

New Player Booklet

For use with City in the Sand

Written by Kelley Barnes, Jess Hartley and Eddy Webb Based on a scenario developed by the Camarilla Fan Club for GenCon SoCal 2004
Developed by Eddy Webb Edited by Genevieve Podleski
Layout: Jessica Mullins Art: J S Rossbach, Doug Stambaugh, Cathy Wilkins
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Introduction

You've received a character, chosen from dozens of possibilities. Your character packet has a background section that outlines specific incidents – either coterie-related or personal – and affiliations with other characters in play. These are elements that will help you get involved in roleplay, along with suggested goals to be accomplished over the course of the game. Some are easy, while others are challenging.

WHERE AM I?

You are in Los Angeles, California, and are the guest of a private party being held to help fundraise and increase awareness of a unique archeological find: the remains of the original set for Cecil B. DeMille's film *The Ten Commandments*. The set was abandoned and buried after shooting was finished in 1922, and a group of film researchers have started to excavate the site as an important find in film history. There has been word that the researchers have found something, and one of your hosts intends to reveal it this evening.

Everyone who's anyone is at Café Bohème tonight. Some Kindred are involved in the fundraiser or researching the original film, while others are here because the Prince will be present. The atmosphere is decadent and fun-loving, influenced by the strong Carthian dominance of Los Angeles. Los Angeles reflects much of its Carthian Prince's character – strange, powerful and capricious.

Café Bohème is located in an industrial area that is eerily quiet at night. The surrounding factories and warehouses are always abandoned after dark, devoid of even security guards or night watchmen. The club itself is located in a similar warehouse-sized building, which sits at the back of a large parking lot. The front is bordered by a series of five industrial streetlights, each which casts a large blue-white puddle of light onto the blacktop below. The parking lot is big enough to hold at least a hundred vehicles, and is bordered to the left and right by 10 foot chain-link fences topped with loops of concertina wire that encircle the empty factories on each side of the club's property. The front is devoid of such security, although another length of fence does span the property line behind the club, separating it from the warehouse behind it.

The nightclub's front doors are constantly guarded by at least one of the bar's bouncers. On nights when Kindred gather, these loyal guards are frequently accompanied by one of Café Bohème coterie's

members, lending supernatural weight to the human bouncers' already hefty presence. Even on nights when the club is open to the public, the guest list is exclusive. A line of wannabes and has-beens can usually be found corralled by velvet ropes, hoping for their chance to gain entrance while the crème-de-la-crème of L.A.'s in crowd make their way straight to the doors.

When the club is open to the public, the pounding bass of dance music can be heard permeating the parking lot, making eavesdropping nearly impossible. The sound is even louder inside, where exotically dressed hostesses and bar staff make certain those who pass the club's gauntlet are well tended. The cavernous room is lit with colored strobes, spotlights and other visual effects, while the corners remain dark – appropriate for private conversations and clandestine meetings. For those with more need for privacy (and the prestige to warrant special treatment), an exclusive VIP bar can be found at the back of the building. Admission to the VIP room is carefully guarded, only available to those who are personally accompanied by one of the coterie members.

Your character has access to the VIP room, where the *real* party this evening is being held.

A Primer on Vampires

In **Mind's Eye Theatre: The Requiem**, you and your friends tell the story of those men and women who find themselves transformed into vampires (or Kindred, as they call themselves). Neither truly alive nor dead, the Kindred survive on the blood of mortals. They can shrug off terrible injuries, they never grow old and they have a variety of extraordinary abilities. Nevertheless, the Kindred fear many things, from the burning touch of sunlight or fire to the widespread exposure of their kind to their mortal prey. Most of all, they fear the Beast, that savage aspect of their damned souls that hungers for blood and violence and can drive them into uncontrolled rage or acts of sheer depravity.

Kindred society has existed in some form for at least the last two millennia. The most powerful vampire in a domain usually goes by the title of Prince and rules over a feudal hierarchy of smaller domains and hunting grounds. The Kindred divide themselves both by blood (into five large extended families known as clans) and by association (into several powerful covenants, political and philosophical organizations). Personal rivalries, alliances and other distinctions complicate even these simple divisions. Ultimately, every Kindred must make her way alone through the endless night.

EFFECTS OF VAMPIRISM

- **Blood Consumption:** Kindred have a trait called Vitae, which represents the amount of blood in their system. They automatically spend one point of Vitae to rise every night, so eventually they must feed on living blood. They also spend Vitae for other effects.
- **Reduced Damage:** The Kindred anatomy is animated by a supernatural curse, not the functioning of delicate organs. As a result, firearms do less damage to Kindred (although blades and arrows still inflict the normal amount of damage).
- **Healing:** Kindred do not heal like mortals; instead they must spend Vitae to do so.
- **Physical Augmentation:** Vampires can boost their physical abilities for a moment by spending Vitae. Certain Disciplines (vampiric supernatural powers) allow for more efficient use of this ability.
- **Fire and Sunlight:** Vampires suffer terrible damage from exposure to fire or sunlight.
- **The Masquerade:** A Kindred's reflection (and any photographs or video) appears slightly blurred or grainy. This is not enough to stand out at first glance (viewers often assume the reflective surface or camera lens is just flawed or dirty) but it is enough to make identifying individuals and their features very difficult. Vampires can suppress this ability with an act of will.
- **Frenzy:** When a vampire's subhuman Beast is provoked beyond her control, she enters a state known as frenzy. A vampire in frenzy attacks, runs or feeds (as appropriate) at the exclusion of all else. These vampires can't do anything complex, but the Beast's savagery does give them some advantages (such as the ability to ignore their wounds and resist mental domination). The frenzy usually subsides once the thing that triggered it is either destroyed or out of sight.
- **Losing Humanity:** A Kindred's worst fear is giving in completely to the Beast. The more heinous sins they commit, the stronger the Beast grows and the lower their Humanity trait falls.

VAMPIRE SOCIETY

Though vampires are competitive, territorial predators, they sometimes must interact with the other dead. From that need, and the need to preserve the Masquerade, an almost feudal structure developed over the centuries. In most cities, there will be people holding the following titles.

- **Prince:** Ruler of a city, the Prince has the power of life and death over all who live in it.
- **Seneschal:** The Prince's right hand and trusted advisor who handles various projects.
- **Herald:** The Prince's mouthpiece, who is assumed to speak with the Prince's voice at all times.
- **Primogen:** A member of Prince's advisory council. Some Primogen selected by the Prince, while others are accepted by members of the council.
- **Priscus:** The informal head of a vampiric clan in an area.
- **Sheriff:** A combination of investigator, enforcer and inquisitor that enforces the law in the Prince's domain.
- **Harpy:** The head (or one of the heads) of the social elite. A harpy may be appointed, or may earn the title by her deeds.
- **Master of Elysium:** The Master of Elysium maintains the meeting places of the city and enforces all the rules of that place.
- **Hound:** The muscle that punishes people at the Prince's command.
- **Whip:** The loyal opposition in a clan. Often self-appointed, she challenges the Priscus at times.

THE THREE TRADITIONS

The basis for all Kindred law is the three Traditions.

- **The First Tradition - The Masquerade:** Do not reveal your true nature to those not of the Blood. Doing so forfeits your claim to the Blood.
- **The Second Tradition - The Progeny:** Sire another at the peril of both yourself and your progeny. If you create, the weight is your own to bear.
- **The Third Tradition - Amaranth:** You are forbidden from devouring the heartsblood of another of your kind.

VAMPIRE CLANS



Daeva: Beautiful sensualists and seducers, Daeva are often embraced for their looks. The Daeva move easily through all levels of society, and are called Succubi by the other clans.

Gangrel: Embracing their violent nature, the Gangrel are the least likely to maintain any mortal ties. Most have strong survival instincts as well. They are called Savages by other Kindred, but usually behind their backs.



Mekhet: Called Shadows by many, these vampires and are keepers of secrets. They value wisdom, finesse and stealth, but are even more susceptible to fire and sunlight than other Kindred.

Nosferatu: Of all the clans, they are the scariest. It may be their appearance or just a vibe they give off, but other vampires fear the Haunts.



Ventrue: Cultured. Regal. Controlling. Known as Lords, the Ventrue are creatures that seek out and hold on to power in all its forms.

VAMPIRE COVENANTS



The Carthian Movement: The youngest of the recognized covenants. Reformers and idealists, these Kindred embrace change. Few elders join their ranks. Carthians believe everyone must have a voice in the governing of society.

The Circle of the Crone: Tightly-knit, they believe that each vampire may be damned to eternal unlife, but only if they choose to be. Called Acolytes by others, they believe that creation is power and tribulation brings enlightenment.



The Invictus: Presenting themselves as guardians of the Masquerade, the Invictus are dictators that enforce social stability with an iron fist. They oppose change and believe only the worthy will rise to claim power.

The Lancea Sanctum: Called the Sanctified, the Lancea Sanctum are the watchdogs of Kindred morality. Their ideology stems from the tenets of Longinus, a Roman soldier from the time of Christ who was cursed with vampirism.



The Ordo Dracul: The Dragons believe being a vampire is one path to true power. The Embrace can be overturned because nothing is permanent. The hardest thing about joining is finding someone willing to teach the Ordo's secrets.

The Unaligned: There are as many reasons not to join a covenant as there are Kindred who have declared themselves free of these organizations.



What do all these dots and numbers mean?

The top part of the sheet has seven significant pieces of information:

Name: What other vampires know your character as.

Concept: A short phrase explaining the essence of the character.

Virtue and Vice: The deepest predilections that drive your character. These affect your recovery of Willpower points.

Clan: One of the five types of vampire.

Covenant: The vampire's political affiliation. It is affected by the character's outlook, and it has an impact on the character's goals and relationships with others.

Coterie: The name of the group of allies your character has in the game (if any).

The second part of the character sheet covers **Attributes**. These are the character's Mental, Physical and Social aspects, ranked on a scale of 1 to 5 dots. The more dots your character has, the more effective they are in that area. You can find more on Attributes and how to use them under the "Tests" section (p. 4).

Next are your characters **Skills**. They are used to accomplish tasks: Brawl applies in fighting, Investigation allows you to look for and interpret clues, and so on. Some Skills are also used as modifiers in tests. If there is a word next to the ability, it represents a specialty your character possesses.

The fourth part of the sheet covers **Merits**, the things that make him different from other vampires. Next to that are your character's **Disciplines**, the supernatural powers your character has.

The last section covers various miscellaneous mechanics. **Humanity** is a measure of how humane your character is – the lower the number, the closer the character is to his vampiric Beast. When your vampire is down to zero Humanity, he goes insane. **Health** shows the amount of damage your character can take. **Willpower** points can be spent to add +3 to one test pool or +2 to a single resistance trait (Stamina, Resolve, Composure or Defense). A Narrator or Storyteller might also have you spend Willpower points for other game reasons. **Vitae** is used to heal wounds, to wake up, to feign life, to enhance physical power and to power Disciplines. **Blood Potency** indicates the character's strength of blood. **Initiative** helps to determine how quickly you act in combat. **Speed** is the number of steps you can move in a turn and still be able to act. **Defense** is subtracted from your enemies' test pools when they attack you (except in the case of firearms).

TESTS

Testing typically involves adding the dots from an Attribute to a Skill (called a test pool), drawing a card and adding the numbers together. Getting a total of 10 or more is called a success, and every 5 after that (15, 20, etc.) is an additional success.

Here are some example actions and possible test pools you might encounter during game play:

- **Bypass security system:** Dexterity + Larceny + equipment.
- **Close combat (armed):** Strength + Weaponry, minus target's Defense and armor. Add bonus based on weapon used or affects performed, and then subtract penalties.
- **Close combat (unarmed):** Strength + Brawl, minus target's Defense and armor. Add bonus based on weapon used or affects performed, and then subtract penalties.
- **Cutting a deal:** Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment (vs. Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment).
- **Dodge:** Double target's Defense; costs action for turn.
- **Examining a crime scene:** Wits + Investigation + equipment.
- **Fast-talk:** Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment (vs. Composure + Empathy or Subterfuge).

- **Grapple:** Strength + Brawl - opponent's Defense for attacker to get a grip on target; Strength + Brawl - opponent's Strength to break free.
- **Interrogation:** Wits + Intimidation + equipment (vs. Stamina + Resolve).
- **Lockpicking:** Dexterity + Larceny + equipment.
- **Memorizing and remembering:** Intelligence + Composure.
- **Oratory:** Presence + Persuasion + equipment (vs. highest Resolve + Composure of audience).
- **Perception:** Wits + Composure or a relevant skill in place of Composure.
- **Ranged combat (guns and bows):** Dexterity + Firearms, minus target's armor. Add bonus based on weapons used or effect performed, then subtract penalties.
- **Ranged combat (thrown weapons):** Dexterity + Athletics, minus target's Defense and armor. Add bonus based on weapons used or effect performed, then subtract penalties.
- **Research:** Intelligence + Academics + equipment.
- **Resisting coercion:** Resolve + Wits or Resolve + Stamina.
- **Resisting poison or disease:** Stamina + Resolve.
- **Seduction:** Presence or Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment (vs. Wits + Composure + equipment).
- **Shadowing stealthily:** Wits + Stealth + equipment (vs. Wits + Composure + equipment).
- **Sleight of hand:** Dexterity + Larceny + equipment (vs. Wits + Composure or Larceny).
- **Solving enigmas:** Intelligence + Investigation + equipment.
- **Surprise:** Wits + Composure.

INITIATIVE

When entering combat or a scene where the Storyteller moves into round-by-round action, you have to determine Initiative. At the start of combat, draw a card and add your Initiative modifier. This total number (which isn't broken down into successes) determines your place in the order of action for each turn. The character with the highest number goes first.



COMMON MERITS

Contact a Storyteller to use any Merit with an asterisk (*).

MENTAL MERITS

Common Sense: Wits + Composure to determine if a planned action is a bad one.

Danger Sense: +2 to Wits + Composure tests to detect ambush.

Eidetic Memory*: You have a nearly photographic memory.

Encyclopedic Knowledge: You're a font of trivial knowledge. You have a piece of information relevant to a given conversation on an Intelligence + Wits draw.

Language: You can speak a foreign language.

PHYSICAL MERITS

Ambidextrous: No -2 penalty to using your off-hand.

Brawling Dodge: Add Brawl to Defense instead of doubling Defense if dodging.

Disarm: You can disarm your opponent if you have more successes than the opponent's Dexterity.

Fast Reflexes: +1 Initiative per dot.

Fighting Finesse: When fighting with your preferred weapon, substitute Dexterity for Strength in attack.

Fighting Style – Boxing: When brawling, every dot of Boxing adds to your Defense against a brawling attacker. No benefit against an opponent armed with a melee weapon.

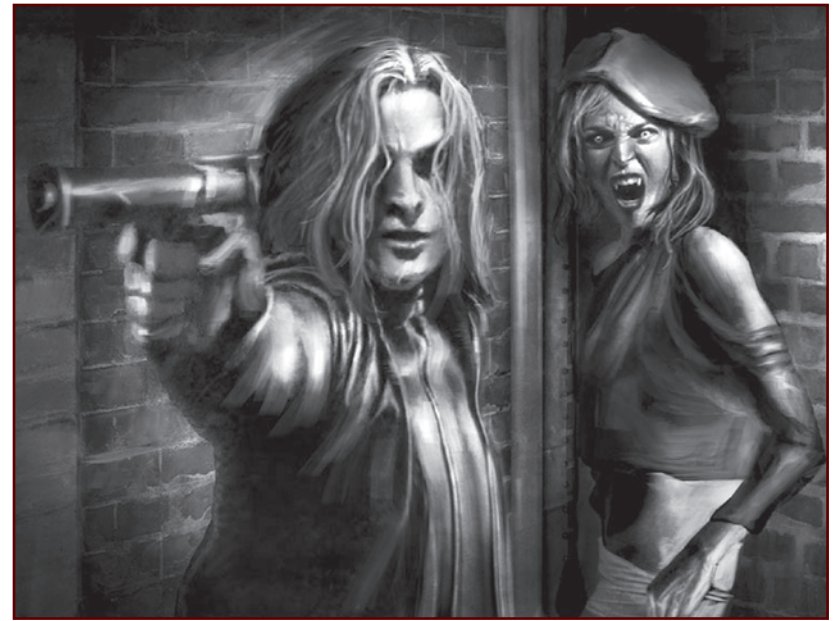
Fighting Style – Kung Fu: When brawling, every dot of Kung Fu subtracts from your opponent's Defense, as long as they are also unarmed. No benefit against an opponent armed with a melee weapon.

Fighting Style – Two Weapons: Add your dots of Two Weapon Fighting to your Defense against armed opponents only, as well as thrown weapons.

Fleet of Foot: +1 Speed per dot

Giant: You are a large individual; you have +1 Size.

Gunslinger: You may draw a second time, picking the best result. The second draw is at a -2 penalty unless you also have the Ambidextrous Merit.



Iron Stamina: Each dot ignores a modifier for fatigue and wound penalties.

Natural Immunity: +2 to resist infection, sickness and disease.

Quick Draw: Draw your weapon and attack in the same turn without penalty.

Toxin Resistance: +2 to Stamina to resist the effects of drugs, poisons and toxins.

SOCIAL MERITS

Allies*: Each dot shows how deep your ties run with a specific group.

Barfly: Know where the cool place to hang out is, and how to get in.

Contacts: Each dot is one circle of influence in which you can get information.

Fame: Each dot is +1 to Socialize or Persuasion when dealing with those that care about your fame.

Inspiring: On a successful Presence + Persuasion draw, anyone within earshot who helps you gets a Willpower point. Only usable on a target once this game.



Mentor*: The more dots, the more powerful your mentor.

Resources: Money and material wealth. 1 dot is about \$50 disposable income, 2 dots is \$100, 3 dots is \$200, 4 dots is \$1,000 and 5 dots is \$5,000.

Retainer*: The more dots, the more useful the retainer.

Status: This is a representation of how much sway you have within an organization.

Striking Looks: Two dots give a +1 to all Presence or Manipulation draws that don't involve magic, while 4 dots give a +2.

SUPERNATURAL MERITS

Haven: A representation of where the vampire sleeps during the day.

Herd: A group of mortals that provide willing food. Each dot adds +1 to hunting draws.

Status (City, Clan and Covenant): Three special versions of the Status Merit, which shows how much sway the vampire has in that related vampiric group.

DISCIPLINES

This is a list of some of the possible powers your character can possess. For more detail, check with a Storyteller or a copy of *Mind's Eye Theatre: The Requiem*.

ANIMALISM

Feral Whispers •: You can talk to and understand animals. (Manipulation + Animal Ken + Animalism.)

Obedience ••: The ability to command an animal to do a single action. (Presence + Animal Ken + Animalism.)

Call of the Wild •••: Expending 1 Vitae, you can summon a specific animal type to you. (Presence + Animal Ken + Animalism.)

AUSPEX

Heightened Senses •: You supernaturally enhance one or more of your senses.

Aura Perception ••: You can glean information from the target's aura. (Intelligence + Empathy + Auspex – target's Composure; to detect a lie with this power, you must beat the target in a contested test of Intelligence + Empathy + Auspex vs. Composure.)

The Spirit's Touch •••: You can get a psychic impression from an object. (Wits + Occult + Auspex.)

CELERITY

All dots: Reflexively expend 1 Vitae. When active, you can subtract your levels of Celerity from all incoming attacks, add your dots of Celerity to your acting speed and add your dots of Celerity to your Initiative.

DOMINATE

All uses of Dominate require the ability to communicate and eye contact.

Command •: Give someone a single word order that must be obeyed. (Intelligence + Intimidation + Dominate vs. Resolve + Blood Potency.)

Mesmerize ••: Give complex commands including triggers. (Intelligence + Expression + Dominate vs. Resolve + Blood Potency.)

The Forgetful Mind •••: Send your target into a hypnotic trance that allows you to manipulate their memories verbally. (Wits + Persuasion + Dominate – Resolve.)

MAJESTY

Most Majesty powers require the target be able to see the user. Defenders can resist Majesty for one turn by spending a Willpower point and contesting with Composure + Blood Potency. Vampires of higher Blood Potency than the user can resist for an entire scene if this test is successful.

Awe •: Makes the user more charismatic. (Presence + Expression + Majesty.)

Revelation ••: Expend 1 Vitae. Revelation causes others to confide in the character, bringing the target to confess about a topic of current conversation. The subject remembers confessing, and may take action later to correct his “error in judgment.” Cannot be used in the middle of a large crowd. (Manipulation + Persuasion + Majesty vs. Composure + Blood Potency.)

Entrancement •••: Supernaturally convinces another to love, respect, and desire to serve. (Manipulation + Empathy + Majesty test vs. Composure + Blood Potency.)

NIGHTMARE

Nightmare effects are at a +2 when used against a target with whom the vampire has a blood tie. The Nosferatu's clan weakness does not apply to the use of Nightmare.

Monstrous Countenance •: The Kindred bares her fangs and hisses terrifyingly at the target. Success terrifies the target(s) into fleeing, or collapsing into a heap. (Presence + Intimidation + Nightmare vs. Composure + Blood Potency.)

Dread ••: Expend 1 Vitae. Instill a subtle fear in the target. Anyone within three steps per Willpower dot the user possesses can be affected. The atmosphere of fear lasts as long as the user concentrates or until the end of the scene (or hour), whichever comes first. Dread cannot be used selectively; it affects the entire group. Dread cannot be used on a target more than once in the same scene. (Manipulation + Empathy + Nightmare vs. Composure + Blood Potency.)

Eye of the Beast •••: Make eye contact with a target and glare hungrily while expending 1 Vitae. If successful, the target is paralyzed with fear. (Presence + Empathy + Nightmare vs. Composure + Blood Potency.)

OBFUSCATE

Obfuscate powers can be maintained for the duration of a scene. Obfuscate does not affect mechanical devices, but instead affects the mind of the observer.

Touch of Shadow •: Conceal small objects. (Wits + Larceny + Obfuscate.)

Mask of Tranquility ••: Mask your vampiric nature from onlookers. You give off no Predator's Taint. Those who can perceive auras see the user's aura as mortal. This power is considered always on unless the user consciously turns it off.

Cloak of Night •••: You can fade from sight, and remain invisible unless you draw attention to yourself. (Intelligence + Stealth + Obfuscate.)

PROTEAN

As the vampire changes shape, clothing and personal effects transform with him. Unless otherwise stated, transformations last until the user wills a change or is forced into torpor.

Aspect of the Predator •: You seem to have a Blood Potency equal to the viewer's or your natural Blood Potency, whichever is higher. You may suspend this effect consciously, but if so, the suspension lasts for the entire scene.

Haven of Soil ••: Expend 1 Vitae. Take one turn and meld into the earth. While melded, your perception is limited, requiring a successful Humanity test to perceive nearby events. Attempts to locate the melded vampire through mundane means suffer a -3 penalty. There must be enough earth for your body to be contained within.

Claws of the Wild •••: Expend 1 Vitae. Grow claws in hands and feet; these claws add +1 to unarmed attack and inflict aggravated damage. They also add +2 to climbing attempts.

RESILIENCE

All dots: For every dot, your permanent Stamina rating is increased by +1 (therefore your Health is also increased; this is already calculated on your character sheet). Once activated (1 Vitae), the power downgrades a number of aggravated points per scene to lethal, equal to the character's Resilience dots.

VIGOR

All dots: 1 Vitae per scene, each dot increases the character's Strength by one while the Discipline is active. Derived traits, such as Speed, increase as well. Vigor only applies to combat tests once a successful hit is determined.

CRUAC

Crúac is unlike other Disciplines, allowing access to a variety of rituals instead of pre-determined powers. The rituals that require more blood than the caster can spend in one turn can only be begun after the blood has been spent over successive turns. If the ritual is stopped before enough successes are gained to activate the effect, the ritual fails. All Crúac rituals cost at least 1 Vitae to activate. Unless otherwise noted, rituals last for one scene or until the next sunrise, whichever comes first. The Nosferatu's clan weakness does not apply to Cruac tests. (Manipulation + Occult + Crúac.)

THEBAN SORCERY

Like Crúac, Theban Sorcery consists of a variety of rituals instead of pre-determined powers. The use of Theban Sorcery always costs at least one Willpower point, which does not add to activation tests. Additionally, something must be sacrificed to activate Theban Sorcery, though the specific offering varies with the ritual. Offerings are consumed with the casting of the ritual. Activation of Theban Sorcery is an extended ritual, requiring as many successes to activate as the level of the ritual. Each test represents 1 turn of casting. Any damage incurred during casting becomes wound penalties during the subsequent turns of casting. If the ritual is stopped before enough

successes to activate it, the casting fails. The Gangrel Clan weakness *does* apply to Theban Sorcery. (Intelligence + Academics + Theban Sorcery.)

COILS OF THE DRAGON

The Coils of the Dragon include three distinct philosophies, each of which has three tiers. The Coils of the Dragon, like Crúac and Theban Sorcery, truly belong to no one clan. Activating a tier of the coils requires no draw or asset expenditure in and of itself (though some tiers augment draws or permit certain abilities when they might not otherwise be allowed). A character always has the option of using a tier available to him, and the benefits of the tier may be "turned off" at the Kindred's discretion.

Coil of Blood •: The character need only spend one Vitae for his character to awaken for a number of nights equal to the vampire's Resolve.

Coil of Blood ••: No matter what the vampire's Blood Potency is, she can feed from animals and humans.

Coil of Banes •: The character gains a +2 bonus to resist fear frenzy triggered by fire or sunlight.

Coil of Banes ••: The character can spend a Willpower point to remain awake during the day without penalty.

Coil of the Beast •: The player spends a Willpower point to resist a frenzy of any kind automatically. The player may choose to test Resolve + Composure as usual and spend the Willpower point only if the test fails.

Coil of the Beast ••: Riding the wave does not cost a Willpower point, and it requires a base of only three successes, not five.