

***Vampire:
The Requiem***[™]
FOR
DUMMIES[®]

**by Justin Achilli and Ken Cliffe
with Colleen Totz Diamond**



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About the Authors

Justin Achilli is a 20-plus-year veteran of hobby gaming and a 10-year veteran of game design. His career with White Wolf Game Studio began in 1995, during which Justin has developed both *Vampire: The Requiem* and its predecessor, *Vampire: The Masquerade*. He has worked on over 100 *Vampire* titles, written an Origins Award–nominated novel for the World of Darkness, and contributed to the *Werewolf*, *Mage*, *Wraith*, *Changeling*, *Scarred Lands*, and *Ravenloft* game lines. Justin enjoys pro football, reading anything he can get his hands on, and nightclub DJing.

Ken Cliffe has been in the game industry in one form or another for over 20 years. He was one of the first White Wolf employees, brought on as a full-timer in 1991 after years spent helping out with the one-time *White Wolf Magazine*. Ken has been involved in most everything White Wolf has published, from *Ars Magica* to the World of Darkness. He was developer of *Hunter: The Reckoning* and helped shepherd the relaunch of the WoD with a new Storytelling System core rulebook and *Vampire: The Requiem*.

Colleen Totz Diamond is a freelance writer and editor who has been a fan of “*Dummies* the books” since 1993, when she was first introduced to the series. She lives in Connecticut with her husband, her cat, and her husband’s four betta fish (and about 30 . . . *For Dummies* books).

Dedications

Justin Achilli: This book is dedicated to anyone who’s ever read a book, watched a movie, or listened to a story and said, “I’d like to do that.” Whether as the teller of the tale or a character in the story, here’s your ticket to doing that very thing. This book is also dedicated to those who have been a part of *Vampire* for any length of time, from new players just getting involved to old-timers who have been with us since 1991.

Ken Cliffe: This book is dedicated to everyone who likes to tell stories and isn’t satisfied with the stories he or she is told. You know who you are. You wish a movie could have taken a turn here and been so much better, or addressed a plot point differently there and made so much more sense. You intuitively know what a good story is and crave that quality from what you see and read. Now you have a chance to tell those great stories through roleplaying. Now you can show everyone the stories you can tell.

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Ken Cliffe: Since he can't see this as I type, and his humble nature would never let this go to press if he saw it, I say that Justin Achilli needs to be honored above all others who have contributed to *Vampire*. Justin has overseen the game for years, creating innumerable supplements and guiding the line from a past iteration into a new one. He is the ultimate champion of the series, “embracing” the values and tenets of the undead as if they were his own, striving to remain true to the higher ideals of the game at all times. He doesn't just decide what vampires in the World of Darkness are, he knows, and makes that intuitive awareness come to unlife every day (or night . . .). Justin is responsible for the greatest achievements of *Vampire: The Requiem*.

Colleen Totz Diamond: Thanks to all the remarkable people at White Wolf, but especially Ken Cliffe, who tirelessly inspired and educated as we traversed the World of Darkness, which in fact isn't so unlike the world where we live. Mary Corder and Jodi Jensen provided the support and resources necessary to complete the project, along with a healthy dose of perspective to keep the whole operation running smoothly. Special thanks to Melody Layne for her help in realizing the vision for the book. But the thank you that could go without saying but must be said is for my husband, David, who when I would prowl the apartment late at night in search of inspiration, would pull me back to earth. Thanks, Dave.

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Introduction

Vampire, at its simplest, is a game. What you do in the game is utterly up to you — unlike conventional games, *Vampire* does not restrict you with its rules. The rules simply exist to help explain what you've done or how well you've done it. The rules of the game are flexible, and the most important one is that you have fun. Okay, that one's not so flexible. If you're not having fun, *you're doing it wrong*, and that's the only time we'll ever say those words in this book.

Playing *Vampire: The Requiem* allows a group of friends to get together and tell scary stories about blood-drinking monsters who have cheated death. The stories themselves are a bit of a stew. They combine the trappings of gothic and Romantic literature with ultramodern sensibilities and settings. The result is a complex creation: a mythic, fantastical tale told in the context of the modern night.

The coolest part about it all, though, is that the stories aren't static creations passed on from author to reader. The Storyteller and the players *cooperate* to tell their own vampire tales in which their own alternate personae get to be the stars of the show. It's a little like writing a book, but it's also a little like acting in a play or movie — and the elements of the game keep it fair for all participants. The result, without a doubt, is unique.

This is where the game aspect becomes important. Part of the beauty of it is that you can use it however you want. If you and friends just want to hang out for a few hours and roll dice with some casual storytelling, great. If you want to make High Art and tell the Greatest Story Ever Told, that's cool, too. If you want high-action Draculas scaling the Sears Tower with submachine guns at their sides, that's just as valid a mode of play as lace-and-velvet intrigue at the Prince's mansion. The game was created with gothic horror in mind, but the choice is ultimately yours as to how you want to play it.

About This Book

Think of this book as your guide to the toolbox that is *Vampire: The Requiem*. The rules are yours to use, and we're going to show you how to do just that, from building a character to building a chronicle — an overarching, episodic story — in which to portray those characters.

The rules and setting elements are your tools, and you take them with you into every story. If you need a rule or story piece, reach into your toolbox and take it out, much as you'd take out a screwdriver to tighten a loose door hinge or a hammer to hang a picture. On the other hand, if you're just fixing a hinge or mounting a picture, you don't need every tool in the box. Neither should you feel compelled to use every rule or setting element in the book. Use only what suits the current story or action. The rest will be there waiting for you if you ever decide you need them.

Let this book help you think around what the rules *are* and get you thinking creatively on what they *represent*. We advocate the spirit of the rules over the letter. If it's cool, your character can do it.

How This Book Is Organized

Vampire: The Requiem For Dummies consists of seven parts. The chapters within each part cover specific topics in detail. In each chapter, we start with the basics and build from there.

Part I: Introducing Vampire: The Requiem

This part is most useful for the new *Vampire* player. You get a glimpse of the rules and how they work, and the basics that go into creating a compelling undead character with whom you'll tell horror stories with your friends.

Part II: Choosing a Clan

Part II provides starting information on the various vampire clans and pre-made characters that you can use to start a game right away. This part is terrific for brainstorming your character's creation.

Part III: Creating Your Own Vampire

In this part, you get to take all the vision you have for possible vampires and create a fully developed character. You get to decide your character's clan, covenant, powers, strengths, weaknesses, and identity for telling vampire stories. This part is truly the heart of the game.

Part IV: Stepping into the Night

In Part IV, you witness cut-throat politics of the vampire social structure. You gain survival tips for hiding from the sun by day, and you see how to sniff out an ally — or an enemy. Basically, this part completes your character's creation, making him or her part of a changing, growing universe.

Part V: Mastering the Art of Storytelling

This part shows you how to play the role of Storyteller. In this role, you are the player who creates a rough plot or series of events through which the players' characters go, with all participants influencing the direction of the story. The Storyteller portrays everyone whom the vampires encounter, calls on the rules, and asks for reactions and rolls when they're appropriate.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

This part presents some of the best elements and features of *Vampire*, whether as a game or as a style of fiction. You can use these favorite picks as advice or tips on how your vampire may deal with problems, such as how to put down other undead, how to find shelter from the sun, or how to further empower your character with magic from other *Vampire* books.

Part VII: Appendix and Character Sheet

This part provides a handy glossary of the terms used in this book. Be sure to flip to this part whenever you run into a term you don't understand. Following the glossary is a blank character sheet that you can photocopy and use as you play the game.

Icons Used in This Book

We use the following icons to help you along the way as you traverse the World of Darkness through this book.



These paragraphs contain handy bits of information to help make your game play go more smoothly. You may even find some information here that helps you leverage an advantage over your enemies.



Don't forget the information contained in paragraphs flagged with this icon.



You must beware of constant danger lurking in the World of Darkness. This icon indicates serious danger that can cost you valuable points if you don't proceed with caution.



This icon points to paragraphs that are just on the fringe of the scope of this book. You don't need the information to play a fun game of *Vampire*, but it does help you bring your game to a new level.



The Storyteller icon indicates paragraphs that relate to the Storyteller's role in the game. If you are flipping through the book in search of information to help you play this role, you will find this icon particularly useful.



Rather than repeat ourselves, we occasionally point you to another chapter or section of the book to get the full scoop on an item that may require more information.

Where Do I Go from Here?

If you're new to *Vampire: The Requiem*, this book is a great place to start your journey into the World of Darkness. You definitely want to get yourself a copy of the *World of Darkness Rulebook*, as well as about ten, 10-sided dice. Those are your supplies. Everything else you need is right here in these pages. When you're ready to delve a bit deeper into the gothic elements of the game and into the game in general, you'll want to check out the *Vampire: The Requiem* game book by White Wolf.

Part I

Introducing Vampire: The Requiem

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Vampire. The Requiem? Why would I want to role play in a dark and sinister world filled with evil? I already belong to the high school cheerleading squad."



In this part . . .

This part introduces you to the basics of *Vampire: The Requiem*. You get a glimpse of the rules and how they work, as well as the basics that go into creating a compelling undead character with whom you'll tell horror stories with your friends.

Chapter 1

Preparing to Play Vampire: The Requiem

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the art of storytelling
 - ▶ Knowing what you need to play the game
 - ▶ Deciphering vampiric truth from fiction
 - ▶ Navigating a modern gothic world
 - ▶ Finding your inspiration
-

All of us have played make-believe at some point in our lives. It might have been “Cops and Robbers” or “Cowboys and Indians.” No matter what the game, you forgot who you really were for a few hours and assumed the role of a daring hero or dangerous villain. You imagined yourself as someone else, even in your own backyard, and your friends did the same, all in the spirit of having an adventure or telling a story. Whether you knew it or not, that imaginative activity was called *roleplaying*, and it’s something that people do today, even as adults.

Imagine a game in which you pretend to be something inhuman, something dark, something potentially sinister. Imagine you’re a vampire. A once-living person who has gone to the grave and returned as a nocturnal predator. A hunter who stalks human beings to exist, and who wrestles with what he has become. At one time he was human, and he hasn’t necessarily forgotten what it means to be alive. Imagine playing *Vampire: The Requiem*.

Understanding Storytelling

The act of getting together with a group of friends to play *Vampire: The Requiem*, where you tell tales about vampires, is called *Storytelling*. Storytelling

is an interactive form of entertainment over which no one player has complete control. No one knows just how your collective story will turn out. As a group you decide how you, as a collective and as individuals, respond based on events that arise as the story unfolds.

Knowing what you need to play

Before you begin playing *Vampire: The Requiem*, you need to gather a few items together.

- ✓ Your character, which you create with your imagination. (Don't forget your imagination!)
- ✓ A piece of paper called a *character sheet* that records all the information about your alter ego, a pencil to keep record of what happens to your persona, and your imagination. We provide a blank character sheet at the back of this book.
- ✓ Some 10-sided dice, which are available at most hobby shops in your town, or at game departments in large bookstores. You need as many as 10 of those dice for each player.
- ✓ *World of Darkness Rulebook* by White Wolf, which provides the fundamental rules on which all the games are based.

Beyond *Vampire: The Requiem For Dummies*, you can look to *Vampire: The Requiem* by White Wolf Publishing, which is jam-packed with ideas about the kinds of undead whom you can portray — and face — in your character's nightly adventures.



If you want to mix things up a little, you can play or face off against ghosts, werewolves, wizards, or other fantastic creatures, all of which exist in the World of Darkness, created by White Wolf. Your local hobby shop or bookstore carries other games called *Werewolf: The Forsaken* and *Mage: The Awakening*, both by White Wolf. These books are just like *Vampire*; they provide all the information and rules you need to play different kinds of modern monsters.



You absolutely need the *World of Darkness Rulebook*. It provides the fundamental rules on which all the games are based. If your character runs after an enemy, no matter whether you play a vampire, werewolf, or mage, the rules for deciding whether you catch him are in the *World of Darkness Rulebook*. Everything starts with this book, and you should, too.

Introducing the Storyteller



One person in your group assumes more responsibility than the rest. He or she is called the *Storyteller*. The Storyteller learns most of the rules of the game and devises basic plots that occur to your group's characters. He doesn't have tyrannical control of your characters or what happens to them; their fate is still a shared phenomenon. Rather, the Storyteller decides in advance a basic series of events that can happen to your vampires, and the players react to those situations based on their characters' personalities.

For example, your vampires may learn that other cursed beings in the city have been turned out from their hiding places during the day and turned to ash. The local undead community is terrified. Maybe a monster-hunter has discovered vampires' existence and seeks to destroy them all. When the characters' repose is interrupted abruptly one day, how do they react when strangers pull them from their hiding places to be exposed to daylight? Do they attack the intruders? Try to discover who's behind it all? Talk to the intruders? Use terrifying powers to hide before being captured? Only you as a player get to decide, while the Storyteller knows what can happen next in the story based on your reactions.

A collective story is told when action and reaction create a chain of events. That chain could have one intended end to a range of possible finales. Maybe it turns out your characters survive the first effort to destroy them, and they learn that one of the local undead is actually behind it all. Now this betrayer must be found and confronted, but what's his secret and why would he dare go so far as to undo his own kind? That's for all the players and the Storyteller to decide.

The Storyteller, then, is like a ringmaster at a circus. He constantly introduces new acts and events to which everyone else responds. While each player creates and portrays only one character, the Storyteller creates and portrays everyone else whom your character meets. It's a big responsibility, but it's also lots of fun.



There is no winner or loser in a Storytelling game. The goal is for everyone to enjoy him or herself. Players should not be personally antagonistic toward each other, or toward the Storyteller, any more than they would in a game of Monopoly or Hearts. Everyone is in it to have a good time and tell a story. That doesn't necessarily mean that all your vampires always get along. They can squabble and feud or be the closest of allies. No matter what, though, players always need to respect each other and their characters so a good time is had by all.

REMEMBER



None of this is real

This goes without saying, but we have to say it. While you pretend to be one of the undead in a *Vampire* game, remember that it's all make-believe. You are not an eternal creature. You don't drink blood. You can't mesmerize others with a stare. It's a game. When you're done playing, everyone gets up and goes about his or her life. All the action that occurs in the story — from

saving people's lives, to attacking enemies, to seducing others — is all fiction. Players around the table should not touch or attack each other. You as players announce your characters' actions in a fabricated world, while you live in the real world. Everything else you read in this book about vampires, clans, powers, and legends has been made up. None of it is real.

Who Are the Undead?

We've all heard of Count Dracula and other vampires from books, movies, and comics. The classic vampire dresses in black, wears a cape, has a strange eastern European accent, keeps a twisted assistant who does his bidding, and exists in a remote castle, coming out by night to feed.

That's the cliché portrayal of vampires. Now imagine them to be ordinary people — a co-worker, neighbor, or yourself — turned into undead beings. You don't exist in Europe; you exist in the town or city where you live now, but you can't come out by day for fear of being destroyed by the sun. All the people who knew you either don't recognize you or fear you. And you can't fully control an overwhelming compulsion to kill, feed, and sustain yourself — on human blood.

The creatures of *Vampire: The Requiem* are a modern, convincing portrayal of what it might be like to be one of the undead in the modern, industrialized world. Imagine the possibilities of being a dark, brooding predator who seeks out prey among the world's bullies and criminals. Or you can put aside your regular routine for a few hours and imagine yourself as a sensual temptress who lures unsuspecting victims to your lair.

Most stories in the game involve a group of vampires — a *coterie* of Kindred — as opposed to the more solitary stalkers of seminal fiction. For the sake of the game, the good folks at White Wolf have adapted the cultural notions of the vampire to one more suited to a group of players, called a *troupe*. White Wolf also added its own mythologies and social structures to the mix to better highlight the highs and lows of the undead condition.



The origins of vampires

Most vampires believe that their kind have existed for as long as they have had men upon whom to prey. Others believe that the Kindred have been chosen to stalk the night by whatever power chose to create them. Still others believe that vampires are part of the natural but hidden order of the world, attaching vampiric (Kindred) origins to pagan beliefs and ancient mythologies. Many vampires don't care about the secret of their origins, believing the mystery to be as unknowable as the question of mortal life's origin. Whatever the truth, it is known that vampires have preyed upon the world since ancient times. Kindred society's admittedly fallible memory marks the undead as active during the height of Rome, if not before.

Belonging to a clan

Each Kindred is a member of a clan. A *clan* is a group of vampires who share common characteristics. When a vampire creates, or *Embraces*, a new vampire, the Embraced is of the same clan as the vampire who Embraces him or her. Each clan has its own powers, called *Disciplines*, that are reminiscent of "traditional" vampire powers, such as being able to mesmerize victims with a glance or assume the form of a wolf.



Part II covers the various clans and even provides some sample characters so you can get up and running quickly, if you want.

Choosing a covenant

Covenants are like clans in that they are distinctions of vampires. The difference between clan and covenant, however, is that one chooses his covenant. If clan is family, covenant is political, philosophical, or even quasi-religious membership. Indeed, some vampires choose to belong to no covenant at all, acknowledging no authority higher than themselves. Chapter 17 explores the Kindred covenants.



Creating Theme and Mood

While each story you and your troupe tell will have its own unique theme and mood, *Vampire* itself has a certain theme and mood built into it. You can certainly push the overarching themes and moods into the background, but they are present nevertheless.

In some senses, *Vampire*'s mood corresponds to key elements of the setting. The world is grim and brooding, with shadows hiding ugly secrets and terrible threats. Play this up as much as you want — make the game a fount of boundless angst if you choose. Secrets and espionage are part of the setting as well, so a conspiratorial mood is also very appropriate. Optimally, a blend of the two serves the game best.

Many Kindred define their existence as an unanswerable riddle: “A Beast I am, lest a Beast I become.” This idea makes morality the core theme of *Vampire*. How much leeway does a vampire allow her Beast in order to acknowledge it and yet keep it from overwhelming her? Here’s what you can expect in the World of Darkness:

- ✦ **Barbarism.** The world of vampires is like our own, but with a significant upturn in violence and decay. The streets are more brutal, with the desperate eyes of the unfortunate ever watchful for someone more privileged from whom they can steal to make their own bleak lives more comfortable.

- ✔ **Corruption.** The world is nasty and brutish, and anyone who can get ahead had best take the opportunity. This is a world of indulgent clergy, avaricious businessmen, cops looking for a payoff, and gangsters who have no other options than crime.
- ✔ **Medieval imagery.** Think buildings that soar heavenward, studded by gargoyles to scare away evil spirits that are far too real. Honest-to-goodness castles might exist in the World of Darkness where none stand in the real world. Moss and vines cling everywhere. Torches and candles light hallways and antechambers. Walls bear breaches, cracks, or other signs of disrepair. A sense of dread and fear looms visibly on the face of every passerby.

Separating the Myths from the Facts

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

- ✔ **Vampires must sustain themselves on the blood of the living:** Fact. For the Kindred, the act of feeding is highly sensual. The vessel feels ecstatic when it happens, and the feeding vampire undergoes a heady rush. Certain vampires sustain their undeath by drinking the blood of animals, but rarely for long, as either their tastes or the needs of their cursed bodies force them to seek human blood.
- ✔ **Vampires are immortal:** Myth and fact. Although vampires do not appear to age, and some survive for centuries, the Kindred use the word *undead* rather than *immortal*. Vampirism is a curse, not a blessing. It does carry with it great power, but the state of being a vampire also brings with it numerous detriments, not the least of which include the internalized rage of the Beast and feeding on human blood.
- ✔ **A vampire's prey automatically becomes a vampire:** Myth. You do not *necessarily* become a vampire if you're bitten or killed by a vampire. It takes a conscious act of will, known as the Embrace, to create a new vampire. Indeed, a vampire leaves little to mark her passing if she is careful. All a vampire must do to hide the wound left by her feeding is to lick it when she's done.
- ✔ **Vampires have every manner of supernatural power, such as turning into animals, flying, and wielding the strength of a dozen men:** Fact. While these powers are not universal, vampires have unique abilities, known as Disciplines, that can grant individual undead capabilities such as these and more.

- ✔ **Vampires can have sex:** Fact. While the act of feeding replaces all physical urges, vampires can still indulge in sex and even take pleasure from it. Curiously, however, the emotional aspect of sex vanishes after the Embrace. A vampire might enjoy the physical sensation of sex, but no more than she enjoys a particularly savory smell or the touch of a luxurious fabric.
- ✔ **A wooden stake destroys vampires:** Myth. Vampires aren't destroyed upon being staked; they're held in stasis. A vampire's body slowly withers while trapped in this state, becoming ever more corpse-like.
- ✔ **Vampires don't show up like normal people on camera or in mirrors:** Fact. Vampires show up with their features obscured in photographic media (including video footage) and in mirrors. They can temporarily counteract this effect, but by "default," their features are obscured. The same is not true for voice recordings; vampires' voices are captured normally on voice recorders.
- ✔ **Sunlight burns vampires:** Fact. As part of their curse, vampires recoil at the touch of the sun, its vital rays scorching their undead flesh. Vampires typically spend the daylight hours in the cold sleep of undeath, and only the most resolute can shake off the weight of the day's forced slumber for even a short time.
- ✔ **Garlic and running water repel vampires:** Myth. Such notions are nothing more than old wives' tales, cultural biases, or perhaps the banes of certain bloodlines of Kindred.
- ✔ **Vampires are repulsed by crosses and other holy symbols:** Myth — almost. While such is not generally the case, the devout sometimes do affect the Kindred with miraculous aspects of their faith.
- ✔ **Vampires' souls are as dead as their bodies:** Myth and fact. A vampire may believe that he feels an emotion, but what he actually feels is the echo of mortal emotions that the remnants of his soul apply to his current experience. That is, a vampire who feels angry might indeed be angry at the subject of his ire, but the resonance of the emotion actually comes from some situation the vampire dealt with in life. This condition results in many strange situations. A vampire who has never experienced a given emotion before becoming Kindred might become confused, while a vampiric artist might create a work of art that is awkwardly devoid of any true emotional insight.

Getting Sources and Inspiration

Vampires have been part of people's storytelling traditions for hundreds of years. *Vampire* obviously concerns itself with the gothic tradition and a familiar

modern setting, so certain sources are more influential than others. Some titles listed in the following sections don't necessarily feature vampires but are thematically or dramatically suitable for consideration.

Looking to fiction for information

The following works of fiction are helpful as sources of information for your game:

- ✓ *The Vampire Chronicles* by Anne Rice. One of modern fiction's most popular entries in the vampire genre, these books are probably more widely read than their seminal forerunners. The first three titles in the series are the most suitable for *Vampire*, as later books in the series grow more epic in scale and more involved with the stranger fringes of the supernatural world.
- ✓ *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. This is the one that started it all, drawing on real-world history and eastern European lore to make the vampire a contemporary monster.
- ✓ "The Vampyre" by John Polidori. This short story arguably marked the first modern usage of the vampire as a sentient creature (as previous incarnations of vampires were little more than blood-drinking corpses). Possibly homoerotic, this story came out of a group of friends that included Lord Byron (upon whom the Vampyre, Lord Ruthven, is modeled), Percy Shelley, and Mary Shelley, who made no small contributions to the gothic and romantic movements themselves.
- ✓ "Carmilla" by J. Sheridan LeFanu. A wonderful example of the idea of vampires hiding among their prey, Carmilla (or Millarca, or...) moved in and out of the lives of her prey, coming back and reinventing herself as their memories left her depredations behind. "Carmilla" has sexual overtones in the same manner as Polidori's "The Vampyre," further establishing the vampire as a sensual metaphor.

The following works may also help inspire a mood for your game:

- ✓ *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* by Hunter S. Thompson
- ✓ *Trainspotting* and *Filth* by Irvine Welsh
- ✓ *The Bonfire of the Vanities* by Tom Wolfe
- ✓ *The Unburied* by Charles Palliser
- ✓ *The Great Gatsby* and *The Beautiful and Damned* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Following movies that matter

The following movies may provide both information and mood elements for your game:

- ✓ *Nosferatu*, either the original F. N. Murnau version featuring Max Schreck or the Werner Herzog version featuring Klaus Kinski. For weird, unsettling vampires with their own strangeness and derangement, you can't beat the tale of Count Orlock.
- ✓ *Shadow of the Vampire* starring John Malkovich and Willem Dafoe. Speaking of weirdness, this movie depicts the filming of the original *Nosferatu*, calling many elements of the production into question. Was the movie cursed? Did the supernatural really plague the crew? Was Schreck *really* a vampire himself?
- ✓ *The Lost Boys* starring Jason Patric, Kiefer Sutherland, Corey Haim, and Corey Feldman. While it occasionally lapses into lampoon and camp, this is a horror movie at heart, especially in regard to its treatment of vampires. It almost single-handedly establishes the modern vampire as a hip, cool, and counterculture icon, much like the rebels and antiheroes of the Romantic Movement.
- ✓ *Near Dark* starring Lance Henriksen and Bill Paxton. Want to be scared by vampires whose actions have no moral accountability? See this movie.
- ✓ *The Hunger* starring Catherine Deneuve and David Bowie. Bringing the vampire-as-sexual-metaphor notion to the big screen, this is one of the most sensual vampire movies ever made. It also opens with a cameo performance by Bauhaus, for those who like a bit of musical counterculture with their film.
- ✓ The film adaptation of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, starring Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt, deserves mention, as does Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula*, but both works are mentioned in the fiction section.

To gain further insight into the personal politics and corruption typical among vampires, check out these movies: *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Blade Runner*, *Mulholland Drive*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *The Sixth Sense*, *Croupier*, *Casablanca*, and *Amadeus*.

Listening to vampire-style music

It gets touchy here: So many bands that are popular at any given moment vanish without a trace shortly after their popularity peaks. As such, we'll just touch on a few musical genres and discuss their applicability, listing a few key performers and composers.

- ✔ **Classical:** Any elder who has spent over a century among the undead probably has a greater knowledge of classical musical than popular music. With its intricate arrangements of instruments and careful composition, classical music is the archetypal sound of both refinement and conspiracy spanning centuries. As you might expect, requiems are excellent examples of these types of music. Recommended composers include Beethoven, Bach, Dvorak, and Mozart.
- ✔ **Punk:** Punk's original sound rose out of a desire to rebel against the status quo and be seen and heard doing it. While punk hasn't aged particularly gracefully, it has at least retained its hokey pop sensibilities, losing only the irony of such accessibility. Punk bands not to miss include the Sex Pistols, the Damned, the Misfits, and Black Flag.
- ✔ **Goth:** It doesn't get any more vampiric. Lyrics about bats, blood, and vampires flirt with religious, pagan, or even blasphemous overtones, all put up against a bombastic wall of sound that's heavy on percussion and discordant guitars. Key goth bands (even though many of them deny it) include the Sisters of Mercy, This Mortal Coil, Faith and the Muse, Switchblade Symphony, and Bauhaus.

Hey, who are we to tell you what music to listen to? No doubt you have your own musical tastes and your own ideas for using a certain song to highlight your *Vampire* experiences. You don't even need to confine yourself to "vampire music." For you, a certain Johnny Cash or Public Enemy song might suit a certain story or chronicle far better than Concrete Blonde's "Bloodletting" ever could.





Chapter 2

Creating a Character

In This Chapter

- ▶ Creating a vampire character
 - ▶ Familiarizing yourself with your character's advantages
 - ▶ Determining your character's Blood Potency
-

Creating a character in *Vampire: The Requiem* is a simple process. When you're ready to make up your own vampire, simply follow the steps in this chapter. Make a copy of the character sheet (see a larger-sized version in the back of this book), get a pencil, and begin.

Creating Your Character

This chapter provides a quick summary of the steps for creating a character. Part III provides more detail on each step.



We provide sample characters in Chapters 4 through 8 that allow you to start playing right now. You can also use these characters as examples to reference for the kinds of characters you can create.

Here are the basic steps to create a character from scratch. Where dots can be spent (see Step 2 for information about dots), the numbers of them available are listed in parentheses, such as (5/4/3).

1. Choose your character's background and create his or her concept.

To help get a handle on your character's identity and motivations, come up with a character concept — a short, two- or three-word description of him or her. This description usually, but not always, includes some

idea of a career — nightstalking journalist, stoic mechanic, lost waif, petulant yuppie, angry young man, and so on.

2. Select Attributes and prioritize the three categories (5/4/3).

Attributes are your character's innate abilities. Your character begins with one dot in each Attribute automatically, already filled in on the character sheet. Dots spent now are in addition to these starting ones. The fifth dot in any Attribute costs two dots to purchase.

Example: Olson wants his character to have a Dexterity of 5. This costs him five dots. His first dot is free and his fifth one costs two.

For more information, see Chapter 12.

3. Select Skills and prioritize the three categories (11/7/4).

Skills are your character's learned abilities. The fifth dot in any Skill costs two dots to purchase. For more information, see Chapter 13.

4. Select Skill Specialties.

Skill Specialties are your character's focused areas of expertise, such as driving, unarmed combat, or autopsy diagnoses. You can take three Skill Specialties of your choice. You can assign each how you like, whether each to a separate Skill or all three to a single Skill. No limits exist for the number of Specialties that you can assign to a single Skill. For more information, see Chapter 13.

5. Add supernatural capabilities based on the transformation your character undergoes: The Embrace.

Your character takes on the clan of the vampire who embraced him or her. There are five clans from which to select.

- **Daeva:** Emotional, sensual, and desirable
- **Gangrel:** Primal, hardy, and savage
- **Mekhet:** Quick, discreet, and wise
- **Nosferatu:** Stealthy, strong, and terrifying
- **Ventrue:** Regal, commanding, and aristocratic

6. Choose a covenant in which your character claims membership.

You can select from five covenants. A *covenant* is a secret society among the undead that is sort of like a political party or religion. If you wish to choose no covenant, record *unaligned* on your character sheet.

- **The Carthians** seek to reconcile Kindred society with modern governmental structures and social systems.
- **The Circle of the Crone** venerates a variety of female figures as a co-creator of vampires, the Mother of all Monsters.
- **The Invictus** is the aristocracy of the night.
- **The Lancea Sanctum** seeks to influence Kindred society with the strictures of Longinus, who is believed to have been turned into one of the Damned by the very blood of Christ.
- **The Ordo Dracul** commands rituals and mystical knowledge that allows the Kindred to transcend their vampiric states.

7. Based on your choice of clan, select one of the clan's two Favored Attributes and give your character a free dot in that trait.


- **Daeva:** Dexterity or Manipulation
- **Gangrel:** Composure or Stamina
- **Mekhet:** Intelligence or Wits
- **Nosferatu:** Composure or Strength
- **Ventrue:** Presence or Resolve

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

Chapters 4 through 8 describe each clan's favored Disciplines. Chapter 14 explores all the Discipline options available to you and explains the powers of each. Here are some examples:

- **Animalism:** Power over animals and even the Beast of Kindred
- **Auspex:** Preternatural senses and perception
- **Celerity:** Superhuman speed
- **Dominate:** The ability to overwhelm the mind
- **Majesty:** Tremendous force of personality
- **Nightmare:** Manipulating fear itself
- **Obfuscate:** Hiding aspects of one's self, even one's body
- **Protean:** Shapechanging and adjustments of the vampiric form
- **Resilience:** Legendary toughness
- **Vigor:** The epic strength of many men

9. Finally, roll a die to determine how much Vitae — blood — your character has at the beginning of your first story.



Vampire

THE REQUIEM

Name: _____ Gnosis: _____ Clan: _____
 Player: _____ Vitae: _____ Covenant: _____
 Chronicle: _____ Voci: _____ Patron: _____

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

Skills

Mental (-3 unskilled)

Academics ○○○○○

Computer ○○○○○

Crafts ○○○○○

Investigation ○○○○○

Medicine ○○○○○

Occult ○○○○○

Politics ○○○○○

Science ○○○○○

Physical (-1 unskilled)

Athletics ○○○○○

Brawl ○○○○○

Drive ○○○○○

Firearms ○○○○○

Larceny ○○○○○

Stealth ○○○○○

Survival ○○○○○

Weaponry ○○○○○

Social (-1 unskilled)

Animal Ken ○○○○○

Empathy ○○○○○

Expression ○○○○○

Intimidation ○○○○○

Persuasion ○○○○○

Socialize ○○○○○

Streetwise ○○○○○

Subterfuge ○○○○○

Other Traits

Merits

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Flaws

Disciplines

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Health

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Willpower

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Vitae

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Blood Potency

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Humanity

10 _____ ○

9 _____ ○

8 _____ ○

7 _____ ○

6 _____ ○

5 _____ ○

4 _____ ○

3 _____ ○

2 _____ ○

1 _____ ○

Equipment

Size _____

Defense _____

Initiative Mod _____

Speed _____

Experience _____

Armor _____

Attributes 5/47 • Skills 11/74 (+3 Specialties) • Clan (+1 bonus Attribute; see p. 92) • Covenant • Blood Potency 1 (May be increased with Merit points) • Disciplines 3 (Two dots must be in-clan) • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health = Stamina + Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 5 for adult human-sized Kindred • Defense = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • Starting Humanity = 7 • Vitae = d10 roll

Assessing Your Character's Advantages

Determine advantages, traits derived from your character's Attributes: Defense (the lowest of Dexterity or Wits), Health (Stamina + Size), Initiative (Dexterity + Composure), Humanity (7 for starting characters), Size (5 for most humans), Speed (Strength + Dexterity +5), Willpower (Resolve + Composure), and Virtue/Vice. For Virtue/Vice, choose one of each:

- ✓ **Virtues:** Charity, Faith, Fortitude, Hope, Justice, Prudence, Temperance
- ✓ **Vices:** Envy, Gluttony, Greed, Lust, Pride, Sloth, Wrath



Most advantages cannot be raised directly through experience points. You must instead raise the traits from which they are derived. For more information on character advantages, see Chapter 13.

Calculating Your Character's Blood Potency

Blood Potency is a measure of a vampire's might and possibly age as one of the undead. It serves as a reflection of what he can do with the magic inherent to his unnatural blood. A character's Blood Potency begins at 1, but Merit points may be spent to increase it. Here are some sample Merits and the points (dots) each is worth:

- ✓ **Mental Merits:** Common Sense (••••), Danger Sense (••), Eidetic Memory (••), Encyclopedic Knowledge (••••), Holistic Awareness (•••), Language (• to •••)
- ✓ **Physical Merits:** Brawling Dodge (•), Direction Sense (•), Disarm (••), Fast Reflexes (• or ••), Fighting Finesse (••), Fleet of Foot (• to •••), Fresh Start (•), Giant (••••), Gunslinger (••••), Iron Stamina (• to •••), Strong Back (•), Stunt Driver (•••), Weaponry Dodge (•)
- ✓ **Social Merits:** Allies (• to •••••), Barfly (•), Contacts (• to •••••), Fame (• to •••), Inspiring (••••), Mentor (• to •••••), Resources (• to •••••), Retainer (• to •••••), Status (• to •••••), Striking Looks (•• or ••••)
- ✓ **Vampire-Specific Merits:** Haven (• to •••••), Herd (• to •••••)

Select Merits that represent character enhancements and background elements. You must spend 7 dots on Merits. The fifth dot in any Merit costs two dots to purchase. Note that many Merits have prerequisites. For more information, see Chapter 14.

Adding the Final Touches

To round out details on your character sheet, fill in the name of the chronicle in which your character will participate (provided by the Storyteller) and the name of his group of companions (if any). Finally, list any equipment he carries. He is now ready to confront whatever fate awaits him in the World of Darkness.



Chapter 3

Playing the Game

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the Storytelling rules
 - ▶ Making characters fight
 - ▶ Using weapons and doing damage
 - ▶ Keeping track of your vampire's health
 - ▶ Leveraging the supernatural qualities of undead existence
-

Like most people, you've probably had the sense — at least once — that not everything is as it seems in the world, that sinister truths lay hidden behind a façade of normality, veiled by the rational, orderly “natural laws” we call science. At night, when the shadows grow long and the wind whistles through the trees, you might shudder and remember the truths of your ancestors, who were right to fear the dark.

You've just entered the World of Darkness, a world very much like our own, save that the shadows hide very real monsters. You are one of them: a blood-sucking vampire.

Understanding the Rhythm of the Game

Vampire is a storytelling (or role-playing) game. In the game, a group of players cooperate to tell a story. Each player takes on the role of a single vampire, or *Kindred*, except for the Storyteller. This player takes on the roles of pretty much everything else. He describes the world to the other players, acts out the parts of other characters, and determines what challenges the players' characters face. Players roll dice to determine whether their characters can overcome the challenges created by the Storyteller.

Here's a sample exchange:

“You rise from a day’s slumber in the small basement you use as a haven. A scratching at the door tells you someone is trying to get in. What do you do?”

The players describe their characters’ actions, usually in the first person. “I sneak up to the door and look through the peephole.”

The Storyteller describes the results of the action. This sort of play goes back and forth until the scene is resolved. Players roll dice when they try things, but they aren’t guaranteed success. Jumping out of a moving car, for example, requires a dice roll; leaving a stationary car does not.

Nailing the Rules

Vampire is simple and streamlined; the emphasis of game play is on who your character is and how he reacts to events rather than to the mechanics behind the scenes. The game uses a set of rules called the *Storytelling System*, as described in the following list.

- ✔ **Rolling dice:** When you roll dice in the Storytelling System, you do not add numbers together. Any single die that comes up 8 or better is considered a success. You usually need only one success to accomplish a task, but more is always better (you can cause more damage in combat, for example). Any die that comes up a 0 is considered a 10 and counts as a success. A 0 (or 10) can be rolled again to gain another success. If you roll no successes, your character fails the action.
- ✔ **Dice pools:** The number of dice you roll to attempt something is called your *dice pool*. Your dice pool is typically made up of the total of two traits on your character sheet (one Attribute and one Skill) and modifiers imposed by any special equipment your character uses, or by adverse conditions, as described in the next paragraph.
- ✔ **Modifiers:** The Storyteller determines which modifiers apply to each dice pool. These either add to or subtract from your dice pool (the number of dice rolled). These modifiers usually come from tools used (a bonus is listed with each tool), your character’s Merits, or general circumstances. The Storyteller grants or imposes a bonus or penalty (usually ranging from +2 to -2) if circumstances are especially favorable or harmful. For example, an attempt to climb a wall that is slick with rain and slime would suffer a -2 penalty, whereas doing so on one with plentiful handholds and ledges would gain +2.

- ✔ **Chance die:** If modifiers reduce your dice pool to zero dice (or even fewer), you should roll a single die (called a *chance die*). If you roll a 10 on a chance die, you gain a single success. Any other result is a failure. A 1 on a chance die indicates a *dramatic failure*. If you experience a dramatic failure, the Storyteller describes especially troublesome results, such as a gun jamming or a blowout during a car chase.
- ✔ **Actions:** Most anything a character does is considered an *instant action*. You determine the dice pool, roll the dice, and see if you succeed or fail. You can perform one simple action per turn in combat. You may need to take other types of actions, however:
 - *Extended actions* occur over a period of time. For example, you may need to research information in a library or search a room. In this case, every time you roll the dice represents a fixed amount of time (usually 10 minutes, but it varies for involved actions). You accumulate successes from roll to roll until your task is accomplished or you run out of time.
 - Some actions are *contested*. Two people work against each other, such as an arm-wrestling match or a character sneaking past a guard. Each player (or a player and the Storyteller) rolls a dice pool for his character. The person who gets the most successes wins.
 - Some actions are *reflexive*, which means they happen automatically and don't take up any time — you can perform them and still do other things in that turn.
- ✔ **Turns and Scenes:** A *turn* is a three-second period and is used in combat. A *scene* is a longer period (usually as long as it takes for everyone to do what they want to in a particular place). Some vampiric powers function for a single turn, while others last a whole scene. A turn is usually enough time for a character to perform one kind of action (instant or contested), like shooting a gun. Reflexive actions can be performed in a turn along with other actions, such as a person resisting a poison (reflexive) while shooting a gun (instant).

Engaging in Combat

Because Kindred steal blood from the living and suffer beastly frenzies, they attract violence. When a fight breaks out, it's important to keep track of who does what and how badly they hurt each other. When that happens, follow these steps:

- 1. If you are the Storyteller, inform the players that their characters are entering combat (until the combat ends, players go turn-by-turn, everyone getting one chance to act each turn).**

- 2. Everyone rolls Initiative, which is the result of the roll of a single die plus a character's Initiative Modifier.**

This is a rare case where you add the number that comes up on a die to the value of your trait instead of rolling a dice pool and looking for a success.

- 3. Starting with the character with the highest Initiative total and continuing on to the lowest, each character gets to take a single action (usually an attack).**

A player can choose to yield her character's action until later in the Initiative queue if she wishes. Resolve each character's action before asking the next player what his character does.

- 4. If a character attacks another character, the attacker rolls the appropriate dice pool:**

- **Unarmed close combat:** Strength + Brawl, minus target's Defense and armor (if any)
- **Armed close combat:** Strength + Weaponry, minus target's Defense and armor (if any)
- **Ranged combat (guns and bows):** Dexterity + Firearms, minus target's armor (if any)
- **Ranged combat (thrown weapons):** Dexterity + Athletics, minus target's Defense and armor (if any)

- 5. Add bonus dice based on weapon used or effect performed and then subtract penalties for circumstance conditions.**

The player rolls the remaining pool. Each success equates to a Health point of damage inflicted, the type of which is determined by the nature of the attack.

- 6. If you are the Storyteller, describe the attack and wound in narrative terms.**

Once everyone has acted, a new turn starts and the player with the highest Initiative gets to act again. Players do *not* make new Initiative rolls every turn.

Inflicting damage with weapons

Anyone who enters a violent confrontation is quick to resort to weapons. One's own body can be used as a weapon, but far more effective are tools such as bats, bottles, knives, swords, axes, and guns.

As shown in Tables 3-1 and 3-2, each weapon has a Damage rating, which is added to the dice you roll to determine harm done. Each weapon requires a certain amount of Strength for a character to use it effectively. A sword or shotgun might be too powerful for a weak or frail person to use properly. If your character's Strength is lower than that required for a weapon, attacks suffer a -1 penalty. *B* and *L* under damage indicate bashing and lethal (both are described in the "Suffering damage to your health" section later in this chapter).

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Strength</i>
Sap	1 (B)	1
Brass knuckles	1 (B)	n/a
Club (wood)	2 (B)	2
Knife	1 (L)	1
Sword	3 (L)	2
Small axe	2 (L)	1
Large axe	3 (L)	3
Stake	1 (L)	1

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Ranges</i>	<i>Clip</i>	<i>Strength</i>
Revolver (light)	2	20/40/80	6	2
Pistol (light)	2	20/40/80	17+1	2
Rifle	5	200/400/800	5+1	
SMG (small)	2	25/50/100	30+1	2
Shotgun	4	20/40/80	5+1	3



Avoiding damage

Vampires can protect themselves from damage in several ways. Here are just a few:

- ✔ **Avoiding damage in close combat:** Your character's Defense trait represents his instinctive ability to duck and weave and make close-combat attacks harder. This trait serves as a penalty to incoming attacks. If your character hasn't yet acted this turn and is willing to forgo that action, he can dodge, which doubles his Defense for the rest of the turn. If your character is attacked multiple times in the same turn, however, he has a more difficult time evading all those strikes. For every attack targeted at him past the first, reduce your Defense or dodge total by one (to a minimum of zero).
- ✔ **Avoiding damage in ranged combat:** Unless a ranged attacker is close enough that he could just as easily attack in close combat (a few feet), or is throwing a weapon, Defense doesn't apply. To avoid damage in a firefight you can either find cover (hide behind something solid) or fall prone (drop flat to the ground). Falling prone constitutes a character's action for the turn and levies a -2 penalty on ranged attacks. Anyone within close-combat striking distance (a few feet) gets a +2 to hit a prone character, though.

- ✔ **Armor:** Your character may wear protective gear or clothing that spares him from harm, such as a heavy coat or a bullet-proof vest. The rating for such armor is automatically subtracted from the dice rolled for an attack before you make the roll. Armor rating does not degrade against multiple attackers like Defense does. If two ratings are listed for a type of armor (for example, 1/2), the former applies in close combat while the latter applies against firearms. Armor types marked with an asterisk also downgrade damage from firearms from lethal (X) to bashing (/).
- ✔ **Concealment and Cover:** If your character is partially concealed behind an object, she is harder to hit with ranged attacks. The penalty goes from -1 (crouching behind an office chair) to -3 (poking up out of a fox-hole). If you are *completely* concealed, the attacker suffers no dice-pool penalty, but has to score enough successes to shoot through your cover. Piercing an object reduces the number of success rolled by a number based on the Durability of the cover: from 1 (for wood or thick glass) to 3 (for steel). If this reduces the number of successes to zero, the attack fails to penetrate the cover, and you take no damage.
- ✔ **Range:** Every ranged weapon has three ranges listed in yards in the format: short/medium/long (refer to Table 3-2). An attacker suffers no penalty when her target is within the short range. If the target is at medium range, she suffers a -2 penalty. At long range, this penalty increases to -4.

Table 3-3		Armor Chart	
<i>Class</i>		<i>Rating</i>	
Modern			
Reinforced/thick clothing		1/0	
Kevlar vest* (thin)		1/2	
Flak jacket*		2/3	
Full riot gear*		3/4	
Archaic			
Leather (hard)		1/0	
Chainmail		2/1	
Plate		3/2	

Suffering damage to your health

The Kindred can suffer three types of damage, each more serious than the last:

- ✓ **Bashing damage** results from blunt or stunning attacks.
- ✓ **Lethal damage** results from cuts, gunshots (for mortals), and other more serious attacks. (Because Kindred have no functioning internal organs to damage, they take bashing damage from gunshots instead of lethal.)
- ✓ **Aggravated damage** results from especially vile supernatural attacks.

When your character suffers damage, you need to calculate the effect the damage has on her health. Here are a few pointers:

- ✓ **Marking damage:** When your character suffers damage, mark off that number of Health points, starting with the box under the leftmost dot of your character's Health trait and proceeding left to right. The symbol used depends on the type of damage.

Bashing damage is marked with a slash (/) in the first available empty box. So, imagining that Louis (who has seven Health dots) has just taken one point of bashing damage, his Health boxes look like this:

[/] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

Lethal damage is marked with an X and pushes any existing bashing damage right on the track (so that lethal damage always appears to the left of bashing damage). If Louis next took a point of lethal damage, his track would be:

[X] [/] [] [] [] [] [] []

Aggravated damage is marked with a large asterisk (*) by drawing a cross over an X. Aggravated damage also pushes any existing lethal and bashing damage right on the track (so that it always appears to the left of lethal and bashing damage).

When multiple kinds of damage are suffered, they follow the same rules as stated above.

So, if Louis next takes another point of bashing damage, his track would be:

[*] [X] [/] [/] [] [] [] []

Two subsequent points of lethal damage would look like this:

[*] [X] [X] [X] [/] [/] [] []

And, another point of aggravated damage would look like this:

[*] [*] [X] [X] [X] [/] [/]

- ✔ **Wound penalties:** If your character has any type of damage marked in any of his last three Health boxes, he's suffered severe beating and has trouble performing feats, resulting in penalties to actions. When your third remaining box is marked, actions suffer a -1 penalty. When your second-to-last box is marked, actions suffer a -2 penalty. When your last box is marked, actions suffer a -3 penalty. These penalties apply to all rolls except those related to reflexive actions, such as losing Humanity.
- ✔ **No more health:** Marking off a character's last Health box usually means she has been incapacitated. If that rightmost wound is bashing (and the character is mortal), she falls unconscious. If that rightmost wound is lethal or aggravated, a mortal character quickly bleeds to death. Note that bleeding to death means the character has no bashing damage at all, since it is always the rightmost. Kindred react differently to these conditions, as described in the next section.
- ✔ **Additional Damage:** An unconscious mortal or severely battered Kindred can still be damaged by ongoing attacks. Without further Health boxes to mark off, you represent extra damage by upgrading existing wounds. Any new bashing or lethal wound upgrades an existing bashing wound to lethal (make the leftmost / into an X). Additional aggravated damage converts a point of lethal or bashing damage to aggravated (make the leftmost X or / into an asterisk).
- ✔ **Healing:** Mortals recover from damage with rest and medical attention. Kindred need to spend Vitae to heal, as described in the next section.

Understanding the Vampiric Condition

The following sections describe the effects of being undead. These phenomena apply to your character once she has been Embraced, making her into something more than mortal, something more than human.

Blood consumption

Kindred have a trait called Vitae, which represents the amount of blood in their systems. They spend one point of Vitae to rise every night, so they must eventually feed from the living. They also spend Vitae for other effects. Most young vampires can spend only one Vitae per turn, and hold ten Vitae at most. The amount of Vitae a vampire can hold is determined by Blood Potency.

A vampire without any Vitae left begins to consume himself. Rising each night inflicts a lethal wound. Trying to activate vampiric effects or Disciplines simply fails outright. When a vampire catches a person on whom to feed,

the vampire can drink as much blood as he wants to the limit of the victim's remaining Health. Each Health point lost by the victim equals one Vitae consumed by the vampire.

Reduced damage

The Kindred anatomy is animated by a supernatural curse, not the functioning of delicate organs, so it takes a lot to do serious damage to the undead. Firearms do bashing damage to Kindred instead of lethal. Blades and arrows still do lethal damage, however. In addition, a vampire does not fall unconscious if all her Health boxes are marked off due to bashing damage. She remains able to act, but suffers a -3 wound penalty. Additional damage upgrades existing wounds as normal. If all a Kindred's Health boxes are marked off due to lethal damage, she enters a coma-like state called *torpor*. A vampire whose Health boxes are all marked with aggravated damage is destroyed.

Healing

Kindred do not heal like mortals. Instead, they must spend Vitae to do so. One point of Vitae heals two points of bashing damage or one point of lethal damage. Aggravated damage is much harder to heal and takes five points of Vitae and two full nights per Health box to heal. Wounds must be healed from right to left on a vampire's Health chart, so her last wound is always on the far left. A vampire can perform another action in the same turn as healing bashing or lethal damage.

Physical augmentation

Vampires can boost their Physical Attributes (Dexterity, Strength, Stamina) for a moment by spending Vitae. Each point adds two dots to these Attributes for the current turn (the vampire can take a regular action that same turn at no penalty). Certain Disciplines allow for more efficient use of this ability.

Fire and sunlight

Vampires suffer terrible damage from exposure to fire or sunlight. Both cause a number of automatic points of aggravated damage per turn, depending on their intensity and the amount of exposure. A lighter held to skin or a hand

held in sunlight filtered through heavy drapes causes only one point per turn. Being tossed in a wood fire or looking out a window on an overcast day causes three points per turn. Being caught in a chemical fire or fully exposed under direct sunlight causes five (or more) points per turn.



Kindred of Clan Mekhet suffer one extra point of damage per turn from fire and sunlight.



Daytime slumber

Vampires are overcome by a crushing fatigue upon the rising of the sun and remain immobile (and to all appearances truly dead) until sunset. If they are attacked during the day, they can rise, but it is extremely difficult. Roll a dice pool made up of your character's Wits Attribute alone; any successes mean your character notices the disturbance. You then spend one point of Vitae and roll your character's Humanity as a dice pool. Your character can rise for a single turn per success on the Humanity roll.

The masquerade

One of the Kindred's firmest traditions is the Masquerade, an edict behind which the undead hide their existence from mortals. (Vampires act as

mortals do when in the company of the living.) This law is more than a social requirement; it reflects an inherent part of vampiric nature. A Kindred's reflection (and any photographs or video) appears slightly blurred or grainy. This effect is not enough to stand out at first glance (viewers often assume there's a flaw in or dirt on a lens or mirror), but it is enough to make identifying individuals and their features very difficult. Kindred can suppress this effect for a scene if you spend a point of Willpower.



For more information on other Traditions that apply to the Kindred, see Chapter 17.

Frenzy

The Beast within all Kindred is violent and savage and can overwhelm the conscious mind with rage, fear, or hunger. Hunger frenzies are triggered only when your character has four or less Vitae points in his system. Anger frenzies are triggered by especially infuriating circumstances (such as public humiliation, the triumph of a rival, or being assaulted) or the Predator's Taint (see the next section). Fear frenzies are triggered by being near fire or sunlight, or by the Predator's Taint.

A vampire in a frenzy attacks, runs, or feeds (as appropriate) at the exclusion of all else. Such a vampire can't do anything complex, but the Beast's savagery does give her some advantages. She ignores all wound penalties, she gains a +1 bonus to dice pools for physical actions, and any attempts to affect her mind (such as with Disciplines like Majesty or Dominate) suffer a -2 penalty. A frenzy usually subsides once the phenomenon that triggered it is either destroyed or out of sight.

Regardless of the type of frenzy, the process is essentially the same: Roll Resolve + Composure. Your character resists the frenzy for a single turn per success, and you can roll again at the end of those turns (hoping to accumulate more successes). If you accumulate a total of three successes, the frenzy subsides. If, however, you fail on one of these rolls, your character enters frenzy immediately. (Note that rolls to resist frenzy do not count as an action.) The Storyteller can raise or lower the number of accumulated successes needed for a frenzy to subside depending on the intensity of the trigger.

Predator's Taint

Vampires know each other on sight, because their Beasts rise to the challenge of another predator's presence. This effect, called *Predator's Taint*, normally feels like nothing more than a simple undercurrent of tension. When Kindred meet for the very first time, however, this tension is acute enough that it can

cause frenzy. The nature of the frenzy (anger or fear) is determined by the relative Blood Potency of the undead. Vampires with lower Blood Potency than those they face must resist fear frenzy. Vampires with equal or greater Blood Potency must resist anger frenzy. (Roll Resolve + Composure.)

This risk of frenzy can be lessened or eliminated by circumstances that make meeting other Kindred less traumatic, such as when a newcomer makes an immediate offer to help or the meeting occurs in a place where the characters feel safe. In general, a single success is needed to resist frenzy threatened by the Predator's Taint.

Losing humanity

A Kindred's worst fear is giving in completely to the Beast. The more heinous the sins she commits, the stronger the Beast grows and the lower her Humanity trait falls. At Humanity 7 (where all characters start), theft or any worse misdeed can cause moral degeneration (a loss of Humanity). When a character commits such an act, the player rolls a number of dice based on the severity of the sin. The worse the sin, the *fewer* the dice that are rolled (petty theft is four dice, manslaughter or massive property damage is three dice, and murder is two dice). If the roll fails, the character loses a point of Humanity (Willpower can't be spent on this roll).



Characters with reduced Humanity justify their sin to themselves rather than repent and become that much more callous. It now takes a worse sin to cause another roll to degenerate. At Humanity 6, only grand theft or worse can spark such a roll. At Humanity 5, it takes intentional mass property damage or worse. At Humanity 4, it takes an impassioned crime like manslaughter.

Characters who lose Humanity also risk becoming mentally unhinged. If a player fails a degeneration roll, he rolls his character's reduced Humanity as a dice pool. If he fails that roll, the character gains a derangement. This can be any form of minor but pervasive mental disorder, such as depression or a phobia. You should role-play this new personality quirk.



For more information on Humanity, its loss, and the threat of madness, see Chapter 13.

Dealing with mortals

Kindred are no longer truly human, and as they degenerate they lose the instinctive understanding of social cues among the living. When dealing socially with the living, a Kindred's Humanity trait serves as her maximum dice pool for any actions involving Social Attributes or Skills. A vampire with Humanity 5, Wits 3, and Empathy 4, would thus get seven dice (Wits + Empathy) to read a fellow Kindred's body language, but only five dice (Humanity) to read a mortal's.



Torpor

Being undead, a vampire is difficult to kill “again,” or at least there are shades of destruction that apply to the Kindred. A vampire who is badly beaten or starved of blood falls into a coma state called *torpor*. For all intents and purposes, she looks like a dead person, but is in fact in a form of supernatural hibernation as she recovers from her condition and may rise again. A vampire falls into torpor if her rightmost Health box is marked with lethal damage (X). Or she collapses if her last Vitae is lost and she has no more left in her body. Generally, a vampire rises again after a period of time from days to weeks to years, or if blood is fed to her desiccated body.

Stake in the heart

Contrary to popular myth, a wooden stake driven into a vampire's heart does not destroy her once and for all. Rather, it paralyzes her. She is immobilized, trapped in a state of torpor as long as the stake remains in her heart. Staking a vampire is no easy task. If the creature resists the effort, it calls for a Strength + Weaponry roll at a -3 penalty. The damage your character inflicts is lethal but must also be sufficiently high to pierce muscle, bone, and organ. Five or more successes must be scored to strike all the way to the heart. If fewer successes are achieved, damage is done, but not enough in the proper spot to have any special effect on the monstrous target.

Final death

A vampire can be destroyed once and for all. The most conventional way is for her rightmost Health box to be marked with aggravated damage (an asterisk). Inflicting that condition might mean she suffers such a horrendous beating — even by mundane weapons — that she can never recover. That's a long process of hacking, shooting, or chopping. More effective is exposing her to fire or sunlight, both of which immediately cause aggravated harm.



Understanding Rolls and Traits

Different kinds of rolls are indicated for different activities — whether instant, extended, or contested actions. In the case of extended actions, approximate time periods for rolls are listed. For contested actions, the roll made for the target of an effect is listed. If a target is allowed to automatically resist an effort, the penalty applied to your character's dice pool is shown.

- ✓ **Animal Training:** Composure + Animal Ken + equipment (trainer) versus Stamina + Resolve (animal); extended and contested action (the task demands a number of successes equal to the animal's Willpower; each roll represents one day of training).
- ✓ **Bypass Security System:** Dexterity + Larceny + equipment; extended action (5–15 successes, depending on the complexity of the system; each roll represents a turn — three seconds — of work).
- ✓ **Carousing:** Manipulation + Socialize + equipment (carouser) versus Composure + Empathy (subject); extended and contested action (the task requires a number of successes equal to double the highest Stamina among the character's acquaintances; one roll equals one hour of carrying on).
- ✓ **Catching Objects:** Dexterity + Athletics; instant action if item is thrown *to* receiver, contested if it's thrown *at* receiver and Defense doesn't apply.
- ✓ **Climbing:** Strength + Athletics + equipment; instant or extended action (one success is required per 10 feet of height; each roll represents one minute of climbing).
- ✓ **Close Combat, Armed:** Strength + Weaponry, minus target's Defense and armor; instant action. Add bonus dice based on weapon used or effect performed and then subtract penalties for circumstance conditions. Each success equates to a Health point of damage inflicted, the type of which is determined by the nature of the attack.
- ✓ **Close Combat, Unarmed:** Strength + Brawl, minus target's Defense and armor; instant action. Add bonus dice based on weapon used or effect performed and then subtract penalties for circumstance conditions. Each success equates to a Health point of damage inflicted, the type of which is determined by the nature of the attack.
- ✓ **Create Art:** Intelligence + Crafts + equipment; extended action (4–15+ successes; one roll equals 30 minutes of work).
- ✓ **Cutting a Deal:** Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment versus Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment; extended and contested action (3–10+ successes required; each roll represents an hour of negotiation).

- ✔ **Defense:** Lowest of Wits or Dexterity; reflexive action.
- ✔ **Degeneration:** Roll number of dice associated with sin performed. If roll fails, Morality drops by one. Roll new Morality trait as a dice pool. If no successes are rolled, a derangement is incurred.
- ✔ **Disguise:** Wits + Subterfuge + equipment (impersonator) versus Wits + Subterfuge (subject); contested action.
- ✔ **Dodge:** Double target's Defense; costs action for turn.
- ✔ **Examining a Crime Scene:** Wits + Investigation + equipment; extended action (3–10+ successes; one roll represents ten minutes of activity).
- ✔ **Explosives:** Dexterity + Athletics (thrown) or Intelligence + Science (triggered); instant action.
- ✔ **Fast-Talk:** Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment (talker) versus Composure + Empathy or Subterfuge (subject); contested action.
- ✔ **Fatigue:** Stamina + Resolve rolls to remain awake; reflexive action.
- ✔ **Foot Chase:** Stamina + Athletics + equipment versus Stamina + Athletics + equipment; extended and contested action (each roll represents one turn of running).
- ✔ **Foraging for Sustenance:** Wits + Survival + equipment; extended action (five successes required; one roll represents one hour of searching).
- ✔ **Grapple:** Roll Strength + Brawl – opponent's Defense for attacker to get a grip on target; roll Strength + Brawl – opponent's Strength to perform an overpowering maneuver or to break free; instant action.
- ✔ **Hacking:** Intelligence + Computer + equipment versus Intelligence + Computer + equipment; extended and contested action (5–10+ successes; each success represents 30 minutes of programming).
- ✔ **Health:** Stamina + Size.
- ✔ **Holding Breath:** Reflexive action; remember, vampires don't breathe.
- ✔ **Initiative:** Dexterity + Composure + results of a die roll.
- ✔ **Interrogation:** Wits + Intimidation + equipment (interrogator) versus Stamina + Resolve (subject); extended and contested action (the task demands a number of successes equal to the subject's Willpower; each roll represents one hour of interrogation).
- ✔ **Jumping:** Strength + Athletics + equipment; instant action.
- ✔ **Lifting/Moving Objects:** Strength + Stamina; instant action.
- ✔ **Lockpicking:** Dexterity + Larceny + equipment; instant or extended action (2–12+ successes required, depending on the sophistication of the lock; one roll represents one turn — three seconds — of work).

- ✓ **Meditation:** Composure + Wits + equipment; extended action (4 successes; one roll represents 30 minutes).
- ✓ **Memorizing and Remembering:** Intelligence + Composure; reflexive action.
- ✓ **Oratory:** Presence + Persuasion + equipment versus highest Resolve + Composure of audience; contested action.
- ✓ **Perception:** Wits + Composure or a relevant Skill in place of Composure; reflexive action.
- ✓ **Ranged Combat, Guns and Bows:** Dexterity + Firearms, minus target's armor; instant action. Add bonus dice based on weapon used or effect performed and then subtract penalties for circumstance conditions. Each success equates to a Health point of damage inflicted, the type of which is determined by the nature of the attack.
- ✓ **Ranged Combat, Thrown Weapons:** Dexterity + Athletics, minus target's Defense and armor; instant action. Add bonus dice based on weapon used or effect performed, and then subtract penalties for circumstance conditions. Each success equates to a Health point of damage inflicted, the type of which is determined by the nature of the attack.
- ✓ **Repair Item:** Dexterity + Crafts + equipment; extended action (4–10 successes; one roll equals 30 minutes of work).
- ✓ **Research:** Intelligence + Academics + equipment; extended action (3–10+ successes; each roll represents 30 minutes of research).
- ✓ **Resisting Coercion:** Resolve + Wits or Resolve + Stamina; reflexive action.
- ✓ **Resisting Poison or Disease:** Stamina + Resolve; reflexive and potentially extended and/or contested action.
- ✓ **Seduction:** Presence + Persuasion + equipment or Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment (seducer) versus Wits + Composure + equipment (subject); contested and/or extended action (the extended and contested part of the task requires a number of successes equal to double the seducer's Presence or double the subject's Resolve; one roll equals ten minutes of banter).
- ✓ **Shadowing Stealthily:** Wits + Stealth + equipment (shadow) versus Wits + Composure + equipment (subject); contested action.
- ✓ **Size:** Base value is 5 for adult human.
- ✓ **Sleight of Hand:** Dexterity + Larceny + equipment versus Wits + Composure or Wits + Larceny; contested action.
- ✓ **Solving Enigmas:** Intelligence + Investigation + equipment; instant or extended action (3–10+ successes; one roll represents one hour of activity).

- ✔ **Speed:** Strength + Dexterity + Species factor (5 for adult human, 3 for human child).
- ✔ **Surprise:** Wits + Composure; reflexive action.
- ✔ **Throwing:** Range: Strength + Dexterity + Athletics, minus the object's Size (short range) for a non-aerodynamic object; double distances for an aerodynamic one. Accuracy: Dexterity + Athletics + equipment; instant action.
- ✔ **Vehicle Control:** Dexterity + Drive + quality of vehicle; instant action.
- ✔ **Willpower:** Resolve + Composure; reflexive action. Spending Willpower adds three dice to a roll or +2 to a single Resistance trait such as Stamina, Resolve, Composure, or Defense in one instance.
- ✔ **Working the Black Market:** Manipulation + Streetwise + equipment; extended action (2–10 success; each roll represents one day of searching the street).

Part II

Choosing a Clan

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I don't want to be Sally the Daeva. I want to be Cliff the roofer, who was sent here to check for leaks in the ceiling."



In this part . . .

This part gets you started with some basic information about the various vampire clans and their lines of descent through the ages. Each chapter provides a pre-made character from a particular clan that you can use for your first game, or you can look to these sample characters for inspiration for your own original creation.

Chapter 4

Starting Out as a Daeva

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the beauty, grace, and curse of Clan Daeva
 - ▶ Role-playing a character from Clan Daeva
 - ▶ Getting to know a sample character from the clan
-

Quote: *What a silly thing to say, my love. Of course you can't live without me.*

Other Kindred envy the beauty and grace of the Daeva. They easily draw on the passion of mortals and they almost literally glide through the masses. The Daeva find the envy of other Kindred to be almost as potent as blood itself. Before you are taken away by the beauty of these creatures, make no mistake: These Kindred are predators to the core. In some ways, they are perfect vampires. Unfortunately for them, most are too dead inside to enjoy it.

Choosing a Character from Clan Daeva



Called *Succubi* by other clans, the Daeva make their prey come to them. No self-respecting Daeva resorts to attacking transients in alleyways. These are the Kindred who accompany a smitten young mortal back to her place, leaving her exhausted from pleasure (if she's fortunate) or a blood-drained husk (if she's not).

The Daeva are sensual beings, drawn equally by beauty and blood. After years of manipulating the love of mortals and the respect of their fellow Kindred, however, they find themselves unable to feel true attachment to other people. The Daeva merely exploit emotions and imitate the motions of attachment to achieve what they need (or want).

Daeva move among high society or low culture, wherever they feel most drawn. Because beauty and congregations of mortals fascinate the Daeva, they often frequent theaters, galleries, trendy clubs, whiskey dives, drug dens, brothels, and everything in between.

Because these vampires are able to find willing victims wherever they go, they have thrived to become one of the most prevalent clans. No single social class has room for them all, so newcomers and losers of political and social games often find themselves dwelling among the poor and unwashed — or at least the middle classes, which, since their blood is as red as any other, means basically the same thing to most Succubi.



The Daeva play politics like a finely tuned instrument. Even allies and co-conspirators who know they cannot trust a Succubus find themselves caught up in the Daeva's personal magnetism. Be warned that few Kindred are as desperate as a Daeva trying to claw his way into his own niche. Wise Kindred know better than to take advantage of a Daeva in such a position, for fear he'll one night achieve the position and privilege he seeks. The Succubi never forget a slight.

Here is a summary of the Daeva's defining characteristics:

- ✓ Play politics with so much grace that even allies and co-conspirators who know better wind up trusting them.
- ✓ Behave sensually, drawn by beauty and blood.
- ✓ Actively manipulate the love of mortals and the respect of their fellow Kindred
- ✓ After some time, can no longer understand emotional attachment as anything other than a tool to be exploited and an action to imitate.



Most Daeva are as dead spiritually as they are physically. They claim to understand desire, but all they truly know is need, and it is this deadening of emotions that causes so many jaded Daeva to become depraved in their efforts to feel again.

Roleplaying a Daeva Character

Nickname: Succubi, which are demons (or in this case, vampires) taking on female form to seduce men. Male Daeva are sometimes called *Incubi*, which means basically the same thing as *Succubi* but with the opposite gender.

Covenant:

- ✔ **Invictus:** Daeva are well-suited to the political game, and here they can surround themselves with lessers, becoming ever more jaded and inhuman as they grow older.
- ✔ **Carthians:** Few Daeva bother with the Carthians. Why fight for an egalitarian society when the current system favors the Daeva?
- ✔ **Circle of the Crone:** The Circle of the Crone has few Daeva for much the same reasons as the Lancea Sanctum, and those who do join often do so more out of a debased and jaded sense of rebellion against societal mores than any real belief in the Pagans' teachings.
- ✔ **Lancea Sanctum:** Most Daeva are too self-centered to feel the religious calling of the Lancea Sanctum, but those few exceptions who are able to channel their sensual drive into matters of faith often obtain positions of prominence, making the clan seem more numerous in the Lancea Sanctum than it really is.
- ✔ **Ordo Dracul:** The Ordo Dracul covenant is home to a small number of devoted Daeva, and it would have more if the rigors of the covenant's policies didn't make being a hedonist among its ranks less than rewarding.
- ✔ **Unaligned:** A surprising number of Succubi fall in among the unaligned, convinced, in their own self-perceived superiority, that they have no need for the laws and restrictions of society.

Appearance: Daeva often Embrace out of infatuation. Thus, most Daeva are surpassingly beautiful. The clan is also highly in tune with trends and fashion.

Havens: Daeva havens vary, but they're almost universally comforting . . . in a subtly alarming way that suggests an artificial appeal to whatever victims a Kindred favors. Most are convenient to social or political centers. Most are intended to impress any compatriots, allies, or victims who are invited inside. Penthouses and condominiums are particularly popular. Many Daeva don't bother to keep up appearances if they don't think they'll bring prey home, however.

Background: Daeva are generally Embraced from the ranks of society's elite. Sires look for some combination of charm, culture, seductiveness, desire to achieve, passion, and physical beauty.



Character Creation: Social Attributes and Skills are of primary concern, particularly those that aid in making good first impressions, in persuading, and in seducing. Social Merits are equally common, representing the character's connections to both mortal and Kindred society. Given that most Daeva feed almost exclusively through manipulation and betrayal, a high starting Humanity score is a good idea, since it's likely to fall throughout the game.

Favored Attributes: Dexterity or Manipulation

Clan Disciplines: Celerity, Majesty, Vigor

Weakness: The Daeva have difficulty resisting the hedonism they allow themselves as members of the Damned. Any time a Daeva has an opportunity to indulge her Vice but does not do so, she loses two points of Willpower (as opposed to gaining one by partaking in its pleasures).

Sample concepts: Bored socialite, club hopper, club owner, cult leader, cultured serial killer, jaded vampire who gets off on being a creature of the night (a fairly melodramatic attitude found only among the very young before the weight of the Requiem fully settles on them), Kindred politico, local covenant spokesman, patron of the arts, professional "escort"

Sample Daeva Character: Tina Baker

Quote: *Only two years in. This sucks.*

Background: Before last night, Tina was a sorority girl from "down south" who came up to experience Chicago for the first time. Her major was sports medicine, but she was still taking core classes. Having come uncomfortably close to being victimized while in high school, she made time to train in self-defense. She just completed her first semester of her sophomore year and drove to Chicago with some of her sorority sisters, but they separated shortly after arriving. Tina spent a few days hanging out with some folks she met in town . . .

And then something bad happened. She has fuzzy memories of the incident, but she remembers fighting, and being hurt, perhaps even stabbed. Although she doesn't have a scratch on her, she knows she was in a fight last night and has a terrible suspicion she lost. At present, however, she has other concerns, like the blazing thirst she can't seem to quench.

Description: Tina is 20 and is a striking, athletic young woman. Her Embrace stripped her of her healthy complexion, but added a certain feline charisma to her. She stands about 5'6" and keeps her brown hair cut chin-length.

Roleplaying Hints: You are not a victim. Your friends sometimes call you paranoid, but you know you're just strong. You refuse to be easy prey, and this trip to Chicago was supposed to prove that . . . except that you became a victim anyway. You aren't normally wired for revenge, but this time you feel you *owe* someone.

Equipment: Cell phone, purse with a little spare cash, backpack with change of clothes.

Virtue/Vice: Tina's Virtue is *Fortitude*. She regains all spent Willpower points at the end of a session of play if she resists overwhelming pressure to alter her goals. Her Vice is *Gluttony*. She regains one spent Willpower point at the end of any scene in which she indulges in her addiction or appetites at some risk to herself or a loved one.

Knowing your character's disciplines and powers

Blood Expenditure: Tina can spend one Vitae per turn. She begins with two Vitae points.

Healing: Tina can spend Vitae to heal two points of bashing damage or one point of lethal damage. She can do so and act in the same turn.

Physical Augmentation: Tina can boost any of her Physical Attributes (Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina) by two dots for one turn by spending a point of Vitae. She can do so and act in the same turn.

Celerity •: This Discipline allows Tina to boost her speed to preternatural levels. To activate Tina's Celerity, you must spend a point of Vitae, after which the Discipline is then active for the rest of the turn. While Celerity is active, anyone attacking Tina suffers a penalty equal to her Celerity rating (1). Her Speed rating also increases by itself again for every dot of Celerity as long as the Discipline is active (so for Tina, her Speed doubles).

Awe (Majesty •): This power allows Tina a supernatural degree of charm; people affected by the power fawn over her and are fascinated by her. The people affected by her power don't take actions that result in harm; they are

polite and deferential. For Tina to use this power, roll six dice (Presence + Expression + Majesty). If you get more successes than the target has dots of Composure, that person is awed. When you make a Social roll for Tina to affect that awed person anytime for the rest of the scene, you gain a bonus equal to the number of successes on your Awe roll. Awe can be used against more than one person, but you suffer a -1 penalty for affecting two people, and -2 for affecting 3 to 6. Anyone can shake off the effects of Awe for one turn by spending a Willpower point.

Vigor •: This Discipline makes Tina superhumanly strong. Spend a point of Vitae. Tina adds her Vigor rating (1) to her Strength for the rest of the scene (note that boosting Strength directly with Vitae lasts for only one turn).

Clan Weakness: Tina was always inclined to drink and eat a little too much, but as a Daeva vampire, she is a slave to those passions. Any time Tina can indulge her Gluttony but does not, she loses two points of Willpower.

Knowing your character's merits

Barfly: Tina is well versed in getting into clubs without waiting in line. As long as she is appropriately dressed for the club in question, she can get in without a wait or much difficulty.

Brawling dodge: Tina worked out every day, practiced fighting at her university's student-recreation center and is especially good at ducking and weaving to avoid getting hit in close combat. If she chooses to dodge in a turn (rather than strike), she adds her Brawl rating to her Defense (meaning her opponent subtracts five dice from his attack pool).

Contacts: Tina has a friend — Dr. Montrose, a history professor at her university — on whom she can call for information. They met and became friends when she took his European History course. Tina can call Dr. Montrose to make use of his extensive knowledge on European and American history.

Danger sense: Tina is used to staying alert in potentially dangerous situations. This gives her two extra dice on any roll to see if she is surprised.

Striking looks (+1): Tina is athletic and sexy and gains +1 die to any Presence or Manipulation dice pool to entertain, seduce, distract, or otherwise get her way by using her looks. Remember, though, that people tend to remember her because she is attractive.

Daeva

Name: Tina Baker
 Player:
 Chronicle:

Concept: College Student
 Virtue: Fortitude
 Vice: Gluttony

Clan: Daeva
 Covenant:
 Potency:

Attributes

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

Skills

Mental

(-3 unskilled)

- Academics ●●○○○
- Computer ●●○○○
- Crafts ○○○○○
- Investigation ○○○○○
- Medicine (sprains) ○○○○○
- Occult ○○○○○
- Politics ●○○○○
- Science ○○○○○

Physical

(-1 unskilled)

- Athletics ●●○○○
- Brawl ●●○○○
- Drive ●●○○○
- Firearms ○○○○○
- Larceny ○○○○○
- Stealth (Crowds) ●○○○○
- Survival ○○○○○
- Weaponry ○○○○○

Social

(-1 unskilled)

- Animal Ken ○○○○○
- Empathy (Body Language) ●●○○○
- Expression ●●○○○
- Intimidation ●●○○○
- Persuasion ●●○○○
- Socialize ●●○○○
- Streetwise ●○○○○
- Subterfuge ○○○○○

Other Traits

Merits

- Barfly ●○○○○
- Brawling Dodge ●○○○○
- Contacts ●○○○○
- Danger Sense ●○○○○
- Striking Looks (+1) ●○○○○
-
-
-

Health

●●●●●●●●●●○○

Willpower

●●●●●●●○○○

Vice

○○○○○○○○

Blood Potency

●○○○○○○○○○

Humanity

10 ○

9 ○

8 ○

7 ●

6 ●

5 ●

4 ●

3 ●

2 ●

1 ●

Disciplines

- Celerity ●○○○○
- Majesty ●○○○○
- Vigor ●○○○○
-
-
-
-
-

Equipment

Size 5

Defense 2

Initiative Mod 6

Speed 11

Experience

Armor

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



Chapter 5

Playing Clan Gangrel

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding Clan Gangrel
 - ▶ Roleplaying a character from Clan Gangrel
 - ▶ Getting to know a sample Gangrel character
-

Quote: *Go tell this Prince of yours that this is my domain . . . if you've got the guts.*

Although vampires give mortals a reason to be afraid of the dark, there exist things that give even vampires reason to fear — creatures like the Gangrel, the predators among predators, the most savage of beasts. Perhaps the only clan whose mere mention elicits a chilled shudder, the Gangrel are in many ways the “noble savages” of the vampiric race.

Choosing a Character from Clan Gangrel

Here are the main characteristics of members from Clan Gangrel:

- ✔ The Gangrel quickly sever ties with everything pertaining to their mortal lives.
- ✔ Many prefer the company of animals, and some avoid contact with the mortal world entirely.
- ✔ Many retain and even value their humanity, but they do so within the bounds and context of their newfound existence and not as an attempt to hold onto what's been lost.
- ✔ Their special bond with the Beast gives many Gangrel unique insight into the Kindred condition. Some of the wisest vampires to be found in all the world are Gangrel.



Other clans delude themselves about what the Embrace “truly means,” but the Gangrel know what they’ve become, so they strive to make peace with it. On the whole, they spend more time in communion with their bestial side than other vampires do, and though such activity more than accounts for their nickname and reputation, few would disagree that the Gangrel truly benefit from their introspection.

Roleplaying a Gangrel Character

Nickname: Savages

Covenant: Many Gangrel are largely unconcerned with matters of Kindred politics, but that’s not to say they don’t have their own views.

- ✓ **Circle of the Crone:** Perhaps surprisingly, a significant percentage of the clan is active in the Circle of the Crone, which provides spiritually minded Gangrel with a ready-made forum for their rituals and beliefs, and a great many of the Circle’s leaders hail from the clan’s ranks.
- ✓ **Carthian:** Some of the more proactive Gangrel find the Carthian mindset appealing, and a number of highly motivated Savages have taken up the cause in recent years.
- ✓ **Invictus:** Those who are active in this group usually work for important elders or are elders themselves.
- ✓ **Lancea Sanctum:** Where the members of Invictus desire to rule all other Kindred, the members of Lancea Sanctum think they themselves already do. For this reason, the few Gangrel of the Lancea Sanctum are among the most frightening and relentless Kindred anyone would ever (not) want to meet.
- ✓ **Ordo Dracul:** The Ordo Dracul sees few Gangrel, although some who join do so not to learn the blood magic of the covenant but to pursue mysteries of their origin without the hauteur of the Lancea Sanctum.
- ✓ **Unaligned:** A great many Gangrel also find their place among the unaligned Kindred, whose lack of structure and love of freedom are attractive to Savages who prefer that elders of other clans keep their politics to themselves.

Appearance: As a rule, Gangrel prefer function over form and are rarely caught wearing anything that restricts movement. They must always be wary, however, of just how bestial they appear to others. Some especially old or angry Gangrel learn how to Obfuscate (hide from view) to avoid disastrous situations.



Havens: One of the clan's greatest strengths is its maneuverability, most of which stems from its Discipline of Protean, which allows the Gangrel to take rest in any natural soil. Sleeping in the ground does, of course, have its drawbacks, and even the most feral of Savages comes to appreciate having a place to hang his hat after a while. A number of the more urban Gangrel elect to take traditional havens, although their restless spirits and mistrust of other Kindred keep them moving.

Background: Clan members most admire those whose greatest strengths are the strengths of the self — self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-reliance. While it is not unheard of for a Gangrel to Embrace someone who lacks these qualities (usually as a cruel test to see whether the Embrace will sufficiently toughen the person up), most Gangrel hold to their standards, as not doing so is often more effort than it's worth.

Character Creation: Gangrel are honest with themselves about what is and is not their forte. As such, they work hard to improve their strong points. Many Gangrel seem hyper-specialized; their players having devoted significant dots to those Attributes and Skills in which they are focused. This rule is a very general one, however, and numerous exceptions apply. Due to temperament, the aptly named Savages are rarely strong in the Social department, preferring to hone the body and reinforce the mind.

Favored Attributes: Composure or Stamina

Clan Disciplines: Animalism, Protean, Resilience

Weakness: As their name suggests, the Gangrel are more closely tied to their Beasts than are other Kindred. The more they feel the call of the Beast, the more bestial they become, and the more their minds become those of less-principled animals. With regard to dice pools based on Intelligence or Wits Attributes, the *10-again rule*, where you re-roll every time you roll a 10 in hopes of accumulating successes, does not apply. In addition, any 1's that come up on a roll subtract from successes. (The latter part of the weakness does not affect dramatic-failure rules.) This weakness does not apply to dice pools involving perception or reaction to surprise, or to the Resolve Attribute.

Sample concepts: Archeologist, bodyguard, bumpkin, circuit rider, guru, mercenary, nomad, shaman, survivalist, urban predator, zookeeper

Sample Gangrel Character: Becky Lynn Adler

Quote: *If my family finds out what happened, heads will roll.*

Background: Until last night, Becky Lynn was a true Southern belle, the pride and joy of the influential Adler family. She was schooled at home and got everything she ever wanted. She attended parties for others in her social circles and probably would have found a nice young gent to marry had fate not had other plans.

Becky Lynn was never allowed to travel, but this year — now that she was finally of age — she persuaded her father to let her travel a bit (chaperoned, of course). One of her destinations was Chicago, and her first night there turned wild. She doesn't know what happened to her chaperones, but she does recall spending a long time talking to a man whose face she can't remember now. All she knows is that his name was John and that his voice made her quake with desire.



Roleplaying Hints: You have craved independence for so long, you're not about to call home, even though things have gone terribly wrong. You just know something awful happened to your chaperones last night, and you think something awful happened to you, too. Trying to remember overwhelms you with feelings of shame.

Description: Becky Lynn is beautiful and delicate. She is recently turned 18 with soft blonde hair and deep brown eyes. She is normally dressed formally and at the height of fashion, but is currently wearing the more casual (but still stylish) clothes that she wore last night.

Equipment: Purse, ready cash, jewelry, perfume, makeup.

Virtue/Vice: Becky Lynn's Virtue is *Hope*. She regains all spent Willpower points at the end of a session of play in which she refuses to let others give in to despair, even though doing so endangers her own goals or well-being. Her Vice is *Envy*. She regains one

Willpower point at the end of any scene in which she gains something from a rival or has a hand in harming that rival.

Knowing your character's disciplines and powers

Blood Expenditure: Becky Lynn can spend one Vitae per turn. She begins with five Vitae points.

Healing: Becky Lynn can spend Vitae to heal two points of bashing damage or one point of lethal damage. She can do so and act in the same turn.

Physical Augmentation: Becky Lynn can boost any of her Physical Attributes (Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina) by two dots for one turn by spending a point of Vitae. She can do so and act in the same turn.

Aspect of the Predator (Protean •): This power mitigates the effect that meeting other vampires with higher Blood Potency has on her. Whereas normally, vampires react fearfully when they meet Kindred of higher Blood Potency, Becky Lynn *always* reacts as though her Blood Potency were equal to whomever she meets.

Resilience (••): This Discipline makes Becky Lynn supernaturally tough. Spend one Vitae point to activate this power. It adds her Resilience rating (2) to her Stamina for the remainder of the scene, which also adds two to her Health rating. She thus gains a ninth and tenth box on her Health chart. Also, the first two points of aggravated damage Becky Lynn suffers in a scene (where her Resilience is active) are considered lethal instead (and thus easier for her to heal). At the end of the scene, when Resilience wears off, Becky Lynn loses her extra Stamina and Health.

Clan Weakness: Becky Lynn's blood is cursed with a potent bestial instinct that sometimes makes it hard for her to think clearly. When rolling dice pools based on the Intelligence or Wits Attributes, do not re-roll 10s (you gain a single success from that die but no chance for a second). Additionally, any 1s that come up on the roll are subtracted from total successes. This weakness does not apply to dice pools involving perception or reaction to surprise, or to the Resolve Attribute.



Knowing your character's merits

Fame: Becky Lynn is a member of the state's social elite, so the media and people in high echelons of society pay attention to her. Add one die to Socialize or Persuasion rolls when she can use her fame to her advantage, but the Storyteller may also make occasional rolls to see if anyone on the street recognizes her.

Resources: Although Becky would need to touch base with her family to gain access to the family fortune, she has her own bank account and credit cards. She can spend up to \$5000 without any problem.

Striking Looks (+2): Becky Lynn is beautiful. Add two dice to any Presence or Manipulation dice pools to entertain, seduce, distract, or otherwise get her way by using her looks. Remember, though, that people tend to remember her because she is attractive and famous.

Gangrel

Name: Becky Lynn Adler Concept: Southern Belle Clan: Gangrel
 Player: Virtue: Hope Covenant:
 Character: Vice: Envy Potency:

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

Skills	Other Traits
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Mental</i> (-3 unskilled)</p> <p>Academics ●●●●</p> <p>Computer ○○○○</p> <p>Crafts ●○○○</p> <p>Investigation ○○○○</p> <p>Medicine ○○○○</p> <p>Occult (cajun) ●○○○</p> <p>Politics (high society) ●○○○</p> <p>Science ●○○○</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Physical</i> (-1 unskilled)</p> <p>Athletics ●●○○</p> <p>Brawl ○○○○</p> <p>Drive ○○○○</p> <p>Firearms ●○○○</p> <p>Larceny ○○○○</p> <p>Stealth ●○○○</p> <p>Survival ○○○○</p> <p>Weaponry ○○○○</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Social</i> (-1 unskilled)</p> <p>Animal Ken ●○○○</p> <p>Empathy ●○○○</p> <p>Expression ●●○○</p> <p>Intimidation ○○○○</p> <p>Persuasion ●○○○</p> <p>Socialize ●●○○</p> <p>Streetwise ○○○○</p> <p>Subterfuge (innuendo) ●○○○</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Merits</i></p> <p>Fame ●○○○</p> <p>Resources ●○○○</p> <p>Striking Looks (+2) ●●○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Flaws</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Disciplines</i></p> <p>Protean ●○○○</p> <p>Resilience ●○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>_____ ○○○○</p> <p>Size 5</p> <p>Defense 2</p> <p>Initiative Mod 4</p> <p>Speed 9</p> <p>Experience _____</p> <p>Armor _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Health</i></p> <p>●●●●●●●●●●</p> <p>□□□□□□□□□□</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Willpower</i></p> <p>●●●●○○○○○○</p> <p>□□□□□□□□</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Virtue</i></p> <p>□□□□□□□□</p> <p>□□□□□□□□</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Blood Potency</i></p> <p>●○○○○○○○○○○</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Humor</i></p> <p>10 ○</p> <p>9 ○</p> <p>8 ○</p> <p>7 ●</p> <p>6 ●</p> <p>5 ●</p> <p>4 ●</p> <p>3 ●</p> <p>2 ●</p> <p>1 ●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Equipment</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

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



Chapter 6

Beginning as a Mekhet

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding what makes Clan Mekhet tick
 - ▶ Roleplaying a character from Clan Mekhet
 - ▶ Getting to know a sample character from Clan Mekhet
-

Quote: *Sure, I can find that out for you, but you better make it worth my while. I'm sure he'd love to know you were asking about him. . . .*

Vampires have always been creatures of the night by design, but none more so than the Clan Mekhet. Darkness is the hallmark of this lineage. They are known for their stealth and wisdom, so it is entirely fitting that they are associated with darkness — the better to hide them and the source of the knowledge they exhume.

Choosing a Character from Clan Mekhet

Here are the defining characteristics of the Clan Mekhet:

- ✓ Clan Mekhet is one of the most cosmopolitan among the great families of the Kindred. Its members come from all walks of unlife, from filth-streaked murderers to enlightened philosopher-Princes.
- ✓ Mekhet Kindred are committed to perfection, so whatever they do they devote themselves to it and refine their capacity almost to the point of second nature.

Roleplaying a Mekhet Character

Nickname: Shadows

Covenant:

- ✔ **Carthians and Lancea Sanctum:** A great many Mekhet fall in with the Carthians or the Lancea Sanctum, both of which have strong traditions of politics and secrecy to which the Shadows can lend their talents.
- ✔ **Circle of the Crone:** The same can be said of the Circle of the Crone, which typically draws Mekhet by virtue of its underlying message of redemption and meaning in the unlives of the Damned.
- ✔ **Invictus:** The clan is not weak within the Invictus. Invictus Shadows are simply quieter about their covenant affiliation than their boastful brothers — or are at least more reserved about the reasons for their affiliation.
- ✔ **Ordo Dracul:** More than a few Mekhet find themselves among the Ordo Dracul, as the study of its esoteric principles often coincides with artifact-finding expeditions or secrets to be gleaned from other Dragons.
- ✔ **Unaligned:** Less philosophical and more viscerally impassioned Shadows are often drawn to the ranks of the unaligned, whose ideology of freedom (or anonymity . . .) is an easy fit for the wild at heart.



Appearance: Of all the clans, the Mekhet are perhaps the least uniform in the way they appear to others. Some play the clan archetype to the hilt, dressing in black clothing and adopting styles that allow them to blend into the scenery. Others choose from popular mortal styles and fashions so that they blend in with the crowd.

Havens: Of all the clans, the Mekhet are typically the most polarized by their preferences and proximity to the mortal world. Some

Mekhet prefer to keep close to where the action is. In large cities, where their numbers are strong, many take flats in the downtown core, or at least within short distance of various urban hot spots. Older or more withdrawn Shadows are often preoccupied with security and many elect to dwell in large homes on the outskirts of populated areas. Such Kindred often keep dogs and male servants made strong by the cursed Vitae of their masters. A few paranoid Shadows even take havens underground, where they cohabitate (or compete) with Nosferatu for shelter from the sun.

Background: The only common thread linking potential candidates for membership in the Mekhet clan is an affinity for the night itself or some metaphorical darkness, such as a pained soul or a thirst for knowledge. Many Mekhet are tutored heavily by their sires so that they understand the clan and its duties. A Mekhet sire rarely leaves a newly Embraced vampire (a *Childe*) to the misinformation of other Kindred. Some prefer to let their childe discover the Kindred world on his or her own, but not even these sires stray so far that they can't watch a protégés' progress.

Character Creation: Most Shadows prize those traits that best assist them in furthering their passion or cause. Violent or politically motivated Mekhet typically favor Physical and Social Attributes and Skills to improve their dealings with others and to allow them to strike from their namesake. Scholarly or philosophical clan members tend to acquire as many dots of Mental traits as they can. For many Shadow players, the process of assigning new traits is like being a kid in a candy store — just about everything looks good, but you don't have a whole lot to spend. The best solution is to keep your character's personality in mind when deciding what to take.

Favored Attributes: Intelligence or Wits

Clan Disciplines: Auspex, Celerity, Obfuscate

Weakness: Whenever Mekhet suffer damage from sunlight or fire, they take an extra point of aggravated damage from that source.

Sample concepts: Antiquities scholar, assassin, Casanova, diplomat, enforcer, fence, ghetto Harpy, pilgrim, policeman, power behind the praxis, seer

Sample Mekhet Character: Jack McCandless

Quote: *In a jiffy.*

Background: It wasn't glamorous work, but until last night Jack McCandless made a good living running envelopes and packages all over Chicago, and he was damned good at his job. He knew the city inside and out, all the little back ways, all the best ways around downtown, and all the neighborhoods best left alone.

He thinks he was in one of those neighborhoods last night, but doesn't remember, which is doubly frightening for Jack because he normally has a razor-keen memory. All he recalls is a last-minute delivery, and that he was thinking about going home and having a beer when he saw a really hot hooker on the sidewalk. . . .

And that's about all. He still has his van, which is a big comfort. The package, however, is gone, and that worries him for some reason.

Roleplaying Hints: You're not sure what's going on, but you know you're different. You're sleeping in all day and rising only after dark. Your dispatcher has left a dozen messages on your answering machine, but you don't care. All you care about is sating the terrible hunger you feel. Food nauseates you, yet you crave something. . . .



Description: Jack was never exactly handsome, but his Embrace seems to have simply made him forgettable. His features are utterly ordinary, with no distinguishing marks, attractive or ugly. He bears characteristics like any of a dozen men in a crowd. Jack wears simple brown slacks and a button-down shirt, but dons expensive running shoes when working.

Equipment: Van, .38 special handgun (roll Dexterity + Firearms +2 to attack: Every success causes one point of lethal damage to mortals or bashing damage to vampires, range is 20/40/80 yards), pocket full of bullets, clipboard, and car keys.

Virtue/Vice: Jack's Virtue is *Justice*. He regains all spent Willpower points at the end of a session of play in which he does the right thing at risk of personal loss or setback. The "right thing" to Jack is a kind of street-level decency: Never steal from someone who doesn't deserve it, never give someone bad directions, and never take someone's last dollar. His Vice is *Pride*. He regains one Willpower point at the end of any scene in which he exerts his own wants (not needs) over others at potential risk to himself.

Knowing your character's disciplines and powers

Blood Expenditure: Jack can spend one Vitae per turn. He begins with three Vitae points.

Healing: Jack can spend Vitae to heal two points of bashing damage or one point of lethal damage. He can do so and act in the same turn.

Physical Augmentation: Jack can boost any of his Physical Attributes (Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina) by two dots for one turn by spending a point of Vitae. He can do so and act in the same turn.

Touch of Shadow (Obfuscate ●): This power allows Jack to hide small items in his grasp or on his person. Even if someone is looking for the item on his person, this power keeps it hidden. Roll eight dice (Jack's Wits + Larceny + Obfuscate). Once the power is active, the object is hidden for the scene or until Jack decides to end the effect.



Mask of Tranquility (Obfuscate ●●): Most vampires feel a flare of fear or anger — the Predator's Taints — when they meet another Kindred for the first time. Jack, however, doesn't engender that effect, though he still suffers from it and can recognize other vampires.

Cloak of Night (Obfuscate ●●●): This power allows Jack to disappear completely, even from plain sight. He remains invisible until he wishes to reappear or until he takes obvious action (such as attacking someone or breaking a window). Disappearing requires a success on a roll of Intelligence + Stealth + Obfuscate (six dice for Jack). If you roll five or more successes, anyone who sees Jack disappear forgets that he was even there in the first place.

Clan Weakness: Jack's Kindred body is cursed to be even more sensitive to fire and sunlight than most. If he is exposed to these banes of vampiric existence, he suffers one more point of aggravated damage per turn than other vampires would.

Knowing your character's merits

Contacts: Jack has a friend in the Chicago Police Department, a young cop who works the night shift. This officer, named Michael Rample, knows Jack socially and usually gives him information about traffic conditions. Michael would be willing to share more sensitive information, but might require bribes — or blackmails — for truly important tidbits.

Direction Sense: Jack always knows which way is north and can always retrace his route in unfamiliar territory.

Eidetic Memory: Jack doesn't forget anything he sees or hears (meaning you should take notes as his player). He doesn't normally need to make a roll to remember anything he knows.

Stunt Driver: Unlike less-talented drivers, Jack can take other actions while driving, including firing his gun as a single action. The Storyteller may still require a Drive roll if Jack tries to do anything fancy, however.

MEKHET

<p>Name: Jack McCandles Player: Chronicle:</p>	<p>Concept: Courier Virtue: Justice Vice: Pride</p>	<p>Clan: Mekhet Covenant: Patron:</p>
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Attributes

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

Skills

Mental

(-3 unskilled)

Academics	●○○○○
Computer	●○○○○
Crafts	○○○○○
Investigation (street crime)	●○○○○
Medicine	○○○○○
Occult	○○○○○
Politics	○○○○○
Science	●○○○○

Physical

(-1 unskilled)

Athletics	●○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○
Drive (quick arrival)	●●●●○
Firearms	●●○○○
Larceny	●○○○○
Stealth	●○○○○
Survival	●○○○○
Weaponry	●○○○○

Social

(-1 unskilled)

Animal Ken	○○○○○
Empathy	●○○○○
Expression	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○
Persuasion	●○○○○
Socialize	●○○○○
Streetwise (slims)	●●●●○
Subterfuge	●○○○○

Other Traits

Merits

Contacts	●○○○○	Health	●●●●●●●●●●
Direction Sense	●○○○○		□□□□□□□□□□
Didetic Memory	●●○○○	Willpower	●●●●●●○○○○
Stunt Driver	●●●○○		□□□□□□□□□□
	○○○○○	Vice	□□□□□□□□□□
	○○○○○		□□□□□□□□□□
	○○○○○	Blood Potency	●○○○○○○○○○
	○○○○○	Humanity	10 ○
	○○○○○		9 ○
	○○○○○		8 ○
	○○○○○		7 ●
	○○○○○		6 ●
	○○○○○		5 ●
	○○○○○		4 ●
	○○○○○		3 ●
	○○○○○		2 ●
	○○○○○		1 ●

Flaws

Disciplines

Obfuscate	●●●○○	Size	5
	○○○○○	Defense	3
	○○○○○	Initiative Mod	7
	○○○○○	Speed	10
	○○○○○	Experience	_____
	○○○○○	Armor	_____

Equipment

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

Chapter 7

Stepping Out as a Nosferatu

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the main characteristics of Clan Nosferatu
 - ▶ Roleplaying a character from Clan Nosferatu
 - ▶ Getting to know a sample character embraced by Clan Nosferatu
-



Quote: *Wow, you haven't flinched for almost two minutes. I must get prettier when you want something.*

Not all curses are created equal, and even the Damned have outcasts. These are the Nosferatu, the most overtly disturbing of the undead. Only sometimes able to pass as human, the Haunts are horribly warped by the Embrace, either physically or otherwise.

Choosing a Character from Clan Nosferatu

Here are the characteristics most commonly associated with the Nosferatu:

- ✔ The Nosferatu dwell in shadows where other vampires would not dare.
- ✔ Members of other Clans fear the Nosferatu. If they had their druthers, most other clans would prefer to never associate with the Nosferatu, but their inarguable talents and brute force make them too dangerous to ignore. Some undead grudgingly respect them.
- ✔ The Nosferatu have incredible powers of stealth and strength and embody the monstrous destructive force that every one of the Damned can muster if pushed too far.

- ✔ Their isolation has fostered strong familial bonds among the Nosferatu. To those outside their ranks, they put on a unified front, creating the impression of a single extended network. Nosferatu, in fact, squabble and compete with one another as much as members of any clan — but when faced with an outside threat, they close ranks.

All that said, some Nosferatu become surprisingly cultured, well-mannered, and well-spoken to compensate for their unnerving presence. These are the Nosferatu most frequently found playing politics with other Kindred.

Roleplaying a Nosferatu Character

Nickname: Haunts

Covenant:

- ✔ **Invictus:** The Invictus nervously welcome the Nosferatu as enforcers, informants, and soldiers.
- ✔ **Lancea Sanctum:** Haunts who seek to understand why God has done this to them, and those penitents who feel that they must atone for whatever sins drew the curse upon them, find solace in the ranks of the Lancea Sanctum.
- ✔ **Ordo Dracul:** Haunts often find a place among the Ordo Dracul, where their disturbing bearing has little immediate effect on their achievements in the covenant (and might even aid them, as it discourages casual social calls).
- ✔ **Carthians:** The Carthians appeal to those who are concerned with constructing a society in which everyone, no matter how unsettling, has a voice.
- ✔ **Circle of the Crone:** Those Nosferatu who truly suffer beneath the weight of their curse often find the redemptive teachings of the Circle of the Crone too tempting to resist.
- ✔ **Unaligned:** Even the unbound attract those who accept their terrifying nature and who want to tear down the system that quakes at their passing — or those who just want to get away.

Appearance: No two Nosferatu have exactly the same air, though troubling characteristics often follow patterns within “families.” Discolored leathery skin, gaping maws, rubbery skin, misshapen heads, odors like grave earth, bulging eyes, queasy stares and personal habits, gnarled hands, ineffable feelings of dread, sagging flesh — all these and more are the hallmarks of the clan. Not every Haunt is physically deformed. Many are simply making those

who look at them uneasy. The darkness and filth in which many Nosferatu dwell make their foul appearance (and fouler odors) even worse.

Havens: Most Nosferatu dwell in places far from mortals, such as abandoned warehouses, graveyards, basements, and of course the ever-popular sewers and subway tunnels. That said, some few Nosferatu choose to flout tradition and take their havens in penthouses or fantastic manors — anyplace where they can enjoy the luxuries of wealth yet still count on substantial privacy.

Background: Nosferatu normally choose their victims from among society's castoffs, such as the homeless, the mentally ill, and criminals. Many Nosferatu Embrace out of spite, using the curse to punish vanity, cruelty, or other such sins. Haunts tend to choose self-reliant individuals who might actually be able to manage their new condition. Rare but heartbreaking are the tales of a Nosferatu determined to "gift" his love with the Requiem, only to find himself the object of his beloved's loathing when she learns what's been done to her.

Character Creation: Physical and Mental Attributes are more useful to Haunts than Social ones. Nosferatu frequently make use of Skills such as Stealth and Survival. It's unwise to begin with too high a Blood Potency; until a Nosferatu has obtained some experience in the Requiem, he might be forced to rely on animal blood. Although Nosferatu aren't social creatures, certain Social Merits such as Contacts can be useful for gaining information in inaccessible areas.



Favored Attributes: Composure or Strength

Clan Disciplines: Nightmare, Obfuscate, Vigor

Weakness: All Nosferatu are repulsive or at the very least uncomfortable to be around. The cause need not be a physical deformity. A palpable aura of menace, a charnel odor, or the undeniable manner of a predator is just as repulsive as a twisted body. The 10-again rule does not apply to dice pools based on Presence or Manipulation Attributes in social situations. Additionally, any 1s that come up on such a roll are subtracted from successes. This weakness does not apply to dice pools that involve the Intimidation Skill or to the Composure Attribute.

Sample concepts: Bogeyman, circus freak, crude sadist, guardian angel, leg-breaker, parvenu, petty thief, rat king, reclusive eccentric, snitch, sycophantic servant

Sample Nosferatu Character: David Walker

Quote: *Spare change?*

Background: Up until last night, life had been unkind to David Walker. In fact, cruel would be more accurate. He was born into an abusive home, ran away to try to make it on his own as a teenager, wound up in halfway houses and correctional facilities, and finally found himself living on the streets of Chicago, all by the “old” age of 20. By then his spirit was broken, and he didn’t so much live as exist. He had become an unnoticed piece of the city, no more noteworthy than a mailbox or trash can. Ironically, that was what the ugly woman said impressed her. He had almost escaped even her notice, even when he was in plain sight. That was why she “rewarded” him. How he was rewarded, he’s not yet sure, but he now feels as dead on the outside as he’s felt on the inside for years . . . and that’s strangely invigorating.

Roleplaying Hints: Your life before was hell, so you gave it up even before it was over. Now life seems to have been taken from you, and it’s like a weight off your shoulders. Suddenly you’re free to be who you are. You’re vindicated in lurking in the shadows, lingering out of sight, and, thanks to newfound powers, lashing out at the people from whom you used to hide.



Description: If the term *nondescript* could be used to describe someone, it would be used to describe David Walker. He's of average height, average build, and average appearance. His clothes tend toward dusty gray or city-snow brown, regardless of what color they originally were. In fact, an observer's eye tends to pass right over or slide right off David almost as a defense mechanism. To single him out and look at him inspires feelings of nausea, dread, and dizziness.

Equipment: Some pocketfuls of stuff, like a steak knife from a restaurant, some change, a cracked coffee cup, three empty wallets, and a set of keys. Keys to what, David's not sure.

Virtue/Vice: David's Virtue is *Fortitude*. Not so much as an act of will, but as an ability to cope with almost anything that life or unlife dishes out. He regains all spent Willpower points at the end of a session of play in which he withstands overwhelming or tempting pressure to alter his goals. His Vice is *Sloth*. He regains one Willpower point at the end of any scene in which he avoids a task but gets someone else to accomplish it for him. These traits are an interesting combination of perseverance to see something done and apathy in pursuing it personally.

Knowing your character's disciplines and powers

Blood Expenditure: David can spend one Vitae per turn. He begins with three Vitae points.

Healing: David can spend Vitae to heal two points of bashing damage or one point of lethal damage. He can do so and act in the same turn.

Physical Augmentation: David can boost any of his Physical Attributes (Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina) by two dots for one turn by spending a point of Vitae. He can do so and act in the same turn.

Monstrous Countenance (Nightmare •): This power allows David to frighten off others with a horrifying glare and menacing hiss. Roll five dice (David's Presence + Intimidation + Nightmare). If you get more successes than a victim does in a Composure + Blood Potency roll, he or she runs away. David's clan weakness does not apply to his rolls with this power.

Touch of Shadow (Obfuscate •): This power allows David to hide small items in his grasp or on his person. Even if someone is looking for the item on his person, this power keeps it hidden. Roll four dice (David's Wits + Larceny + Obfuscate). Once the power is active, the object is hidden for the scene or until David decides to end the effect.

Vigor •: This Discipline makes David superhumanly strong. Spend a point of Vitae and David adds his Vigor rating (1) to his Strength for the rest of the scene (note that boosting Strength directly with Vitae lasts for only one turn).

Clan Weakness: David's fate is cursed to always repel or disturb those who come near him. In his case, however, he regards the effect as a blessing. When rolling dice pools based on the Presence or Manipulation Attributes in social situations, do not re-roll 10s (you gain a single success from that die but no chance for a second). Any 1s that come up on the roll are subtracted from total successes. This weakness does not apply to dice pools involving the Intimidation Skill or to the Composure Attribute.

Knowing your character's merits

Common Sense: David has an intuitive sense of what's a wise course of action — unfortunately he doesn't always listen to his better judgment. Once per game session, when David is about to perform a foolish or dangerous feat, the Storyteller can make a reflexive Wits + Composure roll for David to recognize his peril.

Fleet of Foot (+2): David is quick to get out of harm's way and gets a +2 bonus to his Speed (already marked on his character sheet).

Strong Back: David is good at lifting and moving things, gaining an extra die in such efforts.

NOSFERATU

Name: David Walker Concept: Homeless Youth Clan: Nosferatu
 Player: Virtue: Fortitude Covenant:
 Chronicle: Vice: Sloth Dates:

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

Skills	Other Traits
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Mental</i> (-3 unskilled)</p> <p>Academics 00000</p> <p>Computer 00000</p> <p>Crafts ●0000</p> <p>Investigation ●0000</p> <p>Medicine (improvised tools) ●0000</p> <p>Occult ●0000</p> <p>Politics 00000</p> <p>Science 00000</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Physical</i> (-1 unskilled)</p> <p>Athletics 00000</p> <p>Brawl (sucker punches) ●●000</p> <p>Drive 00000</p> <p>Firearms 00000</p> <p>Larceny ●0000</p> <p>Stealth ●●000</p> <p>Survival ●●000</p> <p>Weaponry ●0000</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Social</i> (-1 unskilled)</p> <p>Animal Ken 00000</p> <p>Empathy 00000</p> <p>Expression 00000</p> <p>Intimidation ●●000</p> <p>Persuasion 00000</p> <p>Socialize 00000</p> <p>Streetwise ●●000</p> <p>Subterfuge ●●000</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Merits</i></p> <p>Common Sense ●●●●●</p> <p>Fleet of Foot ●●000</p> <p>Strong Back ●0000</p> <p>_____ 00000</p> <p>_____ 00000</p> <p>_____ 00000</p> <p>_____ 00000</p> <p>_____ 00000</p> <p>_____ 00000</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Flaws</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Disciplines</i></p> <p>Nightmare ●0000</p> <p>Obfuscate ●0000</p> <p>vigor ●0000</p> <p>_____ 00000</p> <p>_____ 00000</p> <p>_____ 00000</p> <p>_____ 00000</p> <p>_____ 00000</p> <p>_____ 00000</p> <p>Size 5 _____</p> <p>Defense 2 _____</p> <p>Initiative Mod 5 _____</p> <p>Speed 12 _____</p> <p>Experience _____</p> <p>Armor _____</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Health</i></p> <p>●●●●●●●●●●</p> <p>□□□□□□□□□□</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Willpower</i></p> <p>●●●●●●●●●●</p> <p>□□□□□□□□</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Vitae</i></p> <p>□□□□□□□□</p> <p>□□□□□□□□</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Blood Potency</i></p> <p>● 0000000000</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Humanity</i></p> <p>10 ○</p> <p>9 ○</p> <p>8 ○</p> <p>7 ●</p> <p>6 ●</p> <p>5 ●</p> <p>4 ●</p> <p>3 ●</p> <p>2 ●</p> <p>1 ●</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Equipment</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

Attributes 54/3 • Skills 117/4 (+3 Specialties) • Clan (+1 bonus Attribute; see p. 92) • Covenant • Blood Potency 1 (May be increased with Merit points) • Disciplines 3 (Two dots must be in-clan) • Merits 7 • (Buying the fifth dot in Attributes, Skills or Merits costs two points) • Health = Stamina + Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 5 for adult human-sized Kindred • Defense = Lowest of Dexterity or Wits • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity + 5 • Starting Humanity = 7 • Vitae = d10 roll



Chapter 8

Becoming Clan Ventrue

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the pluses and minuses of Clan Ventrue
 - ▶ Roleplaying a Clan Ventrue character
 - ▶ Getting to know a sample character embraced by Clan Ventrue
-

Quote: *Let me be clear. You will accept my offer now or later. You will like it much less later.*



The Ventrue offer a very simple boast: They win. They *always* win. Other Kindred often despise the Ventrue but seldom dispute the clan's boast. All too often, a Kindred works and schemes to win some prize only to find that a Ventrue owned it all along. The officers who lead a city's Kindred almost always include several highly placed Ventrue.

Choosing a Character from Clan Ventrue

Here are the key characteristics of Clan Ventrue:

- ✓ The Ventrue acknowledge no defeats, only setbacks.
- ✓ The clan shares a ruthless will to gain power and the power to enforce its will.
- ✓ The Ventrue learn to command the thoughts of other beings almost by instinct.
- ✓ Although they do not especially cultivate the arts of combat, they often prove remarkably hard to kill.



- ✓ Ventrue regard their supernatural gifts merely as tools to begin the acquisition of real power — the power of money, property, corporate stock, political contacts, and rank in Kindred society.

The Ventrue take the feudal nature of Kindred society very seriously. Every sire tells her childe that some people rule, and some are ruled. As Lords, they should strive to place themselves among the rulers.

Roleplaying a Ventrue Character

Nickname: Lords

Covenant:

- ✓ **Invictus:** Many Kindred see the Ventrue as almost synonymous with the Invictus because they tend to rise to leadership positions within that covenant.
- ✓ **Ordo Dracul:** Almost as many Ventrue find a place in the Ordo Dracul, acquiring immediate power of a different stripe, which the Lords ultimately turn toward the same ends.
- ✓ **Carthians:** Even an independent-minded Ventrue on his way to the top needs a power base, whether he intends to raise his supporters up with him or leave them behind.
- ✓ **Circle of the Crone:** There are many routes to the top, and sometimes the most promising is the most unlikely. A Ventrue who follows the Crone has advantages at his disposal that most other Lords do not.
- ✓ **Lancea Sanctum:** Ventrue tend to rise to positions of leadership among the Sanctified, combining the power of faith with the temporal.
- ✓ **Unaligned:** Some Ventrue hardly bother to hide their intent to use a gang of unaligned Kindred as a stepping-stone to power within another covenant.

Appearance: Ventrue often adopt a conservative, low-key appearance that expresses high status without being flashy. Ventrue elders might keep the styles of long ago, and in public they still tend to look decades out of date. A Lord surrounds himself with other trappings of wealth and status, too, from the big, fancy car in the garage to the wine cellar full of vintages he will never again have the opportunity to enjoy.

Havens: If a Ventrue did not possess great wealth before the Embrace, she often becomes rich afterward. Ventrue select their havens to reflect their wealth and power. Many Lords dwell in mansions or actual walled estates.

Few would settle for anything less than a classic townhouse or penthouse apartment (with secure curtains, of course).



Clan tradition holds that any Ventrue may claim sanctuary from the sun at any other Lord's haven and not be refused, but few Lords ever invoke this right. Not only do proud Lords hate to beg another Kindred's aid, a supplicant henceforth owes a debt of honor to the Ventrue who provided refuge. Great shame would befall any Lord who denied a clanmate or who could not provide a comfortable rest, however, so a prudent Ventrue makes sure his haven can accommodate a Kindred guest or two.

Background: The Ventrue most often create new vampires, or *childer*, among the ranks of professionals or the cream of high society. Some Lords prefer childer from “old money” families or political dynasties, as the closest the modern world comes to feudal nobility. Other Lords prefer self-made leaders such as millionaire entrepreneurs, politicians, military officers, or even crime bosses. As new professions and new forms of power arise, the Ventrue bring them into the clan. The rise of the computer industry, for instance, has prompted a wave of tech-sector childer.

Character Creation: Ventrue favor Social Attributes and Skills — the traits needed for leadership — although they also value Mental Attributes and Skills such as Politics and Academics. The clan excels at Social Merits such as Resources, Contacts, and Status. Most Lords possessed great social influence in life, and they acquire more in undeath.



Favored Attributes: Presence or Resolve

Clan Disciplines: Animalism, Dominate, Resilience

Weakness: Power corrupts, and among the Ventrue, the thirst for power can corrode an ambitious Kindred's moral bearings. Over time, some Ventrue grow paranoid and ever more wary of rivals' desires (real or imagined) for their own holdings. Others become willing to do whatever it takes to acquire the smallest iota of additional power. Still others turn inward, delude themselves as to their ability and importance, or trouble their minds with other maladies. Ventrue Kindred suffer a -2 penalty to Humanity rolls to avoid acquiring derangements after a failed degeneration roll.

Concepts: Corporate CEO, crooked cop, gang chief, military officer, old-time ward boss, patron of the arts, political consultant, rave promoter, realtor, society matron, technical wizard

Sample Ventrue Character: Louis Maddox

Until last night, Louis Maddox was just another Chicago resident, employed in the technical-support department of a local ISP. His real talent, however, lay in ferreting out information from the Internet. In his experience, it was all in there somewhere, and it was just a matter of finding out who put the information there and whether it was reliable. Even amid the hustle and bustle of the city, evenings usually found Louis holed up at an Internet café.

But something happened last night. He's still fuzzy on the details, but he remembers conversation . . . real conversation — not online, which is odd. And he distinctly recalls leaving the café with someone.

Description: Louis is in his late 20s. He is slightly overweight and keeps his hair buzzed; the better to cover the fact that he's balding. He wears glasses . . . or at least, he did, but doesn't seem to need them now. He wears nondescript sweatshirts, blue jeans, and his lucky ball cap.

Equipment: Laptop computer with wireless Internet access, pocketknife (+1 to attacks, inflicts lethal wounds), comfortable clothes, apartment keys.

Virtue/Vice: Louis' Virtue is *Temperance*. At the end of a session of play, he regains all spent Willpower if he resists a temptation to indulge in an excess of any behavior, whether good or bad, despite the obvious rewards it might

offer. His Vice is *Sloth*. He regains one Willpower point at the end of any scene during which he successfully avoids a difficult task but achieves its goal nonetheless.

Knowing your character's disciplines and powers



Vitae: Louis can spend one Vitae per turn. He begins with four Vitae points.

Healing: Louis can spend Vitae to heal two points of bashing damage or one point of lethal damage. He can do so and act in the same turn.

Physical Augmentation: Louis can boost any of his Physical Attributes (Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina) by two dots for one turn by spending a point of Vitae. He can do so and act in the same turn.

Command (Dominate •): This power allows him to give a one-word command to a target, such as “Freeze!” or “Quiet!” This command cannot cause a target to harm herself. Roll six dice for Louis to use this power (Intelligence + Intimidation + Dominate).

Mesmerize (Dominate ••): This power allows Louis to implant hypnotic suggestions and issue complex commands to a victim. He cannot rearrange or alter memories, but he can force a victim to leave a door unlocked, fetch him an item, guard a door during the day, or even do something subtle such as wait for a particular person and then spill a drink on that individual. Roll nine dice for Louis to use this power (Intelligence + Expression + Dominate).

Louis must make eye contact to use either Command or Mesmerize. What’s more, when Louis uses either of these Dominate powers, the Storyteller rolls the victim’s Resolve + Blood Potency. Louis must get more successes than his target for the power to work.

Resilience (•): This Discipline makes Louis supernaturally tough. Spend one Vitae point to activate this power. It adds his Resilience rating (1) to his Stamina for the remainder of the scene, which also adds one to his Health rating, gaining him an eighth box on his Health chart. Also, the first point of aggravated damage Louis suffers in a scene where his Resilience is active is considered lethal instead (and thus easier for him to heal). At the end of the scene, when Resilience wears off, Louis loses his extra Stamina and Health point.

Clan Weakness: As a member of the Ventrue clan, Louis is cursed to grow paranoid and delusional with time. When you roll to avoid gaining a derangement, subtract two dice from the die pool (the Storyteller will tell you when this happens).

Knowing your character's merits

Encyclopedic Knowledge: Louis is a smart guy and has a good memory for trivia, so he often knows inane facts about topics in which he's never actually been schooled. Whenever Louis is confronted with a situation outside his normal realm of knowledge, you may roll seven dice (Intelligence + Wits). If this roll succeeds, Louis knows a helpful fact about the given topic.

Haven: Louis has a small apartment where he can shelter during the day. He has set up various security measures around the door and window (he's not exactly paranoid, but break-ins aren't unknown in the area). If Louis is in his Haven when someone attempts to break in, he receives a +1 to his Initiative on any rolls to notice the invasion.

Ventrue

Name: Louis Maddox Concept: Computer Whiz Clan: Ventrue
 Player: Virtue: Temperance Covenant:
 Specialties: Vice: Sloth Bites:

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

Skills	Other Traits
<p><i>Mental</i> (-3 unskilled)</p> <p>Academics ●●●○○ Computer ●●●○○ Crafts ○○○○○ Investigation ●●○○○ Medicine ○○○○○ Occult ○○○○○ Politics ○○○○○ Science ●●○○○</p> <p><i>Physical</i> (-1 unskilled)</p> <p>Athletics ○○○○○ Brawl ○○○○○ Drive ●●○○○ Firearms ○○○○○ Larceny ○○○○○ Stealth ●○○○○ Survival ○○○○○ Weaponry ●○○○○</p> <p><i>Social</i> (-1 unskilled)</p> <p>Animal Ken ○○○○○ Empathy ○○○○○ Expression (online) ●●●○○ Intimidation ○○○○○ Persuasion ●○○○○ Socialize ●○○○○ Streetwise ○○○○○ Subterfuge ●○○○○</p>	<p><i>Merits</i></p> <p>Encyclopedic Knowledge ●●●○○ Haven ●●○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○</p> <p><i>Health</i></p> <p>Willpower ●●●○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○</p> <p><i>Vitae</i></p> <p>_____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○</p> <p><i>Flaws</i></p> <p>_____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○</p> <p><i>Disciplines</i></p> <p>Dominance ●●○○○ resilience ●○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○</p> <p><i>Blood Potency</i></p> <p>Humanity ●○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○ _____ ○○○○○○○○○</p> <p><i>Equipment</i></p> <p>Size <u>5</u> Defense <u>2</u> Initiative Mod <u>4</u> Speed <u>9</u> Experience _____ Armor _____</p>

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

Part III

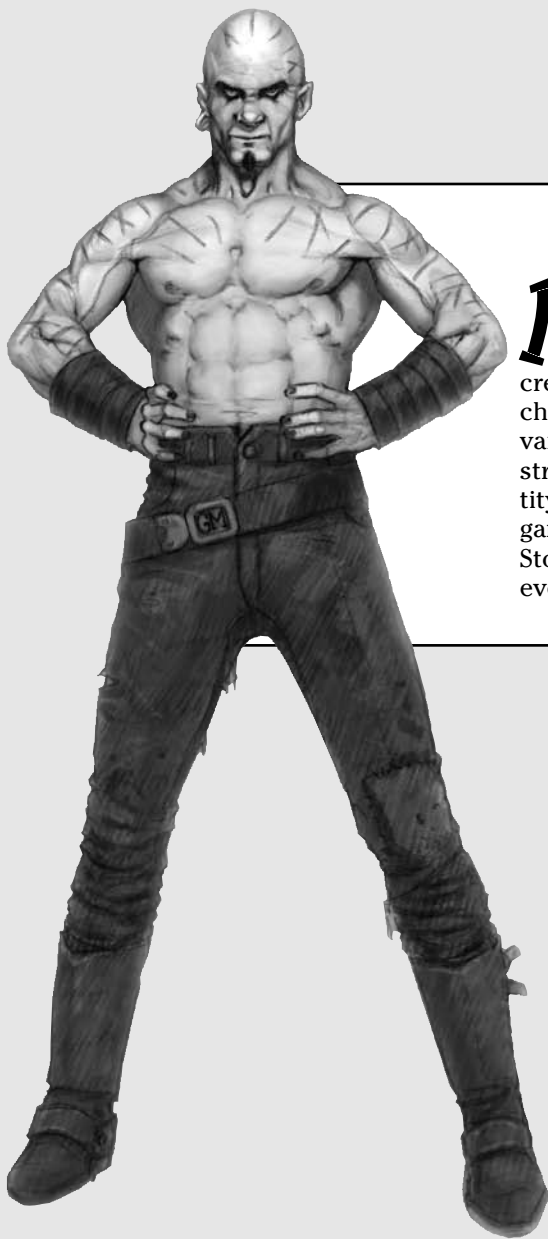
Creating Your Own Vampire

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Gary locked himself in the bathroom again. While I call the locksmith, you ask him if he wants to buy stupidity as a disadvantage."



In this part . . .

In this part, you get to take your vision for possible vampires and create your own fully developed character. You get to decide your vampire's clan, covenant, powers, strengths, weaknesses, and identity. This part is truly what the game is all about, and every Storytelling experience you will ever have starts here.

Chapter 9

Imagining Your Character

In This Chapter

- ▶ Deciding on a character concept
 - ▶ Assigning attributes and skills
 - ▶ Choosing clan, covenant, and disciplines
 - ▶ Selecting merits
 - ▶ Determining advantages based on other traits
 - ▶ Fleshing out the remaining identity of your character
-

Now that you're familiar with the basic rules of the storytelling system, it's time to take a look at the traits and systems that bring vampires to vital unlife. This chapter details the systems by which you create your own character to participate in stories and chronicles.

The character-creation system in *Vampire* provides a set of tools that you use to create a fictional persona. The best thing to focus on is developing a vibrant back story and a true depth of character. Worry about the dots on a page just to the extent that they add a necessary framework so that you and other players' characters can interact in a meaningful way with regard to the game.



Try not to look at a character's traits in black and white, gauging how higher scores in certain areas afford her greater success. Instead, try to understand your character's history and identity, and then choose dots that most accurately represent her personality and abilities. Remember, all you have to do to make a character sheet is copy the blank character sheet at the back of this book.

Step #1: Creating a Concept

A good concept is the stone from which well-developed characters are sculpted. It's important to hammer out a rough-hewn form, seeing the whole before concentrating on the parts.



A *concept* needs only to be a general idea stated in two or more words — renowned socialite, musical prodigy, heroic savior — but it should be enough to spawn more complex ideas about your vampire’s motives, environment, and relationships. Of course, a concept can be far more complex:

My character was a staunch defender of New York’s homeless, fighting for their rights and tending to their needs. His Embrace into the Mekhet clan frightened him into hiding among the downtrodden, who have now come to see him as a predator of the alleys.

As shown in this example, you might want to include clan and covenant in your concept. Information regarding clan and covenant is detailed in “Step #5: Embrace of the Vampire” later in this chapter.

Step #2: Selecting Attributes

After the more qualitative aspects of a character have been solidified, you assign numbers that support your decisions. The first step in determining a

character's numeric traits is to prioritize his Attributes. Attributes represent raw, natural ability. How strong is your character? How smart? How agile? What impression does he make as he enters a room? Attributes take these questions and more into account, ultimately providing the foundation upon which a vampire is built. Characters have nine Attributes divided into three categories:

- ✓ **Mental:** Intelligence, Wits, Resolve
- ✓ **Physical:** Strength, Dexterity, Stamina
- ✓ **Social:** Presence, Manipulation, Composure

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

All characters begin with one dot in each Attribute, reflecting the basic abilities of all human beings. The priorities you establish determine how many dots are allocated for each Attribute cluster. Five additional dots are added to the primary group, four additional dots to the secondary group, and three dots to the tertiary group.

The fifth dot in any Attribute costs two dots to purchase. So, if you want your character to have a Dexterity of 5, you need to spend five dots. You start with one free dot, spend three more to achieve a score of 4, and then spend two more for the fifth dot. It's a lot to take in, but once you play the game, it'll come naturally in no time.



Chapter 10 explores the various Attributes more fully.

Step #3: Selecting Skills

Skills are divided into the same three subcategories as Attributes:

- ✓ **Mental Skills** rely on knowledge of the world and are improved through study and practical application.
- ✓ **Physical Skills** rely on training and are improved mainly through practice and repetition.
- ✓ **Social Skills** rely heavily on interpersonal experience and improve through interaction with others or through trial and error.



As with Attributes, you must prioritize Skill groups when you create your character by selecting primary, secondary, and tertiary categories. The primary group receives 11 dots, the secondary group gets 7 dots, and the tertiary group receives 4 dots. Note that characters do not begin the game with an automatic dot in any Skill; you obtain Skill dots through dedication to a field, not through natural talent alone. As with Attributes, the fifth dot in any Skill costs two dots to purchase.



Chapter 11 explores the various Skills more fully.

Step #4: Select Skill Specialties

Characters may have considerable training in firearms or expertise in medicine, but they invariably excel in certain aspects of these skills more so than in others. For example, Officer Grimes may have a special proficiency with his particular sidearm but not with rifles, shotguns, or chain guns. He may understand the basic principles of using those firearms, but the bulk of his training has been with his pistol. Represented in game terms, such a character may have three dots in Firearms with a Specialty in 9mm automatic pistols.



When you create your character, you choose three Skill Specialties. The Specialties you choose should be very specific, although you may choose more than one Specialty for any given Skill. So, using the previous example, Officer Grimes may have Specialties in both 9mm automatic pistols and 12-gauge shotguns.

Step #5: Embrace of the Vampire

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



Picking a clan

Your character's clan serves as a sort of extended family of the night, bound by lineage and responsible for certain similarities among its members. Vampires are always of the same clan as the sires who Embrace them.

Chapters 4 through 8 describe each of the clans to help you choose the one best-suited for your character.

Joining a covenant

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

Here are the covenants and their general objectives:

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

- ✔ **The Circle of the Crone** venerates a variety of female figures as an amalgamated creator of vampires, the Mother of all Monsters.
- ✔ **The Invictus** is the aristocracy of the night.
- ✔ **The Lancea Sanctum** seeks to influence Kindred society with the strictures of Longinus, who is believed to have been turned into one of the Damned by the very blood of Christ.
- ✔ **The Ordo Dracul** commands rituals and mystical knowledge that allows the Kindred to transcend their vampiric states.

It's also possible to eschew any covenant affiliation, going alone into the night as an "unaligned" vampire. These rogues are not regarded as criminals or outsiders but automatically have a smaller support system on which to fall back and perhaps fewer allies to come to their aid. And yet, being unaligned makes one her own boss. Your character makes her own decisions.



Chapter 17 covers the Kindred Covenants in greater detail. The information in that chapter helps you immerse your character into the society of the undead and the World of Darkness as a whole.

Choosing favored Attributes

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

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

Table 9-1 Favored Attributes	
<i>Clan</i>	<i>Choose from . . .</i>
Daeva	Dexterity or Manipulation
Gangrel	Composure or Stamina
Mekhet	Intelligence or Wits
Nosferatu	Composure or Strength
Ventrue	Presence or Resolve

Establishing Disciplines

When vampires are Embraced, their sires teach them blood-based mystical powers known as *Disciplines*. Taking the shape of an animal, running at super-human speeds, or bending a victim's will to one's own are examples of Disciplines.

Each character begins with three dots of Disciplines, which can be allocated as you choose. At least two dots must be devoted to your character's clan Disciplines, however, before any thought is given to an out-of-clan Discipline. That is, you may choose to spend two dots on clan Disciplines and a single dot on an out-of-clan Discipline, but not two dots on out-of-clan Disciplines and only one on a clan Discipline. After that, you may invest a dot in a Discipline traditionally belonging to another clan.



Each clan description in Chapters 4 through 8 lists the Disciplines practiced by those lineages. Chapter 12 covers Disciplines in greater detail.

Tapping into Blood Potency

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

All vampire characters receive the Blood Potency advantage at one dot for free. Blood Potency can be increased with Merit-point expenditure at a rate of three to one at character creation. That is, you may spend three of your character's seven Merit dots for Blood Potency 2, or spend six of your character's seven Merit dots for Blood Potency 3. For more on Merits, see the next section.



Chapter 13 gives the full story on Blood Potency.

Step #6: Selecting Merits

A beginning character has seven dots worth of Merits, which you can distribute however you like. Knowing your character's concept comes in real handy here — a Daeva socialite isn't likely to have the Stunt Driver Merit, for example, unless her background involved that skill somehow. The fifth dot in any Merit costs two dots to purchase.



Chapter 14 describes the various Merits in more detail.

Step #7: Determining Advantages

After you establish the basic traits of who your character is, others are derived that reflect how well he copes with his undead, predatory existence. These derived qualities may change during play as the traits on which they're based change. So if your character's Strength increases by one during play, his Speed also increases.

Here is a list of the available advantages and how they relate to one another:

- ✔ **Vitae.** *Vitae* is the amount of blood currently in your vampire's system. You spend Vitae to activate different vampiric powers and capabilities. You roll one die to determine how much Vitae is in your character at the beginning of the game. No successes are required; the number you get is the number of points you have.
- ✔ **Willpower.** This trait is determined by your character's Resolve + Composure. Vampires lead unlives of constant struggle, fighting against their predatory natures to retain control of their slipping connections to humanity. Fighting the Beast within them calls for a measure of self-reliance often lacking in mortals, making large amounts of Willpower a great value. Vampires' dangerous emotional situations can lead to violent, mindless frenzy. The Kindred hold their bestial tendencies in check through sheer force of will.



A player may spend Vitae in the same turn in which he spends a point of Willpower.

- ✔ **Humanity.** After the Embrace, a vampire gradually loses touch with those elements of her nature that make her human. These qualities erode over time as the vampire becomes more jaded and the world evolves without her. Humanity, therefore, indicates your character's degeneration from her living morals, values, and ethics. Your character starts with seven Humanity dots out of a possible ten.



As an optional rule, Storytellers may allow players to trade dots of Humanity for experience points. This trade-in reflects some heinous past behavior the vampire engaged in and learned from (accounting for available experience points), but which also scarred her deeply (explaining the loss in Humanity). Players may sacrifice one dot of Humanity for five experience points, dropping their characters' Humanity scores to as low as five (for a maximum of ten extra experience points). The experience points acquired for this exchange can be cashed in for extra traits or capabilities during character creation. Chapter 21 explains experience in more depth.

- ✔ **Virtues and Vices.** Virtues and Vices represent the prevailing strengths and weaknesses of your character's identity — her highest quality and

her tragic flaw. While we understand them in human, mortal terms, Virtues and Vices can take a turn when applied to vampires. For example, a vampire who suffers the Vice of Wrath may be prone to frenzy, while one indulging in Gluttony might leave a trail of drained, mutilated bodies in her wake, finding it difficult to stop feeding before victims' hearts stop. A vampire with the Virtue of Hope might dedicate her nights to escaping the vampiric condition, returning to mortality, while a character with the Virtue of Justice may carefully choose victims from among those deserving punishment (such as rapists or murderers), becoming a crusader of the night (think a darker take on Batman).

Virtues and Vices are described fully in Chapter 13.



- ✓ **Defense and Initiative Modifier.** These traits apply in combat. Defense is the lowest of your character's Wits or Dexterity, and helps your character avoid harm. Your character's Initiative Modifier is a product of his Dexterity + Composure; this derived trait influences how quickly he reacts under dramatic circumstances, such as in combat.

Chapter 13 provides a more in depth look at Defense and Initiative.



- ✓ **Speed.** *Speed* is just what it sounds like: The number of yards your character can move in one combat turn and still perform an action. A character can run up to twice his Speed rating in yards in a turn if he sacrifices his action. Speed most likely comes into play in a chase.

Step #8: Feeling the Spark of Unlife

At this point you should have a character, at least in a purely mechanical sense. You have all you need to use your character as a playing piece in a game, combining Attributes with Skills and rolling dice as necessary.

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



Questions, Questions...

The questions that follow can be used to flesh out a character's background and provide insight into areas a player might gloss over when creating a character. You should answer as many of these questions as you can, either by writing a brief back story and description or by talking about these issues with the Storyteller. The devil is in the details, as they say, and these specifics help make your character far more real once the story begins.

How old are you?

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

What was unique about your childhood?

What do you remember about your early years? What forged your basic motivations and attitudes? Where did you go to school? Were you a good student? Who were your immediate family members? What is your clearest childhood memory? Did you go to high school? College? Did you have a hometown, or

did your family move often? Did you run away from home? Did you play sports? Did any of your childhood friendships last until adulthood?

What kind of person were you?

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

What was your first brush with the supernatural?

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

How did the Embrace change you?

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

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

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

Were you presented to Kindred society?

Did the Prince welcome you? Was he reluctant to accept you? Did prominent Kindred need to be bribed or threatened before accepting you? Did your sire

have permission to create you? Are you on the run from Kindred authorities? What do you suppose your domain's preeminent Kindred think about you?

How did you meet the others in your coterie?

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

Where is your haven?

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

Do you retain any connections to your mortal life?

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

What are your habitual feeding grounds?

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

What motivates you?

Are you bent on revenge? Do you long for your mortal life, or to again look upon the sun? Do you have ambitions within Kindred society? Do you wish to

Embrace any childer, other Kindred? Are you involved with inter-covenant conflict? If you could have any one thing in the world, what would it be?

Coming Full Circle

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



Chapter 10

Picking Your Character's Attributes

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding what Attributes and their dots mean
 - ▶ Getting some real-world game equivalents to dot scores
 - ▶ Exploring stories that demonstrate each trait
-

People have the inherent capacity to act, behave, and think. We can perform actions and have intuitive talents such as running, theorizing, and persuading others. So does your vampire. His basic, fundamental capabilities are represented with Attributes that are the foundation of all the acts that he performs.

Understanding Attributes

Attributes are separated into three categories — Mental, Physical, and Social — and are rolled to determine how well your character accomplishes his various efforts in the game.

- ✓ **Mental Attributes** indicate how insightful, clever, and determined your character is. They are Intelligence, Wits, and Resolve.
- ✓ **Physical Attributes** indicate how strong, graceful, and enduring your character is. They are Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina.
- ✓ **Social Attributes** determine how imposing, magnetic, and dignified your character is. They are Presence, Manipulation, and Composure.

When your character performs an action, the Attribute most appropriate to the effort is referenced. If he tries to remember what he read during library research last week, you look to his Intelligence dots. If he tries to jump a chasm, you check his Strength. If he tries to make a good first impression on a group of people, you apply his Presence score.

The Attributes of ordinary people and vampires are rated from one to five. Your character automatically starts with one dot in each Attribute. These dots are already filled in on your character sheet. Your character's other dots are usually rolled as part of a dice pool.

Some tasks rely on your character's Attribute dots alone, and these traits are rolled and/or combined to determine how well he performs certain tasks. Such feats are typically ones any unimpaired person can perform, such as lifting objects, and don't require any special training or expertise. Almost all other actions that characters can perform involve a combination of an Attribute and Skill. The Storyteller tells you what traits to combine and roll to see how well your character does at a task.



Chapter 3 provides a summary of the various kinds of rolls and trait combinations that can come up during a game. Look there to see how your character's Attributes might get used.

What Do the Dots Mean?

Each Attribute score in the following table suggests the degree of your character's raw capability in that area. His talent can be a product of training, innate potential, or a combination of the two.

<i>Dots</i>	<i>Degree of Capability</i>
•	Poor. Unexercised, unpracticed, or inept.
••	Average. The result of occasional effort or application.
•••	Good. Regular practice or effort, or naturally talented.
••••	Exceptional. Frequently applied, tested, and honed, or naturally gifted.
•••••	Outstanding. The peak of normal human capability. Continuously exercised or naturally blessed.

Understanding Mental Attributes

Mental Attributes represent your character's intellect, speed of thought, and mental determination. The following sections discuss each of these traits in detail to illustrate how they work in *Vampire*.

Intelligence: Thinking smart

"I'm sick of this," Becky announced in frustration. She immediately regretted her outburst as her words echoed throughout the musty old library. Fortunately, this late at night, even during exams, no one else was there to hear. She had been working on her thesis for weeks without getting anywhere. Once again, she wondered if a degree in Linguistics was a good choice.

Her research was simply not panning out as she hoped, but after another pep talk, she forced herself back into the stacks. What other choice did she have? It was when reaching for a book on Sanskrit that she made her real discovery. A dusty old volume that seemed to have fallen between bookcases. It was bound in leather — or something like it — and had no publication date. Indeed, the book was like nothing she had ever seen before. No end papers. No table of contents. It just launched into some strange text.

The next thing she knew, Becky had passed hours studying the book. It had characters reminiscent of Latin and Greek, yet different, with odd pictographs throughout. As near as she could tell, it was dedicated to a religion or to ceremonies of some kind, but from what culture she had no idea. She did know that if she was ever going to find out, she would need more time with it.

The raw power of the mind. Cognitive capacity. The inherent capability to digest, comprehend, and remember information — and to learn more. Intelligence is a direct measure of how smart your character is. She may be dull-minded or have narrow-vision. She may be book-smart, or she may simply be able to grasp concepts, interpret situations, and solve problems quickly. Intelligence is valued by planners, theorists, scholars, white-collar employees, and leaders.

Wits: Thinking on your feet

Martin had accepted some weird jobs, but this one took the cake. He'd installed or repaired plumbing across the city. He liked the work; jobs can be challenging and fun. Busting open drywall and messing with pipes was like tinkering with

the skeleton of a building. You got to see straight into people's private worlds. Sometimes you even got to peek at the skeletons in their closets.

But why be hired to do a full re-pipe at this place and be told not to go on the top floor? Martin had to know. So, when the greasy guy who hired him caught him at the top of the stairs, Martin had to think fast.

"Yeah, I tried to find you. It's uh . . . it's what I was afraid of. An old building like this, the fittings have given way from wood rot or something. We're, uh . . . we're gonna need to re-route all the pipes upstairs instead of running the same lines."

Damn, that was good, *he thought*. Might be able to squeeze some extra bucks out of this job.

The other man didn't seem convinced.

The ability to think on one's feet, under pressure or duress, without letting them see you sweat. Wits also encompass an eye for detail, the ability to absorb what's going on in the environment, and the capability to react appropriately and quickly to events. It might mean recognizing that the temperature in a room is slowly dropping, that a landscape painting incorporates a disguised human face, or that a trap is about to be sprung. Wits involve the powers of perception and response. Your character may be oblivious, dumbfounded, quick-eyed, or wary. The trait is useful for entrepreneurs, charlatans, athletes, tacticians, lawyers, and criminals.

Resolve: Maintaining focus

Josh only really came to his senses when he threw up in the toilet. He was conscious the whole time, he knew, but it was like he was in a daze, walking around like a zombie. He thought back to how it all happened. He had left his apartment a few hours ago to run errands. It was a nice enough evening for winter. He got some groceries, and then. . . .

All he could remember was a blur. Something was there. Big. Strange. He remembered eyes. . . like an animal's. They stared straight into his soul in a weird, almost primitive way. It was like his lizard brain kicked in and told him to run and hide, like a rabbit under the shadow of a hawk.

Josh had a fleeting memory of the oranges he'd just bought rolling across the sidewalk and then all he knew was being back in his apartment, getting sick. How did he get there? Why did he come back? Why couldn't he remember? And what was that thing?

Josh wasn't sure, but he wasn't content to let it go, either.

The focus and determination to see your character's will done. The capacity to stay on target, ignore distractions, and resist coercion or browbeating. Resolve is your character's mental fortitude. His personal conviction. His clarity of vision or spirit. Your character may be easily distracted, unable to concentrate, resolute, or single-minded. The trait is pivotal to resisting supernatural forms of mental control; it acts as a veritable defense of the mind. Resolve is valuable to leaders, motivators, soldiers, athletes, police, and organizers.



Understanding Physical Attributes

Physical Attributes represent your character's muscular power, speed of action, and capacity to persevere through bodily punishment.

Strength: How muscular are you?

"God damn," Martin grunted as he pulled on the drain cover in the basement. Somehow water was still backing up in the system. Everything else checked out, so it had to be a clog in the outtake to the sewer.

The building was so old that it still had a dirt-floor basement, yet the drain cover was stuck like a son of a bitch.

I could dig around it, Martin thought, but that would take time. This was the last place he wanted to be pulling late hours. The whole building and the guy who hired him gave him the creeps. It was like the guy resented Martin being there; as if the plumber was intruding on something the guy wanted for himself.

“To hell with it,” Martin thought, and went to his truck to get a crowbar. Moments later he jammed it between grilles and pried with everything he had. He pushed so hard he thought he was going to piss himself. Then the cover cracked loose with a clang.

Aiming his flashlight down the hole, Martin saw something he couldn’t explain. Like a man who’d done this work for years, he reached down the pipe to his shoulder. When he pulled his arm free, his hand was coated red.

Physical might. Sheer bodily power. The capacity to lift objects, move items, hit things and people, and do damage. Strength is a measure of muscle. Your character could be a 98-pound weakling, he could carry a spare tire, he could be lean and cut, or he could be bulky and brawny. Your character’s Strength score is used in hand-to-hand combat. This trait is instrumental to laborers, thugs, athletes, brawlers, and law-enforcement agents.

Dexterity: How quick are you?

Josh retraced his steps back to where he fell; to where he saw that thing. He turned on the sidewalk, surveying his neighborhood. It wasn’t the best place to live, but he couldn’t afford any better. The worst of it was the bums and homeless, but they left him alone if he gave them some change.

Josh snapped out of his daydream and realized that he’d been staring glassy-eyed at the alley across the street. There was something about it. He shook his head to clear it and waited for a couple cars to pass before crossing the street to the alley.

The alley lay between rundown tenements and ran past an old parking lot. No one parked there anymore. Cardboard boxes and scattered blankets used by bums blocked the way. Josh almost turned back, not wanting to piss off the street people, but then he remembered how angry he was when he got back home.

He steeled himself and headed down the alley. Almost immediately, open hands reached out from what looked like heaps of trash or discarded clothing as the homeless muttered for money. After a moment, their pleas turned to angry shouts

as Josh ventured further into their territory. Panicking, Josh jumped up the chain-link fence next to him. It was the closest escape route. He wished he hadn't when he got to the barbwire at the top, but forced himself upward and over. He didn't quite make it, and the rusted steel tore through his pants and into his leg.

Quickness. Response time. A delicate touch. Dexterity indicates how quickly and with how much finesse your character responds to his physical world. While high Wits dots help your character spot trouble, high Dexterity dots help him react to it, whether with a counteraction or by simply getting the hell out of the way. Dexterity also helps with hand-eye coordination, be it to fire an accurate shot, juggle objects, or perform delicate jobs such as handling explosives. Your character might be sluggish, clumsy, slight, quick, or nimble. Dexterity is invaluable to criminals, sports stars, surgeons, and dancers.



Stamina: Can you keep up?

Becky thanked the pizza guy absently as she closed her apartment door. His nose wrinkled in distaste, not because she failed to tip him but because of the smell of her room, because of her greasy hair, and because of her clearly unwashed appearance.

Becky never noticed the silent insult. She hadn't really noticed anything for weeks. In fact, eating had become something that she had to remind herself to do. Now it was the book that consumed her. Even as she pushed aside scattered and wadded up papers to sit down, she kept her nose in the book. It demanded every ounce of her attention. Translating and understanding it had become her obsession. It superceded food, sleep, even her thesis. At first she had hoped the book would be invaluable to her research. Now she pored over it for its own sake. If she kept studying, kept interpreting, she knew comprehension would come.

As the night wore on, Becky continued to work. The pizza box went unopened.

Sturdiness. Steadfastness. Sheer physical resilience. Stamina is a measure of how tough your character is. It indicates how far she can push her body — how much physical abuse she can endure. Your character might be sickly and frail or hardy and unstoppable. Bouncers, brawlers, triathletes, survivalists, heavy lifters, and workaholics thrive on Stamina.

Understanding Social Attributes



Social Attributes represent your character's magnetism, force of personality, and ability to perform under stress imposed by others.

Presence: How commanding are you?

Martin was stunned. He wasn't sure how long he stared at the blood on his hand, bewildered by what it might mean. Was the guy who owned the place some kind of psycho, killing people and pouring their blood down the drain? He wasn't sure, but he decided that he didn't want to find out. It was weird, though. It was like he couldn't think straight. This should have scared the shit out of him, and here he was kind of out of it, like he'd had a few.

When he got upstairs he realized the lights were on. It was already dusk outside, given the last light coming in through the windows. "When did that happen?" he wondered. "I meant to —"

His thought went unfinished. Standing before him at the foot of the stairs was the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen. Normally, he didn't go for brunettes. They reminded him of his ex-, but somehow this one made it work. Boy did she ever.

“What was I doing?” Martin muttered, but no answer came.

The woman’s dark eyes contrasted her pale skin, and focused intently on the blood on Martin’s hand, on the blood that he’d absently smeared across his shirt.

“Did you hurt yourself?” the woman asked. “Here, let me make it better.”

Bearing. Stature. Assertiveness. Presence suggests the power of your character’s very identity. Attractiveness is only part of the trait. Your character may be jaw-dropping gorgeous, plain-Jane, or downright ugly, but her Presence means much more. It reflects her sheer command over the attention of others. It’s her capacity to impose her will on others by being socially aggressive or powerful — a veritable bull in a china shop or someone who simply doesn’t accept “no” for an answer. This trait is essential to leaders, enforcers, interrogators, models, politicians, and salespeople.

Manipulation: How persuasive are you?

What the hell am I doing? Josh wondered as he picked his way down the trash-strewn hallway. This is exactly where I didn’t want to go.

He had evaded the homeless people in the alley, but then had nowhere to go except into one of the old tenements. His leg burned from the long scratches the fence left him. He hoped his tetanus shot was up-to-date; he couldn’t remember. The place smelled like piss. He could hear music blaring somewhere and a baby crying. Who could raise a kid here? he wondered.

He didn’t have time to think about the answer, though. His eyes were suddenly drawn from the stained carpet to the light at the end of the hall. Three shapes filled it. Two more turned the corner behind them. They were the people from outside. Maybe they weren’t so homeless, after all.

On the verge of panic once again, Josh recognized one of the men. “Hey, Eddy, it’s me, Josh. What’s going on?”

The five dirty, disheveled men stopped a few feet away with menacing looks on their faces. “What are you doing here, Josh?” Eddy asked.

“I was looking for somethi— a guy. I thought I saw him go in here. Maybe you could help me find him? I think I got a couple bucks. . . .”

“We don’t want your money.”

For a second, Josh wondered if he saw that same bestial look that he’d seen earlier that day — but this time in Eddy’s eyes.

Charm. Persuasiveness. Charisma. The capacity to play on the desires, hopes, and needs of others to influence them. Manipulation reflects your character's finesse in social situations. How well he can appeal to, gain the favor of, and generally coerce others. Manipulation is applied to win smiles, to put people at ease, or to gain favors. Where Presence deals in social force, Manipulation focuses on social subtlety. It's the tool and trade of businesspeople, politicians, salesfolk, and publicists. Your character may be a wallflower, he could frequently make off-color statements, he may have a winning smile and a hardy handshake, or he may be able to sell sand in the desert.

Composure: How collected are you?

"Do you understand now?" the priest asked.

Becky was in shock. Moments before, she'd stormed to her door, ready to unleash her frustration on whomever had dared to interrupt her. Her research was not going well. The meaning or purpose of the book still eluded her, and she was at the end of her rope.

Once she recovered sufficiently from the shock of finding a priest at her door, she answered. "What?"



"Do you understand now? About the book? About what it says?"

Becky continued her look of disbelief. How could this perfect stranger — and a man of the cloth — know anything about her, or more important, the book?

"I see," he continued as he let himself in and shut the door.

Becky didn't object. She could scarcely complete a thought.

"You're confused. I understand. Rest assured, though, you're the one. The book chose you. It knows you're ready. Well, almost. That's why I'm here. I'm here to help open your eyes." And with that, everything Becky had stared at and studied moved about in her mind like the pieces of a puzzle. They spun, crisscrossed, and overlapped — and finally formed a complete picture. Looking at it

was like looking at the sun. It was like staring into the void and knowing that the void stared back. In that moment, Becky's mind snapped.

Poise. Dignity. The capacity to remain calm and appear — and actually *be* — unfazed in social and threatening situations, usually harrowing ones. Your character might lose his temper at the slightest perceived insult, collapse emotionally under a mere pretense, weather a storm of verbal (or literal) slings and arrows, or have the nerve to look unspeakable horror in the eye. This trait is a measure of emotional fortitude, restraint, and calm. It's ideal among leaders, soldiers, moderators, and anyone whose movements are public consumption. Composure is vital to resisting social influence and pressure — overt, covert, or otherworldly.

Composure is pivotal to resisting supernatural forms of emotional control; it acts as a veritable emotional defense. The trait is also vital to vampires' efforts to restrain themselves when their blood is raised and frenzy threatens.



Chapter 11

Selecting Your Character's Skills

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding Skills and what their dots mean
 - ▶ Reviewing Skill Specialties and their possibilities
 - ▶ Getting real-world game equivalents to dot scores
 - ▶ Enjoying some stories that demonstrate each trait
-

A character's Attributes (described at length in Chapter 10) measure his innate physical, mental, and social qualities — how strong he is, how quick he thinks on his feet, and how well he interacts with other people. The different ways in which a character can apply these Attributes are determined by his Skills. A character's Skills reflect the education and training he's acquired over the course of his life and are a reflection of his origins and interests. Skills can be acquired in any number of ways, from institutionalized learning to hard, hands-on experience. A young recruit at the police academy is trained to use a handgun, for example, while a gangbanger learns to shoot as a matter of survival.

Understanding Skills

Like Attributes, Skills are broken into three general categories: Mental, Physical, and Social. You purchase a character's initial Skills when you create your character, and you prioritize them the same way as Attributes, with 11 points to allocate among primary Skills, seven points to allocate among secondary Skills, and four points to allocate among tertiary Skills.



Chapter 3 provides a summary of the various kinds of rolls and trait combinations that can come up during a game. Look there to see how your character's Skills might get used.

Understanding How Skill Dots Work

Skills are rated from one to five, with each score suggesting your character's relative level of proficiency and knowledge in that area. His talent could be a product of training or innate potential.

<i>Dots</i>	<i>Character's proficiency</i>
•	Novice. Basic knowledge and/or techniques.
••	Practitioner. Solid working knowledge and/or techniques.
•••	Professional. Broad, detailed knowledge and/or techniques.
••••	Expert. Exceptional depth of knowledge and/or techniques.
•••••	Master. Unsurpassed depth of knowledge and/or techniques. A leader in the field.

Acquiring Skill Specialties

Skills represent broad bases of knowledge and physical training in a given subject. An auto mechanic doesn't just know about fixing engines, for example, but is versed in repairing tires, replacing windows, and painting the body of a car. In addition to this broad foundation of knowledge, characters can specialize in a particular aspect of a Skill, giving them an edge in a particular application due to their increased focus.

The game imposes no limit to the number of Specialties your character can have in a single Skill. You choose three Specialties when you create your character. Any more must be purchased during play with experience points. Rolls involving a Skill Specialty gain a +1 modifier over and above any other situational modifiers. So, if your character has Crafts, but also has a Specialty in Automobiles, you gain a +1 bonus when he works on cars.



The right tools for the job

Having the proper equipment for a task can often mean the difference between success and failure. In addition to situational modifiers and Specialties, Skill rolls gain bonus dice if your character uses high-quality or specialized

equipment when performing a feat. For example, a driver with a high-performance sports car has an edge in a race over someone in an old pickup. Tools used add bonuses (typically +1, +2, or +3) to your dice rolls.

Applying Skills

If a Skill represents a particular body of knowledge or training, a *Skill task* describes a specific application of the Skill in question. Animal Training, for example, is a task describing an application of the Animal Ken Skill. Skill tasks combine an applicable Attribute with the Skill, plus any relevant equipment modifiers to form a dice pool, minus any situational modifiers. Climbing a steep cliff, for example, is a Skill task combining Strength + Athletics + equipment such as rope, pitons, and cleats. The Storyteller will tell you what Skill to apply to your character's effort.

Grasping Mental Skills

Mental Skills are applications of a character's insight, acumen, and focus, such as examining a crime scene for clues, unraveling an enigma, or diagnosing an illness. These Skills are almost entirely gained from a period of formal education, and most characters with high Mental Skills can claim a degree or even a doctorate in their field of study.



Untrained Skill Use: If your character doesn't have the necessary Mental Skill required for an action, she can still make the attempt. Roll her Attribute alone, but with a -3 penalty.

Academics: Are you educated?

Doctor Carlton's library was a shambles. Bookshelves leaned on broken supports as if drunk, and piles of antiquated tomes lay scattered amid bits of broken glass and ceramic on the carpeted floor. Julia picked her way through the debris to Carlton's desk and examined a large, leather-bound book resting on the ink-stained blotter. "It's his journal," she said softly, running a slim finger over the careful lines of script. "The last thing he wrote looks like Latin: 'mali principii malus finis.'"

"The bad end of a bad beginning," Stapleton translated, bleakly surveying the damage from the doorway. "I told him that damned idol would be the death of him."

Academics is a broad-based Skill that represents a character's degree of higher education and general knowledge in the Arts and Humanities — everything from English to history, economics to law. Dots in this Skill do not directly correlate to a given level of education. Your character could have

entered a doctorate program but spent more time partying than studying, resulting in low dots. Conversely, a self-taught individual who read voraciously and studied intensively could have high dots without ever earning a diploma.

Possessed by: College graduates, executives, lawyers, librarians, scholars, and students

Specialties: Anthropology, Art, English, History, Law, Religion, and Research

Computer: Are you a techie?

The photo was a grainy digital reproduction, but the faces of the uniformed men were clear enough to be recognizable. Carla pointed a trembling finger at one of them. "That's Mr. Denisov. Oh my God, where did you get this?"

As grim as the situation was, Robert couldn't help but smile. "There's a news-group dedicated to supernatural research conducted by the Soviets during World War II. You can find damn near anything on the 'Net if you know where to look."

Characters possessing this Skill have the necessary training or experience to operate a computer. At high levels (3 or more), a character can create his own computer programs. People with high levels in this Skill are familiar with a variety of programming languages and operating systems.

Note that dots in Computer do not apply to manually fixing or building machines, only to operating them. Construction and repair is the province of the Crafts Skill (see the next section).

Possessed by: Businesspeople, professors, programmers, students, and system administrators

Specialties: Artificial Intelligence, Data Retrieval, Graphics, Hacking, and Internet

Crafts: Are you good with your hands?

Howard pressed the carving tool gently against the smoothly spinning wood, shaving off a steady curl of pine with the whispery, scratching sound that he had once loved. He hadn't been down in his workshop since Angela died. He'd forgotten how much he enjoyed working with his hands.

He heard the basement door open, and Martha's voice, heavy as lead, sank down the stairs. "Dad? What are you doing down there?"

"Just a quick project, hon," he called back over his shoulder. "Should be done in a few more minutes."

"Okay. Listen . . . I'm going to start cleaning out mom's stuff. I could use some help."

Howard put down the carving tool and switched off the lathe. He tried to keep his voice even. "I've got to go out for a while today. Can it wait 'til I get back?"

Not waiting for an answer, he undid the clamps and pulled the chair leg from the lathe. The end was now tapered to a fine, strong point.

Crafts represent a character's training or experience in creating works of physical art or construction with his hands, from paintings to car engines to classical sculpture. Characters possessing this Skill typically have the knowledge but not necessarily the tools or facilities to make use of their capabilities. A character may be an exceptional mechanic, for example, but still needs to sweet-talk his boss into opening the garage after-hours to work on his friend's car. Crafting a piece of art or creating an object is almost always an extended roll, with the length of time and number of successes required determined by the complexity of the piece. The Storyteller has final say on the time required and the number of successes needed for a particular item.

Possessed by: Contractors, mechanics, plumbers, sculptors, and welders

Specialties: Automobiles, Aircraft, Forging, Jury-Rigging, Sculpting, and Sewing

Investigation: Can you solve mysteries?

All the other detectives were convinced that an arsonist had set the hotel fire and vandalized the fire hydrant out front so firefighters couldn't put out the blaze. But Janet wasn't so sure. The hydrant was literally ripped from off its moorings. Who could do that without something like a truck and tow chains? Who could do that so quickly, without being seen? She contemplated the answer as she picked through the building's smoldering remains. When she stumbled across a charred wooden stake, she knew something was not as it seemed.

Investigation is the art and science of solving mysteries, examining seemingly disparate evidence to find a connection, answering riddles, and overcoming paradoxes. It not only allows your character to get into the head of a killer to grasp his motives or plans, but it also allows her to look beyond the mundane world to guess at answers to mysterious problems, or to have a “eureka” moment that offers insight into baffling circumstances. Your character might realize that all murder victims have the same digits jumbled in their phone numbers, she might interpret a dream that has striking similarities to events in the real world, or she could recognize why an intruder took the time to paint a room red. Certain individuals such as law-enforcement officers, forensic specialists, scientists, and investigators are trained in the art of examination, while others simply develop the knack through years of practice.

Possessed by: Criminals, doctors, forensic examiners, police officers, scientists, scholars, and soldiers

Specialties: Artifacts, Body Language, Crime Scenes, Cryptography, Dreams, Autopsy Diagnoses, Puzzles, Riddles, and Scientific Experiments



Medicine: Can you treat sick and injured persons?

The Land Rover's tires squealed as Anderson took the turn as fast as he dared. Wind whistled through the bullet holes in the windshield. "Jesus Christ!" he yelled, his hands wrestling with the SUV's steering wheel. "How bad is it?"

Robert was slumped on his side in the back seat, a thin, keening moan escaping his lips. Jenny clambered out of the passenger seat and looked him over. There wasn't much she could see in the shifting bands of light from the street lamps. Biting her lip, she ran her hands over Robert's chest and back. When she held them up to the light, they were red-black with blood. "Damn it," she said, noting a froth of bubbles in the blood on her palms. "The bullet's hit his right lung. I need a credit card!"

"What?!"

"Plastic! I need something stiff and waterproof that I can use to plug the hole or his lung will collapse! Give me your damn wallet!"

The Medicine Skill reflects a character's training and expertise in human physiology and how to treat injuries and illness. The trait represents knowledge of human anatomy and basic medical treatments. Characters with a low level in this Skill (1 to 2) often possess only rudimentary first-aid training, while characters with high levels (3+) are the equivalent of nurses, physicians, or surgeons.

Possessed by: Medical students, paramedics, physicians, psychologists, and surgeons

Specialties: Emergency Care, Pathology, Pharmaceuticals, Physical Therapy, and Surgery

Occult: Do you know about the supernatural?

Samantha flicked on the light in the pantry and scanned the shelves. "C'mon, I know mom keeps a box of the stuff around here somewhere." Absently, she gestured at Lisa. "Get me the cookie jar on the counter. If there's anything in it, empty it out."

Lisa opened the jar and spilled its contents — a scattering of stale crumbs and a small plastic bag with a spare key — and carried the ceramic jar to the kitchen table. “Are you sure this is going to work?”

“Ah! There you are!” Samantha pulled the box of sea salt from one of the top shelves. Back at the table, she poured half the salt into the cookie jar. “Sea salt drains spiritual energy from objects,” she said, fishing Mr. Chamber’s pocket watch from her jacket. “Or, at least, that’s what the book says.”

She dropped the watch into the jar and poured the rest of the salt over it. “I guess we’ll know for sure by midnight,” Samantha said grimly, sealing the jar.

The Occult Skill reflects a character’s knowledge and experience with the world’s various supernatural legends and lore. A character with this Skill not only knows the theories, myths, and legends of the occult, but can generally discern “fact” from rumor. Characters may come by this Skill in a variety of ways, from oddball college courses to learning legends and myths from the lips of superstitious family members.

Possessed by: Anthropologists, authors, neo-pagans, occult scholars, parapsychologists

Specialties: Cultural Beliefs, Ghosts, Magic, Monsters, Superstitions, and Witchcraft

Politics: Do you know how to get things done?

Edgar Young spread his pasty, perfectly manicured hands and gave Wilson one of his trademark grins. “Mr. Wilson, I’m the governor’s political advisor, not a member of the Public Health Service. I don’t have the authority to do what you’re asking.”

“No, but the Public Health Commissioner is a political appointee, and if memory serves, he’s one of the governor’s golf buddies,” Wilson replied. “I’m sure if you made a suggestion to the governor — and pointed out to him the risks of being implicated in a criminal cover-up — he’d persuade the commissioner to close the orphanage. Then we can relocate the kids until we finish investigating the disappearances.”

The condescending smirk melted from Young’s face. “Let me make a few calls,” he said coldly.

Characters possessing this Skill are not only familiar with the way the political process works, but they're also experienced with bureaucracies and know exactly who to call in a given situation to get something done. Your character keeps track of who's in power and how she got there, along with her potential rivals. She has a grasp of the issues of the moment and how they affect the political process, and she knows whose palms to grease. It's possible that your character acquired this Skill by running for political office at some point, or by working on a campaign or as a public servant. Or she could simply be someone who follows the news and understands the money trail.

Possessed by: Bureaucrats, civil servants, journalists, lawyers, lobbyists, and politicians

Specialties: Bribery, Elections, Federal, Local, State, and Scandals

Science: Are you resourceful?

The young man's body looked far worse beneath the harsh light of the autopsy table than it had at the crime scene. The antiseptic glare revealed his terrible injuries in gruesome detail. Even Wagner's partner Robison had a hard time concealing his discomfort. Wagner took out a notepad. "What have you got, Doc?"

Dr. Feingold, the city's medical examiner, chose his words carefully. "For starters, the four lacerations across the victim's chest are equidistant from one another, and measurements indicate that they struck the body with equal force. Thus, I believe that they were inflicted at the same moment rather than separately."

Wagner eyed the four deep furrows running diagonally across the man's chest. They'd cut through tissue and bone as cleanly as a saw. "Four guys couldn't have done that at the same time. No way."

"Not four assailants, Detective." Feingold raised his left hand to the light. "Four fingers. These are claw marks."

This Skill represents your character's understanding of the physical and natural sciences: biology, chemistry, geology, meteorology, and physics. Science is useful not only for understanding how the world works, but it helps characters make the most of the resources at hand to achieve their goals. A character with a strong Science background could describe the chemical process for plating metals, for example, allowing another character with Crafts to make a silver-edged steel sword.

Possessed by: Engineers, scientists, students, teachers, and technicians

Specialties: Biology, Chemistry, Geology, Metallurgy, and Physics

Getting a Handle on Physical Skills

Physical Skills are applications of a character's might, endurance, and coordination, such as climbing a mountain, driving a car, or shooting a gun.



Untrained Skill Use: If your character doesn't have the necessary Physical Skill required for a roll, he can still attempt the action. Roll his Attribute alone with a -1 penalty.

Athletics: Are you physically trained?

John made it onto the balcony just as the hotel room door opened. There wasn't time to close the elegant French doors to the patio, and the breeze already ruffled the drapes. It wouldn't be long before Logan — or worse, one of his pale-faced bodyguards — noticed and checked outside.

There was nowhere to hide. John looked about frantically and saw that the balconies to either side were at least 12 feet away — too far to risk a jump at 20 stories up.

John stared down at the balcony below and tried not to think about how small the cars looked. He swung his legs over the railing, taking all his weight on his arms, and hoped that all the rock climbing he'd done last summer would pay off.

Athletics encompasses a broad category of physical training, from rock climbing to kayaking to professional sports such as football or hockey. The Athletics Skill can be applied to any action that requires prolonged physical exertion or that demands considerable agility or hand-eye coordination. Examples include climbing a high wall, marching long distances, and leaping between rooftops. In combat, the Skill is combined with Dexterity to determine the accuracy of thrown weapons.

Possessed by: Professional athletes, police officers, soldiers, survivalists, and physical trainers

Specialties: Acrobatics, Climbing, Kayaking, Long-Distance Running, Sprinting, Swimming, and Throwing

Brawl: Can you fight without a weapon?

He was the stereotypical biker: big and broad-shouldered, the sleeves of his T-shirt straining around muscled, tattooed arms. He loomed over Miles. "You and me are gonna have a little fun, college boy," he said through yellow teeth. "And then me and your girlfriend here are gonna have a little party."

Miles leaned back and the biker took the bait, bending down to glare at the young history student. Miles' first punch struck the biker square in the Adam's apple. The gag reflex doubled the man over, and Miles followed up with a shot to the ear.

The biker hit the floor like a sack of wet cement. "Party on, asshole," Miles said in the silence that followed, and then took Angela's hand. "Let's get out of here."

Brawl defines your character's prowess at unarmed combat, whether he's a black belt in karate, a hard-bitten street tough, or a college student who's taken a few self-defense courses. Characters with this Skill know how to hit an opponent, where to hit for maximum effect, and how to defend themselves from attack. It can mean using fists, but also elbows, knees, shoulders, head butts, wrestling, joint locks, and choke holds. Characters with several dots could be familiar with multiple techniques of unarmed combat.

Brawl is added to your character's Strength to battle people in unarmed combat.

Possessed by: Bikers, boxers, gangsters, police officers, and soldiers

Specialties: Blocking, Boxing, Dirty Tricks, Grappling, Kung Fu, and Throws

Drive: Can you drive at high speeds?

They took the turn with a screech of tires, coming out onto a deserted street. The pursuing pickup truck took the turn wide, riding up onto the far curb and flattening a mailbox before the driver got his vehicle under control.

"Hang on!" John said, hitting the brakes and pulling on the wheel. Jenny and Robert were thrown against the far doors as the Volvo spun and headed back the way it had come, right at the oncoming truck. John got a glimpse of the other driver's shocked expression before the man swerved and the truck struck a fire hydrant.

Robert looked back at the wreck shrinking in the distance. "Holy shit," he said, shaking his head. "Where did you learn to drive like that?"

John laughed. "Who says you can't learn anything from The Dukes of Hazzard?"

The Drive Skill allows your character to operate a vehicle under difficult or dangerous conditions. Characters don't need this Skill simply to drive a car. It's safe to assume in a modern society that most individuals are familiar with automobiles and the rules of the road. Rather, this trait covers the training or experience necessary to operate at high speeds, to tackle hazardous road conditions, and to push a vehicle to the limits of its performance. Drive is the difference between a typical suburban parent with a minivan and a police officer, car thief, or racecar driver.

The Skill also applies to piloting and controlling boats; your character's Drive dots are applied equally to handling boats. In order for your character to be able to pilot a plane, he needs a Pilot Specialty in the Skill. With that, efforts to control a plane call for a Drive-based roll plus one die for your character's Pilot Specialty. A character with the Drive Skill who does not possess a Pilot Specialty cannot effectively operate a plane. His efforts to fly are based on Attribute alone, at a -1 untrained penalty.

Note that dots in Drive do not apply to manually fixing or building vehicles, only to operating them. Construction and repair are the province of the Crafts Skill.

Possessed by: Car thieves, couriers, delivery drivers, emergency responders, police officers, and racecar drivers

Specialties: High-Performance Cars, Motorcycles, Off-Road, Pursuit, Shaking Tails, and Stunts

Firearms: Are you good with guns?

Theodore Logan was a well-protected man. His hillside mansion was surrounded by a high stone wall topped with barbed wire and sensitive motion detectors. Cameras covered every inch of his property. Armed guards accompanied by huge dogs patrolled the grounds 24 hours a day. And then there was the fortress-like manor itself.

Simon checked the wind speed once more and noted it on his homemade range card. It had taken him almost a week to find the perfect vantage point on a hill-top nearly a mile from Logan's property. From here, he had a clear view of the

man's heated pool. Logan was a creature of habit. He liked his nightly swim. And habits, as Simon had learned in sniper school, could get you killed.

Reaching into his pocket, Simon pulled out the heavy, silver-tipped bullet, carefully loaded the scope-sighted rifle, and raised the stock to his shoulder. The night-vision sight revealed the poolside in eerie shades of green. Logan was climbing from the pool as Simon settled the crosshairs over the man's heart.

Firearms skill allows your character to identify, operate, and maintain most types of guns, from pistols to rifles to military weapons such as submachine guns, assault rifles, and machine guns. This Skill can represent the kind of formal training provided to police and the military, or the basic, hands-on experience common to hunters, criminals, and gun enthusiasts. Firearms also applies to using bows. Your character can use guns and bows equally.

Note that dots in Firearms do not apply to manually fixing or building guns, only to wielding them. Construction and repair are the province of the Crafts Skill.

Possessed by: Criminals, gun dealers, hunters, police officers, soldiers, and survivalists

Specialties: Autofire, Bow, Pistol, Rifle, Shotgun, Sniping, and Trick Shot



Larceny: Are you a thief?

The burly security guards hustled Carter and Susan through the lobby and out into the plaza. As soon as the guard holding him let go, Carter spun around and tried to push past, but the guard caught him and shoved him backward.

“Don’t show your face here again,” one of the men said, pointing his finger at Carter and Susan in turn. “Next time we won’t be so gentle.”

Susan watched the guards march back into the lobby and sighed. “Well, so much for that idea. What’s plan B?”

Carter turned, a faint smile on his face. “We wait until tonight and see which one of these fits the front door,” he said, showing her the guard’s thick key ring.

Larceny is a broad Skill that covers everything from picking locks to concealing stolen goods and everything in between. Most characters obtain this Skill the hard way, by committing crimes and paying the price for their mistakes. Some individuals, such as government agents and members of the military, receive formal training in bypassing security systems and stealing valuable assets.

Possessed by: Burglars, commandos, government agents, and private eyes

Specialties: Concealing Stolen Goods, Lockpicking, Pickpocketing, Security Systems, and Safecracking

Stealth: Do you blend into a crowd?

The trick was to keep his weight evenly distributed, gliding across the floor rather than taking unbalanced steps. John moved soundlessly down the hall, slower than he’d have preferred, but speed and silence simply didn’t mix. He never let his entire weight come down on either foot, and the old hardwood floor never uttered a creak of protest. It took a few minutes to reach the dark kitchen, and then he was through the door and gone with no one the wiser.

The Stealth Skill represents a character’s experience or training in avoiding notice, whether by moving silently, making use of cover, or blending into a crowd. When attempting to sneak silently through an area or to use the local terrain as concealment, roll Dexterity + Stealth + equipment. When trying to remain unseen in a crowd, Wits + Stealth is appropriate. The Storyteller may make Stealth rolls secretly on your behalf because your character usually has

no way of knowing he's been noticed until it's too late. If your character attempts to avoid notice by a group of alert observers, a contested roll versus the observers' Wits + Composure + equipment is required.

Possessed by: Criminals, hunters, police officers, and private investigators

Specialties: Camouflage, Crowds, Moving in Darkness, and Moving in Woods

Survival: Can you "live off the land"?

Simon picked his way carefully down the riverside, sticking to the rocks rather than leaving footprints in the mud. He expected that the police had searched his hotel room by now, and there would be APBs posted all over the city. He'd have to lay low for weeks before he could risk going back to look for Anna.

He stopped at his first trout line and tested it. Sure enough, there was a good-sized fish twisting in the swift current. Simon smiled. He could last here as long as he had to.

Survival represents your character's experience or training in "living off the land." He knows where to find food and shelter and how to endure harsh environmental conditions. The more capable your character is, the fewer resources he needs in order to prevail. A master survivalist can walk into a forest, desert, or mountainous region with little more than a pocketknife and the clothes on his back and survive for weeks if necessary.

Note that Survival is not synonymous with Animal Ken. The former helps your character stay alive in the wilderness, living off the land with whatever supplies he has brought with him. The latter involves understanding animal behavior and interacting directly with animals. Your character can be knowledgeable in creating shelter and gathering plants to eat (Survival) but might know nothing about anticipating the actions of a bear in his camp (Animal Ken).

Possessed by: Explorers, hunters, soldiers, and survivalists

Specialties: Foraging, Navigation, Meteorology, and Shelter

Weaponry: Can you fight with a knife?

Lydia's books dropped to the pavement as the dark-clothed man stepped from the bushes. Her hand tightened on the haft of her umbrella. The man smiled, his teeth gleaming white through the hole in his black ski mask. He raised a

long-bladed hunting knife. “I’m not going to hurt you unless I have to, honey,” he whispered. “We’re gonna to take a little walk somewhere private, and then we’ll go our separate ways.”

Lydia set her jaw and took a half-step forward, bending her knees into a fencer’s stance. She raised the umbrella point even with her assailant’s nose.

“What the hell you think you’re going to do with that?” the man snarled, swiping at the umbrella with his free hand. His snarl turned to a shriek as Lydia flicked the umbrella under his hand and stabbed the metal point neatly through the mask’s right eye hole.

As the name implies, the Weaponry Skill represents your character’s experience or training in fighting with everything from beer bottles to pipes and from knives to swords. While formal instruction in Weaponry is uncommon (restricted to military and law-enforcement training and a few martial arts), any character who has grown up on the street or spent a lot of time in seedy bars has had ample opportunity to learn this Skill.

A character’s Weaponry is added to his Strength to stage armed attacks.

Note that dots in Weaponry do not apply to manually fixing or creating weapons, only to wielding them. Construction and repair are the province of the Crafts Skill.

Possessed by: Bikers, criminals, martial artists, medieval re-enactors, police officers, and soldiers

Specialties: Improvised Weapons, Knives, and Swords

Understanding Social Skills

Social Skills are applications of your character’s bearing, charm, and poise, such as negotiating with a bank robber, wooing a crowd, or telling a faultless lie. These Skills most commonly represent innate capabilities honed by years of experience rather than by any formal training. You can teach someone the basic principles of Persuasion, but true leaders are born rather than made.



Untrained Skill Use: If your character doesn’t have the necessary Social Skill required for a feat, he can still make the attempt. Roll his Attribute alone at a –1 penalty.

Animal Ken: Do you understand animals?

Patrick followed the blood trail through the woods. He knew it was only a matter of time before the deer he shot would collapse. The red drops scattered across the leaves and ground leapt out to his trained eyes. Or they did until he reacted instinctively to a nearby sound. To Patrick's surprise, a wolf emerged out of nowhere and barred his path. "It's on the blood trail, too," he thought. Then he reassured himself, "It's alone. It won't attack without its pack." Or so he thought, until a malicious glimmer shone in the animal's eye that Patrick had never seen before.

Anticipating and understanding human emotions is one thing, but being able to interpret and recognize the behavior of animals is something else entirely. Your character intuitively grasps or has been trained to read animals to know how they react to situations. The Skill also involves innately understanding how the animal mind operates, and what may appease or enrage beasts. The knack often coincides with a respect for animals, but it could derive from the analytical observation of a lab scientist or from years of abuse inflicted by a callous animal handler.

Animal Ken could be applied to grasp the thoughts or intentions of supernatural animals, if the Storyteller allows. Sometimes these beings have human or greater intelligence and cannot be read by this Skill alone.

Possessed by: Animal rescue workers, hunters, longtime pet owners, park rangers, ranchers, trainers, and veterinarians

Specialties: Animal Needs, Imminent Attack, Specific Kind of Animal, and Training

Empathy: Can you "read" people?

The crime scene was the usual mix of order and chaos. Detective Wagner pushed his way past the news hounds and under the yellow police tape. "Where is she?" he said to the first officer he found.

"Over there, Lieutenant." The cop pointed at the open rear door of a squad car. "Don't know how much you're going to get out of her. She's messed up pretty bad."

Wagner headed for the car, stepping around the form splayed out on the asphalt, which was only partly covered by a blood-soaked tarp. He saw Dr. Feingold a few yards away, kneeling by the parked car, playing a small flashlight over what looked like a severed hand.

The girl was curled up in the fetal position in the back of the squad car, pulling a blanket around her shoulders as if it could shut out the world. There was matted blood — her fiancé's blood — in her hair. Her white-knuckled hands trembled.

Wagner closed the rear door of the car and got into the front seat, putting a barrier between the two of them. He was going to have to play this very carefully if he hoped to get any useful information from his one and only witness.

This Skill represents your character's intuition for reading people's emotions. For some, it's a matter of observing body language and non-verbal cues. Others employ an extraordinary sense that helps them divine a person's true mood. As the name implies, Empathy also involves the capacity to understand other people's views and perspectives, whether your character agrees with those positions or not. This is useful in everything from negotiations and crisis counseling to reading faces in a crowd and looking for potential trouble. If a subject actively conceals his emotions or motives, make a contested roll versus the person's Wits + Subterfuge + equipment.

Possessed by: Counselors, diplomats, entertainers, profilers, psychiatrists, and police officers

Specialties: Emotion, Lies, Motives, and Personalities

Expression: Do you communicate well?

Pubs weren't supposed to be this quiet. Daniel stepped up to the bar, feeling every eye in the place bore a hole in him. The bartender looked him over suspiciously while Daniel ordered a shot of whiskey.

The tension was tightening around him like a noose. He'd heard of bars in parts of the city that were militant hangouts, but he never imagined anything like this. Still, if there was one place where he'd learn the truth about Finn O'Donnell, this was it.

That is, if he didn't get himself beaten to a pulp.

The bartender pushed a shot glass across the polished wood. Daniel took a deep breath, raised the glass and turned to the staring crowd. "May Ireland's enemies never meet a friend!" he cried, and tossed off the whiskey. "Now who'll drink with me?"

Expression reflects your character's training or experience in the art of communication, both to entertain and inform. This Skill covers both the written and spoken word and other forms of entertainment, from journalism to

poetry, creative writing to acting, music to dance. Characters can use it to compose written works or to put the right words together at the spur of the moment to deliver a rousing speech or a memorable toast. Used well, Expression can sway others' opinions or even hold an audience captive.

When *composing* a poem or writing a novel, roll Wits or Intelligence (depending on whether the work is poetic or factual) + Expression. When *reciting* to an audience, roll Presence + Expression. Playing an instrument involves Intelligence + Expression for a known piece, and Wits + Expression for an improvised one. Dance calls for Dexterity + Expression.

Possessed by: Actors, ballet dancers, journalists, musicians, poets, rock stars, and writers

Specialties: Classical Dance, Drama, Exposés, Musical Instrument, Newspaper Articles, Speeches

Intimidation: Do you get your way at any cost?

Susan came back into the apartment, white as a sheet. Carter glanced up from the computer and shot from his chair, eyes wide with concern. "What's wrong? What happened?"

"I went to get the mail . . . and this was in the box."

She held up a rifle bullet and a small piece of paper. The note bore a single sentence.

"Bullets are cheap."

Intimidation is the art and technique of persuading others through the use of fear. Your character can intimidate someone with a show of brute force (Strength + Intimidation), through more subtle means such as verbal threats (Manipulation + Intimidation), or simply through menacing body language (Presence + Intimidation). It can be used to get other people to cooperate (even against their better judgment), back down from a confrontation, or reveal information that they'd rather not share.

Possessed by: Bodyguards, bouncers, gangsters, executives, police officers, interrogators, and soldiers

Specialties: Bluster, Physical Threats, Stare-Downs, Torture, and Veiled Threats

Persuasion: Can you con your enemies?

Melissa put on her best “Please?” face, the one that always worked on her father. She needed access to the stacks in the basement library, the old archives that were reserved for “special studies.” She now recognized that meant “the coven’s rituals,” but she couldn’t let on.

She found the head librarian Mister Richards in the Humanities section and pleaded her desperate case. “If I don’t do well on this paper, I’ll flunk Philosophy. Professor Ingram talked about some first editions in the archives. If I can quote them, maybe I’ll get extra credit.”

The kindly old librarian’s eyes seemed to soften with pity. “All right, my dear. Let me get the key,” he said. In truth, it was Melissa’s physical assets that impressed him.



Persuasion is the art of inspiring or changing minds through logic, charm, or sheer, glib fast-talking. Although it can be taught to varying degrees of success, most characters with the Skill possess a natural talent and have honed it over years through trial and error, practicing their delivery until it rolls effortlessly off the tongue. Persuasion is the Skill of convincing others by force of personality alone, making one’s point through carefully chosen words, body language, and emotion.

Possessed by: Con artists, executives, generals, lawyers, politicians, salesmen, and sexual predators

Specialties: Fast-Talking, Inspiring Troops, Motivational Speeches, Sales Pitches, and Seduction

Socialize: Do you know how to behave in public?

The receiving line stretched out past the ballroom and down the mansion hall. Julia stood close to Stapleton near the end of the line. She wrapped her stole around her bare shoulders and tried not to shiver. “How long is this going to take? I’m freezing.”

Stapleton smiled. He looked like a picture out of a 1940s fashion magazine, poised and comfortable in his tailored tuxedo.

"I don't expect it to take more than half an hour," he said, eyeing the procession. "Everyone wants to get to dinner and start sampling the wine. By the time we get to Chancellor Martin, almost everyone else will be seated, giving us plenty of time for our . . . conversation. Just make sure you have the amulet ready."

Socialize reflects your character's ability to interact with others in a variety of situations, from talking people up at bars to acting with dignity at state dinners. This Skill represents equal parts gregariousness, sensitivity, etiquette, and custom. Knowing how to make friends is no less important than understanding how to treat guests in formal situations. Characters with low dots might be naturally entertaining or approachable, but unschooled in the finer arts of social interaction. Or they could have impeccable manners but be difficult to approach. Conversely, characters with high dots could have the social graces of a practiced diplomat or raconteur, knowing just what to say and when to say it in any given situation.

Possessed by: Diplomats, entertainers, executives, politicians, and salesmen

Specialties: Bar Hopping, Dress Balls, Formal Events, Frat Parties, and State Dinners

Streetwise: Can you survive the streets?

There were four kids playing a pick-up game at the basketball court across the street from the tenements. Lisa eyed the neighborhood warily as Gabriel stepped up to the edge of the court. "How exactly is this supposed to help?" she asked worriedly.

"Chill out," Gabriel said and turned. "Hey, Carlos!" He raised his hand and waved at one of the kids. Carlos stopped and tossed the ball to a friend before trotting over.

Lisa's eyes widened. "Are you kidding me? This kid's 12 years old!"

"It's not him we're dealing with, it's his brother," Gabriel whispered as the boy approached. "Carlos is the cutout. We tell him what we need and he names a price. Watch and learn."

Characters possessing this Skill know how life on the streets works and are adept at surviving by its harsh rules. Streetwise characters can gather information, make contacts, buy and sell on the black market, and otherwise make use of the street's unique resources. The Skill is also important for navigating urban dangers, avoiding the law, and staying on the right side of the wrong people.

Possessed by: Criminals, gangsters, homeless people, private investigators, and police officers

Specialties: Black Market, Gangs, Rumors, and Undercover Operations

Subterfuge: Do you deceive?

Simon stepped into the lobby, a bored look on his face. He ignored the cameras and the security guards near the elevators. Guards expected people to behave like sheep, unknowing and unaware of what was going on around them. Overly alert, fidgety sorts were the kind of people who drew their attention.

The guard at the reception desk glanced at Simon as he stepped up to the sign-in book. "Can I help you, sir?"

"I'm here to see Mr. Moran in suite 702," Simon said, scrawling a name in the register. He briefly made eye contact with the guard. "Busy day," he said noncommittally.

The guard nodded and reached for a visitor pass. "The third elevator on the left will take you right up."

"Thank you," Simon replied, clipping the badge to his lapel and joining the crowd of other businessmen congregating at the elevators. The worst was over.

Subterfuge is the art of deception. Characters possessing this Skill know how to lie convincingly, and they recognize when they're being lied to. Subterfuge is used when telling a convincing falsehood, hiding one's emotions or reactions, or trying to pick up on the same in others. The Skill is most often used to trick other people, but characters also learn it to avoid being tricked themselves.

Possessed by: Actors, con artists, grifters, lawyers, politicians, and teenagers

Specialties: Con Jobs, Hiding Emotions, Lying, Misdirection, and Spotting Lies

Chapter 12

Choosing Your Character's Disciplines

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding vampire Disciplines
 - ▶ Knowing the rules for using the powers
 - ▶ Elaborating on the special rolls made for Disciplines
-

Much debate occurs over the nature of Disciplines among the Kindred community. Many young vampires who are unfamiliar with the price that the Embrace demands of their souls see only the upside of Disciplines, thinking of them as powers they can wield over mortals. Remorseful vampires, as well as those grounded in traditional or religious belief, see Disciplines as edges granted by whoever created vampires so that they can more effectively fulfill that plan. Others consider Disciplines their own ends, as compensation for the hardships of their nocturnal existence. The truth, of course, remains unknown.



The Discipline powers described in this chapter range from one to three dots, but truly capable or old vampires can have powers rated as high as five dots. Three is as high as a starting character is able to achieve. For higher degrees of potency, see the *Vampire: The Requiem* game book.

Using Disciplines

Among each clan's three Disciplines is one that is listed for no other clan. These individual powers are presented in *italic* in the five clan descriptions. For example, the *Daeva* is the only group with *Majesty* listed as a clan

Discipline. Such special Disciplines allow members of each clan immediate access to a particular vampiric power. That Discipline is one of the things that makes each clan unique.

The basic system for using a Discipline is a bit different from the standard dice-pool mechanic. An appropriate Attribute and Skill is used, but the character's mastery of the Discipline adds dice to the pool. The result is a pool composed of three traits instead of the usual two. For example, the first Discipline power in this chapter is Feral Whispers under Animalism. The power lists Manipulation as its requisite Attribute and Animal Ken as its requisite Skill. If a character has Manipulation 2, Animal Ken 3, and Animalism 4, you roll nine dice to determine success of using Feral Whispers. Some power uses even involve penalties to dice rolled, such as for a victim's effort to resist the vampire's power. These modifiers are listed as numbers to be subtracted under the section, "Dice Pool."

A character may use only those Discipline powers that are available at her level of mastery of a given Discipline and below. Thus, a character with Dominate 3 can use the Discipline's level-one, -two, and -three powers. A character with Dominate 2 can use the Discipline's level-one and -two powers.



Some powers have a cost to be activated: usually one Vitae. Spend that point whenever your character uses one of these powers.

Animalism

Although most look human, all the Kindred conceal within them a feral predator — a Beast that divides all others into only two categories: threat or prey. Some Kindred feel their affinity with the animals of the world and their connection with their own animalistic nature to a greater degree than others. These Kindred often develop the Discipline of Animalism, which allows them to bond with the beasts — and the Beasts — around them.

• *Feral Whispers*

The Kindred with the Feral Whispers ability can understand the lesser creatures that surround her and speak with them. The vampire must initiate eye contact with the animal in question; doing so forges a strong empathic bond between Kindred and beast, allowing communication. The vampire may whisper to the animal in her own language (or any language she knows), or she may hiss, bark, chirp, or make whatever sounds the animal uses to express itself. In return, she can understand the animal's sounds.

Note that while Feral Whispers makes sure that the animal communicates with the vampire, it does not compel the creature to obey commands or perform tasks.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Animal Ken + Animalism

Action: Instant

●● *Obedience*

Having mastered the ability to commune with beasts, the Kindred's connection with his own feral nature now allows him to command them as well. He demands and the animals obey as best they can.

The vampire must make eye contact and convey to an animal precisely what he wants it to do. Once it has received an order, the animal carries it out, assuming it can be completed before the following sunrise. It is extremely difficult to order an animal to do anything blatantly against its nature (such as ordering a sparrow to attack someone) or obviously self-destructive (such as forcing a guard dog to lie down in front of a moving truck).

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Presence + Animal Ken + Animalism – animal's Composure

Action: Instant

●●● *Call of the Wild*

The Kindred is so fully in tune with her own Beast that she can call out in a feral voice — howling, hissing, cawing — that beckons all creatures of a specific type. Any animal of that sort within a given area is compelled to respond, immediately moving toward the Kindred at its fastest possible speed via the most direct route it can find. Only animals that can hear the call are summoned.

Animals that respond to the Kindred's call are not automatically under her control, but they are more easily subjected to other Animalism powers. The Storyteller determines how many animals respond based on the environment. Hundreds or thousands of rats might appear in an inner city, for example, while no hawks or coyotes would.



Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Animal Ken + Animalism

Action: Instant



Auspex

The Auspex Discipline is potent. It grants a character superlative sensory capabilities. At the lowest levels it sharpens a Kindred's senses. As one progresses in mastery, entirely new avenues of insight open up before the user. Precious little can be kept secret from a true master of Auspex.

• *Heightened Senses*

When the Heightened Senses power is activated, all the vampire's senses sharpen to a razor's edge, effectively doubling both the range and clarity of all stimuli received. Heightened eyesight allows the vampire to perceive the

most minute details of objects at great distances, and a heightened sense of smell may alert a character to the presence of trace amounts of alcohol on a mortal's breath. (Vampires do not breathe. As such, the Kindred do not smell unless they actively will themselves to do so.) This power allows a vampire to see in pitch-black darkness.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: This power typically involves no roll. The player simply activates the power and explains to the Storyteller what his character is doing and with which sense(s).

Action: Instant

●● *Aura Perception*

A vampire can open his perceptions to the psychic auras that surround all sentient creatures. Numerous and often-shifting hues and patterns compose these auras, and it can take many years before a vampire becomes truly proficient at reading them correctly with any degree of regularity. Although the strongest emotions predominate, almost every individual has more than one color to his aura at any given time, and an observer can see any number of streaks or flashes of these other colors. As a rule, the more powerful the emotions, the more intense the colors. Due to the peculiar nature of such creatures' auras, this power can be used as a means of detecting other supernatural entities. Vampire auras, for example, tend to be extremely pale, regardless of the colors. An Auspex user who observes someone in the act of lying may recognize that the subject speaks falsely by the person's aura.

Clash of wills

Although Auspex is a potent Discipline, a given Kindred's execution of it is not always flawless. Other supernatural powers and abilities can cloud or contest the power of Auspex, the most common of these being Obfuscate — the direct opposite of Auspex, in many ways.

The heart of any Auspex-versus-Obfuscate contest is a clash of mighty wills, for both powers

stem from and rely upon the power of the Kindred mind. When a character with Auspex uses his acute senses to see through another's Obfuscate, make a contested roll of Wits + Investigation + Auspex versus Resolve + Stealth + Obfuscate. Whoever accumulates the most successes wins the battle of wills. Ties go to the defender.

Sample Aura Signifiers

Condition	Color	Condition	Color
Afraid	Orange	Generous	Rose
Bitter	Brown	Hateful	Black
Compassionate	Pink	Idealistic	Yellow
Depressed	Gray	Obsessed	Bright green
Envious	Dark green	Spiritual	Gold

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Empathy + Auspex – subject's Composure

Action: Instant (Although this is an instant action, it takes more than just a fleeting glance to see the detail in an aura. A character must scrutinize her subject's aura for two full turns to glean information from it, though only the single, immediate roll is necessary to determine if she can read it successfully.)

●●● *The Spirit's Touch*

Your Kindred's powers of perception have progressed to the point that he can pick up psychic impressions from objects simply by handling them for a moment or two. Such impressions can tell your vampire who last held the object, when it was last held, and even what was done with it in the past. These psychic impressions typically come in the form of quick and cryptic images.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Auspex

Action: Instant

Celerity

Tales and legends of vampires ascribe to them inhuman speed, the ability to move faster than the eye can see, and even to appear in two places at once.

While some of those accounts are exaggerated, Kindred with the Discipline of Celerity can indeed move far faster than any mortal. They appear to blur into nothingness, and all others move as if in slow motion by comparison.

Cost: 1 Vitae per turn

Dice Pool: N/A

Celerity is unlike many other Disciplines in that it is not actively rolled. Rather, it provides a group of benefits, many of which affect other rolls.

Celerity cannot be invoked more than once per turn. Your dots in the Discipline are subtracted from *any and all* attackers' dice pools, as your vampire moves much more quickly than normal and is harder to hit. This penalty to attackers' pools applies in addition to any armor and Defense.

Celerity also adds to a character's Initiative during the turn in which it is active. A character with Celerity 3 and Initiative 5 would have a basic Initiative modifier of 8 during turns in which his Celerity is active.

Finally, Celerity acts as a modifier to a character's Speed while it is active. His Speed increases by itself again for each dot of Celerity he possesses. A character with Speed 10 and Celerity • moves 20 yards per turn. At Celerity •• he moves 30 yards per turn.

Action: Reflexive

Dominate

Some Kindred are capable of overwhelming the minds of others with their own force of will, influencing actions and even thoughts. Use of Dominate requires a character to capture a victim's gaze. The Discipline can therefore be used on only one subject at a time. No matter how powerful a vampire is, she cannot force her victim to obey if she cannot make herself understood — if, for example, the victim doesn't speak the same language, she cannot hear, or the orders simply make no sense.

Note that victims of Dominate might realize what's been done to them. That is, they do not automatically sense that they are being controlled, but they might subsequently wonder why they suddenly acted as they did. Wise Kindred, especially those familiar with Dominate, are likely to figure it out while they're being subjected to it, and few vampires take kindly to being manipulated in such a fashion. Most Kindred who develop Dominate are forceful, controlling personalities, and they can make a bad reputation if they use this Discipline too frequently.

• *Command*

Once he has established eye contact, your vampire issues a single, one-word command that must be obeyed instantly. The order must be clear and straightforward — freeze, jump, run, stop, fall, cough, blink, and so on. Subjects of Command cannot be made to directly harm themselves, so an obviously suicidal order such as “Die!” is ineffective. The vampire may include the command word in a sentence to conceal her use of the power from others. The command itself must be stressed. Observers may notice the unusual emphasis, but only the most alert — and those familiar with the Discipline — are likely to realize what has occurred.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation + Dominate versus Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

•• *Mesmerize*



The source of many legends of the vampire’s hypnotic gaze, Mesmerize allows your Kindred to implant a false thought or suggestion into the subject’s subconscious mind. The power requires not only eye contact but intense concentration and precise wording, so both the character and the subject must be free from distraction. The Kindred may activate the imposed thought or command immediately — “Walk over here and open the door” — or he may establish a stimulus that activates the suggestion at a later date — “When you see a man in a blue suit with a red rose in his lapel, you will spill your drink on him.” This power lasts for as long as it takes the subject to carry out the required task, or until the character is destroyed or enters torpor. Impossible actions such as, “Count every grain of sand on this beach,” automatically fail to take root in the subject’s mind.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Expression + Dominate versus Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested

●●● *The Forgetful Mind*

A vampire with this power can literally delve into a subject's mind, stealing or reshaping memories at whim. The power requires eye contact. The Forgetful Mind does not allow for telepathic contact. Instead, the vampire acts much like a hypnotist, asking direct questions to draw answers from the subject and then describing in detail any new memories she wishes to impose on the victim. Simple alterations such as blurring brief and recent memories are easy enough (and very effective for eliminating evidence of feeding). More comprehensive alterations, up to and including a complete reconstruction of the victim's past and even identity, are possible albeit substantially more difficult.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Wits + Persuasion + Dominate – Resolve

Action: Extended (1-100+ successes, based on the detail and complexity of memory; each roll represents five minutes of mental manipulation)

Majesty

One of the most legendary powers of the undead is the ability to attract, sway, and control the emotions of others — especially those of mortals. Unlike some other Disciplines, Majesty can be used on entire crowds of targets simultaneously, making it even more potent — in the right hands. The only requirement for use of most Majesty powers is that any potential targets see the character. Eye contact is not required, nor is the ability to hear the character (but it certainly doesn't hurt).

The downside to Majesty, such as it is, is that its subjects retain their free will. Unlike victims of Dominate, who follow the commands of the Kindred nearly mindlessly, those acting under Majesty are simply emotionally predisposed to do whatever the power (or its user) suggests.

● *Awe*

This power makes the user seem exponentially more charismatic and magnetic than he normally is. The force of his personality issues forth in waves, drawing people to him like moths to a flame. Whatever the vampire says,

people are likely to lend serious credence to his position and views, and even the staunchest opponents gladly hear him out. Awe can often turn the tide in a tense negotiation, tipping the scales from “potentially” to “definitely.”

The number of successes you roll is compared to the Composure of each intended subject. If the number of successes exceeds a given target’s Composure, that subject is affected by the character’s powerful personality. If a subject’s Composure is equal to or higher than the number of successes earned, that subject goes unaffected. Your character may not single out an individual subject in a crowd to Awe. He simply “turns on the charm” and lets it work its magic.

As with other Majesty powers, Awe ceases to be useful when more pressing matters come to the fore. Personal safety always takes precedence, and any commotion pulls even the most rapt listener from his reverie of attention.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression + Majesty

Action: Instant

●● *Revelation*

The allure and reassurance of a Kindred with this power is enough to make others forego caution and share their innermost feelings and secrets. A few complimentary or compassionate words or a heartfelt look from the vampire can break down a person’s prudence and fear, inspiring a desire to share deep feelings or dark secrets in an upwelling of affection or release.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion + Majesty versus subject’s Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Contested

●●● *Entrancement*

This power is perhaps the closest thing that Majesty gets to serious command over the thoughts of another. Its power warps the emotional state of



the subject, making him a willing servant of the vampire. Subjects retain their sense of identity and free will, believing that every instinct to serve and admire comes of their own volition. When the duration of an Entrancement ends, however, confusion and displacement arise, often leading to mixed feelings. Similar to falling out of love, re-entrancing a former “lover” is difficult at best.

If you get sufficient successes, the subject falls under your vampire’s sway for an hour or so — long enough to complete a single task or set of tasks. When a period of effect wears off, the subject does not necessarily bear the vampire any ill will. After all, he has no idea that something unnatural has taken place. He merely comes to the conclusion that he no longer feels the way he once did for the character (even if “once” was an hour ago). At this time, he likely returns to going about his own life, content with never seeing the vampire again.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Majesty versus subject’s Composure + Blood Potency

Action: Contested

Nightmare

There’s no question that one of the foremost powers of legendary vampires is the ability to strike fear in the hearts of mortal men. Also born of mortal existence, other now-supernatural beings are susceptible. Fear is a fact of existence that transcends any origins.

Vampires who delve into the dark side of their being — often exploring the Beast or what it means to be monstrous — invest in the Discipline of Nightmare. They learn to bear that which is terrifying or unholy about their spirits, manifesting their inhumanity in their appearance or letting unfortunate onlookers peer deep into the creatures’ depraved souls.

• *Monstrous Countenance*

The true face of a vampire is a frightening thing, indeed — made all the more terrifying by the assistance of this entirely unsubtle Nightmare power. When a Kindred activates Monstrous Countenance, he does so in conjunction with a ferocious baring of fangs and a raspy, malevolent hiss. The result is a visage most foul, one that can make stalwart foes cower at the vampire's feet.



For a group of observers, the Storyteller rolls the highest Composure of the crowd as an indicator of the group's reaction. Victims run as fast as they can for one turn per success rolled for your vampire.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Nightmare versus subject's Composure + Blood Potency (The Nosferatu clan weakness does not apply to the Discipline user's roll.)

Action: Contested

•• *Dread*

While an outward, physical manifestation can strike fear in onlookers, it is an overt, blunt means by which to prey upon the weak. More insidious and subtle is a general sense of unease, rising panic, and paranoia that a vampire can engender with this power. Gloom, disquiet, and uncertainty creep into the hearts of people around the vampire. Anyone within three yards per Willpower dot that the vampire possesses can be affected. One contested roll may be made reflexively for a crowd of prospective victims — probably mortals — based on the highest Composure among them. Victims suffer a -2 penalty on all actions while in your character's presence.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Nightmare versus subject's Composure + Blood Potency (The Nosferatu clan weakness does not apply to the Discipline user's roll.)

Action: Contested

●●● *Eye of the Beast*

The terrifying nature of the Beast is a horrific reminder of the fundamental predator-prey dichotomy of existence. Shown the Beast, another being is reduced to the most primal of instincts, foregoing all reason and cunning in the face of primeval horror. The vampire makes eye contact with a subject and reveals the inner core of the Kindred's being. The Beast looks hungrily upon the subject and invokes a reaction appropriate to that person's nature. If a mortal is subjected to this power, she is paralyzed with fear while in your vampire's presence. If another vampire is subjected to this power, he is subject to intense fear and flees.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Presence + Empathy + Nightmare versus subject's Composure + Blood Potency (The Nosferatu clan weakness does not apply to the Discipline user's roll.)

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive

Obfuscate

Vampires are creatures of stealth. From hiding minute objects to the ability to appear as someone else to the power to fade from sight entirely, the Discipline of Obfuscate grants the Kindred uncanny powers of concealment, stealth, and deception.

It's important to note that Obfuscate affects the viewer's mind rather than making any true physical change to the vampire. Thus, the Discipline is not effective at cloaking a character from mechanical devices. Photographs, video cameras, and the like record the normal blurred image that all vampires leave in such media, not the assumed appearance. Obfuscate *does* affect any individual currently using the recording device, however, so someone videotaping an Obfuscated vampire sees the illusion when looking through the lens, discovering the truth only later when he reviews the tape itself.

Some Kindred with Auspex are able to see through Obfuscate, or at least to sense the presence of a supernatural deception. Refer to the "Clash of wills" sidebar earlier in this chapter for details.

• *Touch of Shadow*

Touch of Shadow is the first level of Obfuscate. It allows your vampire to conceal small items, either in her grasp or on her person. If she is skilled enough, a thorough search fails to turn up a hidden object. If the roll succeeds, the item goes undetected. Perhaps a careful search such as a pat-down or close examination reveals it, along with a Wits + Composure roll. Successes from this roll must exceed those rolled for the activation of the power.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Wits + Larceny + Obfuscate

Action: Instant

•• *Mask of Tranquility*

Your Kindred masters the art of hiding himself to such a degree that he may subvert some of the stains that undeath leaves upon his soul. A vampire who knows this power can mask his Kindred nature from onlookers, leaving them without the impression that the Predator's Taint inflicts.

Tranquility involves no roll, and is considered "always on." The character does not trigger the Predator's Taint. Therefore, the character doesn't even appear as a vampire to other Kindred who see him. Kindred who can discern auras fail to register the vampire as undead; his aura is no different from a mortal's (the colors are not pale like a normal Kindred's). Note that this power doesn't render the user immune to the Predator's Taint himself; he merely doesn't cause the reaction in others. Uses of Auspex may call this power into question — see the "Clash of wills" sidebar earlier in this chapter.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: N/A

Action: N/A

••• *Cloak of Night*

An essential expression of the Kindred's secretive nature, Cloak of Night allows a vampire to literally fade from sight, becoming completely invisible to observers even under direct observation. Successful use of Cloak of Night

renders the character invisible until and unless he does something to draw attention (launching an attack, smashing a window, shouting a warning), in which case the cloak drops.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Stealth + Obfuscate

Action: Instant

Protean



Easily one of the most overtly spectacular of the gifts of the Damned, the Discipline of Protean is the study of physical metamorphosis and transformation. Protean allows its masters to assume virtually any form or shape.

Because the core of a vampire's self doesn't alter with his shape, a transformed Kindred can generally take any action or use any Discipline that his new form can reasonably allow. Gangrel in the form of a cloud of mist, for example, can read auras (the sense of sight doesn't vanish), but cannot Dominate someone effectively (as the prerequisite eye contact can no longer be established). A vampire's clothes and personal effects change shape with him, but he cannot normally transmute especially large objects or other creatures.

Unless stated otherwise, Protean powers — being permanent physical changes — last as long as the vampire wishes them to, or until he is forced into torpor. Any state that prevents the character from taking action (such as being staked) likewise prevents transformation; the vampire needs the freedom to invoke his will.

• *Aspect of the Predator*

The most basic ability of this Discipline allows a vampire to project a supernatural appearance of savage predatory ferocity.

This power involves no roll. A character is not subject to the usual relationships of Blood Potency upon meeting an unknown Kindred for the first time. If the character's Blood Potency is lower than that of the unknown Kindred, treat it as equal. If the character's Blood Potency is equal to or higher than the unknown Kindred, this power has no effect.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: N/A

Action: N/A

●● *Haven of Soil*

Your vampire has learned how to meld his form with soil. When he does so, he is immune to threat of harm from the sun's rays or to any physical attack. While such a character cannot be dug up, any significant disturbance to the area in which he resides alerts the vampire to the presence of intruders. If enough damage is done to the sleeping Kindred's resting place, he returns immediately to corporeal form (and full wakefulness) in a shower of whatever substance he had taken for his haven. No roll is necessary. Becoming one with earth is automatic and takes a character's action in a turn to complete. While in this state, the character's consciousness hovers slightly above the torpor level.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: N/A

Action: Instant

●●● *Claws of the Wild*

Upon activation of the Claws of the Wild power, your vampire's nails grow into long, fearsome talons capable of ripping bone and flesh. This power involves no roll. The wicked claws grow by silent act of will on the part of the vampire and can be sprouted from both a vampire's hands and feet. These ferocious weapons offer a +1 bonus to attack pools in unarmed close combat and inflict aggravated damage.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: N/A

Action: Reflexive

Resilience

Legends abound of vampires who are able to withstand even the most brutal punishment to their unliving forms. Vampires with several dots of Resilience are capable of walking through a hail of bullets, shrugging off the most punishing blows, and even resisting the deadly claws and fangs of supernatural foes.

Resilience is not rolled. Each dot of Resilience automatically increases your character's Stamina by one for the scene in which the Discipline is active. This bonus also increases your character's Health dots during the scene. Resilience may not be invoked more than once per scene. That is, you may not spend a second Vitae and double the benefits of the power. Resilience also "downgrades" a number of aggravated damage points per scene equal to your Resilience dots. This damage becomes lethal instead.

Cost: 1 Vitae per scene

Dice Pool: N/A

Action: Instant

Vigor

Nearly every vampire legend across the globe expresses the preternatural strength possessed by the undead. In truth, not all Kindred possess such inhuman might, but the Discipline of Vigor makes those who do far more powerful than any mortal could ever hope to be. Vigor is not rolled. Each dot of Vigor increases your character's Strength by one while the Discipline is active. Vigor cannot be invoked more than once per scene. That is, you may not spend a second Vitae and double the benefits of the power. Note also that certain derived traits (such as Speed) might also be affected by the use of Vigor.

Cost: 1 Vitae per scene

Dice Pool: N/A

Action: Instant



Chapter 13

Determining Your Character's Advantages

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding physical, mental, and emotional advantages
 - ▶ Choosing Virtues and Vices that reflect your character's identity
-

Advantages are aspects of your character that set him apart from his peers, for better or for worse. For example, a strong will or a talent for ducking danger are benefits in a rough and uncertain world. As your character develops throughout game play, his advantages can increase to exceptional levels.

Most advantages are derived traits determined by adding two or more Attributes together. Others, such as Humanity and Size, have a base value with which all characters begin play.

Purchasing Blood Potency

Blood Potency determines how much power a vampire gains from the Blood. Having more dots of Blood Potency allows characters to learn more advanced Disciplines and to develop their traits to superhuman levels. Vampires with more dots in this advantage can hold more Vitae within their bodies because the Blood is more concentrated. In short, the higher a character's Blood Potency, the greater her potential.

All newly Embraced vampires start at Blood Potency 1, regardless of their sire's potency, with nowhere to go but up. You can purchase Blood Potency during character creation as a Merit (at three Merit-equivalent points per

dot). Players who want their characters to start with more dots of Blood Potency must thoroughly explain what in their character's history justifies the additional dots and have it approved by the Storyteller before play begins.



As Blood Potency increases, feeding requirements become more stringent. Some elders' blood is so potent that they can't feed on mortals at all, requiring the Vitae of other vampires to nourish them. Only those with the fewest dots of Blood Potency can feed from animals.

Only blood of potency a certain degree lower than a character's can provide sustenance (see Table 13-1). The Max Vitae column indicates how many Vitae a vampire can contain, total, based on his rising Blood Potency.

<i>Blood Potency</i>	<i>Max Vitae</i>	<i>Vampires Can Feed From . . .</i>
1	10	Animals
2	11	Animals
3	12	Humans

Putting on a Good Defense

Traits: Your character's Defense is equal to his Dexterity or Wits, whichever is lower.

Your character's Defense trait is applied as a negative modifier to his opponent's rolls for Brawl, Weaponry, and thrown-weapon (Dexterity + Athletics) attacks. If he is assaulted by multiple attackers, his full Defense trait is applied to one attacker and then his trait is reduced by one for each subsequent attack. Your character's Defense cannot normally be used against Firearms (gun and bow-based) attacks, unless they're conducted within close-combat range (one to two yards). Defense does not apply if your character is taken by surprise or is immobilized.

Example: *Sims finds himself in a barroom brawl with three bikers. His Dexterity is 4 and his Wits is 2. Taking the lower of the two Attributes, his Defense trait is 2. As the bikers wade in, Sims does his best to avoid their swings. The first biker*

suffers a -2 modifier to his attack roll — Sims' full Defense — while the second biker incurs only a -1 modifier. The third attacker is unaffected because Sims has no Defense left to avoid the assailant's punch.



Defense is not affected by wound penalties.

Determining Your Health Trait

Traits: Stamina + Size

A character's Health trait reflects his body's capacity to cope with injury and remain functional. As your character suffers damage, whether accidentally or in combat, each point of damage inflicted lowers his Health by one. When your character's Health points are reduced to three, he suffers a negative modifier to his dice pools. As his Health points continue to decrease, this negative modifier increases as he is slowly overcome by shock and physical trauma. When all of your character's Health points are marked off as aggravated damage, he is dead. The larger and more robust a character is, the more damage he can withstand before dying.

Health is marked on your character sheet and has both a permanent and a temporary rating. Your character's permanent rating is filled in on the dots of your character sheet. His temporary points are recorded in the corresponding boxes. Every time your character loses a Health point to damage, mark off the kind of injury inflicted from left to right.

As your character's Stamina increases through the use of experience points or through temporary supernatural enhancements, his Health increases as well. Don't forget to adjust your character's Health dots when his Stamina changes. For more information on gaining Experience points, see Chapter 21.

Taking Initiative

Traits: Dexterity + Composure

Your character's Initiative trait reflects her reaction time and ability to think on her feet in a crisis. When the Storyteller calls for an Initiative roll, you roll one die and add the result to your character's Initiative trait. The total determines the order in which your character interacts with all other participants of the scene.

Once you roll your character's Initiative, the number does not change through the course of the scene. She always acts after characters with a higher total and before those with a lower total. In the event of a tie between two characters, the character with the highest Initiative trait goes first. If both Initiative traits are the same, roll a die for each with the highest roll going first.



If your character's Dexterity or Composure increases during play, don't forget to adjust her Initiative, as well.

Being in Touch with Your Humanity

Base Value: 7

The change from life to undeath affects more than a person's body. It changes the soul. A Kindred shares his human consciousness with a force completely opposite to humanity — a thing devoid of reason, conscience, or any emotions except hunger and rage. Kindred call it the Beast. The Beast follows a simple plan: Hunt. Kill. Feed. Sleep. Repeat. It feels no pity, only thirst for blood. It cannot even speak.

The presence of the Beast changes the very nature of morality for vampires. The Kindred can pretend to be human, but they are not. Even the most evil mortal does not have a Beast. A vampire's existence is a constant struggle between the Man, the aspect of a Kindred that can make moral choices, and the Beast, which cannot.

Your character's Humanity is not fixed. Depending on his actions, it can increase or decrease during play. A starting character has a Humanity of 7. He has the potential to become more selfless and virtuous, or can fall quickly into the depths of barbarism. The course he follows depends entirely on the choices he makes during the course of your game.

Losing Humanity dots — degeneration rolls

If a character commits a sin equal to or worse than the threshold of his current Humanity trait, roll the number of dice associated with the sin performed to avoid degeneration. If the roll succeeds, the character's overall sense of compassion remains intact, and his Humanity does not change. If the degeneration roll fails, your character's sense of right and wrong is altered

by his experience and he loses a point of Humanity. His soul hardens to the needs of others and he becomes inured to greater acts of selfishness or violence.

Table 13-2 shows the effects of sinful degeneration on your character's Humanity rating.

Table 13-2		
Humanity and Sin		
<i>Humanity</i>	<i>Sin</i>	<i>Roll</i>
10	Selfish thoughts	Five dice
9	Minor selfish act (withholding charity)	Five dice
8	Injury to another (accidental or otherwise)	Four dice
7	Petty theft (shoplifting)	Four dice
6	Grand theft (burglary)	Three dice
5	Intentional, mass property damage (arson)	Three dice
4	Impassioned crime (manslaughter)	Three dice
3	Planned crime (murder)	Two dice
2	Casual/callous crime (serial murder)	Two dice
1	Utter perversion, heinous act (mass murder)	Two dice

Example: *Joan has a Humanity of 7. Referring to the Table 13-2, she does not risk degeneration unless she commits a deliberate act of petty theft or worse. She loses her job during play. Her savings run out and she is about to be thrown out of her apartment. One evening she walks downtown and notices that someone has left his wallet in his open car. Desperate, she reaches through the car window and steals the wallet. This crime (petty theft) is equal to the threshold of her current Humanity, so a degeneration roll must be made to determine if Joan loses a Humanity point. Petty theft allows for a roll of four dice.*

If Joan had committed an impassioned crime such as manslaughter to get some money (a sin more severe than what Joan's 7 Humanity can tolerate), her player would have rolled three dice to see if Joan suffered degeneration.

As a character's Humanity slips lower, she becomes deranged, more of a monster, and capable of virtually any depraved act. When a Humanity point is lost because of a sin, roll your character's *new* Humanity trait as a dice

pool. If the roll succeeds, she finds balance or existence at her new state of spiritual and ethical standing. If the roll fails, she manifests a derangement. Derangements are mental and emotional ailments or conditions, in this case brought on by your character's stress, grief, or even remorselessness over acts performed. Derangements are covered at length later in this chapter.



If your character develops a derangement, you and the Storyteller can decide which is appropriate based on the circumstances. An avoidance condition may set in whenever your character enters a situation that reminds her of the sin she committed. If she decided to harm a child and paid the emotional price, being around children may cause her to mentally escape.

On your character sheet, write the derangement gained on the line associated with the Humanity trait to which she has fallen. If your character manifests a fixation when she drops from 6 to 5 Humanity, write "Fixation" on the line associated with 5 Humanity.

Repeated degeneration and Humanity rolls that fail cause your character to incur more and more or worse and worse conditions. If a character descends so far that her Humanity drops to zero, she can no longer be played in any meaningful way. She becomes a true monster, inflicting pain and suffering on everyone around her without the slightest hint of remorse and no hope of redemption. At that point, control of the character passes to the Storyteller.



Regaining Humanity



The Storyteller has the option of awarding a Humanity point at the end of a story if your character performs a particularly redeeming, generous, or self-effacing act. The deed can't have been performed with the intent to regain Humanity, to alleviate a derangement, or to gain any personal reward. In fact, the character probably suffers repercussions for the deed, but gains some solace in having done the right thing. A character who commits a theft or murder might turn herself in, for example. Or someone who steals may not keep the rewards, distributing them among the needy instead. A character can regain only one Humanity point at a time, with a limit of one per story.



A free Humanity award can eliminate a derangement if the sickness corresponds to your character's former rating. If your character suffers narcissism at 5 Humanity, for example, he loses it upon rising to 6 Humanity when a free point is gained. A free Humanity award can also exceed any previous height that a character's trait has reached. If he's currently at 7 and has never gone any higher, for example, an appropriate act of charity or purity could take him to 8.

Determining Size

Base Value: 5 (adult human)

A character's Size is relative to his species (human) and age. The average adult human's Size is 5. A child's is 3. Size is one of the two component values used to determine your character's Health dots (see the section, "Determining Your Health Trait"), which reflect her overall capacity to withstand damage.

Racing with Speed

Traits: Strength + Dexterity + species factor (5 for adult humans, 3 for human children; see below for other examples)

Your character's Speed is the number of yards she can travel in a single turn and still perform an action. This trait is a combination of her Strength (lean muscle mass), Dexterity (coordination and agility), and a species factor that reflects her age, physical configuration, Size, and other considerations. Your character can also run at up to double her Speed in a turn, but can usually take no other action. Other species such as horses and cheetahs have physical configurations that lend themselves to high travel rates.

Table 13-3	Speed Factors
<i>Factor</i>	<i>Species</i>
1	Turtle
3	Human child
5	Human adult
8	Wolf
10	Caribou
12	Horse
15	Cheetah



If your character's Strength or Dexterity changes through the use of experience points (see Chapter 21) or through temporary enhancement during the course of a story, her Speed changes as well. If you change your character's Strength or Dexterity, don't forget to adjust her Speed.

Testing Your Willpower

Traits: Resolve + Composure

Willpower measures your character's self-confidence, determination, and emotional resilience. A character with a high Willpower is focused, driven to achieve his goals, and capable of resisting his dark impulses.

Willpower is rated on a scale from 1 to 10 and has both permanent dots and temporary points. Your character's permanent score is filled in on the dots on your character sheet. His temporary points are recorded in the corresponding boxes. When a temporary point is spent, just check off a box. When dots and checked boxes are equal, your character is out of Willpower. When your character regains a Willpower point, a check is erased from one of the boxes on your sheet.

Willpower is not rolled. Points are spent for various effects, mostly representing sheer determination in overcoming obstacles in your character's path. They can also be spent to gain bonuses to resist forces applied against your character. Characters with no Willpower points left are exhausted — physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Spending Willpower points

Willpower represents the ability to succeed through sheer determination. Only one Willpower point can be spent per turn to achieve any one of the following effects.

- ✔ You can spend a point of Willpower to gain a +3 modifier on a roll during a turn. Only one dice pool can be affected per turn. You cannot spend a point of Willpower to gain a bonus on a degeneration or Humanity roll.
- ✔ A Willpower point can be spent to add two to your character's Stamina, Resolve, Composure, or Defense to resist mental or social/emotional pressures asserted on him or to avoid being harmed.

Regaining Willpower points



The Storyteller decides when characters recover Willpower during a story. Storytellers should tailor recovery to suit the story, keeping in mind that it's a powerful and useful trait. Characters shouldn't be allowed to regain it too quickly, or else players may abuse its effects.

Your character can recover lost Willpower in four ways. Willpower points can never exceed your character's Willpower dots.

- ✔ Your character may regain one Willpower point per scene if her actions play out in a manner appropriate to her Vice (covered later in this chapter). Your character may regain *all* spent Willpower if her actions play out in a manner appropriate to her Virtue (covered later in this chapter).

The Storyteller decides whether your character's actions are shaped by a Virtue or Vice. She can refuse to award Willpower if your character acts purely for the rules gain and against concept.

- ✔ Your character can regain a point of Willpower after she has had a full day of uninterrupted slumber.
- ✔ If your character achieves a significant goal or performs a particularly impressive act that affirms her sense of confidence, the Storyteller may choose to award a Willpower point.
- ✔ Your character regains all spent Willpower points at the end of a *story*. Not at the end of a game session, but at the conclusion of an overall story.

If your character's Resolve and/or Composure temporarily increases during a game, perhaps as a result of a blood-magic spell, he gains one Willpower point per dot increase. Essentially, he has access to one or more free Willpower dots for the duration of the effect.

Dealing with Derangements

Derangements are behaviors that occur when the mind is forced to confront intolerable or conflicting feelings, such as overwhelming terror or profound guilt. When your character is faced with impressions or emotions that he cannot reconcile, his mind attempts to ease the inner turmoil by stimulating behavior such as megalomania, schizophrenia, or hysteria as an outlet.

The following sections describe some conditions that you may portray for your character. Choose one that best suits your character's identity, or the trauma that inspired the ailment.



Avoidance

When confronted with a situation or person associated with a previous, significant failure or trauma (a long-term rival, an ex-wife, the house in which one suffered a painful childhood), your character prefers not to face the situation and might do everything he can to avoid it.

Depression

If your character fails to achieve a goal (not just fails a roll, but fails to accomplish a desired end, such as getting a job or saving a friend's life), he goes into a bout of depression for the remainder of the scene.

Fixation

If your character fails or succeeds at an important action, such as leaping between buildings or making a getaway in a sports car, he fixates on his loss or victory. In the case of a victory, he becomes a fanatic, spending much of his time researching, observing, or acclaiming an activity or factor that allowed him to succeed. In the case of a defeat, he simmers in anger, cursing a circumstance or trying to devise a method of circumventing it in the future.

Inferiority complex

Whenever your character is subjected to a stressful situation in which the result of a single choice or dice roll can determine success or failure, she might be overcome with such self-doubt that she threatens the outcome. She might need to tell a convincing lie to get out of a dangerous situation or cut a wire to disable a bomb. The weight of the momentous choice is too much for your character and she is flustered, doubting her ability to choose correctly or to perform adequately.

Irrationality

When your character is threatened with violence or suffers extreme tension by being persecuted, challenged, or accused, she reacts without logic or reason. The persecution, challenge, or accusation needs to bear some realistic threat to your character's wellbeing, whether related to finances, emotional security, or social standing. When irrational, your character's only way to comfortably deal with confrontation is to act crazy, in wild hopes that she will scare away her oppressor or at least mitigate her own fears.

Narcissism

When your character *succeeds* at a goal (not simply succeeds in a roll, but achieves a desired end, such as knocking a challenging opponent unconscious

or hacking into a well-protected computer), it goes to his head and pumps up his overweening ego. Your character does not work and play well with others — even if the victory that brings on a bout of narcissism was partly won with their aid. For the remainder of the scene, when called upon to aid in a task your character does so only half-heartedly, unless it's a task focused on his own needs or wants.

Phobia

Your character is scared of a particular type of person, place, or thing, such as lawyers, heights, or spiders. Your character moves away from the object of her phobia. If she must be near it, she can tolerate being no closer than her Speed in yards. If it approaches her, she must move away at least her Speed in distance in her next action.

Suspicion

Anytime your character suffers intentional misfortune at the hands of another, he may become extremely suspicious of *everyone's* motives toward him. *Misfortune* occurs when your character fails an important task due to the intentional intervention of another person — even if it's an ally. Those people whom your character already mistrusts for good reason can still trigger his suspicious nature if they successfully foil his task — everyone then becomes a suspect, plotting to do him wrong. Your character's trust is undermined for the remainder of the scene, regardless of whether or not the person or persons who did him wrong meant any harm. He questions everyone's sincerity and doubts that anyone tries to help him, even if someone saves his life.

Vocalization

Whenever your character is stymied by a quandary and must make an important decision about a course of action, or is under extreme stress, she talks to herself without realizing it. Your character vocalizes her internal monologue but only realizes it if it's pointed out by others. Your character vocalizes even if opponents or rivals can hear. It's hard to keep her thoughts and feelings secret when she speaks them aloud. For example, a rival may demand that she reveal the location of a hidden heirloom. She smirks and think to herself (and unwittingly speaks aloud), "You'll never find it in my hidden wall safe."

Playing Virtues and Vices

Every character starts play with one defining Virtue and one defining Vice, chosen during character creation. Virtue and Vice may clearly reflect your character's background and concept. This is not to say that he may not have other altruistic or despicable qualities, but his defining Virtue and Vice most clearly evoke his identity.



If the Storyteller judges that your character's actions during a *scene* reflect his Vice, he regains one Willpower point that has been spent. If the Storyteller judges that your character's actions during a *game session* reflect his Virtue, he regains all spent Willpower points. Note that these actions must be made in situations that pose some risk to your character, whereby he stands to pay a price for acting according to his Virtue or Vice. Everyday expressions of, say, Faith or Pride are not enough to reaffirm a character's determination or sense of self.

Here are the Virtues your character may reflect:

- ✔ **Charity.** Your character regains all spent Willpower points when she helps another at the risk of loss or harm to herself. It isn't enough to share what your character has in abundance. She must make a real sacrifice in terms of time, possessions, or energy, or she must risk life and limb to help another.
- ✔ **Faith.** Your character regains all spent Willpower points when he is able to forge prevailing or spiritual meaning from chaos and tragedy, and can demonstrate the good that may come from loss at some risk to himself. To do so, he must put himself in harm's way.
- ✔ **Fortitude.** Your character regains all spent Willpower points when he withstands overwhelming or tempting pressure to alter his goals. This does not include temporary distractions from his course of action, only pressure that may cause him to abandon or change his goals altogether.
- ✔ **Hope.** Your character regains all spent Willpower points when she refuses to let others give in to despair, even though doing so risks harming her own goals or well-being. This trait is similar to Fortitude, except that your character tries to prevent *others* from losing hope in their goals. She need not share those goals herself or even be successful in upholding them, but there must be a risk involved.
- ✔ **Justice.** Your character regains all spent Willpower points when he does the right thing at risk of personal loss or setback. The "right thing" can be defined by the letter or spirit of a particular code of conduct, whether it be the United States penal code or a biblical commandment.

- ✔ **Prudence.** Your character regains all spent Willpower points whenever he refuses a tempting course of action by which he could gain significantly. The “temptation” must involve some reward that, by refusing it, might cost him later on.
- ✔ **Temperance.** Your character regains all spent Willpower when he resists a temptation to indulge in an excess of any behavior, whether good or bad, despite the obvious rewards it might offer.

Following are the vices your character may possess:

- ✔ **Envy.** Your character regains one Willpower point when she gains something important from a rival or has a hand in harming that rival’s well-being.
- ✔ **Gluttony.** Your character regains one spent Willpower point whenever he indulges in an addiction or appetite at some risk to himself or a loved one.
- ✔ **Greed.** Your character regains one Willpower point when he acquires something at the expense of another. Gaining it must come at some potential risk (of assault, arrest, or simple loss of peer respect).
- ✔ **Lust.** Your character is consumed by a passion for something. He regains one Willpower point whenever he satisfies his lust or compulsion in a way that victimizes others. A vampire’s need for blood and feeding cannot count as Lust.
- ✔ **Pride.** Your character regains one Willpower point when he exerts his own wants (not needs) over others at some potential risk to himself. This is most commonly the desire for adoration. It can also be the desire to make others do as he commands.
- ✔ **Sloth.** Your character regains one Willpower point when he successfully avoids a difficult task but achieves the same goal nonetheless.
- ✔ **Wrath.** Your character regains one spent Willpower point when he unleashes his anger in a situation where doing so is dangerous. If the fight has already begun, no Willpower points are regained. It must take place in a situation where anger is unwarranted or inappropriate.

Chapter 14

Identifying Your Character's Merits

In This Chapter

- ▶ Interpreting your character's Mental, Physical, and Social Merits
 - ▶ Understanding Vampire-specific Merits
-

Merits are special abilities that add individuality to your character. They're organized alphabetically into four broad categories: Physical, Mental, Social, and Vampire-specific.

Some Merits apply to your character's basic traits to enhance them in particular situations. Some have prerequisites that must be met before they can be purchased. For example, a character with the Gunslinger Merit must have a Dexterity of 3 and Firearms of 3 or higher to be able to accurately fire two weapons at the same time. By the same token, some Merits apply drawbacks that balance out their inherent advantages. A character with the Fame Merit, for example, is treated like a star wherever he goes but has a hard time blending into the crowd.

Each Merit has a number of dots (•) associated with it. These dots represent the number of points that must be spent to purchase the Merit. Some Merits allow for a range of dots (say, • to •••). These allow you to purchase a low rating if it's appropriate to your character concept, or you can start with a low level and increase it over time with experience points, which are explained in Chapter 21.

Mental Merits

Mental Merits typically influence actions and rolls involving other Mental traits, whether Attributes or Skills.



Common Sense (●●●●)

Your character is exceptionally grounded and pragmatic, and can usually be depended upon to make sound, straightforward decisions after thinking through a situation.



The Storyteller can make a reflexive Wits + Composure roll once per chapter for your character if he is about to embark on a disastrous course of action, or if you find yourself at a point in the story where you're completely stumped for ideas. If the roll succeeds, the Storyteller may point out the risks of a particular course, or suggest possible actions that your character can take that might get events back on track.

Danger Sense (●●)

Your character has a well-developed survival instinct that warns him of impending danger. You gain a +2 modifier on reflexive Wits + Composure rolls for your character to detect an impending ambush. This kind of roll is typically made prior to the first turn of a surprise attack.

Eidetic Memory (••)

Your character has a near-photographic memory, being able to recall vast amounts of observed detail with astonishing accuracy. You do not normally need to make a roll for your character to remember an obscure fact or past experience.

Encyclopedic Knowledge (••••)

Your character knows a ton of useful information on a wide variety of topics. You can make an Intelligence + Wits roll any time your character is confronted with a situation or phenomenon outside his normal realm of experience. If the roll is successful, he may recall a “factoid” that he’s heard at some point that may shed light on matters.

Holistic Awareness (•••)

Your character is skilled in the arts of whole-body healing, promoting health and recovery by keeping a person’s entire physiology balanced and strong. Make an Intelligence + Medicine roll once per day when your character spends an hour treating a patient. If the roll is successful, the patient’s healing times that day are halved. Aggravated wounds cannot be treated with this Merit. It cannot be used to treat the wounds of vampires.

Language (•)

Your character knows an additional language besides his own, one that he can read, write, and speak with fluency. You may take this Merit multiple times with different languages.

Physical Merits

Physical Merits typically influence actions and rolls involving other Physical traits, whether Attributes or Skills.

Brawling Dodge (•)

Prerequisites: Strength •• and Brawl •



When your character performs a dodge, you can choose to add his Brawl Skill dots to his Defense *instead* of doubling his Defense. He essentially draws on his training in blocking and evading attacks rather than relying on his raw ability alone. This Merit may provide little benefit to a brawling novice, but it can give the advanced fighter a serious edge.

Direction Sense (•)

Your character has an innate sense of direction that instinctively allows him to remain oriented. He can enter unfamiliar territory and always retrace his steps back to his starting point, and can orient himself to any of the compass points (face north, face south) without references.

Disarm (•)

Prerequisites: Dexterity ••• and Weaponry ••

Your character has refined his Weaponry Skill to the extent that he can use a weapon to disarm opponents in close combat. When making a normal attack,

compare your successes to the opponent's Dexterity. If you get a number of successes equal to or greater than the opponent's Dexterity, you can choose to have your character disarm him instead of doing damage. A weapon lands a number of yards away from the opponent equal to your successes rolled.

Fast Reflexes (• or ••)

Prerequisite: Dexterity •••

Your character's mix of sharp reflexes and steady nerves helps him get the drop on adversaries. You get +1 Initiative per dot in this Merit.

Fighting Finesse (••)

Prerequisites: Dexterity ••• and Weaponry ••

Your character prefers to fight with a chosen weapon in a manner that favors agility over power. With that one weapon (a rapier or katana, for example), you may substitute your character's Dexterity for Strength when you make attack rolls.

Fleet of Foot (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Strength ••

Regardless of your character's physical build, he can run quickly when necessary. You get +1 Speed per dot in this Merit.

Fresh Start (•)

Prerequisite: Fast Reflexes ••

Your character dedicates an action to altering his standing in the Initiative order in the following turn and for all subsequent turns, choosing to insert himself at a new point in the roster, even if it means going first when he went last before. A character must take an action to change his Initiative ranking in subsequent turns. He can do nothing else in that action except move up to his Speed.

Giant (●●●●)

Your character is seven or more feet tall and over 250 pounds. He is +1 Size (and thus +1 Health).

Gunslinger (●●●)

Prerequisites: Dexterity ●●● and Firearms ●●●

Your character's capability and experience with firearms is such that he can accurately fire two pistols at the same time. He can shoot both pistols as a single action during a turn. Your character cannot use his Defense against any attack in the same turn in which he intends to use this Merit.

Iron Stamina (● to ●●●)

Prerequisite: Stamina ●●● or Resolve ●●●

Each dot eliminates a negative modifier (on a one-for-one basis) when resisting the effects of injury. So if all your character's Health boxes are filled (which normally imposes a -3 penalty to his actions), and he has Iron Stamina ●, those penalties are reduced to -2.

Strong Back (●)

Prerequisite: Strength ●●

Your character gains a +1 modifier to actions involving lifting or carrying heavy weights. She can lift and carry much more weight than her build and body type suggests.

Stunt Driver (●●●)

Prerequisite: Dexterity ●●●

Your character can drive a vehicle and perform an unrelated action (such as fire a gun or punch a passenger) in the same turn. Drive rolls may still be necessary for dangerous maneuvers or situations.

Weaponry Dodge (•)

Prerequisites: Strength •• and Weaponry •

When your character performs a dodge, you can choose to add his Weaponry Skill dots to his Defense *instead* of doubling his Defense. He essentially draws on his training in parrying and evading attacks rather than relying on his raw ability alone. While this might provide little benefit to a fencing novice, it can give the advanced fighter an edge.

Social Merits

Social Merits typically influence actions and rolls involving other Social traits, whether Attributes or Skills.

Allies (• to •••••)

Allies are people who are willing to help your character from time to time. They may be associates, friends of convenience, or people who owe your character a favor. Each acquisition of this Merit is dedicated to one type of ally, whether in an organization, society, or circle. Examples include the police, City Hall, criminals, unions, banks, university faculty, and hospital staff.

In order to have alliances in more than one venue, you need to purchase this Merit multiple times, each trait with its own dots. For example, your character might have Allies (Police) ••, Allies (Criminals) •••, and Allies (City Hall) •, each acquired separately at character creation or during play.

Each dot that your character has indicates how deep his influence runs in that group. One dot might mean he can ask for minor favors, such as being spared a parking ticket if alliance is among police, or being allowed to see an article before it goes to press if alliance is among reporters. Three dots garner considerable favors, such as a building permit “going missing” at City Hall, or a strike resolution being wrapped up early among union leaders. Five dots allow for dangerous and even overtly criminal favors, such as a stock being sabotaged on Wall Street or the answers to an exam being shared by a university professor.

Barfly (•)

No matter what town or city your character is in, he can find his way into the best nightspots with a few quick words and a timely bribe. There isn't a velvet rope made that can keep him out of a restaurant or club.



Contacts (• to ●●●●●)

Contacts provide your character information in a particular area of awareness. Each dot in this Merit represents one arena or circle in which your character has a web of connections and from which he may draw information. If he has Contacts ●●●, his dots might be assigned to computer hackers, couriers, and big business, respectively. Contacts can include individuals whom you or the Storyteller defines, but more likely they comprise an array of people from whom your character can draw information with a phone call, e-mail or face-to-face query.

Gaining information from contacts requires a successful Manipulation + Persuasion or Socialize roll, depending on the relationship between your character and the people in question.



The Contacts Merit is strictly for information-gathering. Contacts do not perform services for your character or rush to his aid. Those actions are the purview of other Merits such as Allies and Retainer.

Fame (• to ●●●)

Your character has a measure of recognition in today's media-saturated society, possibly as a performer, athlete, politician, or other sort of public personality.

He's frequently identified and can often get star treatment. And yet, it's difficult for your character to go places without being recognized, and the media watches him carefully.

Each dot adds a +1 modifier to your character's Socialize (or Persuasion, where applicable) rolls among those who are impressed by his celebrity status.

Inspiring (••••)

Prerequisite: Presence ••••

Your character is able to rally others in times of great distress, renewing their courage and determination in the face of adversity.

Once per game session, your character can exhort those around him to redouble their efforts in the face of great stress or danger. Make a Presence + Persuasion roll. If the roll succeeds, any individuals who actively assist your character and who are within earshot regain one spent Willpower point (not to exceed their Willpower dots). The character may not use this Merit on himself, and may not use it on the same subjects more than once a day.

Mentor (• to •••••)

This Merit gives your character a friend and teacher who provides her with advice and guidance. Your character's mentor acts on her behalf, although the Storyteller determines exactly how. The number of dots purchased in this Merit determines the relative power, knowledge, and experience of your character's teacher. One dot indicates a mentor with one or more specialized Skills and a small amount of experience in your character's field of interest. A five-dot patron watches over your character and influences her life in ways both obvious and subtle, and likely has an agenda in which your character is pivotal.

Resources (• to •••••)

This Merit measures your character's material resources, both possessions and wealth. All characters are assumed to have a job or a source of income (trust fund or parents) that is sufficient to cover their basic needs: food, shelter, and transportation.

Dots in this Merit represent *disposable* income — wealth and assets that can be liquidated for more money in case of emergency. The number of dots indicates your character's general level of wealth. One dot suggests low disposable

income: \$500 a month and approximately \$1,000 worth of assets. Five dots suggest significant wealth: \$50,000 a month and as much as \$5,000,000 worth of assets.



Your character's Resources dots aren't spent and don't go away. They represent available cash at any given moment. The only means by which your character's Resource dots might decrease is if story events conspire against them. In this way, the Storyteller influences how your character's dots may decrease, and whether they can be salvaged.

Retainer (• to ●●●●●)

Your character has an assistant, aide, indentured servant, or fanatical follower. You need to establish how this trusty companion was acquired. He may be paid exorbitant amounts of money that buy his unwavering loyalty. He may owe his life to your character (or to your character's predecessors). Or your character may blackmail this person or threaten his family with harm if services are not rendered.

A retainer can be called on to perform many duties without fail. A bodyguard might be willing to hurt other people on a mere command. A dedicated street kid might hang on your character's every word and get her information or contacts without being asked. Unless your character has direct control over a retainer's mind, however, this person can't be made to perform any task. He might not risk his own life unduly or perform a task that violates his own morals.

Each acquisition of this Merit grants your character one follower. Dots spent in the trait indicate the training, capability, or flexibility of the aide. One dot suggests a child, an automaton, or a madman with limited capabilities and freedom of thought. Five dots indicate an extraordinary follower. He is exceptional in many ways (five dots in a couple traits, and four in many others) or he may be capable of supernatural feats.

Status (• to ●●●●●)

Your character has standing, credentials, authority, or respect within an organization, group, company, or social body. He may have an official position or title, or he may simply be revered and honored within the group and therefore accorded a degree of authority.

Each acquisition of this Merit is dedicated to one type of authority, whether in an organization, society, or circle. Examples include police, City Hall, criminals,

unions, banks, a university faculty, and hospital staff. Your character might also have standing among other Kindred, with focus in the city, his clan, or his covenant. In order to have authority in more than one venue, you need to purchase this Merit multiple times, each trait with its own dots. Thus, your character might have Status (Police) ••, Status (Criminals) •••, and Status (City Hall) •.

Status represents the privileges and liberties that your character is authorized to take *within the confines and definitions of his group*. Increasing dots reflect increasing clout. A cop with Status 1 can enter the suspect lockup and interrogation rooms, and a cop with Status 4 can enter the evidence locker without supervision or get involved in a crime-scene investigation without specifically being called in.

The phrase *within the confines and definitions of his group* is emphasized because Status operates exclusively through official channels. A surgeon might have one patient seen or operated on before another, because that's within the official confines of his authority. Exceeding the confines of authority or proper channels transcends the limits of the Status Merit.

Striking Looks (•• or ••••)

Your character is exceptionally attractive by modern standards; heads turn and conversations stop when she enters a room. For two dots, your character gets a +1 modifier to all Presence or Manipulation rolls when she attempts to use her looks to entertain, persuade, distract, or deceive others. For four dots, your character's looks are angelic; she gets a +2 modifier. The more attractive your character is, however, the harder it is for her to avoid notice in public.

Vampire-Specific Merits

Some Merits are specific to vampires, as described in the following sections.

Haven (• to •••••)

A haven is a place where a vampire sleeps, protected from the sun during the deadly daylight hours. A haven can be as simple as a sewer or an abandoned warehouse or a crate in a forgotten storage closet, as long as it is undisturbed between dawn and dusk.

Possessing this Merit means your character escapes the sun in something more comfortable than the trunk of a car or hole in the ground, as follows:

- A small apartment or underground chamber; 1–2 rooms
- A large apartment or small family home; 3–4 rooms
- A warehouse, church, or large home; 5–8 rooms, or large enclosure
- An abandoned mansion or network of subway tunnels; equivalent of 9–15 rooms or chambers
- A sprawling estate or vast network of tunnels; countless rooms or chambers

All you need to do is explain how your vampire came by his haven.

Herd (• to •••••)

Some vampires tire of the hunt and seek to develop a small group of mortals upon whom they can feed without fear. Such a herd may take many forms, from a brothel of prostitutes to a blood cult worshipping a vampiric god. These mortals provide nourishment without the difficulties of the hunt. For each dot of Herd, roll one die. The highest die rolled (1–10) is the number of Vitae that the vampire regains on a night when he resorts to his Herd. No more than one Herd roll is allowed every three nights; otherwise, members of the herd are exhausted, driven off, harmed, or even killed.

Part IV

Stepping into the Night

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I love playing the role of a cursed soul skulking through a shadowy underworld in search of human blood. It's an escape from all the depressing stuff in the newspapers."



In this part . . .

In this part, you immerse your character in the World of Darkness as one of the nocturnal undead. Your initiation is over. It's time to become one with the night. You experience the cut-throat politics of the Kindred and see what it takes to survive from night to night while hiding from the sun by day. You discover who your allies may be, who your enemies are, and perhaps when they might switch roles. This part completes your character's creation, making him or her part of a changing, growing reality.

Chapter 15

Entering the World of the Undead

In This Chapter

- ▶ Immersing your character in the World of Darkness
 - ▶ Undergoing the Embrace and beginning your Requiem
 - ▶ Struggling with the *Danse Macabre*
 - ▶ Existing nocturnally within a troubled city
-

In *Vampire*, you and your friends tell the stories of mortal people who find themselves transformed into the undead. Neither truly alive nor dead, the Kindred survive on the blood of the living. They shrug off terrible injuries, they never grow old, and they have a variety of inhuman abilities.

Nevertheless, the Kindred fear many things, from the burning touch of sunlight or fire to the public exposure of their kind. Most of all, they fear the Beast, that savage aspect of their damned souls that hungers for blood and violence and that can drive them into uncontrolled rage or compel them to perform acts of utter depravity.

This chapter helps you understand the World of Darkness that these damned creatures inhabit.

Enduring the Isolation

No matter how hard they try, the Kindred can't truly be a part of mortal society. Vampires are always separate from those around them. They are wolves among sheep, and their nature prevents them from ever forgetting or ignoring that fact.



No matter how much one of the Kindred might love a mortal and wish to stay with him, the Blood calls constantly. The Beast threatens a frenzy that all too often results in the violent death of those held dear.

The Kindred inability to stand beneath the gaze of the sun separates them from the greater portion of the culture, society, and the life that surrounds them. They think almost solely on a local level because they are unable to travel (not easily, anyway).

The Kindred are tied down for the most part to the cities that mortals create. Each of those cities is distinct. The Kindred have no nations, no federal government; the local ruler of a city — the Prince — is typically the only ruler. For a description of the social and political structure of Kindred society, see Chapter 16.

A vampire retains a sense of identity or memories from her mortal life, but she is no longer a part of the nation or other body with which she identified. Any sense of belonging she has is limited to local circles: loyalty to the Prince, membership in a covenant or clan, or both. Vampires build the whole of their society on these connections.

Understanding the Embrace

The Embrace begins with death — a rush of blood that spills from the throat or wrist of the victim. At the right moment, the vampire places a few drops of her Vitae on the lips of the victim. The person dies . . . and yet he doesn't. His natural processes cease, but his sire's Vitae infuses him with the force that sustains him beyond death. This is the *Embrace*, the first step from existence as a mortal into the gothic world of the Damned.

Beginning Your Requiem

The most common name for unlife among the Kindred is a musical reference, the Requiem. A *Requiem* is a mass or musical composition for the dead. In some cases, a requiem is a funeral song. In other cases, it is a chant intended for the dead's repose.

For the Kindred, the word has a special meaning. The Requiem is the Kindred's unlife, the grand, doomed waltz through which every one of their kind dances every night, urged on by metaphorical strains of music that represent the hidden powers that manipulate and inspire them.

The Danse Macabre

The way a vampire interacts with her fellow Kindred is the *Danse Macabre*, loosely translated as the “dance of death.” Through her interaction with her peers, her Requiem, along with her peers’ Requiems, play, conflict, resolve, and end.

Many Kindred consider the Danse Macabre a negative part of their reality. Because vampires are solitary predators, relationships between Kindred are generally forced. But still, most vampires desire contact among those who understand them.

Of course, there are considerable risks. The Embrace leaves the mark of the Beast on the victim. When Kindred encounter one another for the first time, they react to each other — often uncontrollably — as a challenge for resources and secrecy.

The Danse Macabre is a dangerous dance that the Kindred play with one another. It involves traps, scheming elders, ambitious neonates (newly created vampires), and ploys that can take exceptional amounts of time to play out. For many vampires, revenge is best when left to grow cold, prompting another turn in the Danse Macabre in response. The cycle continues indefinitely.



Trapped in the City

Vampire society has developed as it has largely because of the Kindred’s unbreakable tie to the city. For the undead, the city is really a cage — gilded though it might be — and leaving simply isn’t an option.

The most obvious reason for the Kindred to gather in cities is because that’s where the people are, and people mean blood. Blood is at the core of everything they do. Hunting is never a sure thing, but a Kindred knows that her odds of finding someone on whom to feed are greater in a city.

This is not to say that vampires cannot survive outside the city limits. Some even seek solitude from other Kindred. Some attempt to survive in the wild, feeding on animals, although many give it up after a short time because of the scarcity of available blood. Also, Kindred eventually reach a point when animals cannot sustain them.

Needing social support

The paradox of the Kindred is that they have the solitary nature of the predator and the social leanings of humans. They gather in groups, but their competitive nature often renders such gatherings uncomfortable if not downright dangerous. They plot, scheme, and backstab each other, yet they cannot function without one another. Even if the Kindred could easily acquire blood outside the urban sprawl, few would be willing to leave the cities.

The Kindred find some solace by associating themselves with one another in the following ways:

- ✔ **Clans.** A *clan* is a vampiric lineage. The Kindred acknowledge five clans — Daeva, Gangrel, Mekhet, Nosferatu and Ventrue — and all Kindred belong to one clan or another. Part II describes each clan in detail.
- ✔ **Covenants.** A *covenant* is a social unit of vampires. Each is an artificial group encompassing Kindred with similar philosophies, ideals, political aims, and even religious notions.
- ✔ **Coteries.** *Coteries* are social groups that provide allies and support that young Kindred haven't yet managed to find anywhere else.

The mistrust among Kindred doesn't end with the formation of a group. Coteries are subject to the same internal squabbling, double-dealing, and, on occasion, outright betrayal as any other Kindred institution, especially owing to the fact that most coteries are cosmopolitan with regard to members' origins.



Seeking refuge in Elysium

A prince may declare specific locations of his city to be *Elysium*, places free of violence that are safe for all Kindred. Most official Kindred business takes place in an Elysium. The Prince's court is most frequently held in one such location, and most young vampires who need to speak with a leader or elder come to Elysium to seek them out. Politics and intrigue are as common here as in other facets of Kindred society. Many elders spend entire nights here, and while neonates are usually (not always) welcome, they are expected to remember their place.

Finding shelter in a haven

A *haven* is nothing more than a vampire's home. A haven is the place (perhaps the only place) where a vampire can reliably find shelter from the sun while she sleeps the day away.

You can find many, many different kinds of havens. The Kindred can live under extreme weather or pressure conditions, so they can create their havens in places that mortals find inhospitable.

Socializing with fellow Kindred

Many of the Kindred's actions are survival- and politics-oriented, but the bulk of Kindred contact actually occurs in social venues. Whereas the Kindred power structure is formalized, the Kindred social structure has multiple dimensions.

The Kindred attend social functions for various reasons. The Daeva enjoy the sensuality of social contact. The Ventrue enjoy opportunities to display their grandeur. The Gangrel like to cut loose under the right circumstances. Even the Mekhet and Nosferatu will emerge from the shadows occasionally to forget that they're monsters.

The following are just a few examples of the many ways in which Kindred gather and meet without the formalities of domain politics imposing themselves.



- ✔ **Nightlife.** The Damned frequent dance clubs, bars, lounges, pool halls, and numerous other places where mortals go to enjoy themselves. In addition to providing social interaction, visiting such establishments allows the Kindred to hunt prey who are comfortable in their element.
- ✔ **Cultural events.** The Kindred hardly miss an art exhibit, opera, or ballet. They drink in the magnificence of anything uniquely human.
Cultural events do not need to be high-society affairs. Small theater, for example, is equally as popular with Kindred as Broadway.
- ✔ **Parties.** Parties present the opportunity to attend lavish affairs or paint the town red. Some Kindred even throw their own parties. Sometimes mortals are invited and sometimes not, depending on the size of the party and its purpose.
- ✔ **Religious ceremony.** Strong religious or spiritual presence often exists among covenants and individuals. For these Kindred, centers of faith form the basis of relationships and interactions.
- ✔ **Salons.** Kindred gather in salons to share ideas, such as a new philosophy, point of debate, or emerging theory. Some salons explore classical or even ancient ideas.
- ✔ **Elysium.** Some Elysium gatherings are purely social. Gathering in Elysium provides a place where Kindred can meet and not have to worry about the rivalries between them.



Chapter 16

Rising to the Long Night

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the laws of Kindred existence
- ▶ Jostling for position within Kindred society
- ▶ Dealing with the physical and mystical conditions of undead existence

The Kindred have always engaged each other in a struggle fought behind the scenes in mortal society. This conflict is known as the *Danse Macabre*, and it threatens to tear their entire race apart. Vampires remember the offenses among themselves, and they plot over long periods of times — sometimes decades — to get their revenge.

As individuals, the undead rely on blood and violence for survival, yet their survival as a race also depends on peace. This conflict is perhaps the saddest paradox of the Kindred world, but it is a fundamental aspect of unlife among the Damned.

Understanding the Traditions

Vampire society would have fallen apart long ago if not for the *Traditions*, which are the laws that hold their society together. The Traditions are rules of the Blood, passed down by way of the curse of undeath, hardwired into the physiology of the Damned. Upon the Embrace, each Kindred knows each of these laws intuitively.

Here are the Traditions:

- ✔ **Masquerade.** Do not reveal your true nature to those not of the Blood. Doing so forfeits your claim to the Blood.
- ✔ **Progeny.** Sire another at the peril of both yourself and your progeny. If you create a childe, the weight is your own to bear.
- ✔ **Amaranth.** You are forbidden from devouring the heartsblood of another of your kind. If you violate this commandment, the Beast calls to your own Blood.

Ordering a blood hunt

Violators of the Traditions do not go unpunished. When a Kindred outlaw is considered too dangerous to be allowed to survive, and the Prince's agents prove unequal to the task of locating and capturing or executing her, the Prince is forced to declare that the violator be destroyed. The result is a *blood hunt*, in which all or most Kindred of a city set out to hunt the outlaw.

During a blood hunt, Kindred spread out across the city in a sort of dragnet, all the while taking care to maintain the Masquerade. Some Princes prefer to retrieve a subject intact, but most hunts state that no participating Kindred will be charged or punished if the subject is slain or even devoured. This way, the Prince slyly skirts personally violating the Third Tradition — he is not guilty of devouring a Kindred if a subject carries it out.

True “heretics” against the laws of all Kindred were few and far between in the early nights of the Damned. Despite their differences, most of the Kindred were in agreement about what was and was not a good idea for their kind, especially when their own bodies told them so.



Title, Rank, and Position

The following sections describe the primary ranks and positions found throughout Kindred society. Not every city has each of these positions, but they are common enough that all are worth discussing.

Being the Prince

The Prince is the most important figure in Kindred politics. She rules her city with nearly absolute power. Some princes are weaker than others, and some are mere figureheads for powerful *Primogen* (advisor to the Prince) or other elders. No matter what the case, a Prince's job is to keep the Kindred in her city in line, which can mean regulating many powerful and easily agitated vampires.

For the most part, the Prince holds her position because she was politically or physically strong enough to take it. She may have attained the position, for example, by intimidating her rivals, and now maintains power by slaughtering anyone who questions her. Or she may have attained the position through political prowess. Most

Princes, of course, fall somewhere in the middle, but nearly all possess an advantage or trait that keeps them on top.

Rarely, a Prince may be selected by local elders. The Carthians have even attempted open elections. Most often, such Princes are either overthrown by more powerful Kindred or themselves become tyrants to make sure they are not overthrown.



Most Kindred leaders refer to themselves as *Prince*, but some prefer Cardinal, Bishop, Archbishop, Don, President (usually in the case of those rare elections mentioned earlier), Sultan, Lord, or Duke, depending on the nature of their government. A few self-styled Queens exist, but most Kindred leaders avoid use of the title King.

Serving as the Prince's Seneschal

The *Seneschal* manages the night-to-night details of running a government. While the Prince concerns himself with conflict in the city and making certain the Masquerade goes unbroken, the Seneschal makes sure that things run smoothly in the government itself. He keeps track of the Prince's assets (and possibly those of the Primogen or other ruling bodies). He makes schedules and appointments and handles the many logistics required so that no elder feels that another is given preferential treatment.

The Seneschal holds quite a bit of power. He decides whose petitions are passed on to the Prince, who receives a court audience, and in what order. In some cases, the Seneschal's power is so complete, that it's actually a toss up as to the true ruler.



Although *Seneschal* is the most common label for the high position of right-hand vampire, the position is also sometimes referred to as Amanuensis, Chamberlain, Majordomo, Secretary, and, in some of the most informal domains, simply as an assistant.

Speaking out as the Herald

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



Some treacherous or ambitious Heralds direct other Kindred to their own liking, making suggestions that others assume (incorrectly) carry the weight of the Prince's orders. Some Heralds, who are less subtle than they believe, are executed for this abuse; so most wise Heralds remain more or less honest.



In addition to Herald, this position is sometimes called Minister, Runner, Mouthpiece, Spokesman, or Secretary (not in the domains where the Seneschal bears that last title, of course). The Herald position is often absent in small cities. In many such cases, the Seneschal (or less frequently the Sheriff) handles these duties in addition to his other responsibilities.

Advising the Prince as a Primogen

The *Primogen* (singular as well as plural) are the Prince's advisory council on matters of policy. The precise nature of that council varies from city to city, depending on the Prince's leadership style. Some Primogen are powerful enough (or the Prince they advise weak enough) that they can overrule the Prince. A few Primogen actually rule their cities, either through a figurehead Prince or openly as a governing body.

The Primogen typically consist of those local elders who have sufficient power to claim a seat. Also common are those Primogen who decide among themselves whom to admit into their ranks. More rarely, a Prince may select members of his advisory council, but this occurs only in cities where the Prince is especially strong and the Primogen especially weak.



The vast majority of these councils (and council members) go by the title *Primogen*, but they are sometimes known as Boards, Circles, Senates, Tribunals, or simply as advisors. Most Primogen contain a mix of members of various clans and covenants, but some are more homogenous, depending on the domain. That is, the Primogen in a city largely dominated by Carthians is likely to have more Carthian members than any others, and the Primogen in a city where the Gangrel are persecuted is unlikely to have many Gangrel members.

Becoming head of a clan as a Priscus

A *Priscus* (or *Prisci* in plural) is the informal "head" of a specific clan. This position is not an official one in the local government; it evolves as a single powerful Kindred takes responsibility for his clanmates. He may choose to take on this role to seek power, or he may fall into the role when others of his clan come to him with problems.

The Prisci have no institutional power or rank, but the position does convey a substantial status, and because powerful and well-respected Kindred typically attain the position, the Prince and other elders are wise to at least consider their opinions.

Many Prisci also sit on the Primogen, but the two bodies are not synonymous; not all Prisci are Primogen, and not all Primogen are Prisci. Many cities have no Prisci, and many more have Prisci for some clans but not for others.

Inspiring your clanmates as the Whip

The *Whip* is as informal a position as the Priscus. She is responsible for inspiring her clanmates to present a united face on major issues and to make their voices heard on local issues. It exists only in those cities with fairly large populations of a given clan, and even then only if a particular member of that clan feels the need to take the position.

The Whip is a leader, taskmaster, figurehead, and bully. The Whip and the Priscus work independently of one another and oftentimes are at odds. A Whip succeeds only as long as she has sufficient power or leverage to force her clanmates to do as she wishes.

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



Stepping into the limelight as a Harpy

The *Harpy* is a member of the Kindred elite. Harpies are the celebrities and fad-starters of Kindred society. Other Kindred look to Harpies to see who's in and who's out and what positions and opinions are popular this season. A well-known Harpy can sway public opinion faster than some Princes.

Harpies who attained their influence and position unofficially through nothing more than personal power and charisma are often more respected than those who are appointed by Prince or Primogen.

Enforcing the law as Sheriff

The Sheriff enforces the Prince's laws and dictates. He brings outlaws before the Prince for judgment, and at times he carries out sentences. Some Sheriffs believe that they serve their society and fellow Kindred by keeping the city

as orderly as possible. Others enjoy the position for the power it offers, as they are permitted to bully and push around other vampires, even those who would normally be too dangerous to touch. Some Sheriffs are clever, subtle investigators, and others are little more than bruisers with rank.



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

Exerting force as the Hound

The *Hound* doesn't investigate, and he doesn't question. He punishes anyone he's told to punish, end of story. The Hound and the Sheriff can be at odds because of the overlap in their responsibilities. Or the two positions can be combined into one. The Prince calls on the Hound when she wishes to skip over normal public procedure.



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

Working events as Master of Elysium

In essence a combination master of ceremonies and groundskeeper, the Master of Elysium maintains a city's Elysium, a kind of sanctuary for the undead, ensuring its readiness for court or other official functions, cleaning up afterward and making sure that word of specific Elysium-related events reaches those who must attend. The Master of Elysium also enforces the custom of nonviolence at such gatherings, often working hand-in-hand with the Sheriff or Hounds to do so.



In many cities, the duties of Master of Elysium fall on the Seneschal or Herald. In particularly large cities, more than one Master of Elysium exists, perhaps even one for each declared Elysium.

Blood to Blood Influences

While possessed of many curious properties, the Blood of the Kindred reacts in special ways to that of other vampires. The calling of Blood to Blood tremendously influences Kindred relationships and society. In some cases, encountering other vampires inspires violence, cowardice, or uncontrollable longing.

Reacting with Predator's Taint

Vampires instinctively know other Kindred on sight. Hackles rise, fangs distend, and a sense of fear or territoriality overtakes a Kindred upon meeting another vampire for the first time. This reaction is called *Predator's Taint*.

The urge is a primal fight-or-flight response — the Kindred with more potent blood sees the interloper as a threat to his superiority, and the vampire with less potent blood instinctively feels a desire to flee this greater predator. Both Kindred potentially risk frenzy at the overwhelming surge of instinct.

Kindred of equally potent blood both feel the desire to attack and settle the matter once and for all. The effect subsides once two Kindred are familiar with one another, but the initial experience is either terrifying or perversely thrilling.

Tasting Kindred blood

Those who consume the Vitae of the Kindred, especially other Kindred, find that they long to taste it again. While the Damned would never admit that drinking each other's blood is addictive, dependencies do develop.

As a result, the sharing of blood between Kindred is looked down upon by Kindred society. It is *occasionally* forgiven in light circumstances, such as a lover's tryst, but those who habitually drink other Kindred's Vitae are considered degenerates or even heretics.

Controlling a thrall

Part of the Kindred's ill regard for tasting the blood of other vampires is the *Vinculum*, sometimes known as the blood bond. Those Kindred who consume the blood of another single vampire three times develop a powerful but artificial love for the vampire, subjecting them to a sort of emotional control.

A *thrall* is any being currently under the influence of a *Vinculum*. The vampire to whom a thrall is bound is called the *regnant* or *domitor*. In social situations, the term *thrall* is applied to bound Kindred, as most undead think of bound mortals solely as *ghouls*, mortals who have tasted the Vitae of the Kindred. However, a vampire can have a mortal thrall who is not a ghoul. Rumor has it that the *Vinculum* can subvert the will of even the wildest supernatural entities, but little hard data has come forth to verify this.

Among those who are weak-willed, naïve, mentally unstable, or even willing, the blood bond creates a feeling of singular devotion. Most Vinculums result in this condition, as most thralls subjected to them either know what they're getting into or have some notion of their relationship with their domitors-to-be.

Kindred who are brought to serve a Prince through the Vinculum, or childer forced to bond themselves to their sires “for their own good,” are not as enthusiastic. Thralls generally can't disobey or work against their regnants, but some are sufficiently strong-willed to sabotage their masters in more subtle ways.

Creating a ghoul

Mortal *ghouls* are living people who have been imbued with mystic power by drinking a vampire's blood. Ghouls are subject to artificial love, but they also possess physical strength and stamina. Old or strong-willed ghouls can even develop some other Kindred Disciplines beyond physical strength. As long as some Kindred Vitae is in their system, ghouls do not age.

Ghouls are common and are often considered essential servants. Kindred use their ghouls as messengers, bodyguards, soldiers, proxies at court, fronts through which they can influence mortal institutions, butlers, drivers, menservants, travel planners, and daytime security — potentially anything the Kindred himself cannot or would prefer not to do himself.

Because ghouls require large quantities of blood to maintain their abilities, most vampires have only one or two of them. As with Kindred thralls, some ghouls bitterly resent the tasks they are forced to perform, but few have the willpower to protest, let alone rebel.

Chapter 17

Exploring the Kindred Covenants

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the principles and ideals of the Kindred Covenants
 - ▶ Knowing how Kindred of the various Covenants interact
-

The Kindred Covenants are kind of like vampire nations, political parties, and even religions. The covenants form a cornerstone of undead society. They are ancient traditions that have been part of the vampiric world for hundreds of years. The covenants that are supposedly oldest hold a more respected “pedigree” than others, but none is truly modern. Even those young vampires who believe that Kindred society as it exists tonight is a relatively recent development admit that the covenants almost certainly predate the Industrial Revolution in some form or another.

Understanding the Role of Covenants

Vampire covenants are kind of like political or religious associations. They provide the Kindred with a sense of community that they can find nowhere else. Kindred are Embraced into a clan, with no say of their own. Like many mortals, even if they feel a loyalty to their blood and their family, they often differ from other members of these groups in their opinions and beliefs. They are, for the most part, trapped in their home domains, and their loyalty toward the local regime is usually purchased with fear and enforced by ambition.

Covenant allegiance is something over which Kindred have personal control. They are drawn toward doctrines in which they can believe. Here, more than anywhere else, they are likely to encounter other Kindred who share at least some of their ideas and objectives.

The covenants also provide ambitious Kindred with built-in political support. Most covenants seek as much influence in the local Kindred power structure as possible, either to advance their own goals or to simply prevent rivals from gaining power. For the most part, politically active Kindred would rather have a fellow covenant member in power than any other rival (though many would certainly rather hold the power themselves, when at all possible).

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

Unlike clans, covenants have a fluid membership, which means a Kindred can change to a different covenant. It's not easy, but it's not impossible. A lack of trust often accompanies such behavior, but only the most severe members of either the renounced or the new covenant stoop to leveling unsubstantiated claims of treachery against a convert. In many cases, a Kindred's philosophies simply change over the course of the Requiem.

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

Here are the most common vampire covenants, all of which are covered in depth throughout the rest of this chapter:

- ✓ Carthian
- ✓ Circle of the Crone
- ✓ Invictus
- ✓ Lancea Sanctum
- ✓ Ordo Dracul
- ✓ Unaligned
- ✓ Belial's Brood
- ✓ VII



Members of a given covenant agree on certain basic principles and often ally with one another against outside rivals, but plenty of tension and enmity exist among members of a single covenant. In fact, in those cities where any given covenant dominates, rivalry within the covenant is actually more common than inter-covenant rivalry.



Covenants around the globe

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

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

Joining the Carthian Movement

The Carthians are the youngest of the major Kindred covenants. They are reformists, eager to bring the establishment to its knees if that's what it takes to create positive political change. The Carthian Movement sees quite a bit of support worldwide.

The Carthian philosophy revolves around two core concepts that give the cause its fire:

- ✔ **Power to the people.** Democracy is the cornerstone of Carthian thinking because it gives each individual a say in the affairs and administration of the people as a whole. Socialism is a popular model, too.
- ✔ **Change is necessary.** If part of the curse of undeath is stagnation and stasis, then the Kindred must be willing to change and adapt to the times if they are to endure.

Carthians see brave new possibilities and models for Kindred self-rule that they believe were unimagined before they arrived on the scene, and they long to share those ideas with others — especially those whom they believe keep the covenant and its ideas down. Few stop to wonder whether the existing status quo (whatever and wherever it might be) has endured for a reason. Most are content to challenge it for the sake of trying to accomplish something positive in a world as bleak as the Kindred's.

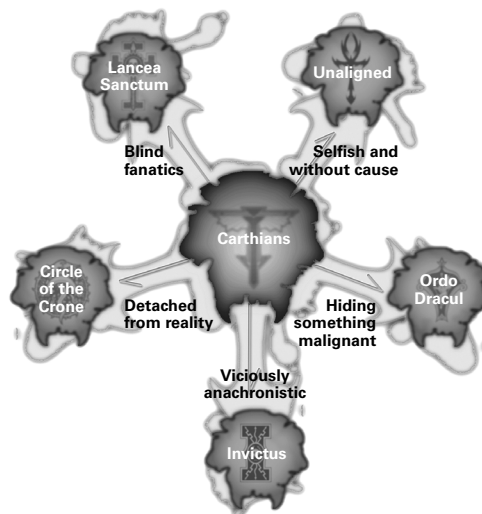
Change is vital to all social systems. Many Carthians fear the elders not because they think elders pose a direct threat, but because elders are the

most stagnant members of their race, the least capable of hearing or accepting new ideas. For this reason, many sub-movements of the Carthian cause have strict policies about who can and can't join, as they fear their dreams might become the target of an elder's crusade.

For the most part, they're right. Most elder vampires have little to no interest in seeing a bunch of neonates summarily rearrange the power structure that's been in place for centuries, and in so doing strip elders of their patiently cultivated power and influence. Vampires are nasty, predatory creatures who only grow nastier and more predatory with age, and few elders appreciate this latest "fad" among neonates. As a result, the Carthian Movement has become the scapegoat of choice for powerful elders. Were it not for the presence of some great minds within the Movement (as well as a few elders of other covenants), the faction might well collapse under the weight of tradition.

Here is a summary of the main characteristics of the Carthians and the Carthian Movement:

- ✓ Carthians are young and full of ideas.
- ✓ Many Carthians fear the elders of their kind.
- ✓ The Carthian Movement has become the scapegoat for some powerful elders.
- ✓ The Carthians' democratic ideas aren't loved by everyone; but what they lack in wisdom and support, they make up for in passion and unity (although they, too, indulge in their fair share of fractiousness and infighting).



Aligning with the Circle of the Crone

At the core of Circle of the Crone's belief sits the Crone, a vampiric mentor and lover of mythological "monsters" throughout history in various cultures. The Crone was cast out of the company of fellow gods for seeking to better herself by consuming the blood of those whom the gods had made in their image. Through trial and pain, the Crone managed to uncover the secrets of creation, and to survive the harsh wasteland that was life outside the gods' paradise. All on her own, the Crone is said to have created form, shape, and beauty out of the barren nothingness that lay beyond the ken of men and gods, and her Circle seeks to emulate her experience so that it too might achieve her wisdom and power.

Branching out from this core idea are two underlying themes:

- ✔ **Creation is power.** Creation is both the source of true power and the only way the Damned can remain a vibrant part of the earthly order. Accordingly, members of the Circle often practice this ideology in small ways, tending gardens or breeding animals. Others take the broader view, seeking instead to create things of lasting beauty or utility such as art or invention.
- ✔ **Tribulation brings enlightenment.** Members of the Circle believe that any creature can overcome its weakness and moral failings by continually testing its physical, mental, and spiritual limitations.

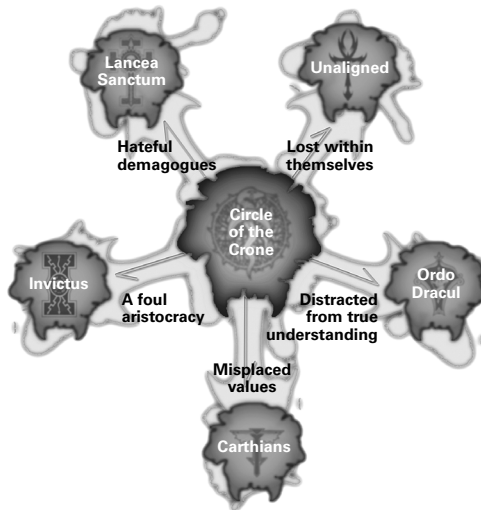


The Circle of the Crone boasts a diverse collection of Kindred among its adherents. Members of every clan and those of any age are drawn to the Circle, and the covenant is certainly stronger because of it. The covenant is probably weak only in the number of Ventrue who share in its beliefs. The Ventrue are childer of tradition and among the more conservative members of the clan tradition suggests that core Circle ideology is foolishness at best and heresy at worst. Conversely, the Gangrel (who are known for their disregard of both mortality and Kindred convention) are perhaps the perfect fit for the covenant's mindset.

Given the radical nature of their philosophies, members of the Circle are understandably preoccupied with the continued growth of their membership. In recent years, many have begun to actively seek converts, particularly from among the downtrodden and dispossessed of Kindred society. This search often leads to the door of unaligned Kindred, many of whom are somewhat more tolerant of members of the Circle than they are of the Lancea Sanctum or Invictus (both covered later in this chapter). And there are others who view the Acolytes' ideology as compatible with their own political outlook. As a result, the Circle's missionary efforts have been rewarded, and the number of former independents who have become members grows with each passing night.

For many new vampires, however, the mysterious Circle of the Crone members are the “bogeymen” of vampire society — those who gather in sequestered cabals, where they practice ancient rites in reverence to bloody gods and goddesses of cultures forgotten or shunned. These are the vampires about whom elders warn their childer: the political outcasts, iconoclasts, and to some, heretics of the Damned. Keeping their reputation in mind, here’s what is known about the Circle of the Crone:

- ✔ The Circle of the Crone decries what are the most widely accepted creation myths of the vampire. The Circle of the Crone claims a naturalistic origin for vampires, that they have always been a part of the world, spawned in the dark places where mortals fear to go.
- ✔ Members of the Circle, often known as Acolytes, reject vampiric notions of remorse. They take a more organic approach to unlife that allows for all creatures — even the living dead — to continue to learn, grow, and find enlightenment over time.
- ✔ Members of Circle of the Crone believe that a vampire, though damned to an eternity of unlife, is no more or less a victim than he chooses to be. Empowerment and enlightenment are both well within the reach of any creature, vampire or otherwise, who is truthful and dedicated enough to attain them.
- ✔ The Circle’s ideology is attractive to non-Kindred as well. As such, the Circle boasts some of the most extensive and unusual contacts among other, similarly inclined creatures, including mages and even werewolves.





Because the Circle of the Crone decries the widely accepted creation myths, they do not revere, worship, or heed the Lancea Sanctum's creator. The Lancea Sanctum (covered later in this chapter) understandably takes great offense at the Circle's "corruption" of its dearly held ideals. Some truly hard-line Kindred, especially those in power in conservative domains, go so far as to outlaw the practice and spread of what they call "demon worship," and they lay heavy penalties down upon those caught in violation of the decree.

Wielding the Power of the Invictus

In the eyes of those who don't understand it — and admittedly, of some who do — the Invictus is the despised aristocracy of the undead, the gentry who did nothing to earn their position but who would do anything to maintain it. They're the landlord, the overseer, the dictator.

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

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

- ✔ **The Invictus must be respected.** The Invictus prefers to announce its presence, but it isn't stupid about it. Members of the Invictus, or *First Estate*, are experts at backroom deals and covert schemes, and they keep a secret as well as anyone. If the Invictus holds power in a region, however, it wants the Kindred to know that it's in charge.
- ✔ **The Invictus is an actual entity.** The Carthians tend to eschew oaths of fealty, and the Lancea Sanctum and Circle of the Crone swear oaths to higher powers such as a god or spirit, first and foremost, with obedience to the covenant second. The Invictus alone not only demands oaths of loyalty to local covenant leaders, but considers them more important than any other allegiances.

Because the Invictus holds allegiance to the Covenant paramount, they create the illusion that most Princes are Invictus.

- ✔ **Mortals are power.** While all the covenants understand the need for the Masquerade, the Invictus focuses most heavily on not merely infiltrating but manipulating and influencing mortal society. The picture of a vampire sitting at the heart of a web of corporate, political, criminal, and social connections — a rare but extant stereotype — is most certainly that of the Invictus.



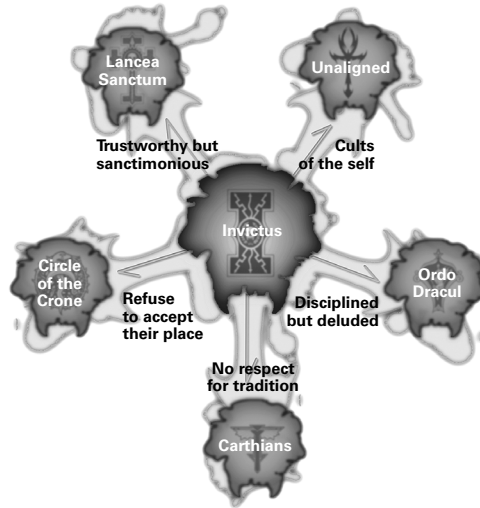


The Invictus appeals far more to elder Kindred than to new vampires. In the incestuous political arena that the Invictus favors, age and experience are of far greater value than anything youth might offer. Although the Invictus appeals more to elder Kindred, however, a surprising number of new vampires belong to the Invictus, as well. In some instances, this is purely a matter of the Embrace. The offspring of many Invictus Kindred remain in the covenant, first out of duty, and then because they have either managed to eke out some status for themselves, or because they know no other way.

Whatever the age of the vampire, the following is known about the Invictus:

- ✔ New vampires join out of ambition or even arrogance. Advancing within the ranks of the Invictus is challenging, but the rewards for doing so are great. So they accept the challenge.
- ✔ Young and old members alike have burning ambition and a belief in the rule of law. Those who are unwilling to work for every scrap of power — and perhaps more to the point, to be constantly on guard against their rivals who do the same — have no place in the courts and corporate boardrooms of the First Estate.
- ✔ The Invictus makes a big deal about its power, even though it's not markedly different from the power of any other covenant.

- ✓ The Invictus tries to portray itself as among the oldest covenants, with or without justification. Oldest or not, the covenant is certainly tenured. It has vast interest — and influence — in mortal affairs, and many outside the covenant see it as the guardian (sometimes excessively so) of the Masquerade.



Aspiring to the Lancea Sanctum

The Lancea Sanctum believes that its members are the chosen of God. Sanctified are not inherently superior to other vampires but exalt themselves by wholeheartedly accepting the teachings of Longinus, the Roman centurion who used his spear to prod Christ on the cross.

According to the covenant's dogma, some of Christ's blood dripped onto the soldier, and this blood gave the centurion eternal life. It also carried with it, however, divine retribution, and although Longinus' act revealed Christ's divinity, it did so after an act of faithlessness on the soldier's part. Longinus was cursed to live eternally. He could walk only at night and subsist only on the same blood that had proved his undoing.

In practice, the Lancea Sanctum are the priests, bishops, paladins, and the religious and spiritual advisors. Most of the covenant's members take their role as religious guides to their fellow undead very seriously. Many of its members advise Princes and other leaders on religious and moral matters.



The teachings of Longinus

The following five principles are from the testament of Longinus:

1. That though you are Damned, your Damnation has purpose. It is the will of God that you are what you are, and the will of God is that the Damned exist to show the evils of turning from Him. The evil become Damned; God has taken those worthy of His love to His own side.
2. That what you once were is not what you now are. As a mortal is a sheep, so the Damned are wolves among them. That role is defined by nature — wolves feed on their prey, but they are not cruel to them. The role of predator is natural, even if the predator himself is not.
3. That an ordained hierarchy exists. As man is above beasts, so are the Damned above men. Our numbers are fewer so that our purpose is better effected.
4. That with the power of Damnation comes limitation. The Damned hide among those who still enjoy God's love, making themselves known only to exemplify fear. The Damned shall make none of their own, for such is a judgment of soul that is the purview only of God. The Damned shall suffer yet more should they slay a fellow to take his soul from him.
5. That our bodies are not our own. Our purpose is to serve; when we stray from that purpose, we are to be chastened. The light of the sun excoriates; the flames of a fire purify fleshly evil. The taste of all sustenance other than Vitae is as ash upon the tongue.

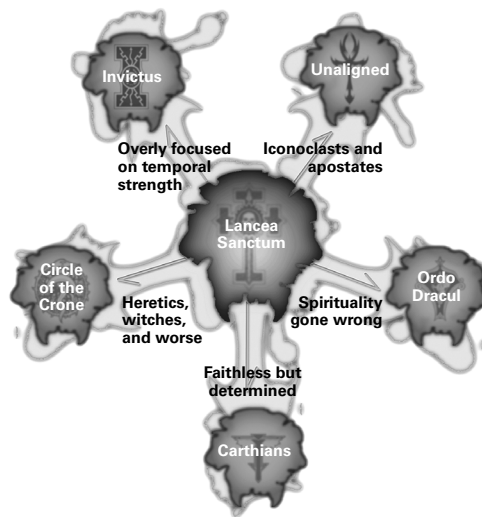
Some members of the Lancea Sanctum take their duties further still, counseling younger Sanctified on what it means to be a vampire, educating them about the mythology and spirituality of the race, and even advising them on how to be more effective predators.

The covenant does not merely advise, however, it enforces. Its members do not merely preach, they demand. Members of the faction are known for their zealotry not only because Longinus himself was cursed by God, but because they maintain that violence and bloodshed are perfectly acceptable means of conversion.

Here is some more of what is known about Lancea Sanctum:

- To members of the Lancea Sanctum, their origin defines everything they are and everything they do. They are the religious and even moral backbone of the Kindred, but they are also self-appointed priests and inquisitors.
- The Lancea Sanctum believe that their covenant rules other Kindred in all ways that matter. They believe they speak for God and represent the ideal of what the undead should be.

- ✔ The most inhuman of an inhuman race, the Lancea Sanctum exalt the role of predator.
- ✔ Lancea Sanctum projects an equal appeal to undead of all ages. What an elder looks for in the covenant, however, is often not the same as what interests a neonate. Most elders join for religious or spiritual reasons.
- ✔ The Lancea Sanctum allows and even demands members to accept what they are. For a new vampire seeking direction in something so drastically different from mortal life, few things are as comforting as being told that it is acceptable to be a monster.
- ✔ New members of the covenant are required to make many gestures of commitment to Longinus, to God, and to the goals of the faction. They engage in many rites and rituals and undergo trials to test their faith.
- ✔ Universally respected yet universally feared, this covenant constantly seeks power over all Kindred everywhere, not for political rule, as the Invictus does, but to enforce the dictates, attitudes, and even thoughts that they believe have been handed down to them from their originator Longinus, and by extension from God Himself.



Achieving True Power through the Ordo Dracul

The vampires of the Ordo Dracul, also called *Dragons*, come from two extremes. They are either fundamentalist fanatics or secular mystics simply seeking the

means to destroy an enemy. The covenant welcomes both mentalities, for both have much to teach.

Ordo Dracul claims an infamous founder — Vlad Tepes, Dracula himself. Dracula is noteworthy because he acknowledges no sire. According to Dracula’s account of becoming a vampire, God turned His back on him, and in order to punish him for his wicked acts, God cursed him with undeath. The most widely accepted story of Dracula’s origin is that God punished Vlad Tepes for his abuse of faith in mortal life.

According to historical records, Tepes was appointed as a “defender of Christianity,” a charge he then used as a means of advancing his own political agendas and as an excuse for heinous crimes against humanity. Dracula ultimately put his own desires before his holy oath, which is the act that Damned him.

These statements remain unproven, of course. For one thing, Dracula himself hasn’t been seen in over a century. What’s more, knowledgeable members of Kindred society say that he has sired very few childer. Even so, if Dracula wasn’t Embraced, what clan could he possibly be, and what does that make his get? By other accounts, he has never sired childer at all, or those he has sired are somehow “failed,” little more than hideous horrors doomed to constant mindless rage.

The Ordo Dracul doesn’t require the fanaticism of the Lancea Sanctum or the Acolytes, because its tenets do not demand it. The Dragons’ philosophies are as rigorously tested as any of their ceremonies, so they work their miracles without worship or reverence to a higher power. Respect, they feel, is enough.

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

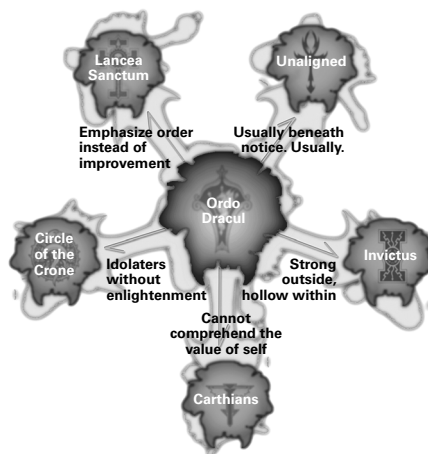
- ✔ **Nothing is permanent.** Members of the Ordo Dracul know better than to consider themselves “immortal.” Vampires do indeed die, and without benefit of plotting enemies or slaving werewolves.
- ✔ **Change must have a purpose.** Central to transcending the vampiric condition is an understanding of why it is necessary to do so. The Order looks at the Requiem as a challenge more than a curse, but its members never forget or deny that it *is* a curse.

The Order doesn’t, however, believe in causing foolish chaos and then shirking responsibility for its actions by saying, “Change is good.” Every action has a reaction, and until a Dragon can understand the reactions that a given course causes, she is discouraged from taking action at all.

That’s the philosophy. Here are some other characteristics of the covenant:

- ✔ The Ordo Dracul welcomes new members, but it isn’t as open as the Invictus because its strength depends on the intelligence of its Kindred rather than on their loyalty.

- ✔ Kindred who are dissatisfied with their lot but who attribute that dissatisfaction to a spiritual or mystical state rather than to a political or temporal one make good candidates for the Ordo Dracul.
- ✔ The most accomplished Dragons of the Order tend to come from those Kindred who are open-minded and realistic before the Embrace. They see what they have become and do not immediately accept that the Requiem is the ultimate end of their existence. These sorts of Dragons are the cream of the crop.
- ✔ Most Dragons join the covenant to cheat the curse of undeath, pure and simple. The lure of the group's high rites draws all clans, and even members of the Lancea Sanctum have been known to leave their covenant, thus committing unthinkable blasphemy, to join the Ordo Dracul.
- ✔ Occasionally a member of the Order decides that the ceremonies she observes are sins against nature or a higher power and resolves never to call upon her hard-won knowledge again, passing the rest of her nights in quiet penance for her dabbling in forbidden mysteries.
- ✔ The hardest part about joining the covenant tends to be finding members who trust other Kindred enough to be willing to teach. With that in mind, the first task a prospective Dragon has is to get a potential mentor to notice her. Once a prospective Dragon finds a mentor, the apprenticeship period begins. Because all members of the Ordo Dracul are meant to learn constantly, all members can teach constantly.
- ✔ The Ordo performs elaborate graduation ceremonies and initiations as a covenant (though individual mentors might elect to test would-be pupils privately before fully introducing them).



Thinking Freely with the Unaligned



The Unaligned, or *Unbound*, are the rebels, outlaws, and original thinkers of vampire society. They freely and intentionally disobey the rule of the elders among their kind. Independent Kindred can also simply be apolitical vampires who acknowledge only their own authority but who don't necessarily make a grand show of defiance against Princes and Regents. There are as many reasons to renounce the entire notion of covenants as there are Kindred among the unbound.

The guiding philosophical principle behind the unaligned mindset is that every vampire — like every man — is free. This idea forms the approximate basis of the independent ideology, but like any solid foundation, it is set within the context of night-to-night practical principles. These are simply the most common points of agreement among a non-covenant of ruggedly individual vampires:

✔ **Vampiric nature is solitary.** To the unbound, the twin notions of freedom and individuality — as they pertain to vampiric existence — have their roots in the simple truth that vampires are solitary creatures. The soul of a Kindred is solitude. It is shut out from the world it knew before the Embrace.

The same applies to the new world into which a Kindred is thrust upon his Embrace. To the Unaligned, the idea of a “vampire society” is an attempt by power-hungry elders to enforce structure and order where there is none. Vampires are bestial, undead predators. Only by respecting the natural Kindred state — that of isolated, independent equality — can harmony be found among the Damned.

✔ **Power corrupts.** The unaligned are no fools. They see how terribly power corrupts among the living. Compound the problem with undeath, literal bloodthirst, and the prospect of an eternity of the same, and the result is disaster waiting to happen.

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

Here are some of the defining characteristics of the Unaligned:

- ✔ The unaligned are fiercely independent, and many would sooner face the rising sun with a smile than spend eternity in submission before another creature of the night.
- ✔ The unaligned existence is a magnet for the young and downtrodden among the Kindred.

- ✔ Many would-be unbound renounce their affiliations following eye-opening or humiliating experiences in one of the covenants.
- ✔ The independents probably see more “converts” than any of the covenants, which is yet another reason why these outcasts are often held in such low regard by the established covenants.
- ✔ A number of older Kindred, primarily those of the Mekhet and Gangrel, prize the unbound for their freedoms, and even seek to turn their influence toward uniting local unbound in hopes of forming a neo-covenant that advances their own agendas.

Dealing with Belial's Brood

Belial's Brood believes covenant law is unnecessary because, “Do as thou wilt shall be the whole of the law.”

The Brood is truly a hellish faction of Kindred. Members inflict pain and misery with no remorse and even less discretion. They burn buildings and overturn cars onto mortals. The Damned should be the Beast incarnate, they preach. Vampires serve none but the Devil himself!

Belial's Brood rarely survives long in any given domain. Princes rally entire domains against them; and if they didn't, members of the Brood would probably bring their own Final Death about sooner rather than later.

The truly remarkable aspect of Belial's Brood is that, even with the effort of all right-thinking Kindred to stamp them out, the same Satanic ideology survives to take root elsewhere.

VII

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

By all accounts, members of Seven are few, and not every city harbors their genocidal population. What they lack in numbers, however, they make up in

fervor and burning hatred of the Kindred. A few of their organization have been captured by other vampires, and from their testimonials (most gleaned under pain of torture or through supernatural means), more than a few worrisome details arise.

For example, members of Seven do not suffer the same pangs of possible frenzy upon seeing other undead for the first time. They can, however, identify other vampires on sight, as they claim to be able to see “the mark of the Betrayer” upon the Kindred.

Even the artificial understanding of the group’s “name” is a murky translation at best. When asked under supernatural compulsion to speak the truth, these creatures cannot define what they are, and probes into their minds yield only mental images of the Roman numeral “VII” or a character from what seems to be an unknown alphabet that the vampire so questioned cannot properly explain.



Despite the mysteries of their origins and purposes, one thing is certain: Members of Seven are fanatical in their drive to destroy other vampires. Seven believes it is the lost legacy of a king who was wronged centuries or even millennia ago, and that its purpose is to destroy the Damned. Only by removing the taint of the Kindred from the world can they achieve their Sabbath, which they understand as the ability to reclaim that lost kingdom.

Details differ. Some members believe that the kingdom shall emerge from a mystic curse, while others believe the kingdom is metaphorical, and they are the chosen workers of God’s will to remove the scourge of the Kindred from the world. Without a doubt, Seven is made up of vampires. Its members consume blood just as do any other undead, and the true nature of their fanatical mission remains unknown.

Whatever the cause of its caustic hate for the Kindred is, Seven isn’t stupid. It knows that the world at large sees no difference between it and its hated foes, so it practices a Masquerade, as well. It doesn’t blindly leap into conflict if it feels it would be doomed — it chooses its fights carefully so that it can gain as many advantages as possible. Given its relatively small numbers, overt conflict with groups of Kindred is rare, but not unheard of. Assassinations, murders, and stealth tactics are more suited to the covenant’s capabilities, but don’t underestimate its abilities. Too many Kindred have met their end at the claws of a coterie of Seven after thinking the killers were destroyed.

Part V

Mastering the Art of Storytelling

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



“Late in the game I received a debilitating supernatural attack. Not from a roll of the dice, but I’m pretty sure from the sour cream and onion dip they were serving.”



In this part . . .

Now is the Storyteller's time to shine. You are the one who creates a rough plot or series of events through which the players' characters go, with all participants influencing the direction of the story. The Storyteller portrays everyone whom the vampires encounter, enforces the rules, and calls for reactions and rolls when they're appropriate. It's a challenging job, but also a rewarding one, because players appreciate you for a great game. In this part, you get the tools and advice you need to prepare a great story.

Chapter 18

Setting the Stage

In This Chapter

- ▶ Telling stories about vampires
 - ▶ Portraying the World of Darkness
 - ▶ Using story tools such as characters, setting, and supporting cast
-

V*ampire* is not about rules, or even about a particular fictional world. It's about stories. Specifically, stories about vampires. It's about a relentless hunger that makes one a monster. It's about having power over others but not over oneself. It's about secrets, madness, and treachery. It's about making choices when no options are good, safe, or easy. Most of all, it's a story you don't tell by yourself. You tell it in partnership with other players. One of you takes the role of Storyteller, but all of you work together to make the story complete.

Creating the Story



As Storyteller, you create a dark version of the real world for the players' characters to inhabit, including all the people they meet. Doing so is a lot of work, but luckily you don't have to create the whole story all at once.

Vampire presumes that most stories take place within one city. At first, you don't have to worry about Kindred, mortals, or other supernatural creatures elsewhere in the world. You have to create only the parts of the world that affect the characters, which for Kindred is a lot less than for most mortals.

First, discuss the type of story your players want. *Vampire* permits a wide variety of different plots and styles of play. Do the characters want espionage, mystery, love stories, or black comedy? Do they want to play neonates (the default *Vampire* chronicle), elders among the Primogen, or something else? Does any aspect of the game or setting especially appeal to them? You don't want to create a chronicle that bores or irritates your players (or you!).

In your stories, your characters should discover how awful their existence as Kindred can be. Can they resist the hunger for blood and the ruthless demands of Kindred society? Can they maintain some moral standard when no mortal law can bind them and the Beast constantly moves them to attack? Even if characters can affirm their humanity one night, they have to deal with the next night, the night after that, and the night after that.

You also need to work with players to decide how long a chronicle you all want. A short chronicle of four to six episodes demands different planning than a chronicle meant to continue indefinitely. In a short chronicle, players may try to give their characters every trait, Merit, and personality quirk right away. For a long chronicle, players might generate more singularly focused characters.



As a Storyteller, you need to devise plots with clearly defined endings. Your own characters need to make an impression quickly, because they might not be on your imaginary stage very long.

Filling Out Your Characters



Your players' characters are the most important part of the chronicle. After all, the stories are about them. (If they aren't, your players will be bored and probably won't continue the chronicle for long.) What sort of characters do your players want to play? How do they relate to your ideas?

Suppose that you want to build your chronicle based on the rise and fall of a Prince in a large city. You envision the characters up to their eyeballs in the politics surrounding the Prince's career, with themes of treachery and corruption of power. What if one of your players, however, has her heart set on playing a Nosferatu who's chiefly interested in protecting his mortal family (without letting them see him), and another player wants to play an apolitical Mekhet who seeks mystical enlightenment through the Circle of the Crone? Neither seems compatible with your concept, but forcing

players to abandon characters they love won't make for interesting gameplay.

So negotiate. Maybe you can shift the emphasis of your chronicle so that the Prince's rise and fall plays out in the background and the characters deal with its side effects. The Nosferatu could be interested in the Prince's rise if he sees a chance to help his family through political connections. The Mekhet could sympathize with a Prince who also belonged to the Circle of the Crone. This sort of give-and-take helps both sides.

Social Merits can play an important role in defining a character. Newly Embraced vampires still have connections to the mortal existence they left behind, so encourage players to buy these Merits for their characters. Don't forget to ask how the Embrace affected the character's social connections. Did he somehow keep his mortal friends, relatives, or co-workers from realizing he became a vampire? Does he maintain a completely false existence as a mortal, or does the world think he's dead and only a few people know he isn't? (Well... not *quite* dead.)

Most dangerous of all, do some of his contacts, allies, or other associates know what he really is? Compromising the Masquerade opens wonderful story opportunities. The character must prevent these people from telling anyone else. He must hide or defend them from other Kindred who would kill them to keep the secret, or he must justify his own connection to them.



Make sure that players don't ignore the Embrace as part of their characters' background. The Kindred don't sire just anyone, and they don't do it often. What made this particular mortal so important to one vampire that she sacrificed part of her soul to bring him into the darkness?

Some players are reluctant to develop social or emotional connections for their characters, out of fear that those connections will be turned against them. To be human, however, involves contact with other people. The struggle to hold onto a fading humanity loses much of its poignancy and horror if no one else cares what happens to a character, and she doesn't care what happens to anyone else.

Picking a Setting

The Kindred usually dwell in cities. The larger the city, the more Kindred — and the more complete social structures — it can sustain. Large urban conglomerations such as New York, London, or Mexico City can support hundreds of Kindred.

Mid-sized cities such as Houston and Toronto sustain fewer Kindred, so the social structures are sparse there. A large percentage of local Kindred claim some sort of title, or many offices go unfilled because they aren't needed. In small populations, individual personalities, grudges, and influence can matter just as much as clan and covenant allegiance do in large populations.

In a small city such as Las Vegas or Venice, the players' characters form a major demographic of the Kindred population. This keeps the characters at the center of plots, but the setting may feel constricted in play. If the players

want to explore constantly evolving relationships between a limited cast of characters, however, a small city can work just fine.

Give thought to the city's age, too. In the New World, many major cities are less than a century old. The first Kindred to settle in the city probably still dwell there, and most other Kindred are their descendants within two or three generations. The alliances and rivalries between those founding Kindred probably still dominate undead politics.

London and Paris, on the other hand, have been around for centuries. Rome and Alexandria have flourished for more than 2,000 years. *Baghdad* is only the latest name of the city in its location, in a series of names stretching back to ancient Babylon. Equally long Kindred histories can generate bizarre customs, traditions, secrets, and vendettas whose origins are lost.



Many players and Storytellers set their chronicles in the nearest large city — perhaps the one they live in — or a city they know through books, movies, or TV shows, such as Chicago or Prague. Visits to the library can turn up all sorts of famous, notorious, or merely eccentric people from any city's history. Every significant city also has weirdness in its past and present, from mass murders to quirky monuments that can inspire supernatural mysteries.

If you're up to the task, you can create a fictional city. You can create fictional history, geography, celebrities, and colorful locations to go along with it. Just be warned that players do notice inconsistencies and might catch you in one if you don't take adequate notes during play.

Unlike in a small town or in the wilderness might also be possible if the characters possess the right blend of Disciplines and a great deal of care. The focus could be almost entirely on raw survival: hunting for animals to feed on, avoiding the sun, and possibly testing your characters' wits against other supernatural creatures.

Darkening your World

Once you decide where to set your chronicle, take that location and translate it into the World of Darkness. The easiest way to think of the job is to exaggerate the negative in a real-world city to turn it into a hellhole. Make the slums and other low-income neighborhoods poorer and more dilapidated. More buildings are vacant, except for squatters. Many homes have broken windows covered with boards or plastic sheeting. Boom boxes, screaming arguments, car alarms, and the occasional gunshot provide the soundtrack.

Affluent residential neighborhoods hold their own inhumanity. Blocks of apartments or condominiums are built like fortresses. In most neighborhoods,

suburban homes have no trace of individuality. Anyone who can afford it lives in a gated community, behind high concrete walls topped with barbed wire or broken glass, and with an armed guard at the gate. In the World of Darkness, these elements are more pronounced than in real life.

As you design your World of Darkness city, think of places where Kindred might dwell or congregate. Museums, opera houses, and other “cultural” locations work well for Elysiums, but so do old rail or bus terminals built in elegant Art Deco or earlier gingerbread style. Feel free to change your urban landmarks to make them more atmospheric. Ruined churches are too perfectly symbolic to ignore. Buildings left unfinished and abandoned also convey the despair of the World of Darkness.

Feeling out the World of Darkness

For the Kindred, the World of Darkness is even darker and deadlier than it is for mortals. Consider these guidelines for setting the tone of your chronicle:

- ✔ **The death of virtue.** Centuries of greed and lies from leaders in business, government, religion, and every other institution have led to the *death of virtue*. Everyone in the World of Darkness knows that virtues such as compassion and charity mark one as a sucker, ready to be victimized.
- ✔ **No more good guys.** Modern mortals have no one to inspire them. The media has caught possible heroes in sex scandals or taking bribes, or maybe destroyed their reputations just to create a story. Local community leaders sold out or died in the endemic urban violence.
- ✔ **Violence and fear.** Crime is commonplace and life is cheap, especially for the young. The poor lash out from frustration and greed, with well-heeled criminals as their antiheroes. Bored rich kids look for thrills in violence and drugs. People find no shortage of other groups to blame — other races, other classes, or just people who like other things.
- ✔ **Isolation.** Many families and neighborhoods are paranoid against the rest of the world, convinced that they live surrounded by enemies who want to strip them of whatever they have. Those who are well-to-do hide behind walls, gates, and security systems, sending their children to private schools, careful to avoid anyone outside their class.
- ✔ **Madness.** Insanity takes many forms in the World of Darkness. Sometimes it's obvious, like a bag lady talking to herself as she roots through a dumpster. Some forms of madness hide themselves within suburban walls. Many people seek escape through the temporary madness of drugs.



Knowing Your Supporting Cast

It's not possible (or necessary) to write up everyone the characters in your story might meet, but the people who matter most for your plots should be designed with as much care and detail as the players' characters.

Start with the supporting characters who matter most to the players, and who appear in the earliest stories. This probably includes the characters' sires. Give considerable thought to the characters' past and present mortal associates. Your players can help you brainstorm the histories and identities of their characters' loved ones, acquaintances, relatives, and important social contacts. The city's Prince and a few other prominent Kindred also probably play important roles. As the chronicle progresses, you can fill in other individuals as needed.



When you design important Storyteller characters, keep these guidelines in mind:

- ✓ **Envision the role.** Establish what role you intend a character to play and figure out what qualities he needs to fill that role. For example, an old Prince might need to seem both tyrannical and powerful so that the players' characters have reason to hate him while believing that they must garner widespread support before they dare to attack him.

- ✔ **Paint a picture.** Try to form an image of what each Storyteller character looks like. A character's appearance can evoke the qualities you assign to the role or can surprise by their apparent inconsistency.
- ✔ **Choose a name.** Carefully chosen names can enhance the image and roles of your characters, but inappropriate names can detract from them. Avoid names that make the players giggle. If you name the tyrant Prince Aloysius, he sounds more pretentious than frightening. A common, abbreviated name like Tom or Billy makes him sound too ordinary. An unusual name such as Brandon or Lorimer helps this important character stand out.
- ✔ **Age.** If the character has an appearance of either callow youth or enfeebled age, this can lead other characters to underestimate a Kindred. Most important, the time since a character's Embrace has bearing on her attitudes to mortals and other vampires. As the decades pass, everyone the Kindred cared about in life grows old and dies. Eventually the character has spent more time among the undead than she has among the living.
- ✔ **Personality.** To make your characters more interesting, pick personality traits that don't obviously fit together or that run against players' expectations.
- ✔ **History.** Every major character needs a background, just as a player's character does. What conflicts has this character already faced? Who has she loved, hated, or feared? If she's a vampire, why was she Embraced? How did she reach her present status, whatever that is? Design as much of the character's past as you feel her role demands.
- ✔ **Flaws or weaknesses.** Everyone has some sort of flaw or weakness that he struggles against (or that he cannot perceive and refuses to admit exists). At the very least, everyone in the World of Darkness suffers temptation from at least one Vice. Define it for major Storyteller characters.



Chapter 19

Crafting Stories

In This Chapter

- ▶ Creating plots and stories
 - ▶ Adding drama and conflict
 - ▶ Developing the story — from opening curtain to finale
 - ▶ Understanding the do's and don'ts of storytelling
-

This chapter explains the basics of getting your plot off the ground. Each story needs a central idea that you develop through a beginning, middle, and end. In the story's beginning, you present a situation that drives the characters to act. The middle consists of what the characters do about the situation and how other people respond to their actions. The situation resolves itself at the story's end.

Understanding the Different Types of Plots

Your chronicle will most likely contain several types of plots:

- ✓ **Primary plots** advance the overarching focus of the chronicle. They form chapters in a longer story.
- ✓ **Secondary plots** are self-contained and often have nothing to do with the chronicle's main plot.
- ✓ **Subplots** are small stories that run alongside other plots and concern just one or two of the characters.

Primary plots usually portray characters' overarching experiences as vampires as they come to grips with undead existence and the challenges and burdens it presents. At the start of a chronicle, primary plots might involve meeting other Kindred and deciding upon allies and enemies.



Anything goes for secondary plots. They might serve as a change of pace. If the characters have sweated through a series of grim and difficult moral dilemmas in the primary plot, maybe it's time to break the tension with a simple brawl or something darkly humorous.

Subplots are good for character development. They provide extra conflicts and obstacles that can complicate the resolution of a main story. A character's attempt to gain favor within a particular covenant might draw her into conflict with a clan leader with whom the coterie seeks an alliance. The type of conflicts offered by subplots provides more chances for characters to make decisions that influence the course of the main story.



Use subplots based on a character's background or current activities to further embroil the character in your setting.

Resolving Conflicts

Stories usually revolve around a conflict, an obstacle, or opposing force that characters must overcome in order to achieve their goals and resolve the plot. The usual sorts of conflicts break down into a number of categories.



- ✔ **Kindred versus himself.** The character faces divided loyalties or conflicting desires. He wants to achieve two goals, but achieving one means abandoning the other. The character must, therefore, decide where his priorities lie.
- ✔ **Kindred versus the Beast.** Vampires cannot avoid this conflict, and they never know when it might erupt. Storytellers can exacerbate the conflict with the Beast by creating situations in which a character must resist frenzy to achieve a goal, or in which surrender to the Beast could destroy something (or someone) held dear.
- ✔ **Kindred versus Kindred.** Individual Kindred may oppose each other because of clashing ambitions, competition for hunting grounds, moral differences, or because they just don't like each other.
- ✔ **Weak versus strong.** Differences in status and power can drive conflict between Kindred. On one hand, young Kindred fear and envy the power of their elders. On the other hand, old Kindred fear their resentful childer, but if they give away any of their own power and influence, their rivals might gain an edge.
- ✔ **Clan versus clan.** The clans have their own cultures, interests, and viewpoints, which give them grounds to disagree. All too often, though, the conflict between clans within a city grows from some personal slight that one clan member offers another.
- ✔ **Covenant versus covenant.** Each covenant espouses a particular ideology of how vampires should organize and comport themselves. Believing that you are right usually involves believing that people who disagree with you are wrong, so that gives any covenant grounds for conflict with any other covenant.
- ✔ **Clan versus covenant.** Although Kindred of any clan can join any covenant, each clan favors some covenants over others. The leaders of a clan or covenant within a city may oppose each other and drag their followers into a conflict. That conflict becomes awkward for any character who falls within both groups.
- ✔ **Individual versus society.** Kindred society, like mortal society, has its rules. Some rules, such as the Traditions and the prerogatives of sires and Princes, are explicitly stated. Some are not. Anyone who challenges the rules of his society gets into trouble with the people who believe in those rules and have a stake in enforcing them.
- ✔ **Kindred versus mortal world.** The Kindred defend the Masquerade because they know that in a war between Kindred and kine, the mortals would easily win. Kindred power depends on mortals not knowing how the undead manipulate their lives. Some mortals, however, know that the Kindred exist, and so they hunt them.



The most gripping conflicts arise when Kindred come into conflict with the mortals they once loved. How do you explain to your parents, your best friend, or your spouse that you are worse than dead? How do they react if they discover what a monster you've become? When it comes to mortal loved ones, the options for Kindred range from bad to worse.

Developing the Story

So, you have an idea for a story. You know who will be involved. You've decided what challenge or conflict the characters will face. Now it's time to plan the structure of the story and block out possible scenes. Most important, you need to figure out why the players get involved.



Drawing characters into the plot

Kindred don't risk their unlives because a mysterious sixth sense tells them a story has begun. As a Storyteller, you must draw characters into stories. Here are some tools available to you:

- ✓ **The carrot:** A character sees a chance to get something she wants. It might be anything from blackmail information about a prominent vampire to meeting her favorite writer at a late bookstore signing. The character tries to acquire what she wants, and thus places herself on the scene as the story begins.
- ✓ **The stick:** Some external threat forces the characters to take action. A typical example is the Prince telling the coterie to perform a mission or suffer the consequences.
- ✓ **Curiosity:** If a character possesses a special interest in some subject, any event that relates to that subject can attract her attention. A Circle of the Crone member might want to investigate strange events that hint of magic at work.
- ✓ **Personal connections:** Someone close to the character is already involved. This person needs help or has attracted attention that extends to the character. The person may want something from the character, or the character may want something from the person.

Luring characters into the plot

As you get characters' attention, you need to draw them into the story and set out the challenges they face. Don't reveal everything at once. Give them just part of the situation. The players need a goal for their characters to

accomplish. To fulfill it, they need to follow leads that you plant. If you present players with a mysterious death (that they cannot leave to the police for some reason), for example, they can interview people who knew the victim and search for physical clues.

After the first hour of play, the players should have a pretty good idea of what challenge their characters face, what conflict awaits, and what other characters matter in the story, even if they haven't met all those people yet. They could, of course, be mistaken on several counts. In the World of Darkness, matters are seldom how they seem. The characters have a direction, though, and the story is begun.

Building the action

The bulk of the story consists of the characters' reaction to the situation they discover in the introduction, other characters' responses to those actions, and the coterie's deeds in return. The characters learn more about the situation, including a few surprises. They meet other characters, gather information, implement plans, and face challenges.

Not every surprise necessarily arises because someone lied to the coterie. Supporting cast members may be misinformed, ignorant, or outright deluded. Other characters might blunder into someone's careful plan and disrupt it. For instance, the mystery kidnapper might demand that the characters rob a certain safe in order to get the abducted brother back safely. When the characters open the vault, they find no trace of the item they were told to steal. Was the whole situation a complicated setup? The challenge they thought they would face (burglary) was replaced by another challenge. (Where is the item, and what the heck is really going on?) Yet, the main challenge of the plot (secure the brother's return or rescue) still needs resolution.



When you design the middle portion of a story, you need to decide who knows what and who does what, but you also need to leave room for the characters to make their own decisions, including multiple possible courses of action. Storytelling the middle of a game demands some flexibility since everyone reacts to everyone else and you don't really know what actions the characters will choose. You can (and should) furnish hints that some courses of action are more useful than others. Just as you should try to surprise the players at least once in a story, you can expect that they'll surprise *you* now and then. If you know your World of Darkness and your Storyteller characters, you can work out how other people respond to the characters' unexpected choices.

The story's climax

At the story's climax, all the chains of cause and effect come together. The characters face the biggest challenge and succeed, fail, or decide what constitutes success. Their decision and actions resolve the central conflict. Mysteries are explained. They find the missing goods and exchange it for the brother. Or they go after the kidnapper directly to succeed or fail in a rescue attempt.



Make sure that your climax is worth the effort the players and characters invest to get there. This is a golden rule of Storytelling. Give them something spectacular at the story's climax: the most wrenching ethical decision, the most dangerous fight, the most elusive puzzle, the most difficult social challenge. The rewards of success are great, but the price of failure is high.

Tying up loose ends

After the climax, the story probably still has a few loose ends. The characters learn the consequences of their choices. Other people react to their deeds. Remaining questions may be answered. This phase of the story is called the *aftermath* phase.

The aftermath phase may not need much intensive roleplaying. Much of it can be portrayed in downtime, which you simply describe. One idea is to include a question-and-answer period in which the characters can explore points of special interest.

The aftermath connects the coterie's actions back to a wider world. Doing so reinforces the sense that the characters' actions matter to other people, and that they dwell in a greater environment. This, in turn, sustains the players' interest and curiosity. Meanwhile, you may also plant the seeds of future stories. Not every question is necessarily answered, and some Storyteller characters might react to the coterie's achievement by setting their own plans in motion.

The Commandments



Like any artistic endeavor, Storytelling is a process and skill you develop with practice. At first, the task might seem overwhelming. The main elements to remember break down into five “do’s” and five “don’ts.”

- ✔ **Involve the players whenever possible.** Work players' ideas and character backgrounds into your city and chronicle. Doing so not only reduces the amount of work you have to do to build your World of Darkness, but it also gives the players a greater sense of involvement in the story.
- ✔ **Work with the players' expectations.** Remember that it's their game, too. Try to get some idea of what sort of game your players want before you throw them into your chronicle.
- ✔ **Work things out in advance.** The better you know your setting and characters before game time, the more attention you can pay to telling the story and presenting interesting characters. When the players throw you a curve, you'll be better prepared to respond if you've already worked through your story's twists and turns and pondered possible alternative events.
- ✔ **Story first, rules second.** The rules are here to help you tell the story, not to get in the way or to turn the game into an exercise. Use the rules you need when you need them. When you can get by with narration and common sense, do so.
- ✔ **Description, dialogue, and action.** Bring your world to life with exciting descriptions using sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Act out character interaction through dialogue, with different voices and mannerisms for each character. Keep something happening at all times, and give the characters important choices to make.

On the other hand:

- ✔ **Avoid stereotypes.** An endless parade of identical, cardboard characters can drain the interest from your chronicle.
- ✔ **Don't forget the payoff.** If the players work hard and make smart decisions, their characters should overcome challenges and achieve something. If the characters' success is not in proportion to their effort and the challenges they face, the players will feel cheated.
- ✔ **Don't tell them everything.** One of the biggest "hooks" in a story is actually for the players, not the characters. They want to discover what's going on! Part of the fun of any story is the suspense of not knowing how it will turn out. Make the characters work to figure out who's really doing what.
- ✔ **Don't abuse your power.** As the final arbiter of events, your word is law in your chronicle. Don't use this power to beat the characters into doing what you want. You're playing a game. It's for fun, and everyone wins if they have a scary, good time, whether they follow your script or not.
- ✔ **Traits and statistics.** Do these last. They're just numbers, and if your characters aren't unique and interesting, the best traits in the world won't help your chronicle. For many Storyteller characters, traits won't even come up — you don't need to supply dots for every herd member or the snitch who tells characters the word on the street.



Chapter 20

Introducing Antagonists

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting to know vampires' antagonists and opponents
 - ▶ Understanding animals
 - ▶ Encountering non-combatants
 - ▶ Engaging combatants
-

This chapter provides profiles of a number of supporting cast members who you can drop into your stories as you need them or use as models for creating your own opponents and rivals.

Animals

The following specimens are animals commonly found in urban or rural environments. Note: Unlike humans, Defense traits for animals are determined by whichever dots are *greater* between Dexterity and Wits.

Skill Specialties are listed in parentheses following their associated Skills. Add one die to a pool whenever a Skill Specialty comes into play. Each animal's attack is listed with a total dice pool (including natural weapon modifiers) for your convenience.

Bat

Description: Bats are small, generally nocturnal animals that hunt for food using a sophisticated means of echolocation. Though unintelligent, they are swift, agile fliers. While most bats feed on insects or fruit, a few species in Latin America are known to feed on the blood of animals.

Attributes: Intelligence 0, Wits 1, Resolve 0, Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 1, Presence 1, Manipulation 0, Composure 1

Skills: Athletics (Flight) 4, Brawl 1, Survival 3

Willpower: 1

Initiative: 5

Defense: 4

Speed: 15 (flight only; species factor 10)

Size: 1

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Bite	1 (L)	3

Health: 2

Cat

Description: Cats stalk and pounce on prey, killing it by snapping its neck with their jaws. Cats are intelligent animals and clever hunters, but difficult to train. They have exceptionally sharp hearing and excellent night vision, as well as well-developed senses of taste and smell. The following traits are typical for a medium to large cat (9 to 12 pounds).

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 1, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 2, Stealth 3

Willpower: 6

Initiative: 8

Defense: 5

Speed: 13 (species factor 7)

Size: 2

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Bite	0 (L)*	3
Claw	0 (L)*	3

Health: 5

* A cat's attacks receive no damage bonus but still inflict lethal damage.

Dog

Description: Dogs are pack-oriented carnivores capable of hunting and killing prey many times their size through teamwork and persistence. Dogs come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and intellects and are generally loyal and can be taught a wide variety of tasks. Dogs have highly acute senses of smell and taste, have powerful jaws, and are tireless runners.

The following traits are representative of a large guard dog (80 to 100 pounds).

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Skills: Athletics (Running) 4, Brawl 3, Intimidation 3, Stealth 1, Survival (Tracking) 3

Willpower: 6**Initiative:** 6**Defense:** 4**Speed:** 14 (species factor 7)**Size:** 4**Weapons/Attacks:**

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Bite	2 (L)	9

Health: 7



Horse

Description: Horses are large herbivores with a long history of domestication by humans, serving as draft animals, farm workers, and fighting mounts for thousands of years. Horses vary considerably in size, weight, and temperament, but are generally intelligent and easy to train.

The traits listed below represent a medium-sized riding horse (725 to 1000 pounds).

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl 1, Survival 2

Willpower: 5

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 19 (species factor 12)

Size: 7

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Bite	1 (L)	6
Hoof	3 (B)	8

Health: 12

Raven

Description: Ravens are large, omnivorous birds related to crows and are common in rural areas (particularly farmlands). They are very intelligent, inquisitive animals that possess a penchant for stealing small, brightly colored objects such as earrings or other pieces of jewelry. Hand-raised ravens can be domesticated and trained and are capable of mimicking human speech.

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

Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Intimidation 2, Survival 3

Willpower: 6

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 14 (flight only; species factor 10)

Size: 2

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Beak	1 (L)	3

Health: 4

Encountering Non-combatants

The following are examples of non-combatants whom characters can encounter in the course of a typical story. These people are vampires' likely feeding victims.

Club-goer

Quote: "C'mon man, let me in! The manager's a friend of mine! Seriously!"

Background: Club-goers haunt the streets and alleys downtown, cruising the hip locales or hitting their usual hangouts and looking to get lost in a haze of music, smoke, and booze.

Description: These characters fit a wide range of descriptions depending on the local culture and the kind of club in question. They can range in age and appearance from teenage poseurs to middle-aged iconoclasts, wearing anything from ostentatious goth attire to flannel shirts and jeans.

Storytelling hints: Club-goers are people out looking for a good time, or at least a distraction from their troubles. They aren't generally interested in long, deep conversations or answering detailed questions about the local nightlife. They're often good sources of local gossip relating to the club scene and can provide useful information on local personalities, but quickly excuse themselves after more than a couple of questions.

Abilities:

Carousing (dice pool 5) — Club-goers know how to party, and most are well-versed in the art of drinking the night away. These characters are adept at dragging others along on their club-hopping escapades, often to the detriment of their hangers-on.

Doting ghouls and thralls

Quote: "Whatever you want, my love . . . whatever you want."

Background: The Vinculum wreaks havoc on those subjected to it. Ghouls often have little choice, given that they rely on the same domitor to provide them with Vitae. They don't know that their love is artificial — and even if they do, many don't care.

Doting thralls are like lapdogs to a master. They hang on his every word and do their best to please him in their weird, codependent, surrogate-sexuality submission fantasies. Still, their love has limits. The doting thrall is presented

as a non-combatant because, even though her love for her *regnant*, or master, is extreme, she won't throw herself at impossible odds if she believes she can run away and help her master from afar.

Description: Thralls come from all walks of life, but almost all have weak wills (the better to be suborned by the Kindred). More than anything else, a dotting thrall's appearance suits her purpose. A perverted domitor who simply wants a ghoul to provide sustenance might make a thrall of a kidnapper. A refined Ventrue who uses his thrall as an aide and chamberlain might deck his ghoul in tailored suits. A thrall can appear as anything or anyone, and often does.

Storytelling hints: As might be expected, many ghouls know more than a few secrets regarding their domitors. In fact, many Kindred regard their ghouls affectionately and possibly even lovingly. As such, thralls make for excellent moles (almost always unwittingly) or hostages.

Abilities:

Investigation (dice pool 5) — Ghouls seek to look out for their masters and protect them from harm.

Socialize (dice pool 5) — Those Kindred who bring their servants to Kindred functions find that their ghouls are eager to learn about the ways of Kindred society and often pick up the nuances of its relationships rather quickly.



Homeless guy

Quote: “Man, you wouldn’t believe some of the shit I’ve seen out here at night. Let me have one of those smokes and I’ll tell you about it.”

Background: The homeless can be found in almost every large city or town around the world, wandering streets and alleys in search of food, a fix, or a warm place to sleep. Many times their disheveled appearance hides a sharp mind and the capabilities of a practiced confidence man or thief, or a proud, good-hearted individual who has simply fallen on hard times.

Description: Dirty, tangled hair, cracked lips, raw complexion. Most homeless people are thin and in poor health and wear layers of dirty and ragged clothing. They often carry their possessions in a trash bag or threadbare duffel bag.

Storytelling hints: Homeless people are often beggars, looking for some money to feed their addictions or just their bellies. These individuals can be eager to perform a simple job in return for a handout, like posing as a lookout or sharing information about the local area. In some cases, however, these people are experienced con artists who try to swindle as much as they can out of the gullible or overly compassionate.

Abilities:

Awareness (dice pool 4) — Many homeless people have learned to be acutely aware of their environment and are quick to take advantage of whatever opportunities fate tosses their way.

Streetwise (dice pool 5) — Homeless people know who and what goes on in their territory, mostly as a matter of survival. They can be persuaded to share what they’ve observed with others (with the right incentive).

Sales clerk

Quote: “Let’s see . . . four stakes, a mallet, and a mirror. Wasn’t Halloween like, last month?”

Background: They are the faceless masses that man every counter at every store and institution across the world. Most are young men and women earning minimum wage and working long hours while going to school, or trying to make ends meet with a second job. Frequently sullen and sarcastic, these characters have seen all manner of strangeness while working the graveyard shift at the local Mini-Mart.

Description: Sales clerks come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, largely depending on the kind of store or institution at which they work. Late-night convenience store clerks are usually young men or women with pasty skin

and red-rimmed eyes. A car salesman might be artificially tanned, with bleached-white teeth and an off-the-rack business suit.

Storytelling Hints: Sales clerks can be sullen and sarcastic, distant and withdrawn, or outgoing chatterboxes eager to share the latest bizarre episode of their workday. Longtime clerks are often keen observers, able to tell a lot about the people who come into their stores just by watching. Clerks can be a useful source of information with the right kind of motivation.

Abilities:

Awareness (dice pool 4) — Sales clerks spend a lot of time watching people and gauging their moods. They can often discern a great deal about a person's intentions by observing what she wears and how she acts.

Empathy (dice pool 5) — Successful clerks are adept at reading a customer's mood and manipulating it to make a sale.

Security guard

Quote: “Who's there? Come on out where I can see you!”

Background: Often derided as “Barney Fifes” or “rent-a-cops,” security guards are a ubiquitous presence at most medium or large institutions from schools to warehouses to hospitals. Most times they're poorly trained and paid only minimum wage to walk a long, boring beat or to sit at a desk and stare at cameras all night.

Description: Often middle-aged and overweight (many security guards are retired cops), with a sharply pressed uniform. Security guards carry a large flashlight and a set of keys, and sometimes wear a radio. They are frequently unarmed, though some carry non-lethal weapons such as pepper spray or a collapsible baton.

Storytelling Hints: Most security guards are tired, grumpy, and bored out of their minds. When confronted with signs of trouble, they typically have one of two reactions: pawn off the problem on someone else or charge headlong into the situation, eager for some action.

Abilities:

Awareness (dice pool 6) — Security guards are paid to pay attention to their surroundings and be alert for trouble.

Brawl (dice pool 5) — The most action that many security guards ever see is manhandling the occasional drunk or shoplifter, but some are experienced in dealing with fistfights.

Intimidation (dice pool 3) — In many situations, security guards are used to present an intimidating presence to deter troublemakers. Sometimes guards like to throw their weight around and abuse their authority out of boredom or frustration.

Student

Quote: “I can’t believe I let you talk me into this. I’ve got an exam tomorrow!”

Background: When they aren’t going to class or sleeping in their dorm rooms, students can be found wandering campus grounds or haunting the bars, clubs, or cafés around town. Usually young and often night owls, students generally look for out-of-the-way places to study — or avoid studying altogether.

Description: Students are typically in their mid to late teens. Most wear whatever clothes they happen to find on the floor each morning. Nearly all carry bags overflowing with papers, books, and snacks.

Storytelling hints: Students are often bored with college life and look for ways to blow off steam, usually by partying or hitting the local clubs, or hanging out with friends and watching movies. Full of new-found freedom after a lifetime under their parents’ control, some students get involved in harebrained stunts that no sane adult would ever consider, just because it sounds like a good idea.

Abilities:

Academics (dice pool 4) — If a student can’t recall something he’s learned in class, he has ample facilities with which to go look it up.

Carousing (dice pool 3) — When not studying or going to class, most students spend their nights hitting the bars.

Science (dice pool 4) — Some students (like Engineering or Biology majors) possess this ability instead of Academics. Occasionally, some students possess both.

Coming Up against Combatants

The following sections describe examples of combatants your characters may encounter during a story.

Belial's Brood fanatic

Quote: “Burn, baby, burn!”

Background: The demonic undead faction is known as *Belial's Brood*. Members of this faction despise the established social order and do whatever they want, regardless of the Prince's will. Their methods vary from the subtle to the blatant, but their recklessness never wavers.

Description: Belial's Brood are secretive and often aggressively hostile. Certainly, they are always ready for a fight. Interestingly, they rarely carry modern weapons, because they don't have the connections to get their hands on them.

Storytelling hints: Belial's Brood are a numerical minority, but their activities are not so easily overlooked. This group lends itself to a search-and-destroy type of Storytelling, one in which an obvious enemy fits the bill rather than the more shades-of-gray intricacies of most *Vampire* stories. Belial's Brood members serve as excellent enemies or as the impetus to forge alliances with previously rival groups in the face of a common enemy.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2, Weaponry 3

Merits: Allies (Cult) 3

Willpower: 5

Humanity: 5

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Blood Potency: 2

Vitae/per Turn: 11/1 (Can hold 11 Vitae total and spend no more than one per turn.)

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Machete	2 (L)	8
Stake	1 (L)	3

Armor:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Rating</i>
Reinforced/thick clothing	1/0

Health: 8

Disciplines: Celerity 2, Resilience 2, Vigor 1



Gangbanger

Quote: “Step off!”

Background: The most common member of any gang, this person is the enforcer and “soldier” who fights and dies in turf wars and drive-bys. Most gangbangers are teens or young men or women who have learned that violence is the only path to respect and power on the street.

Description: Gangbangers wear the colors of their gangs — sometimes a literal hue, sometimes a particular article of clothing or tattoo. Most bear scars from numerous fights and sport showy rings or other types of jewelry.

Storytelling Hints: Gangbangers are thugs. Their standing in the gang is determined by how tough they act and how vicious they can be when provoked. Most fight at the slightest provocation. The others go and get ten of their friends and look for revenge. Most times, they ambush their opponents with gunfire (often inaccurate gunfire) and then escape to safety. When they are faced with capable opponents, they look for opportunities to even the score when their enemy least expects it.

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

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2, Weaponry 2

Merits: Allies 2, Fleet of Foot 2, Status 1

Willpower: 4

Morality: 6

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 11 (13 with Fleet of Foot)

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Glock 17 (light pistol)	2 (L)	20/40/80	17+1	6

Armor: None**Health:** 7

Monster hunter

Quote: “They’re out there, hiding among us, preying on the innocent and defenseless. I’m going to make them pay for what they’ve done.”**Background:** A *monster hunter* is a man or woman who has witnessed firsthand the terrors that plague the modern world. Some hunters have lost loved ones to these creatures. Others may be victims themselves who survived only by luck or the cruelty of their tormentors. But rather than shrink from the horror of what they’ve experienced, these individuals devote themselves to finding and destroying creatures. Monster hunters operate alone and often lead secret lives.**Description:** Monster hunters come in all shapes and sizes. Some are dirty and disheveled. Others appear perfectly respectable until they pull a stake and a mallet from a briefcase. Like the creatures they hunt, these people work hard to blend in with the crowd.**Storytelling hints:** Most monster hunters are mentally disturbed to one extent or another by what they’ve experienced. They are frequently paranoid and suspicious of even close friends, whom they constantly fear might become “one of *them*.”**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 5, Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 4**Skills:** Academics 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Computer 1, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult (Vampires) 4, Science 1, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 4**Merits:** Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Iron Stamina 2**Willpower:** 9**Morality:** 7

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 8 (10 with Fast Reflexes)

Defense: 4

Speed: 12

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Machete	2 (L)	9
Stake	1 (L)	4

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Colt .45 ACP (heavy pistol)	3 (L)	30/60/120	7+1	10
Remington 870 (shotgun)	4 (L)	20/40/80	8+1	11

Armor:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Rating</i>
Reinforced/thick clothing	1/0

Health: 8

Police officer

Quote: “Please step out of the car, sir.”

Background: Many people become police officers out of a desire to protect others. Some, often former soldiers, join the force looking for a chance to use their capabilities against live opponents. Police officers are well trained in criminology, investigative procedures, armed and unarmed combat, and basic lifesaving techniques.

Description: Most police officers are tall and broad-shouldered, with close-cropped hair (many have military-style haircuts) and muscular physiques.

They actively cultivate an intimidating persona, an attitude they have a hard time letting go of when not in uniform.

Storytelling Hints: Police officers are trained to be polite but detached when dealing with civilians. They can't afford to make friends or appear to favor one person at the expense of another. They tend to assume people are guilty until proven otherwise, and cops with many years' experience can be sarcastic and cynical when dealing with the public.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Skills: Academics (Criminology) 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Computer 1, Drive 3, Empathy 2, Firearms 3, Intimidation 2, Investigation (Crime Scenes) 3, Larceny 2, Medicine 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2, Weaponry 2

Merits: Allies 2, Fast Reflexes 2, Status 2, Stunt Driver

Willpower: 7

Morality: 7

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 7 (9 with Fast Reflexes)

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Baton	1 (B)	6

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Glock 17 (light pistol)	2 (L)	20/40/80	17+1	8
Remington 870 (shotgun)	4 (L)	20/40/80	8+1	10

Armor:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Rating</i>
Kevlar vest (thin)	1/2

Health: 8

Rogue ghoul

Quote: “You can give me what I need or I can take it from you. It’s your choice.”**Background:** The rogue ghoul knows what it’s like to serve a vampiric regnant as a thrall — and she’s had enough. Somehow, she escaped thralldom to her master and made it out on her own. The problem is, she’s addicted to what being a ghoul does to her. As such, she seeks out vampires, either to slay them or barter with them, but always to take their Vitae for her own use. She’s savvy, quick, and paranoid.**Description:** The rogue has a haunted, hunted look about her. She might go days without a shower, or even longer without access to a mirror. She spends her life hunting vampires, but knows she is weaker than her prey, and she looks it.**Storytelling hints:** The rogue ghoul is under blood hunt in at least one domain, so helping her probably means courting disaster. Still, she likely knows a great deal about individual Kindred and travels more than most vampires do, so she might have news of outside territories and domains.**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2**Skills:** Brawl 2, Crafts 3, Drive 2, Investigation 1, Larceny 1, Persuasion 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1, Survival 2, Weaponry 2**Merits:** Resources 2**Willpower:** 6**Morality:** 6**Virtue:** Prudence**Vice:** Pride**Initiative:** 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Vitae/per Turn: 4/1. Having consumed Kindred Vitae, a ghoul has some physical Disciplines and blood to spend to fuel those powers. The Vitae listed here is usable only for Disciplines; it does not represent the entirety of the blood in her body.

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Stake	1 (L)	1

Armor: None

Health: 9

Disciplines: Auspex 1, Vigor 3

SWAT officer

Quote: “Get down on the ground and put your hands behind your head! Do it now!”

Background: SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) officers are police who receive special training in commando-style assaults when faced with hostage situations or when dealing with heavily armed suspects such as terrorists or militia members. These officers are generally more fit than their peers and receive extra training in guns and combat tactics. When confronted with an armed individual, they are likely to shoot to kill.

Description: SWAT officers wear special uniforms, usually black, with heavy ballistic armor and a web harness to carry equipment. Their faces are hidden behind shields or balaclavas.

Storytelling hints: SWAT officers are much more gung-ho than their peers on the force. They consider themselves an elite squad, and behave that way to civilians and fellow officers. They perform like soldiers or commandos, operating with flawless teamwork and precise shooting.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Skills: Academics (Criminology) 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Computer 1, Drive 3, Empathy 2, Firearms (Submachine Guns) 4, Intimidation 3, Investigation (Crime Scenes) 2, Larceny 2, Medicine 1, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2, Weaponry 2

Merits: Allies 3, Fast Reflexes 2, Status 3

Willpower: 7

Morality: 7

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Pride

Initiative: 8 (10 with Fast Reflexes)

Defense: 4 (3 with flak jacket)

Speed: 12

Weapons/Attacks:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Throw Modifier</i>	<i>Blast Area</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Concussion grenade	+2	3 yards	4 (B)	9

<i>Type</i>	<i>Damage</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Shots</i>	<i>Dice Pool</i>
Glock 17 (light pistol)	2 (L)	20/40/80	17+1	10
HK MP-5 (large SMG)	3 (L)	50/100/200	30+1	12

Armor:

<i>Type</i>	<i>Rating</i>
Flak jacket	2/3

Health: 8



Chapter 21

Gaining Experience

In This Chapter

- ▶ Earning and awarding experience points
 - ▶ Developing your character further through flaws and failings
 - ▶ Understanding mental, physical, and social flaws
-

People pick up new skills and knowledge, either through deliberate study or through the school of hard knocks. The undead are no exception. This chapter explains how your Storyteller determines whether your character has earned experience points. The last part of the chapter covers flaws, sometimes tragic, sometimes surmountable. This chapter describes how you can earn experience points by dealing with your character's flaws effectively.

What's the Lesson?

Over years and centuries, vampires learn from their successes and failures, hone their Disciplines and mundane skills, and even change their force of will and personality. Such development is represented through *experience points*, which are awards given to players between game sessions and stories, which are, in turn, saved or spent on new or higher traits or powers.



Awarding experience points

Players' characters gain experience points for the following reasons:

- ✓ **Automatic:** Each player gets one experience point for her character for participating in a game session's events, regardless of success or failure.
- ✓ **Learning Curve:** At the end of a game session, the Storyteller asks each player what his character learned in the course of play. For example, the

character may have gained information about another Kindred's deeds. Or he may have learned about a bit of mortal society he didn't know before. If the Storyteller agrees with the player that his character learned something important, the player gets an experience point.

- ✓ **Roleplaying:** A player can win one experience point for playing the role of her character exceptionally well. Not only did her performance entertain the other players, but she also showed the strengths and weaknesses of the character's personality.
- ✓ **Danger:** The character took risks and showed courage. Dangerous situations challenge a character's ability to think on his feet and use all his resources. The danger may involve combat, or it may be entirely social — a risk of humiliation, financial ruin, or personal grief deserves recognition as much as a shoot-out or a brawl. A player receives one point for her character's bravery.
- ✓ **Coolness:** Sometimes a character comes up with a solution to a problem that's positively brilliant. Sometimes a character does something that has everyone else at the table standing and applauding. Sometimes a character takes an action that unexpectedly heightens the drama or opens a whole new avenue of interest for the entire troupe. When a player is just this damn cool, he should earn an extra experience point as a reward.

Spending experience points

Table 21-1 shows how many experience points it costs to buy various dots or to raise existing traits. The cost of improving an existing trait is a multiple of the new dot total sought. To raise a character's Strength from 3 to 4, for example, costs 20 experience points: 4, the goal, times a factor of five. Buying the first dot in, say, a Skill costs three experience points (1, the goal, times a factor of three).

Table 21-1	Experience Costs
<i>Trait</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Attribute	New dots × 5
Skill	New dots × 3
Skill Specialty	3 points

<i>Trait</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Clan Discipline	New dots × 5
Other Discipline	New dots × 7
Merit	New dots × 2
Blood Potency	New dots × 8
Willpower	8 points



Although players decide where to spend their characters' experience points, the Storyteller has a veto. When players improve traits, they should spend experience on traits that characters actually used in the last few stories. Even a failed attempt to use a trait can justify an increase, however, because the character learns from his mistake; but greater aptitude requires some justification.

Keeping track of experience points

Here are some rules to keep in mind when dealing with experience points:

- ✓ Improving a character's Attributes raises any figured traits that depend on them. For example, raising a character's Stamina permanently grants him another Health dot, and improving the character's Resolve raises his Willpower.
- ✓ Some Merits cannot be taught or learned. Physical Merits, for example, must be bought when you create your character. No one can set out to become a giant and gain extra Size.
- ✓ A *Clan Discipline* is available to your character through the lineage of the Embrace. It comes quickly to the supernatural identity of your character's origins. Clan Disciplines are listed in each of the clan descriptions in Chapters 4 to 8. An *Other Discipline* is one that belongs to another clan rather than your own. Those other Disciplines can be learned, even if you're not of the same clan, but at a slower rate than a Clan Discipline.
- ✓ Experience points cannot be spent to raise your character's Willpower dots higher than his Resolve + Composure. In general, Willpower is acquired with experience points to restore dots lost when a vampire has sired another Kindred.

Accepting Your Flaws

Most people are flawed in one way or another, but some people have truly tragic flaws, hindrances that make it a real challenge for them to achieve certain goals.



With the Storyteller's permission, a player can select one Flaw for his character during character creation from the following sections. If that Flaw hinders the character adversely during a game session, the Storyteller can choose to award the character one extra experience point for that chapter.

Here are some things to keep in mind regarding Flaws:

- ✔ Flaws award experience points only if they adversely affect their bearer. If a character is crippled and requires a wheelchair to get around, but spends the entire game session hacking into a corporation's computer database, he does not gain an experience point for his affliction because it didn't affect his hacking in any way. If your character does not need to overcome adversity, he does not experience growth or betterment as a result of dealing with the flaw.
- ✔ Flaws can be temporary or permanent, depending on the nature of the trait and the player's wishes. If the Storyteller deems that a Flaw has been sufficiently overcome, he can declare that a character no longer has it and no longer suffers from its effects (and thus no longer gains an extra experience point now and then).
- ✔ Events in the game might also inflict a Flaw. A vampire subjected to sunlight may develop a condition associated with his injuries, if the Storyteller thinks it's appropriate. Perhaps he is now *Lame* or has *Poor Sight*. If a fight is particularly traumatic, he might become a *Coward* or develop *Amnesia*. In all cases, only the Storyteller has the power to inflict Flaws (or to *not* inflict them), and he should do so only if a player agrees.
- ✔ The ultimate key to Flaws roleplaying is that a player must fully role-play his character's Flaw. He can't pretend it's not there and demand an extra experience point.
- ✔ For the most part, Flaws act as carrots rather than sticks, rewarding roleplaying rather than enforcing it. If a player doesn't incorporate a Flaw into his character's actions, he should not be made to do so. His only punishment is that he does not gain the extra experience point. If he ignores his Flaw too often, the Storyteller can declare him cured of it,

and thereafter refuse to award extra experience points even if the player later attempts to play the Flaw and claim the points.

- ✓ The Storyteller is free to devise new Flaws, or to allow players to create their own.

Mental Flaws

Mental Flaws can be as frustrating and inhibitive as any other sort. Here are the most common Mental Flaws you may see in game play:

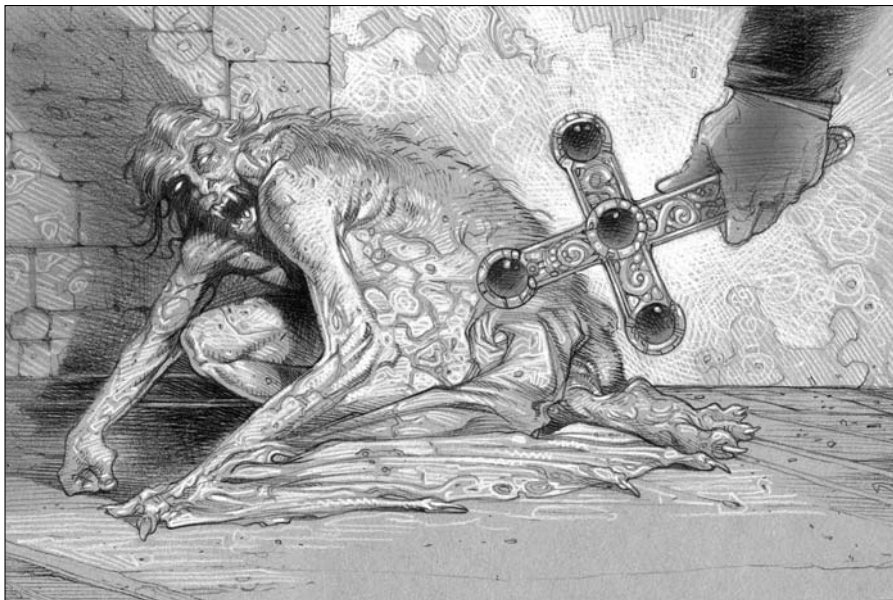
- ✓ **Addiction.** Your character is hooked on a certain substance or behavior from his mortal life, and it's not a craving for blood. If he doesn't get a fix regularly, he gets anxious and goes out of his way to satisfy his need, even neglecting more important duties. If he goes three or more game sessions without indulging this addiction, he is assumed to have beaten it (your character loses the Flaw). The Storyteller is free to inflict harsh withdrawal symptoms, however.

Satisfying this particular addiction does not count as indulging a Vice such as Gluttony. No Willpower points are gained for doing so. Nor may a vampire's need to consume blood be defined as an addiction flaw.

- ✓ **Amnesia.** Your character cannot remember a certain period of her mortal or undead existence. This can be caused by physical or psychological trauma, and memories may come back at the most unexpected or inopportune moments. In addition, she may not remember allies or enemies from her past.
- ✓ **Coward.** Your character is afraid to confront unknown situations, and hesitates when he should act boldly.
- ✓ **Forgetful.** Your character doesn't have amnesia, but she does have trouble remembering particular details. *What was the name of that cursed book I was supposed to rescue from the library?* The player should avoid relying on her own memory or asking for memory rolls for her character. The character doesn't forget *everything*, especially not truly important details, but she should forget enough to make things frustrating for her companions.



In addition to the preceding mental conditions, a character can have a derangement as a Flaw. The Storyteller may decide that such a Flaw cannot be cured, unless he concludes that a derangement Flaw is not honored during play and he lifts it from your character.



Physical Flaws

Although vampires can heal and reform their bodies easily thanks to the power of the Blood, there are limits to how they can restore themselves. A Kindred typically continues to suffer major physical disabilities that he did as a mortal. If he lost an eye in his living days, for example, he lacks that eye in his unliving nights. The player and Storyteller can agree on whether the Embrace overcomes former disabilities such as chronic ill-health, or perpetuates them indefinitely.

Here are some examples of Physical Flaws:

- ✔ **Crippled.** Your character cannot walk and was probably Embraced out of cruelty. He has no natural Speed trait and must rely on a wheelchair or vehicle to travel. A manual wheelchair's Speed is equal to your character's Strength, but he must spend an action to move or suffers a -2 penalty to both Speed and any other action performed (he uses one arm to spin a wheel). An electric wheelchair has a Speed of 3 and allows for other actions in a turn without penalty (your characters' hands are largely free).
- ✔ **Dwarf.** Your character is much shorter than the average person. His adult Size is 4. This Flaw awards points only if the character's short size

causes him physical or social problems (besides the obvious problem of having a low Health score).

- ✔ **Hard of hearing.** Your character's hearing isn't so good. Subtract two dice from any hearing-based perception rolls. Even though he suffers this penalty on all hearing rolls, you get an experience point at the end of a session only if this Flaw caused him notable trouble.
- ✔ **Lame.** Your character has a leg or foot condition that slows him down. His basic Speed factor is 2 (instead of 5). Add this to his Strength + Dexterity to determine his Speed trait. You get an experience point at the end of a session only if this Flaw causes your character notable trouble.
- ✔ **Mute.** Your character cannot speak and must communicate through hand signs, gestures, or by writing.
- ✔ **One arm.** Your character is missing an arm, which makes it difficult to perform certain tasks. At the Storyteller's discretion, tasks that normally require two hands may take twice as long to perform or are impossible. If your character attempts to perform a challenging task in the normal amount of time, he suffers a -3 penalty.
- ✔ **One eye.** Your character is missing an eye. He has no depth perception, so all penalties for ranged attacks are doubled. If he attempts to drive in heavy traffic, any 1s rolled on any die cancel out successes on a one-to-one basis, and you may not re-roll 10s.
- ✔ **Poor sight.** Your character's sight isn't so good. Subtract two dice from any sight-based perception rolls. Even though she suffers this penalty on all seeing rolls, you get an experience point at the end of a session only if this Flaw causes your character notable trouble.

Social Flaws

The Embrace changes someone's identity radically, but remnants of morality and humanity remain. With those may come insecurities or awkwardness from life. Or social disabilities may arise from the Embrace or after it, due to the heinous acts vampires perform.

Here are some examples of Social Flaws:

- ✔ **Aloof.** Your character is uncomfortable in social settings and avoids crowds and interaction as much as possible. She dislikes being the center of attention and recoils from center stage. Experience is gained when she avoids attention or social environments and misses out on potential rewards as a result.

- ✔ **Behavior bind.** Your character doesn't really understand human behavior and is blind to common social cues that communicate other people's basic feelings. He can't tell when others use sarcasm or innuendo, or if he's boring them. An experience point is awarded only if this Flaw is directly related to a setback that delayed or prevented your character from achieving his goals. This Flaw does not preclude your character from having the Empathy Skill, but barring successful Skill rolls, he cannot figure out other people's moods.
- ✔ **Deformity.** Your character has a misshapen limb, a terrible visible scar, or some other physical affliction that disgusts others. You suffer a -2 penalty on Social rolls when your character makes new acquaintances. Nosferatu cannot have this Flaw.
- ✔ **Embarrassing secret.** Your character has a secret about her past that she must hide or else suffer shame and ostracism from her peers. An experience point is awarded only if your character harms her other causes by working to keep her secret. Extra experience can be awarded if the secret gets out, at which point this Flaw might be exchanged for Notoriety at the Storyteller's discretion.
- ✔ **Notoriety.** Your character is renowned for some heinous deed, regardless of whether he committed it. This Flaw can derive from his infamous family or from his association with a scandalous organization such as the Mob or a company known for environmental infractions. If recognized, he inspires a negative reaction in others. An experience point is awarded only if the negative reaction causes some harm to your character's goals.
- ✔ **Racist or sexist.** Your character has biased opinions of other races, genders, gender-preference groups, or cultures. Unfortunately, he also has trouble keeping those opinions to himself, even in the presence of such people. Experience is gained when your character acts on his biases and is confronted, dismissed, ignored, or even attacked for them.
- ✔ **Speech impediment.** Your character has trouble speaking properly. This may be due to a lisp, stutter, or wound. This Flaw should be roleplayed whenever your character speaks. If you consistently forget to do so, the Storyteller may warn you that your character's condition is improving and may soon be overcome.

Part VI

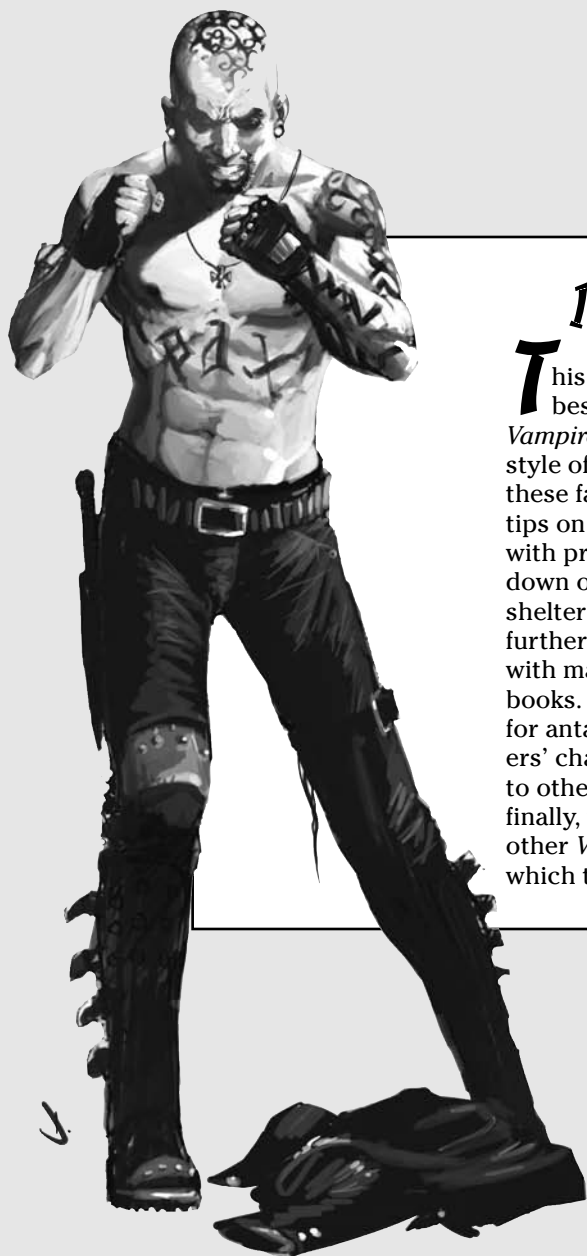
The Part of Tens

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Before you call animal services, find out how many character points I'd get for this as a disadvantage."



In this part . . .

This part presents some of the best elements and features of *Vampire*, whether as a game or as a style of storytelling. You can use these favorite picks as advice or tips on how your vampire may deal with problems, such as how to put down other undead, how to find shelter from the sun, or how to further empower your character with magic from other *Vampire* books. Storytellers can get ideas for antagonists to present to players' characters, from mortal mobs to other resentful Kindred. And finally, you learn about some of the other *Vampire* books available with which to expand your game.

Chapter 22

Ten Best Ways to Defeat a Vampire

In This Chapter

- ▶ Separating the myth from the fact
 - ▶ Destroying vampires in the World of Darkness
-

Everyone knows Hollywood's take on the vampire myth, and how to go about destroying one of the undead. Confront her with a crucifix or garlic. Immerse her in running water. Cut off her head. Stake her in the heart. All these techniques derive from real myth, but not all of these myths actually work in the World of Darkness, or at least there's only a kernel of truth to some of them. The following are some of the best ways to defeat and destroy a vampire, assuming she hasn't taken precautions against one or all of them, and she doesn't wake up right before a hunter's hammer blow.

Home, Sweet Home

A vampire's daylight slumber makes her most vulnerable. She sleeps off the day and rises at night. If would-be killers can find her haven, she's in jeopardy. Most vampires set up defenses, however. Ghouls may stand watch. Booby traps might spring. Alarms might go off that call the police to what superficially seems like an ordinary home or office. And then there's the threat of the vampire rising during the day, in the dark recesses of her hiding place, forcing herself up to kill whomever dares to threaten her.

Stake in the Heart

In the World of Darkness, staking a vampire in the heart only paralyzes her. It doesn't destroy her once and for all. If someone pulls the stake out or it rots away, she rises again and no doubt remembers who assaulted her . . . or knows the surname of her assailant's descendents. Assuming no other means of destruction is available, a staked vampire can be immersed in concrete or bricked up behind a wall. That way, if she ever is revived, she still has to escape her physical tomb.

Weak Links

A vampire is immune to the effects of poison, but her ghouls, herd, and other mortal minions are not. One of the best ways to get to a vampire is to undermine her support system. Drive off or kill her agents and servants and her means of survival is taken away. Sure, she's tipped off that someone is after her, but without backup, her weapons may be narrowed to fangs and claws. Those are still deadly, but at least they can be anticipated to some degree.

Getting Medieval

Hacking and chopping. Believe it or not, the simplest methods still work on vampires. A Kindred can take a lot of punishment from blows, blades, and bullets, but inflict enough damage and even a vampire is pulverized, diced, or riddled to the point of Final Death. The problem is surviving the attacks she inflicts while you manage to cause her all that harm. Lots of automatic weapons fire by multiple shooters is a good start, followed by judicious use of an axe once she's down.

Old School

Not all weapons that can be turned on vampires are physical or even mystical. Some are completely mundane. Kindred insinuate themselves into the mortal world to draw power and protection. A vampire with influence over mortals in key positions can get the favors and services she needs to insulate herself. But those very layers and institutions can be turned against her. Maybe the old building she calls home can be condemned and torn down.

Maybe the stocks in which she is heavily invested can be ruined on the market. Maybe the police are tipped off to the gambling rings she supports. Denied her comforts and layers of protection in the mundane world, a vampire's supernatural existence is threatened.

Angry Mob

As a rule, the Kindred seek to keep their existence secret from mortals. If vampires were discovered, the human masses would overwhelm the undead. Some mortals manage to discover the truth, however. They witness vampiric displays of power, survive being fed upon, or lose loved ones under bizarre circumstances and ferret out the truth. Of course, no one else believes these poor souls. They're dismissed as mad, grief-stricken, or deluded. Other vampires, however, can feed these people just enough information about a target to make these mortals dangerous. Such vengeful or wrathful people can be armed and pointed in the right direction, all the while keeping a conniving Kindred's hands clean.

The problem with mortal vampire hunters is that they're loose cannons. They can cause all kinds of collateral damage, manage to make their discoveries public, or destroy an intended target and then look for more.

Disgruntled Employees

While most ghouls are enthralled by their masters, not all are dedicated to vampire regnants. Some have escaped their former masters or were spurned and now seek a new source of Vitae to empower them. If you can ally with a rogue ghoul, he might have information about the nature of the undead or a particular vampire that you do not. He might also be willing to help capture her as a source of blood for himself. Such a partner is helpful for his knowledge and experience, but is also treacherous. He was or is addicted to vampire blood and might just as easily betray you to a targeted vampire as help you defeat her.

Fire Bad

A perennial favorite for rooting out and destroying vampires is fire. It's easily accessible, and vampires are always vulnerable to it. They burn like kindling. Fire can be counteracted, though. Sprinkler systems work for the undead as

they do for the living. Immersion in water or earth also puts fire out. If you resort to this tool to destroy a vampire, and she survives, your own life is certainly forfeit.

Rays of Dawn

Sunlight narrowly edges fire out on this list. It's not so easily portable as fire is, but it can't be doused. At best, a vampire can hide from it, and if she's forced to hide from it without a pre-planned escape route or back door, she's caught like a rat in a trap. Sunlight also buys hunters time to recover, plan, and heal, assuming that they're not Kindred as well, and assuming that a vampire's mortal agents don't hunt her hunters.



The downsides to both fire and sunlight can be counteracted. These weapons are both phenomena of nature and physics. They have strengths and weaknesses that can be anticipated. A wise vampire-hunter plays up their strengths and downplays their weaknesses with backup plans. Vampires are terrified of both fire and sunlight and can fly into panicked frenzies when exposed to these anathema. That frenzy can be the real effect a hunter seeks. Fire might seem to be the intended killer, but when a vampire is flushed out and survives a burning haven, she might not be prepared for machine-gun-toting hunters who await her emergence.

Cannibalism

If one is a vampire who hunts other vampires, the best way to do away with a quarry once and for all is *diablerie*, the act of drinking the last of a victim's blood, and mystically consuming her soul in the act. One of the greatest crimes among the Kindred, *diablerie* is empowering. The blood of the devourer becomes more potent. He manifests some of his victim's Disciplines and becomes stronger for his "crime." The trick is getting another vampire in a position where she can't resist utter destruction and cannibalization. No small feat when one's quarry is herself a supernatural predator.

Chapter 23

Ten Best Haven Locations

In This Chapter

- ▶ Choosing a haven
 - ▶ Securing your location
-

All Kindred need a haven of some sort, a place to retreat from the sun during the day, to seek shelter from mortals and one's own kind, and to plot schemes for the ages. Havens can be dirt simple (literally!) or elaborate domiciles with other vampire or mortal-servant inhabitants. It all depends on the needs and resources of the vampire in question. Security measures such as guards, cameras, and monitoring systems are sure to be proportionately complex.

Watery Grave

Arguably the common-denominator haven for any Kindred on the run, desperate for shelter, or hiding from foes is a deep body of water. Remember that vampires are dead and don't breathe. They can submerge themselves deep to hide from the sun's penetrating rays and rise from the waters by night. It's an awful existence, though. A waterlogged vampire smells, can't go straight to the ball, and may show signs of being fed upon by bottom-feeding fish. Kindred who resort to this kind of haven on a regular basis are hunted constantly or have no interest in social interaction.

Dirt Nap

For some rogue or outcast Kindred, the Requiem doesn't allow for a comfortable or elaborate haven. These vampires are on the run, can't afford better, or choose a lean existence. Regardless of the reason, they resort to escaping

the sun by literally melding with the earth. Doing so requires the Protean Discipline Haven of Soil. It isn't pretty, and a vampire using it is filthy by definition, but its protective advantages and versatility can't be beat.

Trunk Space

When a vampire can't meld with the earth and may be traveling, the trunk of a car does in a pinch. Again, it's not elaborate, comfortable, or impressive, but it's a great place to hide for a day. A vampire just wants to rig a lock from the inside or arrange for someone to let him out by nightfall. The biggest danger, of course, is that someone may pick the lock or set that junk in the trunk ablaze.

Top-of-the-Line Appliances

Similar to the trunk of a car for access in a pinch is an abandoned refrigerator (with the door still on its hinges). What urban squalor would be complete without an abandoned fridge? The problems here are akin to a trunk, however, for fear of someone opening it from the outside. The door would have to be rigged to open from within, but if the appliance is out of the way, such as deep in a junkyard, who's going to randomly come by and crack it open?

Sewer Dwelling

Improving only slightly on the odor scale is a sewer haven. A resident vampire reeks, but there's no beating the protection from the sun. A lucky or ingenious vampire may find a dry reservoir and clean it out to make a comfortable chamber. Getting to and from it is still revolting, however. A side benefit is constant access to rats, either as companions or sustenance.

Public Transit

Major cities have underground subway lines. While the main lines themselves are not accommodating as havens, access and maintenance tunnels or rooms

can be. Kindred existing here must still be careful to choose locales that are off the beaten path. The ideal subway haven is a long-forgotten passage or underground car yard. It allows access to victims in terms of wandering homeless people and the occasional city employee. It also allows a Kindred to make social visits without marring her appearance just by coming and going from home.

Root Cellar

When a vampire can claim private access to them, the basements of private homes or commercial buildings make for fine havens. The cellar of a private home can literally be home sweet home — the Kindred's abode from life. Or, he may use the basement under his former business. Just darken any windows and a Kindred is set. The biggest concern is inspectors or utility employees coming by to do work and inviting in the sun.

Bodies in the Attic

With all the advantages of a basement, a home attic has the further benefit of rarely being disturbed by anyone who comes to a house. All an undead resident needs is stair or trapdoor access and he has a (probably) dry, secure place to spend his days. The primary requirement would be to block ventilation vents and nail holes or cracks to the outdoors. Loose insulation might also be a minor inconvenience but can be removed easily. An attic may even lend itself to use in an otherwise occupied home, assuming the vampire can gain outside access and is careful to be quiet.

Penthouse Suite

Who wouldn't want to reside in a penthouse, whether they're living or undead? Only the rich can do so, of course, but vampires have the advantage of accumulating cash over many lifetimes' worth of investment. The biggest requirement here is blacking out the many windows, or even having a penthouse built or renovated to have no windows at all. Access is also limited to elevator or stairs, so intruders have limited approaches. (And yet, that might mean a resident has limited avenues of escape, too.)

Bomb Shelter

What better place to hide from the sun, enemies, and Armageddon than a bomb shelter? These fortified bunkers offer everything in security and limited access and can be finished and stocked with all the amenities. This is the ultimate in Kindred unliving.

Chapter 24

Ten Best Foes of Vampires

In This Chapter

- ▶ Acquiring foes
 - ▶ Knowing your enemy
-

A vampire can't exist without acquiring foes. It seems a natural product of the Kindred's unnatural rise after death. Many of these enemies are "species" motivated. That is, they're natural foes of the unliving. Others are the types of antagonists Kindred make during the course of their Requiems.

Sibling Rivals

Perhaps one of the first rivals a newly Embraced vampire faces is a "sibling" under the same sire. The pregenitor chose both for undeath, but that doesn't mean they have to get along. Another vampire born of the same sire can be jealous of perceived favoritism given to the newcomer. She may feel threatened where she was secure in her solitude. Or she may have designs on the shared sire that the new vampire might not condone.

Mob Rules

Although vampires strive to keep their existence hidden, mortals sometimes discover the truth and seek to ferret out and destroy one of the undead. Or more likely, a rival vampire steers the wrath of a mob toward another Kindred, while the dupes think they are participating in a protest or riot. Vampires certainly have more power than individual mortals, but a mob has strength in numbers. Rioters who conveniently start fires may destroy vampires in their path. Such a vampire is best to go to ground or get out of the way altogether.

Power behind the Throne

Vampires rarely strike directly at one another when they can do so indirectly, through agents and pawns. Many of these are uninformed mortals who are easily swayed, but more purposeful agents are ghouls. Such vassals know about vampires' existence and sometimes about their vulnerabilities. A ghoul sent to interfere with a Kindred's influence in the mortal world, to undermine his power base, is a dangerous threat. This informed opponent can operate by day and might pretend to be completely unwitting. But ultimately, the ghoul doesn't back down to intimidation or threats, not even supernatural ones.

Jealous Rival

There are proscriptions among vampires against the Embrace, that passing on the Curse is an offense to God. And yet, Kindred continue to sire. This procreation might need the consent of a local Prince or any faithful sect of undead that seeks to uphold religious law. If a sire creates progeny without approval, those childer are endangered. Similarly, the rivals of a vampire may frown upon him Embracing, for his childer give him strength. Jealous vampires might seek to undo or destroy the neonates. Recently turned vampires, therefore, need to come to grips with their new nocturnal, inhuman existence; they could have to protect it immediately from Kindred who would like to see them destroyed.

Blood Addict

A ghoul who has lost her regnant still craves vampiric blood. She has become addicted to Vitae and needs it to perpetuate her strength and perhaps her very existence. Without a source of undead blood, she may turn on other Kindred. That could mean seeking them out as her new regnants in a blood bond, but it could also mean that she preys upon vampires, a mortal who drinks from them! The recently Embraced make ideal targets for their inexperience and relative lack of power. A rogue ghoul could imprison a victim, maintaining his existence only so long as she can feed from him, or she may drain him for everything he's worth and leave him for the sun.

Undead Lawgivers

While Kindred can bend the Traditions and sometimes get away with it, one who breaks them (or who is framed for doing so) is doubly damned. A city's Prince or other prominent elder is empowered to declare a blood hunt on a vampire who defies the Traditions or the local political hierarchy. All vampires, except the most important or insulated, are called upon to search out and capture the transgressor. He might be delivered whole and intact for punishment, or all that might be left is his remains after being subjected to diablerie. The trick of avoiding a blood hunt is to avoid getting caught violating the Traditions or to prove one's innocence even while hunted by all of a city's predators.

Mortals in the Know

Mortals who have discovered and hunt vampires are among the Kindred's most dangerous enemies. Not because mortal hunters are especially potent or informed on the secrets of the undead, but because they're indistinguishable from other mortals. Suddenly, vampires' food can bite back, but there's no telling from where or when. A Kindred must always be careful to observe the First Tradition — secrecy — for fear that she births the very people who might become her hunters.

Vampire Epicureans

Kindred who manage to exist for decades or centuries develop rarefied tastes over time. With years and potency comes an ever increasing need to feed upon more sustaining blood. When vampires are newly Embraced, they can exist upon the blood of animals. Before long, however, only the blood of humans offers nourishment. In time, not even that sustains. Only the blood of other vampires can quench one's thirst. Recently turned vampires in particular must watch out for elders long in the tooth, for these newcomers make easy prey for these hunters among hunters.

Wizards

Vampires are not the only creatures of the night. Legends also tell of mortals who make pacts with spirits, demons, or other powers and who can work magic. These modern mystics have inscrutable motives and mysterious

goals. Whatever drives them, they sometimes cross paths with the undead and can invoke powers that the Kindred have never seen before, even casting the light of the sun at the dead of night!

Werewolves

If modern wizards are a threat to the undead, werewolves are even more so. These beasts of the wild and outlands are sworn enemies of the Kindred. Their very vitality, passion, and rage defies the cold stagnancy of vampires. The motives and goals of these beings is a mystery as well, though it is rumored that their blood is exceedingly nourishing. While most vampires claim they cling to their urban havens for the easy proximity of prey, they may secretly fear the shapechangers that lurk between cities.

Chapter 25

Ten Best Blood Magic Spells

In This Chapter

- ▶ Casting spells
 - ▶ Engaging in rituals
-

Cultivated by some Kindred covenants are rites, practices, and explorations of the properties of the Blood. The results of these arcane rituals are various forms of dark magic. The ability to wield this magic is restricted to members of the Circle of the Crone, Lancea Sanctum, and the Ordo Dracul. These secrets are guarded jealously and shared only with covenant members who prove their worth and loyalty. In rules terms, they can be learned and handled like other Disciplines. The full parameters of these forms of magic are best learned in *Vampire: The Requiem*.

Rigor Mortis

This spell causes a vampire's body to stiffen and cramp in keeping with the target's dead state. It's a great preemptive tool in combat, interfering with the opponent's capability to fight.

Blood Seeps Slowly

A cool magical effect for slowing the rate at which vampires need to spend blood to arise each night. A vampire needs less Vitae overall as a result, and has better control of himself.

Blood Scourge

Casting this spell allows a vampire to coalesce her own Vitae into a whip with which to make attacks. Ideal for blood sorcerers who go into a situation seemingly unarmed. The spell also grows more powerful with increasing mastery, causing more and more damage.

Blood of Beasts

Though it might seem relatively innocuous at first, this magical effect is utterly liberating for vampires who wrestle with their undead state. It allows one to get sustenance from animals even if she has existed to a point where only human blood should be sustaining. The spell is ideal for upholding Humanity and helping a vampire survive when no human vessels are available.

Liar's Plague

When a subject of this spell speaks a lie, insects swarm from her mouth. Not only is it a fine lie detector, but it has great intimidation value to keep others from lying to or crossing a vampire.

The Hydra's Vitae

When this spell is in effect, other vampires who drink from the caster suffer harm from the blood consumed, as if it were poison. This spell is a great spoil-sport tactic against those who would commit diablerie and against elders whose rarefied tastes demand that they drink the blood of other vampires to exist.

Malediction of Despair

The caster invokes a curse on a subject, poisoning that target to suffer a tragedy in a certain kind of action, such as when driving or feeding. The spell allows a vampire to dispose of enemies without being in the vicinity, or without a victim even knowing matters were preordained.

Deflection of Wooden Doom

This spell guards against the most well-known means of disabling a vampire. A stake intended for the caster's heart literally dissolves or shatters before it can be driven home, undoubtedly undoing a hunter's plans.

Stigmata

Wounds open spontaneously on a subject, and he bleeds profusely. Not only is a mortal victim badly hurt and a vampire literally bled of his Vitae, the power is terrifying to observe.

Feeding the Crone

The caster's teeth turn into massive, horrifying fangs that tear and bite targets — even vampires — to pieces!

Chapter 26

Ten Best Vampire Game Books

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting the best *Vampire* game books
 - ▶ Knowing what each *Vampire* game book offers
-

V*ampire: The Requiem For Dummies* is a terrific introduction to the World of Darkness and *Vampire* by White Wolf. As you get further into the game, you may want to explore the other books, which we consider to be the ten best, listed in this chapter.

City of the Damned: New Orleans

New Orleans lives on borrowed time. Steeped in the customs and traditions of the Old World and ruled with an iron fist by a pious Prince, the Kindred of the city keep the sanctity of the Traditions at court and sate their desires amid the neon glare of Bourbon Street. From the stately manors of the Garden District to the seedy lanes of the French Quarter, New Orleans seethes with pent-up desire and whispered promises of power, revolution, and revenge.

City of the Damned: New Orleans presents the Big Easy in all its baroque glory, detailing the city's history, the laws and customs of its aristocratic court, and the intrigues of the vampires both prominent and petty. A wealth of characters, plot hooks, and Storytelling tips make this an invaluable resource for any *Vampire* chronicle.

VII

The members of the reviled cult known as VII wage a private war on the Kindred, and some whisper that they're even older than the Damned themselves. Only those within the strange covenant know the truth of the matter — whether their hostility is a holy war, a vendetta, or something altogether different.

VII offers three distinct versions of this mysterious sect of vampires and vampire-killers, the true bogeymen of the game. You get to choose the interpretation that you like for your chronicle, each of which includes a history, beliefs, and prominent sect members.

Ghouls

Slaves to the addictive taste of vampiric Vitae, ghouls trade servitude for that heady substance. Servitude, however, damns them far more than they know, as their unnatural craving drives them to ever greater desperation and depravity. Among those known as blood slaves, there's no such thing as "just one fix."

Ghouls examines the life and lot of those who serve vampiric masters. From in-depth rules on being a ghoul, to ghoul families and systems for creating them, to Vitae-fed plants known as mandragora, this book explores the effects of the Blood on mortal lives.

Coteries

The Kindred are solitary predators, yet something within compels them to seek out others of their kind. Whether formed as a social faction, a cult of heretics, a consortium of conspirators, or for safety in numbers, a coterie of Kindred is no strange thing to see after sunset. How, then, do its members reconcile their bestial urges with the demands of nightly unlife?

Coteries examines the "family unit" of Kindred society. Broken down by sect and clan relations, this book sheds light on how groups of disparate vampires set aside their differences (or nurse grudges) to protect themselves against the hostile world in which they exist. Sometimes, only your fellow Kindred can protect you from the darkness, but trusting them is a dangerous proposition in itself.

The Invictus

Patterning itself after the glory of Rome's Kindred society and the ages of kings that followed, the Invictus stands as a model covenant, one immune to the passage of time. But how well do ancient ways mesh with the Damned of the modern world? On whose backs does the Ivory Tower stand?

The Invictus is a covenant book that details the history, hierarchy, and goals of this society, one of *Vampire*'s core factions. It serves as an invaluable guide to the world of the Kindred from this covenant's unique viewpoint.

Lancea Sanctum

Dark paladins, fearsome zealots, and devout evangelists, the members of the Lancea Sanctum exalt the words of Longinus, the philosophical founder of their cult. Through influences both subtle and overt, this ancient covenant enforces the dogmas of its Dark Prophet with relentless fervor. The Sanctified are more than just fire-and-brimstone extremists, however. They are agents of a righteous spirituality at work tonight.

A covenant guide for *Vampire*, *Lancea Sanctum* sheds light on the mysterious, cultic practices of the organization that venerates the father of the Kindred. It includes society secrets, bloodlines, and Theban Sorcery rituals, as well as the offices and ideals the covenant holds dear.

Ordo Dracul

Visionaries among the Damned, members of the Ordo Dracul seek to transcend the curse of vampirism. Devoting themselves to hoary experiments and the philosophies of their leader, Dracula, the Dragons of this covenant seek to discover what lies beyond the Requiem.

Ordo Dracul details the history, hierarchy, and goals of this covenant, one of *Vampire*'s core factions. The book is an invaluable guide to the world of the Kindred from this society's unique viewpoint.

World of Darkness: Chicago

Chicago lies at the center of the web that is the American heartland. Tendrils of power, wealth, and reward stretch outward, ensnaring the selfish, greedy, and unwary. Yet, Chicago attracts its predators, too. Creatures that would have the city for their own, spinning their own webs of malice and intrigue. But among the city's towering skyscrapers and wind-swept streets, who is the spider and who is the fly?

World of Darkness: Chicago is a guide to the history, geography, and politics of the Windy City, twisted to suit the mysterious World of Darkness. It's a huge collection of new game material, including dozens of complex and surprising characters, new threats to face, and three complete stories to play. This Windy City offers numerous ways for characters from any World of Darkness game to interact and collide. *Chicago* is a fully compatible supplement for *Vampire: The Requiem*, *Werewolf: The Forsaken*, and *Mage: The Awakening*.

The World of Darkness Rulebook

We live our days completely ignorant of the true terrors lurking around us. Only rarely do our experiences draw back the veil of shadows to reveal the horror in our midst. These glimpses into the supernatural can cause us to retreat into comforting lies — “There are no such things as monsters” — or stir our morbid curiosity. Only a few, however, can overcome their fear and dare to look deeper.

The *World of Darkness Rulebook* introduces a version of our contemporary world where the supernatural is real. Players join to tell tales of mystery and horror, in which theme, mood, and plot are more important to a character's experiences than weapons or equipment. Inside are rules for character creation, task resolution, combat, and any activity your character attempts as he delves into the shadows.

Vampire: The Requiem

Since time immemorial, the Kindred — vampires — have stalked their prey, unseen by the mortal masses. Their world is a xenophobic nightmare, populated by tyrannical despots, wild-eyed heretics, bloodthirsty rogues, and scheming manipulators, all unified by the mysterious curse of vampirism. And you would join them? You would live forever? To play the lusts of mortals like a violinist plays the strings? Then beware, the price is steep to enter the neofeudal hell that the Damned have wrought.

Join the revival of the Storytelling tradition. *Vampire: The Requiem* invites you to tell your own stories set within the world of the Kindred. This book includes rules for using vampires in World of Darkness chronicles, covering everything from the five clans to covenants to Disciplines, bloodlines, storytelling advice, and a complete spread of game systems governing the undead.

Part VII

Appendix

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I'm in a different World of Darkness role-playing game six nights a week. I don't have the energy to play the role of the boyfriend right now."



In this part . . .

This appendix provides a brief rundown on the terminology you typically encounter when playing *Vampire: The Requiem*. Following the appendix, you'll find a blank character sheet that you can photocopy for use in your game.

Appendix

Glossary

This glossary provides a list of the most commonly encountered terminology used to describe vampires and game-play in *Vampire: The Requiem*.

Game Terminology

This is a glossary of general Storytelling System terms used throughout this book. These explanations will help you understand the rules of the game.

10 Again: A result of 10 on any die means it is re-rolled in an attempt to achieve more successes. A further result of 10 on a re-rolled die causes it to be rolled again, over and over, until no more 10s are rolled.

action: A task that takes all a character's time and attention. Storytelling measures instant actions (one to three seconds, taking place within a single turn) and extended actions, taking longer (duration determined by the Storyteller). Also, there are reflexive actions, which take no time and do not prevent a character from performing another action within a turn, and contested actions, in which two or more characters compete in a task or for a single goal.

advantage: A character trait such as Health or Willpower that usually represents abilities derived from other traits. Advantages are measured in dots and sometimes in points.

aggravated (damage): A damage point that inflicts a grievous or supernatural wound. Vampires suffer aggravated damage from fire and sunlight. Mortals might suffer aggravated damage from a dire supernatural power such as a lightning bolt summoned from the sky.

Attribute: A character trait representing innate capabilities, Mental, Physical, and Social. An Attribute is added to a Skill (or another Attribute in certain cases) to determine your basic dice pool for a task.

bashing (damage): A damage point that inflicts a blunt or bruising wound, such as from a fist or a baseball bat.

chance roll: Whenever modifiers reduce your dice pool to zero or fewer dice, you must make a chance roll on a single die. Unlike a normal dice roll, a chance roll succeeds only on a result of 10. Worse, a result of 1 causes a dramatic failure.

close combat: Attacks that involve hand-to-hand or weapon fighting. Such attacks use the Strength Attribute for their dice pools. Characters gain their Defense against close-combat attacks.

contested action: Two or more characters compete in a task or for a single goal. The one who gets the most successes wins. Contested actions can be instant or extended actions.

damage: The points inflicted against a character's Health, rated as bashing, lethal, or aggravated. One point of damage inflicts one wound.

Defense: An advantage trait determined by taking the lowest of Dexterity or Wits. Characters can penalize a close-combat opponent's accuracy by subtracting their Defense from his dice pool.

degeneration: Characters who violate their ethics lose dots of Humanity. Degeneration can cause a character to acquire a derangement.

derangement: Characters whose Humanity dots are lost through degeneration or who suffer horrible psychological trauma can acquire a derangement. Some derangements are classified as "mild," meaning they hinder the character mainly by plaguing his conscience. Others are "severe," often cases of clinical insanity. Derangements caused by degeneration can be healed by restoring lost Humanity dots.

dice: The Storytelling System uses 10-sided dice to represent the element of chance. Dice are collected to form a character's dice pool for an action.

dice pool: The number of dice rolled to determine failure or success (and the degree of success) for a character's action. Dice pools are usually determined by adding an Attribute to a Skill, plus any relevant equipment and/or modifiers.

dot: The incremental measurement of a permanent trait. Most traits range from 1 to 5 dots, but some (such as Willpower) range from 1 to 10, and others (Health) can go higher.

dramatic failure: A result of 1 on a chance roll causes a dramatic failure, a catastrophe worse than a normal failure. The character's gun might jam or he might wind up shooting a friend by accident. The Storyteller determines and describes the result.

Durability: A trait representing an object's hardness, based on the material from which it is made (wood has less Durability than metal). Durability is measured in dots. An attack's damage must exceed Durability before the object is harmed.

equipment: Characters can improve their chances of succeeding in a task by using the right equipment. This benefit is represented by modifiers to the dice pool, depending on the equipment used and its quality.

exceptional success: Whenever five or more successes are rolled, the character achieves an exceptional success. This achievement sometimes provides an extra perk over and above the effect of having multiple successes. For example, a character who gains five successes on a fast-talk roll might allay the target's suspicions enough that he believes anything the character says for the remaining scene.

experience points: Points awarded by the Storyteller at the end of a game session and story, used to purchase new traits or to boost the dots of existing traits.

extended action: A task that takes time to accomplish. Players roll to accumulate successes during phases of the task, succeeding once they have acquired the needed total.

failure: A dice roll that yields no successes is a failure — the character does not succeed at his task.

Health: An advantage trait, determined by adding Stamina + Size. Health is measured in dots and points. (See also *Wound*.)

Humanity: An advantage trait representing a character's moral, ethical, and even psychological standing and well-being. Humanity is measured in dots, which can be lost to degeneration by performing unethical or criminal acts.

Initiative: An advantage trait representing the character's ability to respond to sudden surprise, determined by adding Dexterity + Composure. A character's Initiative helps him get a high standing in the Initiative roster.

Initiative roster: The list that determines when each character can perform an action within a turn. For each character who is not surprised, a player rolls a die and adds his character's Initiative to the result. Whoever gets the

highest number acts first, followed by the character with the next highest, and so on until everyone who can has acted that turn. Initiative is usually rolled once per encounter, but the Storyteller can decide to re-roll it each turn.

instant action: A task that takes place within a single turn. A character can perform only one action per turn, unless he has a Merit or power that lets him do otherwise.

lethal (damage): A damage point that inflicts a sharp, slashing, or piercing wound, such as from a sword or bullet.

Merit: A character trait representing enhancements or elements of a character's background, such as his allies or influence. Merits are measured in dots, but are not always used to determine dice pools. Instead, they represent increasing degrees of quality or quantity concerning their subject.

modifiers: Dice pools are often modified by a number of factors, from bonuses (adding dice) for equipment or ideal conditions to penalties (subtracting dice) for poor conditions.

point: A trait expended to gain certain effects, such as a Willpower point or a measurement of damage or Health. The amount of points available to spend is equal to the parent trait's dots. Spent points are regained over time or through certain actions.

reflexive action: An instinctual task that takes no appreciable time, such as reacting to surprise or noticing something out of the corner of your eye. Performing a reflexive action does not prevent a character from performing another action within a turn.

ranged combat: An attack that sends a projectile of some sort at a target, whether it's a bullet from a gun or a knife from a hand. Such attacks use the Dexterity Attribute for their dice pools. Characters' Defense cannot normally be used against firearm attacks, although targets can penalize an opponent's accuracy by going prone or taking cover.

Resistance: Characters can resist others' attempts to socially sway them, physically grapple with them, or even mentally dominate them. Whenever applying such resistance requires a character's full attention, it is performed as a contested action, but more often it is a reflexive action, allowing the target to also perform an action that turn.

scene: A division of time based on drama, such as the end of one plot point and the beginning of another. Whenever a character leaves a location where a dramatic event has occurred or when a combat has ended, the current scene usually ends and the next one begins.

Skill: A character trait representing learned ability or knowledge. Added to an Attribute to determine a character's basic dice pool for a task.

Specialty: An area of Skill expertise in which a character excels. Whenever a Specialty applies to a character's task, one die is added to his player's dice pool. There's no limit to the number of Specialties that you can assign to a single Skill.

Storyteller: The director or editor of the interactive story told by the players. The Storyteller creates the plot and roleplays the characters, both allies and villains, with which the players' characters interact.

success: Each die that rolls an 8, 9, or 10 yields one success. (Exception: A chance roll must produce a 10 to succeed.) In an instant action, a player must roll at least one success for his character to accomplish a task. In an extended action, the number of successes required (accumulated over a series of rolls) depends on the task. In an attack roll, each success produces one point of damage.

troupe: Your gaming group of friends.

turn: A three-second period of time. Instant actions are observed in turns. Combat (a series of instant actions) is observed in consecutive turns as each combatant tries to overcome opponents.

wound: A marked Health point, denoting an injury from damage. Bashing wounds are marked with a /, lethal wounds with an X, and aggravated wounds with an asterisk (*). (See *Health*.)

Vampire Terminology

The following terms are used freely and frequently by both neonates and those elder Kindred familiar with vernacular (or who wish to disguise their true age). Some of the newer words have come into circulation only in the last few years. When necessary, a pronunciation guide is included for uncommon vocabulary.

Acolytes (AK – uh – lites): A common nickname for members of the Circle of the Crone.

Ancilla (an – SILL – uh): Kindred too old to be considered neonates, but not yet elders, whose Requiem has lasted roughly 50 to 150 years. The plural term is ancillae (an – SILL – ae).

ancient: The rare vampire who has existed for over a millennium.

Barrens: Portions of the city unfit even for hunting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

coterie: A group of allied Kindred.

covenant: A faction of Kindred who share certain political and theological beliefs. The covenants exist worldwide, though details often differ from domain to domain.

Crúac (KREW – ack): The bloody, witchcraft-like magic practiced by the Circle of the Crone.

Daeva (DAY – vuh): A clan of vampires known for being emotional, sensual, and desirable.

Damned, the: The race of Kindred; vampires.

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

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

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

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

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

elder: A vampire who has survived for over 150 years; also a term of respect.

Elysium (ell – ISS – ee – um): A location used for Kindred gatherings and declared a neutral, “no violence” sanctuary by the Prince.

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

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

First Estate: A common nickname for the Invictus.

frenzy: A berserk state in which the Beast takes total control over a vampire. Rage, fear, and hunger can induce frenzies; when precision is needed, the term is qualified by cause (rage frenzy, fear frenzy, or hunger frenzy) or by a special term (*Rötschreck* or *Wassail*). Unqualified, the term generally indicates rage frenzy.

Gangrel (GANG – grell): A clan of vampires known for being primal, hardy, and savage.

ghoul: A mortal fed Kindred Vitae and possessed of various supernatural abilities, though far weaker than most vampires.

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

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

Herald: A spokesman for the Prince.

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

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

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

Kindred: The modern (and most frequent) term by which vampires refer to themselves and their race.

kine: A term for mortals; the phrase “Kindred and kine” refers to everyone.

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

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

Lupine: A werewolf.

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

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

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

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

neonate (NEE – oh – nate): A young vampire, engaged in his Requiem for less than 50 years.

Nosferatu (noss – fur – AH – too): A vampire clan known for being stealthy, strong, and terrifying.

Ordo Dracul (OR – dough drah – KOOL): A covenant of vampires known for its mystic studies and desire to transcend the vampiric condition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Seneschal: The Prince's right hand and assistant.

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

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

sire: A vampiric "parent," one who has Embraced a childe; alternatively, a verb, meaning "to Embrace."

Theban (THEE – ben) Sorcery: A mysterious form of blood magic practiced primarily by members of the Lancea Sanctum.

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

torpor: A death-like sleep into which Kindred fall if they are injured severely or starved for too long. Kindred can also enter torpor willingly to escape the world for a time.

Traditions: The three primary Kindred laws, passed down through the ages and observed inviolate due to the Kindred condition.

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

Ventruue (VENN – true): A clan of vampires known for being regal, commanding, and aristocratic.

vessel: Any source of blood for the Kindred to feed on; usually but not always used to refer to a mortal.

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

Vitae (VIE – tay): Blood, particularly the blood of a vampire.

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

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

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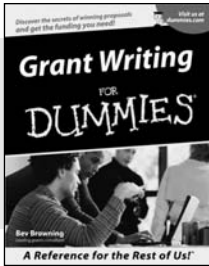
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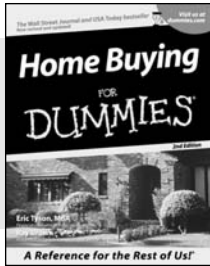
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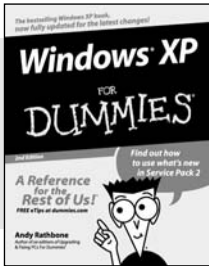
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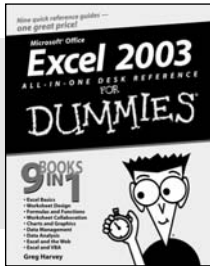
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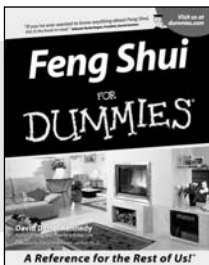
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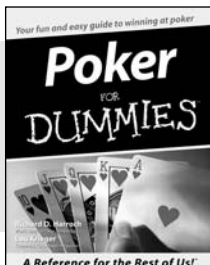
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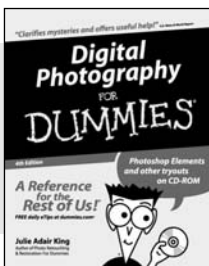
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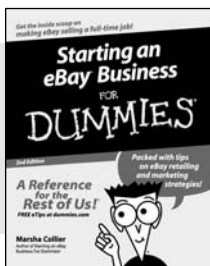
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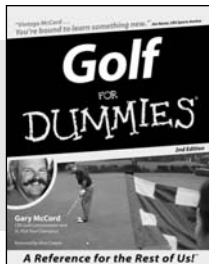
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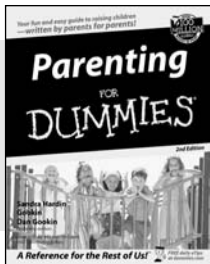
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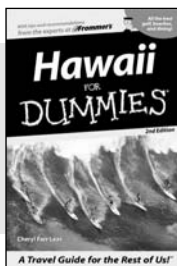
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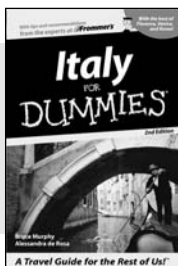
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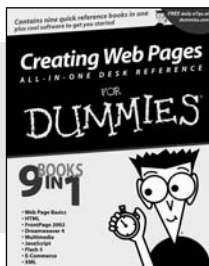
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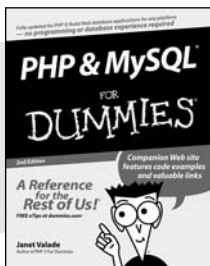
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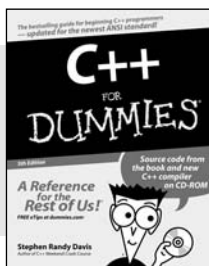
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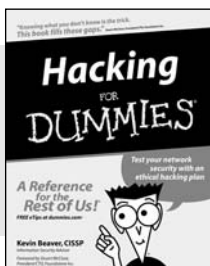
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Seonate

By Greg Stolze

I got to the party early and almost everybody was already there. They were like that.

The apartment door was ajar and low voices drifted out, but no music was playing. No one was drinking; no one was smoking.

The people attending were an odd group. An outsider would be hard pressed to guess what could unite a black lawyer with a bored expression and a tailored silk jacket, an elderly Latino in a wheelchair, two teen lovers in black vinyl, and a matronly woman in the pantsuit and comfortable shoes of a DMV bureaucrat. A 12-step program would have been a good guess, but wrong. They all kept glancing at the door.



“Perfume? He can’t stand perfume; go wash it off!” That was the hostess, a 40-year-old with a wedding ring on her pointer finger, and an “Ohm” pendant on her batik-covered chest. E knew her as “Sunny.”

Dick and Gina, the pierced couple with iPod earbuds (currently dangling silent), were at play with a sharpened, bat-motif letter opener. She was orbiting the tip around a slow-bleeding wound on his wrist, while he had nicked her neck and was lapping at it.

“Somebody’s daddy must have been *really* hard to piss off.” Steph, the bureaucrat, muttered to E with a raised eyebrow.

An outsider looking for hierarchy would probably have put Dick and Gina on top from their provocative behavior, to their obvious devotion to blood as a lifestyle. They’d be wrong. Steph was the top. E could tell. Burton did something with Steph that he didn’t do with the others, not even Sunny and that black lawyer (who still, after four months, hadn’t given his name). Sunny got more from Burton, and Steph got more than Sunny, and E couldn’t help wondering what more there *was*. That’s when Burton arrived.

Everyone was pleased. They grinned and tried



their strategies for charming him. Burton smiled back, patient and superior, and then nodded at E. She had time to be surprised, to catch Gina's jealous glare, and then they were going back to the bedroom.

"Steph, could you please come, too? And Sunny."

This was new. Burton usually did them one at a time. The door closed on puzzled murmurs.

Burton was a vampire. That night, he asked E to become one as well.

When Burton bit in, it was just like always at first. Burton liked it at the wrist. The tingly caress of those fangs before the sting, the piercing, it was sweet, it was a drug, it was a delicious black fog that closed over E, overwhelming. Always the same but a surprise. Always shocking that something could feel so good, that anything could. This was what love was supposed to be like, or success, or being justified. But E's life didn't offer those things, or if it did, they were hollow next to the vampire's bite.

Usually Burton did it, time stopped for a while, and then started again. E would leave feeling dirty, itchy, and raw, wondering how long it would be until the next time. But this time it went on and on, an obliterating bliss that washed away memories, feelings of right and wrong, even her full name.



She felt when her heart stopped.

She felt the blood stop in her veins.

She'd never known she was feeling
it until it ended.





E smelled the blood as Burton offered it and knew she could refuse, could simply die, but she took it.

Then E was different. Her eyes opened and she was all hunger. Sunny was right there and E would have sucked her dry if Steph and Burton hadn't grabbed her arms, made her take it slow. They held E back while Dick and Gina and disabled Marcello and the lawyer were all brought in to feed her until she was finally sated. The lawyer's name turned out to be Marion.



"There are rules," Burton said. "First is, don't let anyone find out."

"You let us find out," E said. "Me and Marion and Gina and the rest."

"I knew you wouldn't tell. You were too invested. You wouldn't have risked losing the Kiss, would you?"

The Kiss was what they called feeding, the lie of happiness that made mortals willing, or at least unable to resist. Not blood-drinking, but *The Kiss*. And they weren't vampires. They were *Kindred*.

"How did you know?" E asked.

"I watched each of you very closely before approaching. I watched your habits, your gestures, and listened to the tones of your speech. I examined the shapes of your lives. Then I read your souls and minds. I knew each of you was right."

"You can . . .?"

"Yes. And yes, in time I can teach you to read minds, too. Don't think about the most shameful thing you've ever done." E winced. Burton smirked. "Never fails."

"Whose house is this?"

"It's a rental facility for baby showers and business meetings. Tonight we have it so you neonates can meet the Prince."

“What’s . . .?”

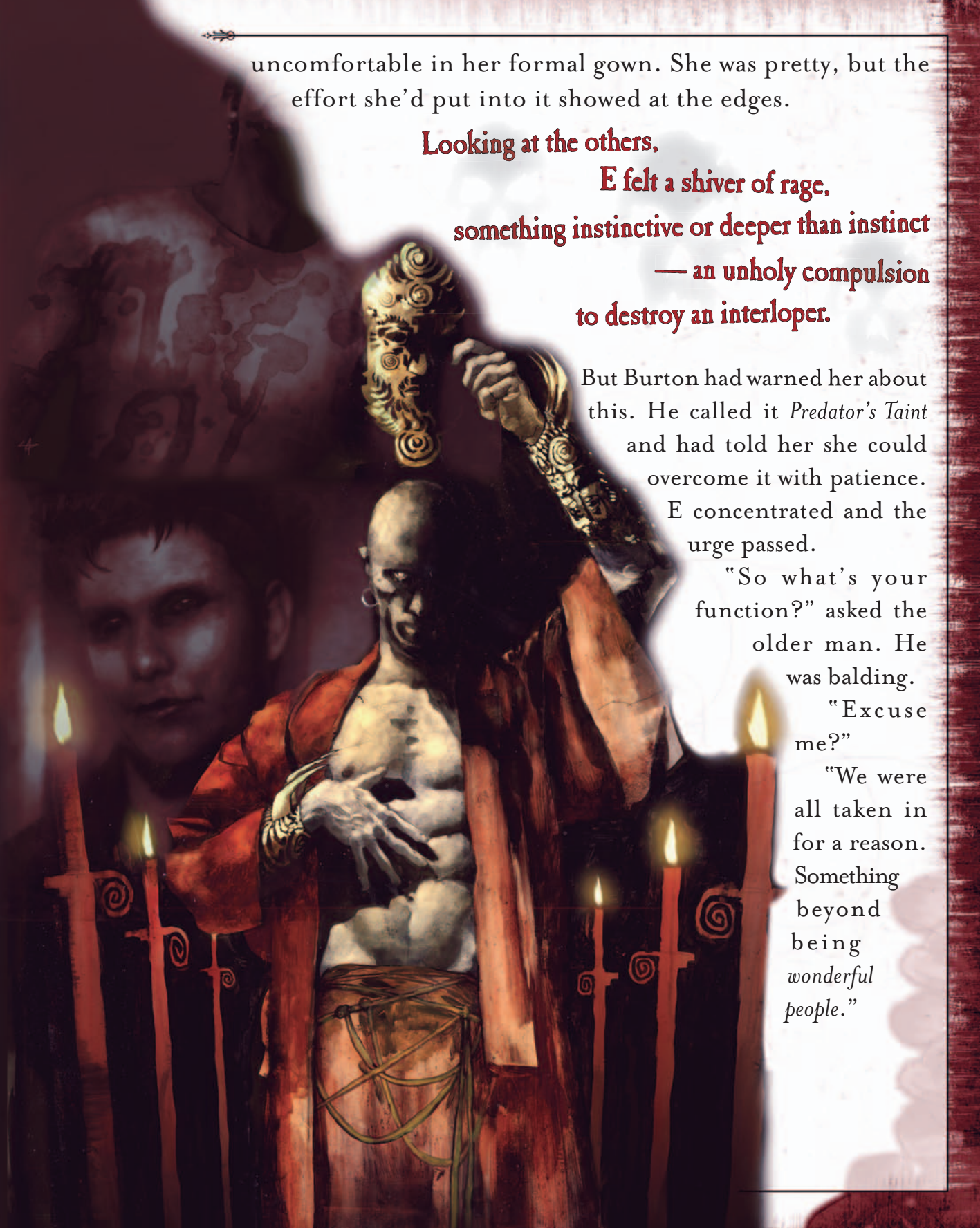
“A *neonate* is a new vampire — but remember, use *Kindred*. The Prince is in charge. His name is Maxwell. When you approach him, kneel. If he holds out his hand, kiss it. Listen, Maxwell is the most dangerous Kindred you’ll ever meet. Don’t screw up.”



As with Burton’s mortal victims — the phrase was *herd* — the neonates were an odd bunch. There was a stuffy man in his 50s wearing tweed. A poised black woman in mauve business casual.

There was a sinewy man with deep purple birthmarks all over the right side of his face and his arm, wearing a muscle shirt despite them. And there was a red-haired woman who looked





uncomfortable in her formal gown. She was pretty, but the effort she'd put into it showed at the edges.

Looking at the others,

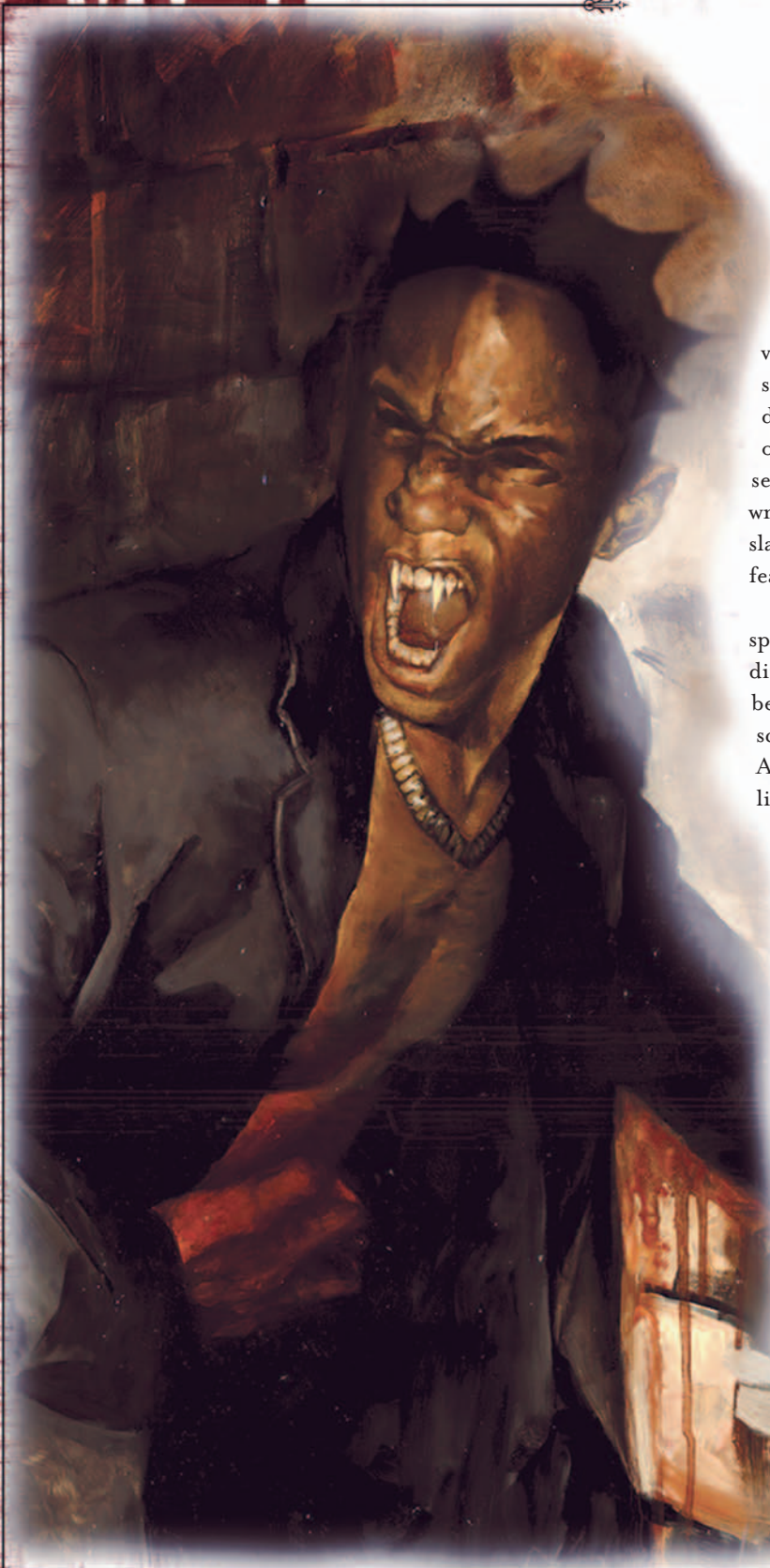
**E felt a shiver of rage,
something instinctive or deeper than instinct
— an unholy compulsion
to destroy an interloper.**

But Burton had warned her about this. He called it *Predator's Taint* and had told her she could overcome it with patience. E concentrated and the urge passed.

"So what's your function?" asked the older man. He was balding.

"Excuse me?"

"We were all taken in for a reason. Something beyond being wonderful people."



"Clearly his was exquisite manners," said the black woman. "I'm Ofelia. What's your name?"

"They call me E."

"E?" asked the marked man.

"It's a nickname. I had lazy friends."

"Heh. I'm Chuck."

"Aurora," said the redhead.

Then the door opened. Another vampire came in and said, "The Prince will see you now," and this time the instinct was different. E wanted to bolt for the exit. The only thing that held her against the fear was seeing everyone's scorn when Ofelia ran, wrenching feverishly at the locked door and slamming her shoulder into it, sobbing with fear.

Ofelia was left behind and the fear inspired by the Kindred Prince was altogether different. There were other vampires arrayed behind him — a muscular man covered with scars, a woman whose loveliness outshone Aurora's like the sun rising next to a street-light, two men who didn't properly register, and a swarthy woman with crossed arms. But the Prince eclipsed them all.

He had black skin and tidy hair shot with gray. He wore a vintage tuxedo complete with a sash, like a 1930s German ambassador. His hands were folded in his lap (only he was seated), and his fingernails were perfectly trimmed.

Facing him, E's fear deepened into perfect, abject self-loathing. She was nothing before the Prince and knew it. The shame of running was no greater than the shame of standing still. Maxwell would surely destroy her with some magnificent gesture and to be destroyed was better than E deserved, she who was nothing, a worm, the dirt beneath the Prince's shoes.

Then Maxwell gave a little smile and the fear popped like a soap bubble. E hadn't realized her knees were trembling until they sagged with relief.

“Neonates,”
Maxwell said.

“Welcome to a larger world.”

The Prince’s smile widened and E started to laugh, spontaneously, along with Chuck and Aurora and even the smug man. It was spontaneous joy. The Prince’s smile had filled them up past full, the mere pleasure of him turning them giddy.

When he invited them to drink his blood, they accepted it as the most precious of compliments. Later, E would realize that Maxwell had used some kind of trick, some vampire power.

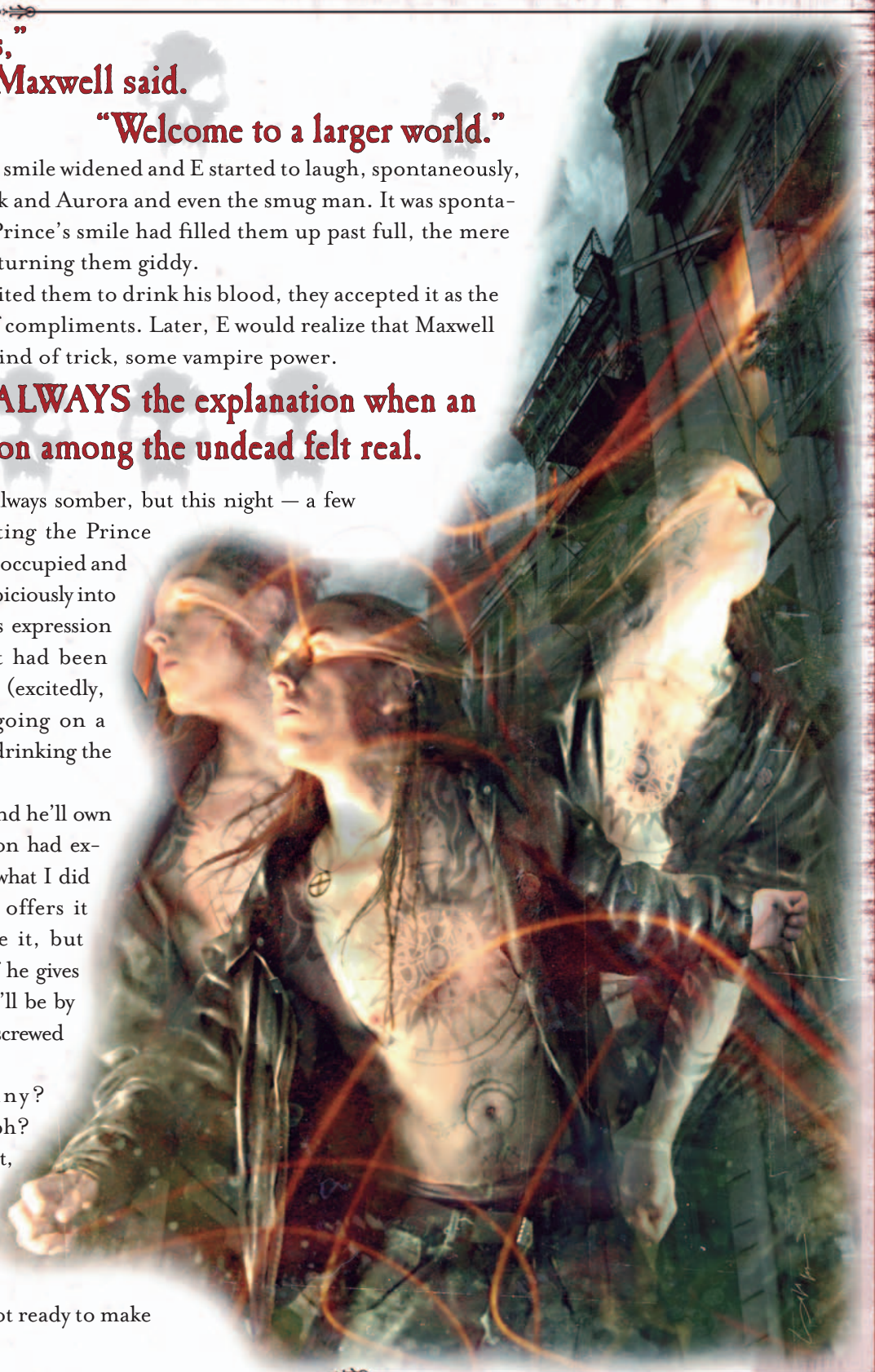
That was ALWAYS the explanation when an emotion among the undead felt real.

Burton was always somber, but this night — a few weeks after meeting the Prince — he was both preoccupied and alert, peering suspiciously into each shadow. His expression was grim, like it had been after E told him (excitedly, like a teenager going on a first date) about drinking the Prince’s blood.

“Two more and he’ll own your soul,” Burton had explained. “That’s what I did to Sunny. If he offers it again, don’t take it, but he won’t offer. If he gives it to you again, it’ll be by force because you screwed up.”

“Like Sunny?
What about Steph?
Is she . . . like that,
too?”

“Steph’s a
ghoul. Don’t
worry about
ghouls, you’re not ready to make
them yet.”



Those strange, bloodletting intricacies had stuck with E, along with Burton's serious expression. He leaned over and said, "Tonight we're meeting a vampire called Scratch. He is extremely dangerous — perhaps the most dangerous one of us you'll ever meet."

"You said the Prince . . ."

Burton waved his hands. "Different dangers. Never meet Scratch by yourself. Never say anything bad about him, even when you're alone. It's okay now . . . I think I'd spot him . . . but you won't. Not if he wants to be hidden."

"What . . .?"

"Don't worry, you're safe with me. He knows I know him and he trusts me somewhat." Burton rubbed his chin. It was the first time E had seen him make any gesture that could be called nervous. "Scratch is a businessman above all. We're going to purchase a service."

They were in a cavernous Cicero warehouse, sitting in a Ford sedan with the lights out. Burton peered out the windows and said, "Here they come."

At first, E saw only a woman in clothes that were both fussy and flamboyant. Her purple velvet jacket was perfectly pressed, and E felt sure she had meticulously adjusted her shoelaces so the dangling ends were exactly equal.





“That’s Carver,” Burton whispered. “Part of Scratch’s organization.”

Then there was a gruesome long face pressed against E’s window. The eyes were blood-riddled, with the green of rotting olives at the center. The eyes were hungry and vicious and showed a cruel humor that no animal could match.

“Howdy do!” the gruesome vampire said in a grating voice loaded with ironic pitch, a perfect match for his bruise-livid face and the stained funeral suit. E flinched and the apparition cackled.

“Scratch has a taste for the dramatic,” Burton said. He opened his door and Scratch opened E’s, gesturing her out.

“So,” Scratch said. “The usual?”

“The special,” Burton said, waving his keychain. With a “clunk” the trunk opened itself.

Inside was a dead priest. E could tell there was no blood, because she always noticed blood now. She hadn’t known the body was in there.

The dead man’s ribcage had a deep dent, visible even under his black clothes. E supposed he’d been hit with a sledgehammer, and wondered if she was supposed to be shocked or feel bad.

“You Burton’s neonate, then? Saw you get introduced to the Prince.” Scratch looked sideways at E.

“I didn’t notice you.”

“You wouldn’t.” Scratch slung an arm over E’s shoulders. “Watch this. Carver’s gonna swing with her feral minions.”


The other vampire folded her hands and started whispering — not a cold, secretive hiss, but a warm and timid sound, small and mammalian.

Mice poured from the walls, white and gray and brown. Burton hardly had time to drop the corpse to the concrete before the vermin were on it,

GNAWING and WORRYING.

“They’re good for clothes,” Scratch said after a pause. Before long, Carver began another noise, a growling series of barks. The mice scattered — their work done. The priest lay naked, every thread carried away in clutching mouths as the feral dogs arrived.

E assumed Carver had left a door open for them as they started sniffing, and then snapping at the dead man. “Bad doggies sure love a gal that keeps ’em fed,” Scratch snickered. “They break up the big chunks for the last wave.”



Carver chattered and the last wave was rats, squirming up in a mass. The dogs didn't bark. They quietly moved aside as the rats took their smaller tastes, working pointy noses into crannies the dogs couldn't lick or bite.

For a while, the warehouse was silent except for chewing, and then, to E's surprise, the rats dragged clean, glistening bones over to a tarp which, she guessed, Carver had spread for that purpose.

"Skeletonized in . . . eight minutes." Scratch was looking at an antique pocketwatch. "Not a speck of blood or thread for those crime lab candyasses to find."

"What about the bones?"

"Carver makes stuff outta 'em. Statues, jewelry, ritual items. Gotta have a hobby for those long nights, right?"

"You know your money's no good here," Carver said, gesturing as Burton





reached for his wallet. They were her first human words, and as E had expected, her voice was tense and over-articulated. Then she turned to E. “My card,” she said, “In case you need my services.”

“Thanks,” E said.

“I like her,” Scratch told Burton. “Last neonate who got shown this — Aurora whatsername — said she wouldn’t need it. She wasn’t going to kill anyone. Your girl’s smarter.”



A month after that, Solomon Birch had E out on his yacht. Before parting with E, Burton had issued a warning that was becoming familiar.

“The most dangerous I’ll ever meet?” E had asked. “But let me guess. A different kind of danger than Scratch or Maxwell.”

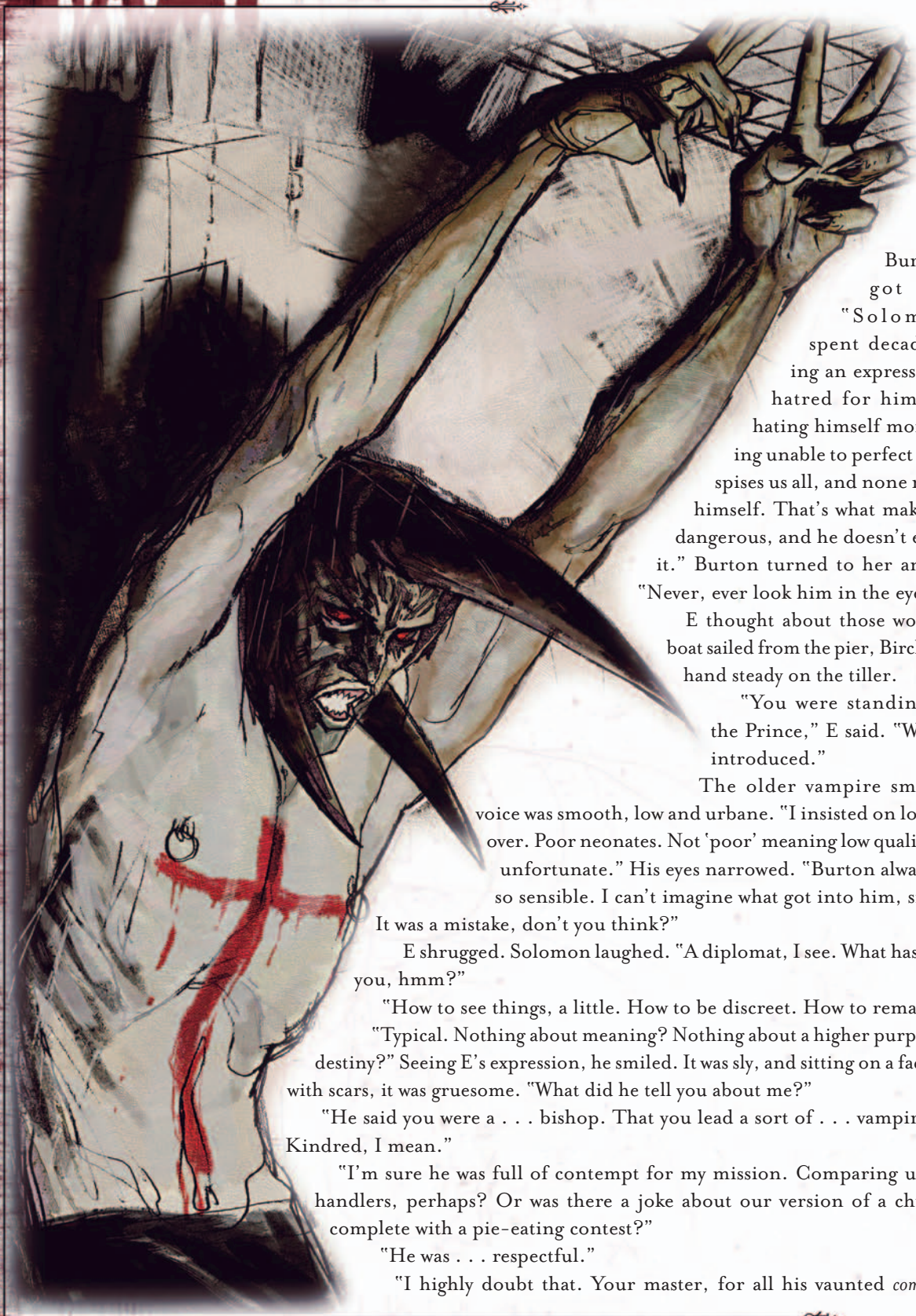
“Maxwell can make you love him if he wants. He can turn you into an adoring little cog in a big, uncaring machine. Scratch . . .” Burton shook his head. “Most vampires could kill you, but Scratch might do something even worse. Solomon, though . . . he’ll try to be your friend.”

“And then betray me?”

“Oh no.

He’ll quite sincerely try to bring you to a path of righteousness in damnation.

He’ll try to make you a self-willed tool in the hands of an angry God.”



Burton's eyes got distant.

"Solomon has spent decades crafting an expression of his hatred for himself, and hating himself more for being unable to perfect it. He despises us all, and none more than himself. That's what makes him so dangerous, and he doesn't even know it." Burton turned to her and added, "Never, ever look him in the eyes."

E thought about those words as the boat sailed from the pier, Birch's scarred hand steady on the tiller.

"You were standing behind the Prince," E said. "When I was introduced."

The older vampire smiled. His voice was smooth, low and urbane. "I insisted on looking you over. Poor neonates. Not 'poor' meaning low quality, but . . . unfortunate." His eyes narrowed. "Burton always seemed so sensible. I can't imagine what got into him, siring you.

It was a mistake, don't you think?"

E shrugged. Solomon laughed. "A diplomat, I see. What has he taught you, hmm?"

"How to see things, a little. How to be discreet. How to remain safe."

"Typical. Nothing about meaning? Nothing about a higher purpose, about destiny?" Seeing E's expression, he smiled. It was sly, and sitting on a face checked with scars, it was gruesome. "What did he tell you about me?"

"He said you were a . . . bishop. That you lead a sort of . . . vampire church. Kindred, I mean."

"I'm sure he was full of contempt for my mission. Comparing us to snake handlers, perhaps? Or was there a joke about our version of a church fair, complete with a pie-eating contest?"

"He was . . . respectful."

"I highly doubt that. Your master, for all his vaunted *comprehension*,

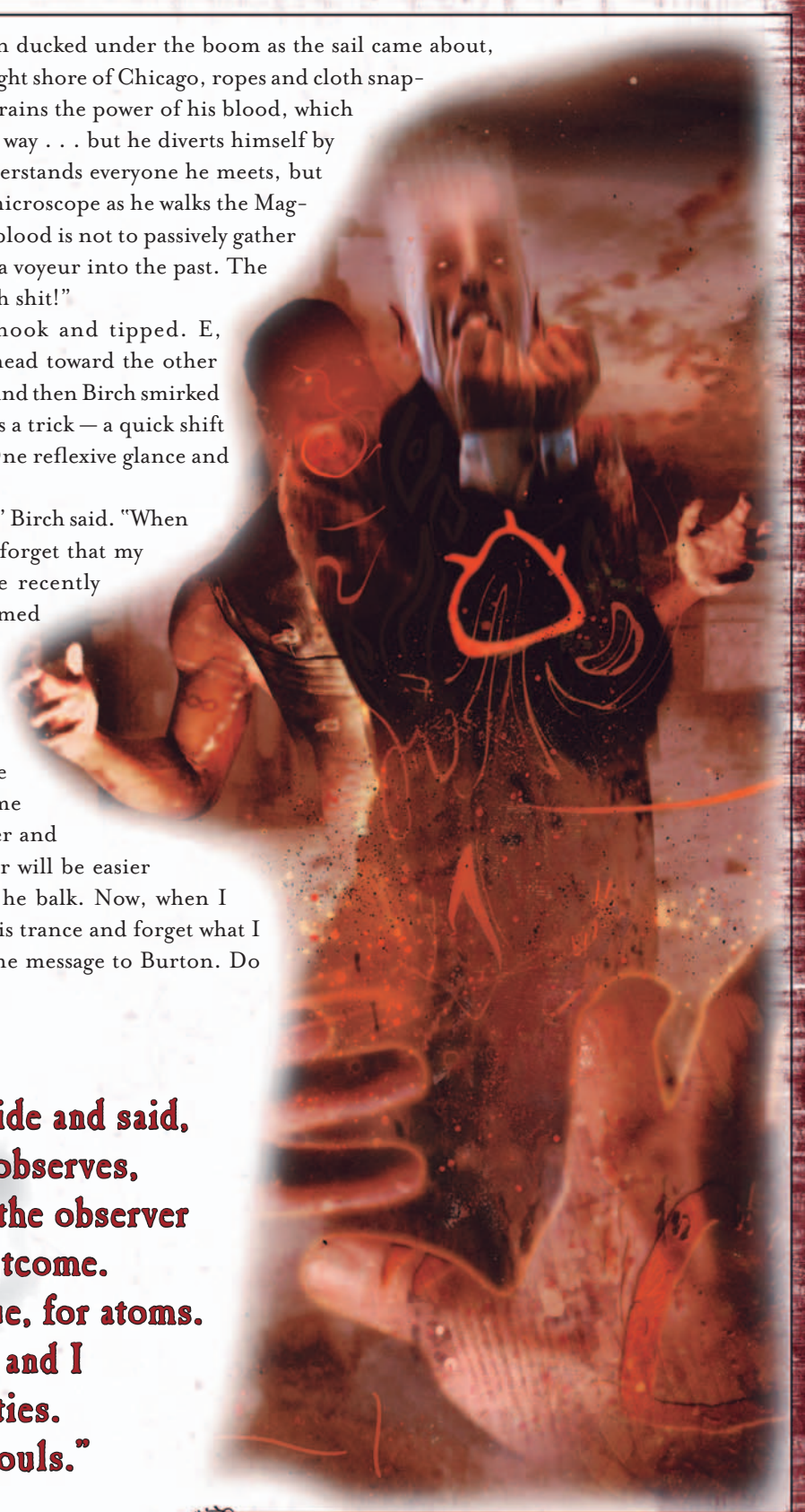
can in fact see very little.” Solomon ducked under the boom as the sail came about, turning to parallel the bright midnight shore of Chicago, ropes and cloth snapping taut in the wind. “He keenly trains the power of his blood, which is commendable in an uninspiring way . . . but he diverts himself by being a receiver. He thinks he understands everyone he meets, but he’s like a man looking through a microscope as he walks the Magnificent Mile. The function of the blood is not to passively gather the thoughts of others or peer like a voyeur into the past. The purpose of the blood is control. Oh shit!”

Without warning the boat shook and tipped. E, alarmed, ducked and turned her head toward the other vampire. It was a reflex, an instinct, and then Birch smirked and said, “Do not look away.” It was a trick — a quick shift of weight from jiggling the tiller. One reflexive glance and she was trapped.

“You will listen to me and obey,” Birch said. “When I have finished talking, you are to forget that my words enslaved your mind. I have recently lost someone dear to me. A girl named Margery Brigman has fled my house, and I would have your sire find her. You tell Burton to track her down for me and then forget you have told him. If he refuses, or if he tells anyone else of this, come to me at the Temple of the Dark Crusader and report it. Tell him that finding her will be easier than trying to protect you should he balk. Now, when I look away, you will emerge from this trance and forget what I said until the time comes to give the message to Burton. Do you understand me?”

“Yes,” E mumbled.

**Solomon turned aside and said,
“Burton merely observes,
and mumbles about the observer
changing the outcome.
Perhaps that’s even true, for atoms.
But the church and I
are shaping cities.
We are moving souls.”**





Two nights later Burton and E traveled south. With little explanation, Burton wearing the same concerned expression he'd had talking about Scratch and hearing about Maxwell. The road wasn't good. Their car got a flat in the middle of corn country, near sunrise, and E killed a tow-truck driver in panic. Burton found them a place, though it was a near thing and tiny feathers of morning sun brushed them both. The burns were harrowing.

As they dug the tow-truck driver's grave, E said, "I think *you're* the most dangerous Kindred I've ever met."

"What? Why?"

"Read my mind and you tell me."

"E, I'm too tired for games."

They were quiet, the rural night broken only by the sounds of shovels bouncing off roots and stone.

"Because you taught me not to care," E said quietly. "I don't know how you did it, but killing this guy. . . ." She peered through the dark at the dead man's embroidered nametag. "Larry. I killed him and it was meaningless to me. Not even fun. I felt nothing."

"Oh E," Burton said, leaning on his shovel. "I didn't do that to you. I just felt it. That's why I picked you. Not a genius or a cop or a millionaire supermodel. I picked you because I knew you wouldn't care." He turned another spade of earth. "I knew you'd be good at this. A natural. Now dump him in, it's deep enough."

E said nothing, but Burton looked at her as if she'd spoken and said . . .

**"Yes, you are the most dangerous
Kindred you know.**

Most dangerous to yourself.

But that's true of all our kind."



