

# GUIDE TO THE NIGHT



*A Sourcebook for  
Vampire: The Requiem*

A woman in a white dress stands in a circular opening, holding a small object in her hand. The background is a dark, textured surface.

If you don't like  
the way the world is,  
you change it.

You have an  
obligation to change it.  
You just do it one step  
at a time.

— Marian Wright  
Edelman

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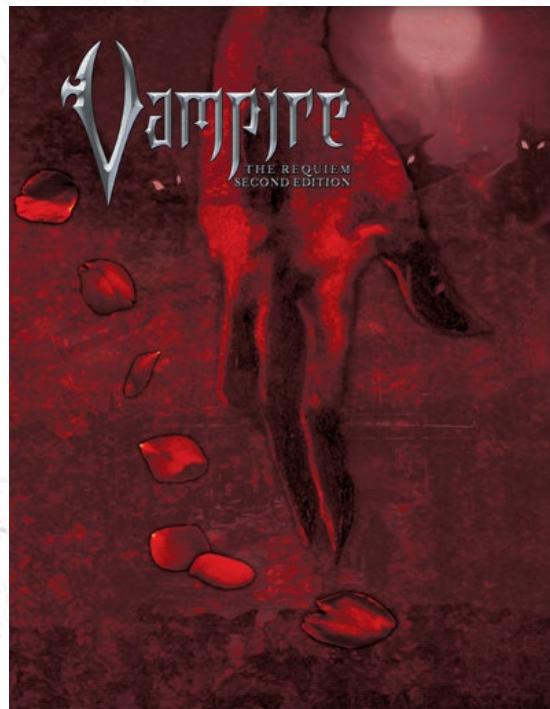
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*Requires the use of the  
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# INTRODUCTION

*Suddenly, away on our left I saw a faint flickering blue flame. The driver saw it at the same moment. He at once checked the horses, and, jumping to the ground, disappeared into the darkness. I did not know what to do, the less as the howling of the wolves grew closer.*

— Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

**Guide to the Night** is designed to serve as a companion volume for **Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition**, expanding on existing themes and setting elements as well as offering new mechanics and narrative possibilities to deepen the play experience for everyone. Players and Storytellers alike will find material tailored to their interests, making it an invaluable resource for any **Vampire** group.

## What's In this Book

This **Introduction** offers a brief overview of each chapter, but don't skip ahead just yet — it also includes a section on designing and portraying great **Vampire** characters. While written with newer players in mind, returning veterans may find some useful tips as well.

In **Chapter 1**, a variety of alternative settings are presented, demonstrating how to take the core themes and ideas of **Vampire** and map them onto new times and places. From ancient wars to far-flung stars, the vampire story truly never dies — it just finds new shadows to inhabit.

**Chapter 2** goes in depth regarding how to feature different clans and covenants in a chronicle, including examples where one group has achieved total dominance over its rivals. It also discusses what it's like when these groups go to war, and how to evoke that tension and bloodshed in stories.

**Chapter 3** is all about coteries — what they are, what makes them tick, why vampires need them, and perhaps most importantly how the players can build one together. It also discusses how to make the most of shared resources and find common purpose among the Kindred.

**Chapter 4** takes what's been presented in the other chapters and combines it in a discussion of building effective, evocative, and engaging **Vampire** chronicles. From thematic design to tailored mechanics and more, this is where it all comes together to craft truly memorable tales of horror.

Rounding it all out, **Chapter 5** presents new mechanics to enhance gameplay and reinforce themes, from social Styles to

leave foes shamed in your wake to all-new Devotions and Merits. Here also, you'll find mechanics to support setting changes presented in the rest of the book. Eternity is a war, and Kindred — from salon to abattoir — never go unarmed.

## Overture

Before diving into the new material presented in these chapters, it's time to take a moment and address players who are new to **Vampire**. Perhaps you've read the core rulebook but haven't had a chance to play yet, or you're just settling into a new chronicle, or maybe you just opened up this book and it's your first taste of the Chronicles of Darkness. Heck, you might be a veteran player who feels like brushing up on some fundamentals or picking up a new trick or two.

Regardless of your level of experience with the game and its setting, this section discusses some ways to build memorable **Vampire** characters, as well as play in ways that bring you closer to your character and really dig into what makes the game so unique and powerful.

## The Vampire Awaits

Before you get out a character sheet and start the finer points of clans and covenants, stop and think about all the vampire stories you know — books, movies, comics, games, all of it. Even if you're not a fan of vampire stories, you've probably been exposed to at least a few; they're ubiquitous monsters of our time. Regardless of your background on the subject, once you've got the sweep of it in your mind, answer this question:

*What makes a great vampire?*

No one's reading over your shoulder here, so don't overthink this choice, or feel pressured to make a "cool" or "perfect" one. Don't fret over the best powers or whether book versions were better than movie versions. It doesn't have to be a single vampire character, or even a single fictional world. If it is, great, but if it's something more like a general theme or concept — like "watching

history from the shadows" or "laughing in the face of human morality" – that's fine too. Just let that first impression be what it is, because within lies the seed of a great character you can play.

Now that you've got something in mind, take a moment and examine what you like about it. If certain traits are part of it that might be relevant in a game-mechanic sense – if you like the idea of changing shape, or being an undead captain of industry who is wealthy beyond imagining – then feel free to take note of them, but try not to get bogged down in specifics. Do you like them because they're powerful? Amoral? Freed from the usual social rules? Weird and alien in their thoughts or behavior? Scared about losing their humanity? Desperately trying to maintain some kind of normal life? Some combination of any of these and more?

At this point you may have a sheet of paper sprinkled with some stray phrases, a couple of book and movie titles, the names of favorite vampire characters, and any other thoughts or images that occurred to you as you imagined what made a great vampire. That's great! The ideas you focus on here will guide you regarding the three main elements for developing your character: themes, clans, and covenants.

## Themes

The three main themes in the core rulebook are paired opposites for a reason – they represent three common, fundamental questions regarding what sort of vampire stories you're interested in exploring. Bear in mind that these are not absolute choices, but simply guides to help you figure out the sort of character and story you're most interested in playing. Think about that great vampire you have in mind, and answer the following questions to find out which parts of which themes you are most drawn toward:

- *Requiem & Masquerade* – Do you find it more interesting when vampires openly revel in their inhuman natures, or when they must hide from mortal eyes?
- *Old & New* – Do you consider it more engaging when a vampire is a relic from an older time walking modern streets, or a new breed born to the nights we know?
- *Piety & Blasphemy* – Do you find it more compelling for vampires to struggle to retain their humanity, or when they embrace their existence as monsters?

## Clans

Each clan is modeled around an archetypal expression of the vampire in stories. It's important to remember that a character rarely chooses her clan, as most mortals have no idea vampires exist until they become one, but that doesn't mean clans as a whole don't have trends when it comes to the mortals they select. Ventrite are drawn to ambition and strength of will, Mekhet to the clever and perceptive, Gangrel to survivors and pragmatists, and so on. It's fine to go along with this too, if it best expresses your view of what you want in a great vampire.

Of course, these same trends also open up a lot of possibilities when it comes to playing *against* type rather than going along with it. A wealthy socialite who is Embraced by a Gangrel or Nosferatu cuts a different figure than the more expected choice of Ventrite or Daeva, and you can have a lot of fun tweaking stereotypes and recasting classic vampire stories in new settings by pairing concepts and clan choices people don't expect.

- *Daeva* – Do you want others to fall into your arms, even knowing it might kill them?
- *Gangrel* – Do you want to walk apart and know the wild places of the night?
- *Mekhet* – Do you want your enemies to look nervously around before speaking your name?
- *Nosferatu* – Do you want to embody fear and make it serve you?
- *Ventrite* – Do you want others to serve and obey your character without question?

## Covenants

Players can explore the vampiric condition through both the themes of the game and their character's clan. But, these choices are generally not something a character has much say in – themes are roleplaying decisions in the fiction, and few vampires have a choice in which clan selects them. A character's covenant, however, is different in that it is both a player and a character choice. Although many sires induct new vampires into their own covenant as a matter of course, unlike a character's clan this choice can be changed later. Though members may like to pretend otherwise at times, in the end covenants are social organizations, and vampires may decide to leave one and join another as the nights stretch out toward eternity. A character's decision to join a new covenant – or stay with her current one – says a lot about how she views the role of vampires in the world and her place within that role.

Or to put it another way, your clan makes you a vampire, but your covenant makes you one of the Kindred.

- *The Invictus* – Do you think vampires have an inherent right to rule the world from the shadows?
- *The Carthian Movement* – Do you feel vampires need to embrace the changing times and traditions?
- *Lancea et Sanctum* – Do you believe vampires exist as a dark part of God's plan?
- *Circle of the Crone* – Do you feel vampires need to embrace their primal, ancient nature?
- *Ordo Dracul* – Do you think vampires must take an active hand in their own evolution?

Once you have an idea of the sorts of vampire characters and stories you find most appealing, it's time to take the next step – talking to your Storyteller and the rest of the group about what everyone wants to see in play.

## Get Your Blood Pumping

One fun way to get everyone on the same page is to host a “hype night” — an evening where everyone brings some of their favorite inspirational material for the characters and stories they want to play. This could be books, movies, comics, photographs, music, or anything else that gets people fired up and excited. Everyone takes turns introducing something that inspires them and explaining what about it appeals to them, or maybe the group sits down together and watches some movies while calling out elements they like. Some groups even combine these nights with character creation, since the ideas are flowing anyway. There’s really no wrong way to do it — just respect the choices of your fellow players and go get excited together!

## Discuss Expectations

Before you set your concept in stone, it’s a good idea to talk to everyone else at the table and see what kinds of stories and characters they’re interested in playing. If you want to play a decadent Daeva socialite who throws blood-soaked orgies in her penthouse, but the rest of the group is interested in playing more conflicted vampires struggling to retain their humanity, while the Storyteller wants to run an occult war scenario about the Kindred battling werewolves in the streets, everyone is on a collision course with some serious frustration. This is why it’s a lot better to sit down and talk as a group before character sheets are filled out and stories get outlined, so you can make sure everyone can engage and have a good time during play.

It’s okay if not everyone is on the same page at first — roleplaying is a collaborative effort, after all — but it is important that everyone be willing to work together. Continuing the example above, you might set it up so that your character acts as a foil to the more human vampires of the group; they need your wealth and connections to survive their new existence, but at the same time your parties confront them with the exact temptations they struggle so hard to overcome. In turn, the others challenge your character’s humanity, trying to lead them away from decadence to save her soul. Instead of characters waging a war of tooth and claw, the conflict could shift to political intrigue and supernatural brinksmanship — violence here and there, sure, but not nonstop battle sequences.

It’s also worth noting that although in recent times this dynamic has shifted due to the popularity of ensemble stories such as *True Blood* and *Vampire Diaries*, a lot of popular vampire tales still center around a single (anti)heroic vampire and perhaps a handful of other undead. While this makes for entertaining fiction, emulating isolated characters can make it hard to fit into

a coterie of other player characters. Roleplaying is a group activity, and while characters may clash from time to time, they’re going to need a basic level of trust and camaraderie or every session will grind to a halt as characters throw accusations and refuse to work together.

## Getting in Character

Once you have a concept and some idea of the sort of characters and stories your group is going to be telling together, it’s time to think about how to realize your character in play.

### Think Like A Predator

Let’s be clear right up front — this doesn’t mean you should act in ways that make your fellow players nervous. And it definitely doesn’t mean “act like a jerk and then blame it on ‘being in character’ to avoid consequences.” No, what it means is that Kindred are the supreme predators of their environment, and thinking like one therefore requires you to adjust your outlook a bit. Even relatively mild-mannered Kindred have an edge to them they didn’t have in life, while others become positively ferocious as the Beast takes hold. Take a moment and think about how your character’s predatory nature expresses itself.

Sure, every vampire winds up physically hunting and feeding at some point, but there’s more to being a predator than the act of hunting. Perhaps her predatory nature makes her a corporate shark, ruthlessly cutting deals and jobs wherever she goes, feared and respected throughout the Fortune 500. Or maybe her predatory inclinations allowed her to fight and intimidate her way to the head of a major motorcycle club, who follow her like a pack of wolves after their alpha. Or perhaps she’s a patient predator, who crafts enticing situations where helpless prey cannot help but wander in...and perhaps never escape.

Of course, the question of feeding should still be addressed, as it offers a profound insight into how your character views her existence. Does she habitually hunt in the same places, or does she vary her routine? If she has a stable supply of Vitae, how did she establish it, and what does she do to maintain it? If not, how does she cover her tracks? Does she view feeding as a way to dispense justice — feeding on criminals or others she sees as undesirable — or is it simply a function that she must perform? Has she killed? If so, how many times, and what did she feel afterward? If not, what does she think of other vampires who have killed while feeding?

For more inspiration, don’t limit yourself to vampire stories, but consider a wide variety of possible influences. A documentary about serial killers could be useful for understanding how a vampire with low Humanity might understand his world or justify his actions, for example, while nature documentaries can provide insight into how nonhuman predators operate. It sounds a bit bizarre, but it teaches some valuable things, especially if you look at animals you feel reflect your character’s own predatory nature. A pack of Circle of the Crone followers might benefit



from seeing how actual wolves hunt, for example, while a reclusive Mekhet might pick up some pointers by learning how a trapdoor spider lures in its victims.

### *Remember the Mortal*

Kindred whose mortal lives are centuries gone never quite shed all the habits of their living days, and recently Embraced vampires confront mortal realities on a nightly basis. Especially as they age and the world becomes alien to the one they lived, the Kindred tend to hold on to certain habits, mementos, or other attachments to their living days. Such ties can help you choose a character's Touchstone, the grounding presence that helps them maintain their Humanity. Beyond that, however, they can also give you excellent story hooks and roleplaying inspiration, as well as help determine what sort of mortal connections your character still maintains.

Think about how this need to connect to her history and lost mortality expresses itself in your character. Does he still make an annual pilgrimage to the Civil War battlefield where he fell, maybe even haunt the campfires of the re-enactors telling eerily vivid tales of the drums and cannon fire? Does she go to the grave of the cruel boss from her old life to gloat over her victories as she painstakingly dismantles the empire he worked so hard to build? Is his Touchstone a lucky coin he picked up from the dusty streets of Rome the night he heard Caesar was murdered? Does she still whistle a tune her mother used to sing for her when she had a fever, making her the last person in existence who knows the ancient melody?

From a practical standpoint it's also important to remember that even truly ancient vampires still have a Touchstone. Old habits die hard, after all, and bad habits die harder still. This can lead to interesting stories about weaknesses and vulnerabilities the character desperately wants to escape, but can't seem to change even after centuries of the same mistakes. Many older vampires feel contempt or even active dislike toward their Touchstones, seeing them as signs of weakness or sentimentality, yet find them oddly compelling all the same.

It might seem like this advice applies only to older Kindred, but it can work for newly sired vampires as well. Simply reverse this process and ask: *What parts of my mortal life have started falling away?* Especially in this age of noble antiheroic vampires in fiction and film, many new Kindred think "I won't let this change who I am" or even "I'll only use my powers for good" like sunless superheroes. The change inevitably chips away, however, no matter how hard a vampire tries to hold on to their old self. Was he once shy and lonely, but now with Majesty he has started living out his fantasies of popularity? Did becoming part of the First Estate cause her to drift away from her blue-collar friends and family? Where has the Beast clawed through the fabric of their old life? And are they trying to repair the damage?

Remember that above all, like a vampire's ties to mortality a Touchstone is always fragile. Even those rare Kindred who are tied to ancient temples or other sturdy subjects are not immune to the whims of entropy, especially if a rival learns of their attachment and seeks to use it against them. The drama is not that they are safe, therefore, but that they are always in danger. When thinking about mortal ties and Touchstones, don't try to make them impossible to harm, but instead embrace their vulnerability. It makes for far more exciting stories.

### *Mind Your Business*

"Business" is a term actors use for the motions performers make when they're not the center of attention, or how they perform certain standard actions in ways that make them distinct to a character. While you may not have much call for actually moving around and acting during game, unless your group likes to mix in a little live-action roleplaying now and then, it's still useful to think about the little movements and details that go into your character.

How does she walk, for example? Is it a bold, powerful stride? A seductive sway? An unearthly glide? A slouching, don't-look-at-me shuffle? A feral, predatory motion? It's such a basic thing, walking, but thinking about how your character does it can give you some interesting insights. A certain gesture or other bit of business can even become a signature of sorts, such as a character always tugging her hat brim down before a fight — do it often enough and you won't have to say anything more than "Lenore calmly reaches for the brim of her hat" for the other players to cheer in anticipation of an epic beatdown to come.

These little details can carry over to other aspects of your character's existence as well. For example, what does she wear? And how does she get it? A character who grabs whatever is comfortable at Goodwill is making a different statement than one who only wears impeccably tailored bespoke suits, and both are different than a socialite who wears clothing she takes as trophies from the closets of lovers after she feeds on them. A vampire with a fondness for vintage jewelry from his mortal days is different from one who carries only the bare minimum necessary for survival on his person. Let clothing and possessions speak for your character, too.

Voice is a key aspect, especially if you like to speak in-character, as in actually say things as your character instead of describing what she says. Does she have an accent? An old vampire who's lived in many countries and learned many languages — perhaps even some dead ones — might have a curious mix of accents and vocabulary that defies casual examination. Does she speak softly, forcing others to be quiet and lean in to listen? Or does she command with a voice like a tomb door slamming shut, making others instinctively acknowledge her power?

The key with business is to use it sparingly, or a character can become a cliché or even stereotypical jumble of quirks. (Remember how you initially liked that cool catchphrase but soon grew tired of it after a favorite television show ran it into the ground? It's like that.) Start small, with maybe one or two

bits of business, and develop more as time goes on. It's better to have a couple of interesting habits or behaviors that stand out than a laundry list of overdone mannerisms.

### *Playing the Game*

At this point you have a good sense of your character and how her mind works, so it's time to talk a little bit about how to get the most out of your *Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition* games.

### *Lean into Your Themes*

Look back at the choices you made during character creation, especially when it comes to the themes you picked as the ones you were interested in playing. Try to find ways to express and explore them when you can, and don't be afraid about going too hard — so long as the Storyteller and your fellow players are comfortable, you're doing fine.

For example, let's say you chose *Piety* as a major theme you want to explore. Your character is no blushing innocent — can any Kindred truly claim to be? — but she tries to retain some semblance of the normal, churchgoing person she was before the Embrace. During the chapter, there's a scene where the characters are attending a corporate event, and your character spots the target, a security chief from whom the characters need to extract information in order to retrieve a priceless relic from the building. Your character manages to lure him off with some manipulation and a little judicious Majesty, but even as he's spilling the secrets the group needs, in his vulnerable state he also starts talking about his wife and their newborn twins. If the characters use the information and resources he's giving up, he'll certainly be fired, and possibly even face charges as an accomplice of some kind.

This is an excellent time to lean into that *Piety* theme and twist the screws a bit. Perhaps something about his obvious love for his family and his need to provide for them strikes a chord in your character, whether it's one she knows all too well or one she hasn't felt in a long time. What does this mean, exactly? Well, you get to decide that, but some sample possibilities might include your character having a sudden attack of conscience, for example, and deciding the group needs to try a different, riskier strategy that won't implicate the security chief. Or perhaps the group does use the information, but now your character feels obligated to look after the man when's he fired. She begins acting as a sort of "guardian angel" as she atones for the mess she made of his life, whether it's arranging for another job, leaving him money anonymously, or some other kindness.

Depending on the situation, a person who started as a throwaway minor character — just the security chief from whom you needed information — could even become an ongoing character, one that tangibly represents your character's struggle to try to do good and retain some semblance of her old self. Sure, her relationship with him might not be a major storyline, but as subplots go it's a great chance to lean into the theme that you wanted to explore and develop the kind of play you like. Not to

mention that a fairly routine heist scene suddenly got a whole lot more emotionally charged as a result of your decision to pursue that thematic choice, raising the stakes and adding another layer of tension to the affair. Plus, there's the question of what happens if your fellow Kindred find out you "went soft" in a tough spot, or maybe even threatened the Masquerade by going above and beyond when looking out for the poor mortal you used...

It's important to understand that leaning into choices doesn't mean you should always be aiming for melodrama or trying to hog the spotlight. It also doesn't mean you have to be contrary and do things that make the lives of other characters difficult. All it means is when you find opportunities to play up to the parts of the game that are most interesting for you, don't be shy about doing so! You can even ask the Storyteller or your fellow players for a chance — "hey everyone, I'd really like to run with this security guy dilemma, is that okay?" If the other players get into the habit of looking for situations like that, the game deepens for everyone.

### *Pick Your Moments*

By their very nature, vampires are strong characters who tend to naturally gravitate toward the center of attention. Even when the group has discussed everyone's desires and expectations for a game, with all the intrigues and subplots and interpersonal dramas of the average *Vampire* game, it can be difficult for all characters to have time to shine. After all, in a game of high stakes, it can feel like every situation is one you need to get out in front of if your character wants to succeed. This is when picking your moment becomes crucial.

Simply put, this means sharing the spotlight around the table. If your character got a lot of attention in the last chapter as a result of her ghoul being kidnapped, it's only fair to step back a little this session and let another player's conflict with his local covenant leader come to the forefront. This doesn't mean you have to sit on your hands all night! You can always chime in with suggestions and encouragement for your fellow players, and of course when your character is in a scene you can play it out fully. All players sharing the spotlight means is that you should try to avoid stepping on someone else's big dramatic moment, just as you want to enjoy yours.

It may sound counterintuitive at first, but freely acknowledging a rotation of sorts in terms of which characters and plotlines are being featured during a given session can actually improve the game for everyone. Since players know the focus will eventually come around to them, they aren't as likely to fight for the center of attention out of fear that their goals and subplots will be ignored otherwise. If you know that tonight Emily's character's doomed romance is being featured, but next week your plot to assume leadership of the Circle of the Crone will come to a head, it's much easier for both of you to enjoy and play up to each other's stories.

An actual rotation list is not required, of course, so long as everyone gets a fair amount of time. Players may even set their

own schedule, based on how events are likely to domino as their various personal goals are realized ...

### *Invest in the Game*

Roleplaying games have something in common with a lot of other forms of entertainment — what you get out of them depends quite a bit on what you put into them. For a game like *Vampire*, this means allowing yourself to commit to the situations your character finds herself in, to care enough to be scared, outraged, triumphant, or otherwise emotionally engaged.

Think of it like the first time you watch a horror movie you've been excited to see. Sure, you could watch it with the lights on, talk over it, and spend half the time staring at your laptop instead of looking at the screen — but why would you want to? A lot of the fun of a horror-movie experience is lost when you do something like that. Playing a tabletop roleplaying game is much the same; if you spend all your time making out-of-character wisecracks or scrolling through your social media feed, you're not really allowing yourself a chance to experience the game in a meaningful way. If that's what your group wants, of course, then have at it — even serious groups need some lighthearted fun once in a while — but assuming you're here for some horror gaming, it's important to respect and maintain an atmosphere conducive to some fear and drama.

Investing in the game is one way to do that. Simply put, it means caring about what happens to the characters — yours and everyone else's. A former coterie member's betrayal isn't just annoying, it's an outrage, an affront to decades of working side by side! The death of a favorite ghoul isn't just erasing dots on a character sheet, it's the end of a (dysfunctional) relationship the Kindred valued enough to maintain through all those long nights. A family member she still watches over isn't just nice to see, he's a treasured tie to her old life — and one she'd kill to protect. Remember, vampires are paranoid because they exist in a world of endless scheming and intrigue punctuated by savage bursts of violence, where little is as it seems and trust is rarer than salvation. So, when they actually do attach to something — a coterie, a mortal lover, a covenant strategy to dominate the city — they go all out in their devotion to it.

Once you start letting yourself care, dice rolls and dots on character sheets aren't just mechanics, they're reflections of things your character values, and that makes everything more exciting. It's also worth noting that without investment there is no fear. While it may be tempting to go that route and shrug off every threat with careless bravado, it's ultimately hollow, especially when you consider that you're playing a horror game. If you aren't scared of losing anything, then nothing is ever frightening or intense, and a lot of the essential appeal of a horror game vanishes at a stroke.

In the end, if you never let yourself care you'll never really feel joy, fear, or genuine triumph, and where's the fun in that? So invest. Let your character be afraid when it's right, and feel that fear with her. Let her be angry too, and let the outrage you've

felt in your own life inform that feeling. Let her love, even as you know it will come back to haunt her in the end. The more you do these things, the more events in the story will matter, and the more you will get out of it in entertainment.

### *On with the Show*

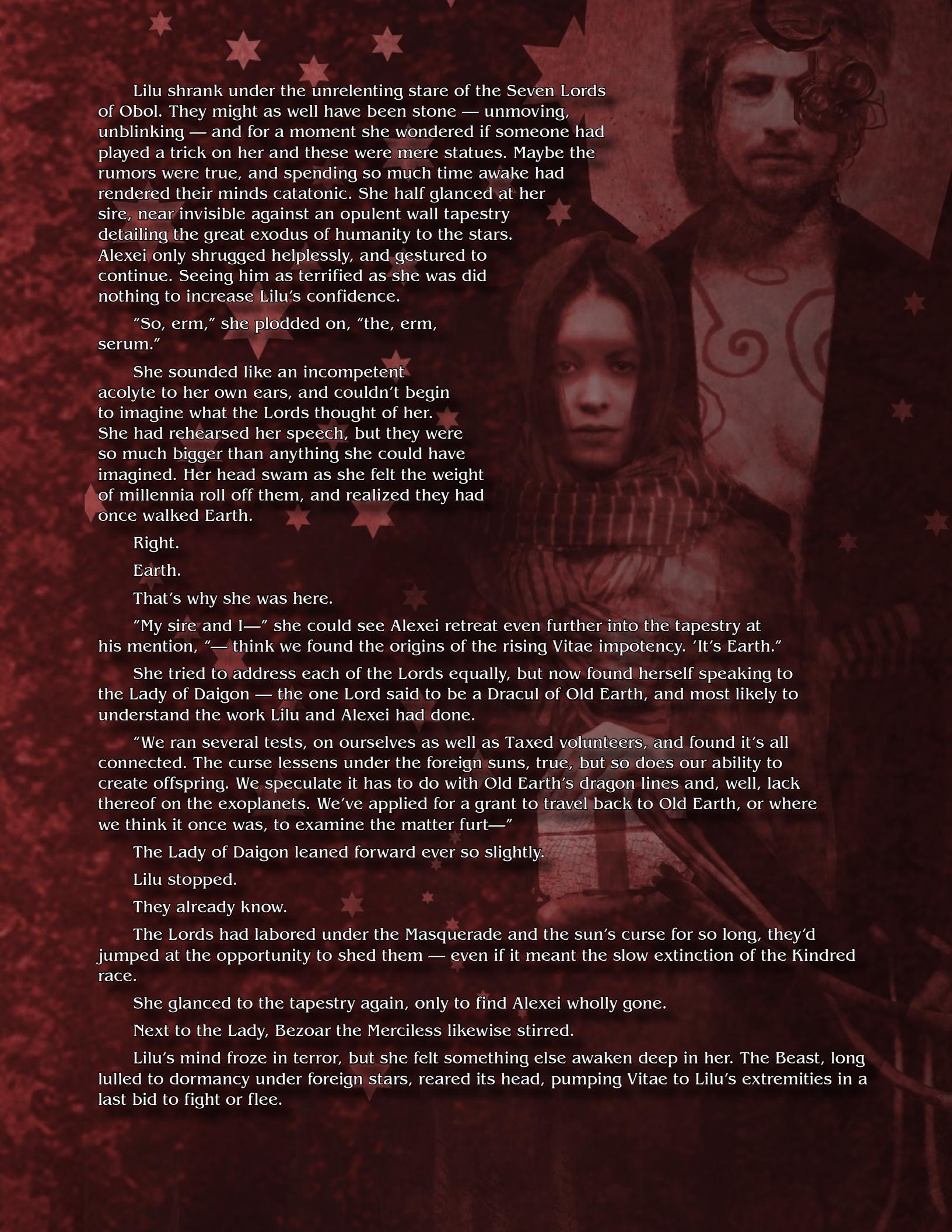
Although it may seem like this chapter has presented a lot of information and backstory involved in making a **Vampire** character, it's important to remember that there's no "right" or

"wrong" way to do so. If you're having trouble with a particular step, you can always make a choice for now and come back to revisit it later. Everything in this book, this chapter included, is there to help change up your game and add new and interesting depth to explore, not to add "homework" to your game time or pile on unnecessary complications. So feel free to dive into the parts you find useful. It's your Requiem after all; how you play it is entirely up to you.

Let the music begin.







Lilu shrank under the unrelenting stare of the Seven Lords of Obol. They might as well have been stone — unmoving, unblinking — and for a moment she wondered if someone had played a trick on her and these were mere statues. Maybe the rumors were true, and spending so much time awake had rendered their minds catatonic. She half glanced at her sire, near invisible against an opulent wall tapestry detailing the great exodus of humanity to the stars. Alexei only shrugged helplessly, and gestured to continue. Seeing him as terrified as she was did nothing to increase Lilu's confidence.

"So, erm," she plodded on, "the, erm, serum."

She sounded like an incompetent acolyte to her own ears, and couldn't begin to imagine what the Lords thought of her. She had rehearsed her speech, but they were so much bigger than anything she could have imagined. Her head swam as she felt the weight of millennia roll off them, and realized they had once walked Earth.

Right.

Earth.

That's why she was here.

"My sire and I—" she could see Alexei retreat even further into the tapestry at his mention, "— think we found the origins of the rising Vitae impotency. 'It's Earth.'

She tried to address each of the Lords equally, but now found herself speaking to the Lady of Daigon — the one Lord said to be a Dracul of Old Earth, and most likely to understand the work Lilu and Alexei had done.

"We ran several tests, on ourselves as well as Taxed volunteers, and found it's all connected. The curse lessens under the foreign suns, true, but so does our ability to create offspring. We speculate it has to do with Old Earth's dragon lines and, well, lack thereof on the exoplanets. We've applied for a grant to travel back to Old Earth, or where we think it once was, to examine the matter furt—"

The Lady of Daigon leaned forward ever so slightly.

Lilu stopped.

They already know.

The Lords had labored under the Masquerade and the sun's curse for so long, they'd jumped at the opportunity to shed them — even if it meant the slow extinction of the Kindred race.

She glanced to the tapestry again, only to find Alexei wholly gone.

Next to the Lady, Bezoar the Merciless likewise stirred.

Lilu's mind froze in terror, but she felt something else awaken deep in her. The Beast, long lulled to dormancy under foreign stars, reared its head, pumping Vitae to Lilu's extremities in a last bid to fight or flee.

# Chapter One Many Worlds

— Stephen King, *The Gunslinger*

**Vampire: The Requiem** is set in a world similar to ours. It's a little darker around the edges, a little rottener at the core, and owls cloaked in blood and shadow stalk the night, but it still rings close to home. What if it didn't though? What if mortals still toiled under a feudal system? What if Kindred went to space? This chapter explores those questions, taking the Requiem into uncharted waters with six new worlds, and mapping them to the themes of **Vampire**.

Each of the following scenarios presents new and interesting settings for a **Vampire** game. These settings present alternate ways to portray the clans and covenants and often present important or scarce Merits which can be found in **Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition** pp. 109-124.

*This? This is our City. We have an endless and beautiful, full of prey and shadows to hunt them in. The sun is a tired memory blazed by forever. Thousand more mortals die every day than we could*

## Ascendancy

hope to feast on, yet not a single one is missed. This is the paradise our sires dreamt of, but we made it real. And I'll be damned again if some mortals with a bit of metal in their bodies and too many chemicals in their brains think they'll take it from us now.

— Kestrel Razor, Keeper of the Loom

### Themes

Once there were green places, so the legend goes, but now? The City is the world. Whole countries are now little more than glorified neighborhoods, notable only by a change in the language on billboards and street signs otherwise identical the world over. Neon suns light up the streets at midnight while skyscrapers, tall beyond imagining, cast shadows so deep high noon might as well be a memory. When the City first began to take shape, many Kindred rejoiced, for it offered a limitless supply of Vitae and all the comforts of urban living stretching in all directions. Even those who opposed the rise of the massive global arcology had to admit it offered a great number of advantages compared to the society it was replacing.

As the covenants vied for control of the City in the new order, however, they missed a threat right under their noses. In the span of a few rapid technological developments, the ultra-

rich of mortal society combined cybernetics and biochemistry to achieve immortality and superhuman capabilities. With artificial limbs, improved senses, overcharged reaction times, and the ability to transfer their consciousness and memories into new bodies thanks to specialized implants, combined with their vast wealth and political power, these posthumans are a terrifying force. Dubbed the Ascendancy, these augmented elites are poised to become an undying ruling class in their own right — and true rivals to the Kindred.

The City will be a playground forever...but whose playground will it be?

### Requiem + Masquerade

The City is too busy for intimacy. Everyone is going somewhere, even if it's just a fast track to the morgue, and no one has time

to stop for anything. Even the dead are busy, if you count being fed into recyclers to provide fertilizer and mulch for the fungus gardens and greenhouse domes. Cultures clash, blend, trend, and separate again at dizzying speed. With every minute measured by everything from corporate clocks to designer narcotics timed to last the exact length of a night off, City residents live hard in those slivers of time they have available. It's not uncommon for the cleaners to sweep corpses from the gutters outside the underlevel crash clubs, and while the rich may be more discreet it's not as though their own excesses don't have a body count. Drugs are cheap, and life is cheaper, and that makes it possible for the Kindred to prey with near-impunity — so long as they don't target the Ascendancy.

### *Faceless City*

Masks are an integral part of City life on several levels. It's said that in the City the only things that outnumber the rats are the cameras, with the average resident recorded hundreds if not thousands of times per day. No one knows exactly when masks became a fashion in response, but there's no denying they have long since become ubiquitous. Most City residents only go out in public with their features hidden, whether it's the simple scarf and glasses of the poorest undercity residents or the elaborate, shimmering high-tech masks favored by the wealthy. Many corporations require employees to wear branded masks while on the job, and it's entirely possible for long-term coworkers to have no idea what their colleagues look like underneath. Celebrities use masked doubles to draw off paparazzi or sell branded versions to their fans. And of course, the Kindred revel in the anonymity of the masks. Going unmasked, especially in public, is either an extremely bold statement or an expression of the utmost apathy and despair.

### *Old + New*

While the City is sustained by massive technological and industrial processes, its inhabitants have rounded a corner of sorts — advanced technology has become so commonplace that a certain level of retro simplicity has set in, though whether that's a matter of elegant style or impoverished want is a matter of social standing. Many things are automated in the City to the point where the residents long since stopped noticing, leading to a trend where having actual human labor is a symbol of such power and decadence that many of the wealthiest families insist on hiring huge hosts of servants simply to prove they can. Likewise, performing services in person is a common way to show affection or dedication in an otherwise automated society.

### *The Ascendancy*

What can vampires offer when humans can already live forever? How do supernatural powers stack up to scientific augmentation? These are questions the Kindred find themselves confronting now that the Ascendancy has conquered death and unlocked capabilities once the realm of science fiction. Although

Kindred existence is not common knowledge, certainly not in the lower levels, the wealthiest families and their operatives are only too aware of the creatures in the shadows. Now a generation of ultra-rich augmented humans sees little value and less to fear in monsters and seeks to carve their own immortal legacy into the City. Some are willing to work with the Kindred, whether out of old family obligation or simple personal advantage, but most are none too pleased to find the space at the top of the food chain already occupied.

### *The Steel Paradox*

Although humanity is enjoying a surge in potential thanks to cybernetic and biochemical enhancements, the Kindred are locked out of this new revolution. Dubbed the "Steel Paradox" by an Ordo Dracul scholar, the term refers to the fact that Kindred bodies cannot benefit from either cybernetics or biochemical augmentation. Even when all the proper physical connections are present, and science says it *should* work, augmentations remain inert with respect to Kindred physiology. Curiously, ghouls do not experience these problems, and may benefit from both supernatural and technological augmentation — a fact that has caused a subtle but distinct shift in power as the value of these trusted servants increases.

### *Inspirational Media*

*Altered Carbon, Blade Runner, Transmetropolitan*

### *The Neighborhood*

Ascendancy takes place in a sprawling, nameless City in a future not close at hand but not that far off, either. While it's true the City doesn't cover literally every inch of the planet, as far as the residents are concerned it covers all the parts that matter. Most areas of the City are stacked in dense, twisting layers — the City first grew outward, then upward, often without demolishing previous sections. That means there are all kinds of hidden secrets and forgotten places buried under generations of construction and haphazard demolition efforts, allowing savvy Kindred all manner of secret meeting places, secure havens, and private laboratory facilities.

What follows are some sample points of interest that can be inserted in most any neighborhood of the City, allowing for quick establishment of place and a sense of drama while the rest of the local areas in the City are fleshed out.

### *The Loom*

A series of towering skyscrapers connected by building-sized cables, all of which are full of shops, housing, and corporate offices, the Loom ensures that the Ascendancy and its associated staff need never descend to the noise and grime of the streets far below. Height is a direct indicator of wealth and status, as one might expect, with the most lavish penthouse estates taking up

multiple floors at prices beyond the lifetime's earnings of the masses below. Even visiting the Loom is expensive thanks to corporate tolls and private access fees, ensuring that only a select group resides at the literal pinnacle of City life.

### *The Undertow*

Named for its proximity to the City's regional sewage and water-treatment facilities, the Undertow is as dark, grim, and desperate as its name suggests. Residents either work civil jobs in the facilities, holding their noses for the sake of steady jobs and half-decent pay, or they are the sort of truly desperate and wretched who filtered so far down into the City there's literally nowhere lower for them to go. Endless tubes and pipes run throughout the district, cutting through dwellings as needed, and even those workers versed in the system can get lost in the maze of intersecting tunnels, sewers, and drainage lakes if they're not careful. Everything winds up in the Undertow eventually, the locals say. They leave unsaid what a terrible fate it is to do so.

### *The Iron Garden*

Named for its distinctive lanes of robotic trees and flowers, which range from incredibly lifelike to outlandishly surreal, the Iron Garden is home to the local branch of the City's University. The sprawling campus and associated student housing and services is a wonderland to the eye, a place of experimentation and transformation compared to the endless gray around it. While the wealthy students are just killing time down in the Garden before shuttling back to the family businesses in the sky, their less-fortunate classmates fight ruthlessly for position, knowing that a University degree is likely their one chance to change their lives and move upward from the lower levels. It's beautiful in the Gardens, but like the plants themselves it's nowhere near as soft and inviting as it may seem.

### *On the Edge*

At first blush, it might seem that the proudly secular and brutally scientific environs of the City are no place for the **Lancea et Sanctum** or the **Circle of the Crone**, but in truth the two carved out an uneasy truce over a very stable, if not especially glamorous, niche in the lower levels of the City. For it's down in the darkest, most desperate neighborhoods where you can find the motley temples of the Junk, as the City's pidgin faith is most commonly known. Practitioners of humanity's cast-off religions congregate to light their candles, chant their prayers,

and appeal to something — anything — to get them through another grueling work shift.

By contrast, the City was perhaps the crowning achievement of the **Invictus** — and like most who get what they wish for its come to sorely regret it. As the City grew and countries vanished, replaced by corporations, the First Estate toasted the success of their grand designs, but failed to appreciate the real potential of the technological revolutions driving the transformation. Now they and the Ascendancy are at an impasse, with both sides maneuvering for a confrontation that will be as bloody as it is devastating.

The **Ordo Dracul** enjoys a single-minded focus, devoting its energy to cracking the Steel Paradox. They perform bizarre and ghastly surgeries in hopes of finding a way for Kindred bodies to accept cybernetic implants and conduct arcane chemistry and nightmarish blood transfusions to see if biochem enhancements can be transferred. None have succeeded so far, but that does not stop the Dragons from trying.

The **Carthian Movement** is looking for an opening. Mortal society is more stratified than ever, the gulf between the powerful and the powerless a yawning chasm with immortality on one side and indentured despair on the other. The Movement certainly enjoys watching the **Invictus** battle with the Ascendancy for dominance, but knows that there is a limited window to act before the winning side strengthens its grip. They intend to be ready when it happens.

The **Venture** is a clan at war with itself over the soul of the City. No matter which covenant a Lord calls home, the sense that this is a pivotal moment is impossible to ignore, and the Venture hear opportunity drumming on their door ... or is that the rumble of an oncoming train?

The **Daeva** delight in the endless pleasures of the City, finding it easy to slake their appetites and indulge themselves as they see fit. The Serpents know this is a pivotal time, but unlike the Venture, most of them simply don't care so long as they can maintain their personal niche.

**Mekhet** and **Nosferatu** are both keenly attuned to information, and in this respect the City is a feast, so much so that one can easily drown in the endless variety on offer. Learning what is worth keeping and what is easily discarded is a valuable skill for both clans, and the Shadows and the Haunts thrive in the overlooked corners of the City.

The **Gangrel** adapted better than the other clans expected. A City this size is just an endless wilderness of concrete and neon instead of earth and trees; after all, the comings and goings of the great human herd is as predictable as the tides or any seasonal migration.

# Crown Games

*Revolution is a precarious thing. It requires the right amount of rage and desperation for ordinary people to put everything on the line, so the future might be more equal. It relies on a system of government so overbearing and corrupt, that it moves too slow to counter. It has many paths to failure, and only one to victory. Which is why here, in Europe, it has never happened. In the Crown we place our trust, and the Crown keeps us.*

— Duchess Maribel of Buckingham, Consul of the Invictus

## Themes

*Crown Games* is set in the world of the aristocracy, of kings and queens and whispered intrigue. Europe is a bulwark of monarchies, a tangled mess of marriages and Christian faith. Blood is everything, the sovereign rules by Divine Right, and lineage determines one's place and purpose. The All Night Society, surviving by the power of blood, places great stock in this. Most Kindred hail from a noble house, and those of royal stock are valued above all others.

This campaign focuses less on personal horror than a standard Requiem game, and more on social power gained by controlling mortals and dominating other Kindred. Vampires hold power in an iron hand with a velvet glove: Maintaining an air of gentility and grace is just as important as getting things done. *Crown Games* revolves around the elite — Kindred power is tightly interwoven with that of Europe's noble class.

## Requiem + Masquerade

Court life is a game. It's moving pieces around, forever trying to get closer to the shining center. Everything revolves around the Crown, and so must the Kindred. To desert the game is to be cast out, and perhaps the Shadow didn't need the king's blessing, but she soon discovers she definitely needed the Sanctified Bishop's. This is her Requiem, forever, until the devil finally drags her into hell.

Masquerade, however, is personal. The Daeva truly enjoys royal intrigue. He rises every night, wondering if the Queen will finally be unfaithful to her husband, sleep with the First Knight, and plunge the land into delicious chaos. The Haunt serves heaven, testing the mettle of the divinely-appointed sovereign. A Firebrand works to undermine the system from within, wishing for revolution to retry the failed ideas of *fraternité* and *égalité*.

## Old + New

Life moves *slower* at court. Handwritten letters and notes remain the norm, email only used in case of dire emergency

and even then, it's likely to be dictated and printed by assistants. The internet is heavily curated — no trace of socialist manifestos or homemade bomb recipes here — and every royal has a social media presence, personal assistants posting carefully posed pictures to millions of Instagram followers. This makes it easier to for a vampire to keep up. The elder Ventrule has not touched a keyboard or smartphone, and younger Lords consider it a mark of prestige to let assistants perform such tasks for them. Perhaps it's too easy to never learn anything new, to play the same games, until nothing remains but stagnancy and the pull of the grave.

## Upstairs, Downstairs

The House of Habsburg is heavily involved in charitable work: Emperor Rudolf II speaks as easily with a homeless man as he does a visiting head of state, and all royals *must* include charities in their will. Any notion of institutionalizing protection for the poor and disenfranchised, however, is struck down. If such things were the norm, then how would the Emperor impress God with his humility and piety? The Holy Roman Empress opened Versailles to the public, a limited selection of rooms for them to visit and stand in awe of. Courtiers herald her passing when she is in residence though, hurrying to clear visitors lest Her Majesty unwillingly confront lesser mortals.

The All Night Society follows the same model. Feudal hierarchies are universal, and when the Queen grants her subjects more freedom it's because she is gentle and kind — not because they deserve it. Kindred overwhelmingly choose childer for their noble lineage, and only rarely do they grant the Embrace to someone who is merely clever. Such Embraces are often viewed as a joke ("Eccentric old Pietro brought an inventor into the Night! Such folly!") or with pity ("Poor Pietro was so desperate, he gave the Embrace to an inventor! Such disgrace!"), and either is fuel for decades of gossip.

## Party + Blasphemy

The sovereign rules by divine right: God's chosen on earth to rule and guide lesser people. If they are unjust or cruel, only

God may punish them — any attempt to dethrone a monarch is a direct violation of God's will. In return for this absolution, the sovereigns protect the church. Religion is not optional in Europe. Citizens have a choice of Christian beliefs, but they *must* pick one. Other faiths brought in by immigrant families are accepted if kept indoors, but such practices are beneath civilized folk. Atheism is unheard of, a fictional notion best kept to oneself — foreign heretics may worship the wrong god, but that is still better than worshipping none at all.

If a Kindred had any doubts about the existence of God during her life, the Embrace washed that away. She *knows* firsthand the supernal is real, as tangible as this book or that pen, so souls and God must be, too. Certainty does not bring comfort though. Souls are real, but does she still have hers? Was she damned for her mortal sins, and is this half-life a portal to hell? Is it limbo, which traps those too weak to be good, and too cowardly to be truly bad? Or was she given more time, a chance to gain absolution and entry into heaven upon her true death? These questions consume the Kindred, cast her Requiem into doubt and leave her in despair.

### *Blood is Divine*

Nobility needs an excuse: a reason why they hold all the power, why wealth flows to the top. How convenient for them, that God Himself supports them. Europe's monarchs rule by divine right, and that divinity passes on through blood. A destitute prince, forced to flee his country in a shipping crate, is still a prince. Penniless and alone on a foreign shore, he may marry the heir to the throne by virtue of this lineage. Vampires, whose survival relies on blood, take the power of it to heart. Only the Queen of the Night may drink from the Queen of England; only she stands close enough to hell to partake of the blood of heaven. An upstart fledgling feeding above her station is quick to get smacked down, or left for the sun, yet so many do — the blood of princes is to die for.

### *Inspirational Media*

Carmilla (Sheridan Le Fanu), *The Crown*, *Downton Abbey*

### *A World of Houses*

In designing this game, take any European country and imagine it as an absolute rule-by-divine-right monarchy. Reach back in history for your favorite noble house — who's to say the crown didn't pass from Elizabeth I to her cousin, and the Tudors still rule England? Create your own world or use one of the courts detailed below.

### *Holy Roman Empire: House Bonaparte*

God abhors a vacuum, and more so a blasphemous one. After the French rose up and slew their noble king Louis XVI, the country suffered only briefly under the incompetent and bloody

rule of the République. While the rule of Emperor Napoleon I was fraught with risk, the people came to accept their proper place again under the rule of his son, Napoleon II. That Napoleon II was begotten of a French monarch and his Austrian wife, like Marie-Antoinette, was an auspicious sign.

House Bonaparte, once home to generals and statesmen, has since grown rich and fat. The current Emperor named himself Napoleon the Wise, as numerical values became insignificant after two score Napoleons. A shrewd politician, he leans heavily on the Vatican to keep his house ascendant. The Invictus support Bonaparte as one of the oldest and most stable Houses. Stability, after all, is good for keeping secrets. Consul Radagast, however, is displeased with how complacent the house has grown, believing military discipline to be a far superior attitude. Efforts to whip the Emperor and his heirs into shape have all failed, and Radagast believes another, so far unidentified, force opposes him. He is right, too, for an ancient Kindred slumbers deep under Rome, dreaming of decadence and the end of kingdoms.

### *Empire of Austria-Hungary: House Habsburg*

The House of Habsburg is perhaps the most adaptive monarchy in Europe. It rose to prominence through a series of strategic marriages, ruling from Switzerland to Spain and claiming the title of Holy Roman Empire. Envious neighbors cut at the Empire until only Austria and Hungary remained. Nearly losing Hungary in a nationalist uprising, the house teetered on collapse until the populist charm of Empress Elizabeth pulled the Hungarians back in line. The house was dealt another blow in the assassination of Emperor Franz Ferdinand I, causing it to side with Kaiser Wilhelm in the Great War that followed. When the ashes from the war cleared, the House of Habsburg navigated the aftermath with its usual charm to emerge unscathed.

The House of Habsburg survives on the support of its citizenry. Emperor Rudolph II is universally beloved, and if foreign powers claim the House's charity is a shield, carefully cultivated after Empress Elizabeth's popularity saved the Austian-Hungarian alliance, the people of the Empire ignore them. Such sweetness is irresistible to the Lancea et Sanctum, who flock to the court. Cardinal Maxima has taken the Emperor and Empress themselves under her wing, nightly testing the purity of their hearts. The Cardinal believes herself closer to redemption if she drinks from them after they've been true, though she finds the ruling couple tastes so much sweeter when they succumb to temptation.

### *Kaiserreich of Germany and Prussia: House Hohenzollern*

Powerful neighbors batted Germany around as a prize to be won for centuries. Finally, the Holy Roman Emperor and the Emperor of Austria-Hungary agreed *no one* should have the contentious piece of land. Or at least, no one that mattered. Instead, Germany would become its own empire. They expected the new Kaiserreich

to remain small and insignificant, but they created a monster. Kaiser Wilhelm I poured all his efforts into propaganda: tales, songs, and a made-up history of a united German ancestry. The people gobbled it up. By the time his son Wilhelm II ascended the throne, he did what all nationalists eventually do — he went to war. The Great War pulled Europe into the most destructive war the continent had ever seen. New guns and advances in firepower far outstripped any armies' mobility, and the main tactic became to dig in and lay low. By the time the war was over, Europe was filled with dead bodies and trenches.

For all its aggression, the Kaiserreich lost the war it started. The victors stripped down Germany's territories, claiming for themselves any land that might be valuable in rebuilding their war-torn kingdoms. The House of Hohenzollern now survives on familial relations to other monarchies, throwing itself on their mercy. Kaiserin Sofie struggles against her smallness, pride chafing as she lives on scraps. She has secretly given orders for her scientists to develop a new weapon, one that will harness the power of the atoms. The Leninates draw to her court, watching in awe as the mortals try to steal the power of God. If Germany gets its nuclear bomb, Empress Sofie will plunge Europe into a second Great War, and the Leninates will laugh and laugh as the All Night Society sees its precious houses reduced to ashes.

## *Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland: House Stuart*

King Edward VIII sided with Germany during the Great War. Not bravely by leading the vanguard of war to the other kingdoms. Not openly by claiming his alliance to Kaiser Wilhelm; rather, he chose the coward's way, secretly supplying Wilhelm with money and information. The outrage when he was found out toppled his reign. Edward's brother and heir, King George VI, renounced all ties to Germany when he ascended the throne, but the outrage did not die. Terrified that rage would, finally, lead to revolution, nobles across Europe scrambled to find the last living heir to the House of Stuart: a lesser cousin of Queen Anne. The scion of Stuart was crowned with much fanfare and acclamation, and revolution barely avoided.

The youngest of Europe's sovereigns, Queen Anne II is acutely aware her father only became king through the machinations of the other houses. House Stuart, once home to famed rulers as Queen Mary of Scotland and Queen Anne, has no power of its own. Determined to gain leverage, however, the young queen turns to older gods. England had already experienced a great revival of occultism under Queen Victoria, and the witches have truly crawled out of the dark under Anne. Protected by distance, an admittedly small ocean, and the Anglican Church, the Circle of the Crone is making its first forays into a major European house.

## *The Russian Empire: House Romanov*

The Russian Empire boasts the greatest landmass and the largest army in Europe. No wonder then, that Kaiser Wilhelm

II consorted with the Czar's enemy, the Bolshevik Lenin, to cripple Russia. After the Great War, when both the Kaiser and Lenin were defeated, the Russian Crown fell to Maria Romanov, a traumatized nineteen-year-old who had watched as revolutionaries shot and killed her family. She never recovered, and Maria's reign was one of paranoia and isolationism — traits she passed on to her children and grandchildren.

Russia's isolation from Europe has offered a cloak to the Dragons, who whisper in Czarina Nikola's ear. They seek power, as all Dragons do, but believe they need Russia specifically. Dragon Lines run through the land, more than anywhere else, forming large and complex knots that grant transcendence of God's curse. If the Dragons must battle other foul beasts for these Nests, then so be it. The Dragons are led by Grigori, an elder who alternately claims to be Nosferatu and Mekhet, then boasts to be older than either of those clans. Equally charismatic and distrustful, he keeps his enemies close and his students closer. He has no friends.

## *Playing Nobility*

The *Lancea et Sanctum* may not be universally ascendant, but they are universally present. Every significant noble family has its own Spear, lurking in the dark with myriad nightmarish temptations. Every court gathering of Kindred has a priest, and attending Mass is not optional. If Christianity is effectively Europe's state religion, then so is the *Testament of Longinus* for Kindred. The Sanctified fall in two divides: the Russian Orthodox and Protestants, who cling to a strict and conservative view of the Testament, and the Vaticines who take the more cerebral approach of viewing Longinus as the imperfect vessel for a perfect message (which is to say, he may have gotten things wrong). Former Anglicans make poor Sanctified, due to the permissive nature of their mortal church, rarely rising above the rank of laymen.

Europe's *Invictus* claim they have no dog in the fight. They protect the Masquerade and use mortal tools of power to do this. If those tools lie in the hands of the aristocracy, that's fine. If the revolution breaks out tomorrow, and they must take up tools of the peasantry, they can do that, too. The First Estate protects the secret, and everything else is noise. They are lying. The Invictus have used the trappings of monarchy for so long they couldn't survive without it. There's a reason they, of all the covenants, assume the same hierarchy and titles. In order to keep the secret, they need the monarchies in place.

The *Circle of the Crone* and *Ordo Dracul* do not exist. No one here worships another god than Him, and no one would dare rebuke His curse. No one is meeting secretly under the premise of book clubs and knitting circles, and certainly not right under the noses of the Sanctified. They are not using secret symbols and messages, passed on by nomadic elders who act as both recruiter and mentor. They are not walking uncharted paths, leaving their mortal faith behind with every step, or spitting in the eye of God. They do not exist. So, there's nothing to see here — move along.

The *Leninates (Carthian Order)* are a failed experiment. They tried in France. They tried in Hungary. They tried in Russia,

renaming themselves when that revolution came so close. They failed every time. If any Leninites remain in Europe's courts, they keep quiet. More so than the Crones and Dragons, the Firebrands are enemies of the Crown. They are given no quarter when they are found out; not given the mercy of a quick death. The Leninites' last hope lies with the success of Kaiserin Sofie, and that is a longshot.

**Venture** and **Daeva** are excellently suited to the *Crown Game*. They like intrigue and power, or at least they are good at it. It's rare to see a Kindred court that doesn't have a Lord or Succubus in a high, if not the highest, position of power. **Nosferatu** and **Mekhet** might not relish the trappings of nobility much, but they are experts at watching and waiting. They ferret out all the

secrets best kept hidden, leveraging them for power. **Gangrel** serve as couriers for both royal houses and Kindred covenants alike, traveling quickly and unseen across borders, or as elite guardians to the crown family.

Kindred cultivate lineages as carefully as royalty does, and the **Dynasty Membership** Merit carries great weight. **Attachés** are common for cumbersome tasks that require confidentiality, such as maintaining email accounts. All major courts have an **Anointed** Bishop. While feeding follows a strict hierarchy, every vampire with his own **Herd**, occasionally an **Enticing** Kindred seduces mortals above his station. The **Etiquette** Merit is a must for any Kindred dealing with nobility.

# The End of the World

*Of all the ways the world could have ended, this was the absolute fucking worst. Not some small-fingered vulgarian mashing the nuclear button, not Tesla finally creating Skynet, but the accidental release of a motherfucking bio weapon. Guess it's fitting: the end of the world, a fucking human error. That shit'd be funny if the disease didn't linger in the blood, poisoning us one motherfucking bite at a time. It's the absolute fucking worst.*

— Red-Eyed Jack, Gangrel nomad

## Themes

Welcome to the end of the world. Well, that's not entirely accurate. Welcome to the end of the world as we know it, of humanity ascendant, of Snapchat and online shopping. The *world* is still here. Most of the animals survived: wildlife not dependent on humans, and kept animals released by activists in the dying days. Nature is conquering brick and stone at an alarming pace and turning cities into jungles. Most of the cities are doing fine, save for a few exploded power plants. The future holds more of those catastrophic failures, but for now most fail-safes are still working — it's only been two years. Two years of deadly, virulent disease carried through air and blood to strike down humankind. Only a handful survived, granted reprieve by the grace of God or natural immunity.

*The End of the World* is a game stripped of niceties and pretenses. Raw power will seize the night, and 'friends' are only good to serve as a buffer against the storm. Mysticism is on the rise, as people and vampires alike search for a 'better' god than the one which clearly abandoned them. Covenants have lost their power, leaving Kindred to make new alliances. The only social constant that remains is the need for Touchstones — so few mortals survived that finding one to anchor you, that single light in the darkness, becomes more important than ever. *The End of the World* ramps personal horror up to 11: With no one to keep you in check, how far will you go to survive — and can you do it with your soul intact?

## Requiem + Masquerade

Humanity has been decimated. Phone lines, the internet, and mass media are all dead. No one's coming with pitch forks. There's no army waiting with flame throwers. Surviving doomsday preppers and militias have bite, but a strong vampire could take them. The question is: *should she?* The apocalypse left her with so few Touchstones. If she renounces what's left of her humanity, release her inner monster, only the pull of torpor remains. Keeping the Masquerade has become part of her Requiem, existing among humanity vital to survival. For every Kindred openly leading a blood cult, there are more trying to live a human life.

## The Ascendancy of Hunters

The end of the world also gave rise to hunters. Perhaps it's because conspiracy theorists, preparing for the end of the world since Y2K, survived in disproportionate numbers. Maybe it's because with the lights out, humans have become acutely aware of things that lurk in the dark, or it's God trying to make up for this mess by preparing people for the dangers they still face. Hunters organize in cells armed to the teeth, and they *travel*. They interrogate mortals and vampire nomads alike, scouring broadband radio for strange broadcasts, and go to places where the supernal flaunts its power — and then they fuck up its shit.

## *Old + New*

Nothing is old. Everything is new. Except for that one elder who remembers when humankind was spread thin and travel was done on foot, everyone's working from scratch. Save for a few generators, the power's gone out. Gasoline is the most valuable substance in the world – give it a few more years, and riding horseback will be the new modern. Even feeding is new; not the biting part but *finding* prey. Cities aren't completely empty – people flock to what they know – but survivors huddle together. It's hard to grab someone unseen.

## *Piety + Blasphemy*

Humanity finally did it – they wiped themselves out. It happened quickly, too, global air travel rendering borders a paper tiger. By the time the world's governments caught on, the disease had already passed its tipping point. Between speed and panic, no one really knows *what happened*. Supercharged smallpox accidentally leaked from a secret lab in Russia. North Korea released the virus as a weapon, some new concoction of Spanish Flu. The Rapture came to take the devout to Heaven. Vampires are as clueless as any survivor. Beyond that, the apocalypse has the Sanctified questioning their faith. If the apocalypse is manmade, does the world still need God? Vampires proved largely immune: Does that mean they were granted absolution, or merely that heaven doesn't care enough to properly kill them? Or maybe humans are God now, for they have truly become the destroyer of worlds.

## *Doomsday Cults*

They may be a little late to the party, but doomsday cults are popping up left and right. Most of them are human. Some are led by vampires, from Carthians using their magnetic pull to their own end, to Sanctified truly believing what they preach. Other monsters lead a few rare ones. All of them carry the same message: no one *survived*. The people still walking, those precious few with immunity, are already dead. Nuclear plants, and biological and weapons facilities, need people to run checks, push buttons, and maintain fail-safe systems. Eventually they'll malfunction and start a cascade reaction. The real end is still coming.

## *Inspirational Media*

*The Passage* (Justin Cronin), *The Walking Dead*, *Van Helsing* (Netflix Original)

## *A World of Ashes*

The apocalypse is universal in its destruction, but the particulars of the aftermath vary widely. North America overflows with guns and bullets, and militias quickly form xenophobic enclaves. Survivors in Singapore huddle in skyscrapers that are now as massive as they are empty, forming a unique hierarchy

based on closeness to the sky. Australian Aborigines find the skills of their elders, long derided by white neighbors, finally let them reclaim their land. Europeans abandon their cities to form rural enclaves, trying to relearn how to keep cattle and tend crops without bio-industrial equipment. The best way for a Storyteller to pick an in-game location for her campaign is in reverse. Imagine your post-apocalyptic landscape. Do groups of survivors carry dozens of guns among them? Are they armed with wood-chopping axes and makeshift spears? Do they wander a vast, arid country scape, or are they holed up in empty cities? Once you have your setting, simply pick a location that matches. Or, don't pinpoint a location at all – borders are already meaningless, and names on maps will soon be, too.

## *Blood is Poison*

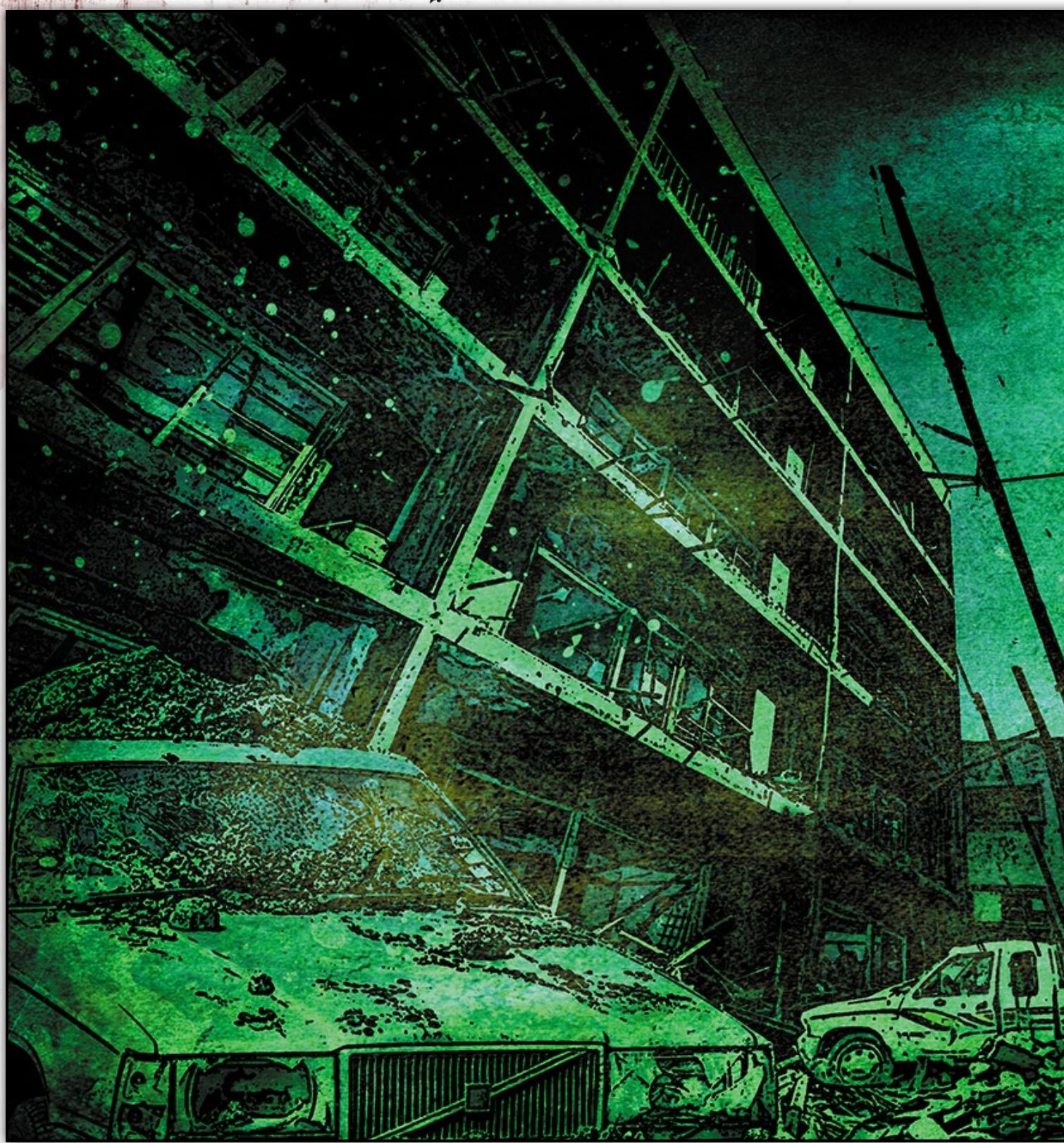
The virus that eradicated mankind is still active. It drifts in molecules on the air, rising into the clouds to fall as rain and sink into the earth. Natural immunity graced the survivors, and they'd better pray that passes to their children. Humans are not the only ones at risk though. The vampire may already be dead, but the virus still infects him through stolen blood. One meal is harmless, and the next causes boils to break out over his body. Another vessel might leave him with seizures, or prophetic day-mares. The effects are erratic, caused in equal parts by the disease, the vessel's unique mental and physical state, and the vampire's curse. This is his weakness, compelling him to ask the same question as human survivors: How long will I last?

## *Playing the End*

Some vampires still identify as Invictus, or Spear, or Carthian, but what does that mean? If you can't communicate with the Carthians two cities over, and it's just you and your one mate, are you still a covenant? The 'All Night Society' no longer means anything either. Hardly anyone uses the moniker *Kindred* anymore, save as a bitter, sarcastic utterance or as an almost-endearingly naive plea for kinship in the final nights.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the **Sanctified** has adapted best to the apocalypse. See, the Spear says, God is real, and this is His judgment. He offers answers where other covenants have only questions, and his cult swells. The Bishop reveals himself openly as a demon, promising a road to heaven through hell: a purification of pain and despair to strip a person of all foulness, so they may finally know God. Having nothing left to lose, mortals and Kindred flock to him.

The **Carthian** also does well for herself. The Firebrand has always been quick to shake things up, using her adaptability to gain an edge over other vampires. She likes new inventions, new mortal solutions to ancient problems. Well this time the invention was extinction and that's an interesting twist, but it's one she can work with. She carefully picks a surviving community, fortifying it with Carthian Law to assimilate its neighbors. It's a process, but she is building an impressive herd.



Dancing at the end of the world, the **Crone** is jubilant. Civilization as he saw it was rotten: a corrupt system propped up by a patriarchal church. Now all of that is gone, and the old

Gods may rise again. He calls to Baba Yaga and Kálii to join him, reveling in an orgy of blood. He teaches the strong to thrive in this new world and eats the weak. Who cares if the party



isn't gonna last, or if a true end is still coming – his enemies have finally gotten theirs, and the Crone relishes every moment.

The **Dragon** was uniquely suited to the apocalypse. She can survive a drought of blood, and she's never much cared for mortal society anyway. The nearest herd being two nights away means the Dragon must abandon her lair and laboratory, though. She can't share her work with peers without long-distance communication, and loneliness is no longer so sweet now that it's the *only* option before her.

If your sole purpose is to keep a secret, and no one's around to tell it anymore – does that mean you've won? The **Invictus**, for the first time since his Embrace, isn't sure. His sire already abandoned the First Estate: won or lost, her work is clearly done. He, remaining true, has become nomadic instead. He seeks out vampires who flaunt their nature and removes them. It may not make a difference anymore, but he's devoted his nights to keeping the secret, and *keep it* he will.

Looked down on by his more civilized cousins, the **Gangrel** was proved right in the end. He traverses the distance between cities easily, moving from herd to herd. The earth itself guards him while he sleeps. The apocalypse wasn't the world he was born into, but it is the world he was made for.

The **Venture** always struggled to retain her Touchstones, and the end of humanity has not been kind. Narrowly resisting torpor, she now relies heavily on feral animals as both servants and prey.

The **Mehket** sinks into despair and deeper idiosyncrasies, collecting mirror shards and throwing salt over his shoulder. Most secrets are worthless now: Who cares if the accountant embezzled money, if neither her boss nor the company exist anymore. When he does find a mortal who holds an interesting secret, the Shadow follows her. He cares less for the secret itself now, instead studying its effect on the keeper.

The **Daeva** jealously guards the mortals around her. She needs them for their blood and companionship, and in return she'll be the radiant star that gives them purpose. If all mortals do now is worship her, at least it's a life well spent.

The **Nosferatu** has retreated into himself. He has lost his Touchstones, and acquiring new ones is so hard. Not that he cares anymore. Best to drag his carcass down into the bowels of the earth and rest, sleep until a new world rises from the ashes. Except sleep also holds defeat, and that is beneath his pride. So instead the Haunt pulls himself up, reluctantly studying mortals until he finds one to care about again.

Relying on each other for survival, most coteries are extremely close and benefit from the **Close Family**, **Lineage**, or **The Mother-Daughter Bond** Merits. Poisoned blood leaves a Shadow with permanent **Dream Visions**, while a Sanctified, the last of her city's covenant, has taken on the sacred role of **Lorekeeper**. Another surviving Kindred spontaneously developed an **Unnatural Affinity** that lets him feed on hardier prey than mortals. The **Touchstone** Merit is not available at character creation – there are simply too few people left – though it can be purchased through roleplay.

# Night Without End

Rebellion? Hardly. A few frontier outposts taken by scruffy malcontents barely qualifies as a disturbance. All the same, send in the nearest Protectorate garrison and attach a unit of Blood Centurions for good measure. Take some for questioning – if this is some ploy by the Confederation, we need to know about it. What's that? The rest? Well, I believe those outposts just volunteered to pay their tax.

Let us collect.

— Dame-Commander Savia nav Obol, Damocles Station

## Themes

The Earth is a memory, and with it the time when humanity didn't know the monsters that walked among them. Early in the diaspora, as humanity charted the Waylanes and found habitable planets to replace the home it lost, the Kindred came to a realization – they were uniquely suited to the stars. Ships and stations were enclosed against solar radiation, fire was all but unknown due to strict safety protocols, and the afflictions that troubled mortals during long periods in space such as radiation exposure or bone-density loss didn't trouble the Kindred. They could even enter their own form of suspended animation for long voyages between worlds.

Rather than surviving like rats down in the holds, eking out a meagre existence, the Kindred could be lords of the endless night between the stars. Over time, they assumed total control of the spacefaring industries that linked the struggling colonies, along with associated properties such as orbital stations, ship docks, and communications arrays. At first, they moved behind a screen of mortal pawns, but in time they abandoned even this pretense and openly asserted their true nature. Humanity had a choice: Accept their Kindred overlords, or face isolation and oblivion as rebellious colonies were cut off from the human race.

Staring extinction in the face, humanity submitted.

In the centuries since then, the Kindred have come to control not just the spacefaring industries but also the most powerful corporate, political, and religious entities as well. Ghouls and dhampirs act as planet-side agents and liaisons with human populations, while the Kindred use their interstellar empires to carry out their ancient wars and intrigue across the New Terran Dominion. With eternity to plan, an ever-expanding list of star systems to conquer, and whole worlds of humans willingly sustaining them, vampires are masters of all they survey ... if they can keep from burning it all down themselves. After all, sometimes getting everything you ever wanted is the greatest curse.

## Requiem + Masquerade

The Kindred of the New Terran Dominion enjoy a paradoxical existence – thanks to their stranglehold on the corporations and political entities that drive society, they need not hide their nature as they once did. At the same time, even these tremendous advantages might not suffice to save them from the collective wrath of humanity if they didn't abide by certain rules. From limiting their numbers to feeding restrictions that deem it illegal to simply grab a human and feed, the Kindred take care to balance their immense power with at least the appearance of restraint. And when restraint fails, when the Beast rears its head for all to see, they ensure that either the offender or the witnesses do not remain to cause further harm to their reputation.

Although there is little Masquerade as such, that isn't to say that mortals are consumed by thinking of the Kindred either. Life for most of the mortals in the NTD is about what one might expect for colonist populations that are several generations into a vast expansion. While some of the oldest settlements and orbital stations have grown and developed sophisticated, urbane cultures, a great deal of humanity is still busy with the daily tasks required for survival on the frontier – farming, mining, manufacturing essential goods and so on. They've heard stories and seen vids about the sunless lords that rule them from above, maybe seen a dhampir functionary in their local city center or even caught a glimpse of a visiting Kindred emissary at some planetary function. But most of the time they have more pressing concerns than thinking about the undying creatures that rule them. So, they simply ... don't.

## The Tax

One of the reasons the Kindred have been able to maintain their grip on the Dominion for so long is that they have an ingenious system that benefits both themselves and the human colonies they rule. Criminals, dissidents, and other undesirables as determined by local law are sent to the planetary embassies and orbiting bases of the Kindred, where sophisticated technology

and supernatural conditioning ensures they remain useful *Vitae* sources for prolonged periods of time. Though it has a variety of legal names throughout the NTD, most simply call it the Tax, and by its nature it weeds out troublemakers and ensures rebellion rarely gets much of a foothold on any colony. At this point it's hardly even controversial — after all, if you don't want to be Taxed, just follow the rules and you've got nothing to worry about. Right?

## *Old + New*

One thing that the Kindred have to offer a dispossessed humanity are real links to its storied past. There are still some among vampire ranks who walked the Earth before its fall, and while their memories are fragmented and dreamlike, scraps of the storied past from those who lived it are hungrily devoured by a population that misses its now mythic planet of origin. Even those Kindred who never knew the Earth often play up their connection to the past by dressing in outdated styles or displaying curios from the homeworld, to better cement the impression that humanity's overlords are eternal and constant.

Which isn't to say that the Kindred have let the innovations of the past several centuries pass them by. As befits the space-opera genre, technology in *Night Without End* follows the general rule of "if it suits the story, is at least borderline science-y, and the Storyteller approves, then go ahead." From faster-than-light travel and vast orbital stations with full artificial gravity to rapid terraforming and sophisticated personal weaponry, fleets of lumbering capitol ships surrounded by swarms of fighters, to herds of strange native animals lumbering past outposts perched on stilts above alien landscapes, this is a far future. While science has yet to conquer some things such as teleportation or human immortality, for the most part the sky is the limit, and what is realistic takes a backseat to what is dramatic, epic, and exciting.

## *The Serum*

Though better adapted than humans, the Kindred have not gone unchanged by their time in space. One curious change to the Curse is that Kindred can no longer make more of their own kind as easily as they once did. Simply draining a human, feeding them *Vitae* and focusing one's will on the act is insufficient. Humans require regular infusions of a serum made from their prospective sire's blood as preparation for the transition. Exact times vary, but it is at least a number of years equal to 11 minus the sire's Blood Potency and can sometimes take even longer for reasons the Kindred don't understand. This extended delay in creating new Kindred is one of the few balancing factors skewed in humanity's favor, and all prospective Kindred are carefully groomed and vetted to ensure they are worth the extended investment.

## *Inspirational Media*

*Dune*, *The Expanse*, *The Collapsing Empire*

## *Lights in the Dark*

*Night Without End* takes place in a distant, immense, space-opera future where the New Terran Dominion spans scores of worlds across dozens of star systems, all linked by hyperspatial routes known as Waylanes. Thanks to high technology and generations of perseverance, the setting may reflect all manner of environments, from floating cities in the clouds of gas giants to slowly spinning orbital luxury platforms to remote settlements on the wild frontier of any type of landscape imaginable. While the Kindred typically prefer their orbiting homes, safe from sunlight and fire and human insurrection, all manner of events may call them down to the surface, from overseeing a new business venture to asserting control over a wayward local government.

A few basic setting elements are offered below to help jumpstart a *Night Without End* story, but there is literally no limit to what sort of worlds and locations can be explored in this setting.

## *Obol*

Relatively green and hospitable to humanity, if possessed of slightly elevated gravity thanks to its rich metal deposits, Obol would be an unremarkable world of the New Terran Dominion were it not for a few significant factors. Its prolific mining operations are one, of course, but its juxtaposition at the convergence of several important Waylanes makes it a desirable commercial layover for traders from a number of settled systems. Not one of the oldest settled systems but not part of the frontier, Obol is home to a number of corporate and religious outlets and hotly contested by several factions. The Invictus Protectorate arrived first and still has the most entrenched power structures, but age and intrigue have weakened its grip, and now other forces are circling.

## *Damocles Station*

Damocles Station is one of the grandest orbital stations in the Dominion. It has been extensively overhauled and built upon over the centuries; while some original sections remain as museum pieces, the rest represent the cutting edge in luxury orbital technology. It has artificial gravity, spacious rooms and corridors, artificial day/night cycles with carefully simulated (though harmless) "sunlight," and even a few parks with greenery and running water. A few carefully screened humans make their homes on the station, primarily political liaisons and corporate representatives of one kind or another, but the structure is otherwise unmistakably designed for the Kindred in general and the Protectorate in particular. Its sheer size makes it impossible to completely monitor, however, and other factions are slowly setting up their own safe houses and smuggling vectors.

## *Memphis Valley*

Obol's largest planetary settlement is rapidly outgrowing the humble river valley in which it originated, a multi-level city

of towers, hillside habitations, and innumerable bridges and flyways soaring above the two mighty rivers that carved the valley. It boasts corporate offices, temples, militia barracks, shops, and entertainments that draw colonists from all over Obol. While the corporate areas and nicer neighborhoods have their own armed patrols, the rougher parts of town are left to fend for themselves, giving the city a frontier feel in contrast to its cosmopolitan aspirations. Not that the gentrified sections are any less dangerous, given the incessant political, corporate, and religious intrigue. They're just a lot more likely to drive you to end your own life than do it for you.

## *The Stygian Stones*

An unusual series of monolithic standing stones outside Memphis Valley that were not shaped by humans, but seem just a bit too regular and perfectly placed to be entirely natural, the Stygian Stones attract not just human researchers but also a growing number of Crone Cultists and associated believers. Whether they were the work of alien hands, a skilled and secretive group of early settlers, or simply some yet-unknown natural phenomenon remains the subject of much speculation. Obol Mineral Concern laying claim to the site prompted a sharp backlash from the local population, and tensions surrounding the site are rising.

## *Olympian Orbital Mechanics*

Although not the only corporation devoted to the spacefaring industry, Olympian is far and away the largest, a true megacorporation with offices in just about every settled star system. The only things that have kept it from a complete monopoly are generations of Kindred fighting over control of the vast empire, as well as a calculated willingness to give humanity the illusion of real choice to avoid more determined resistance. Olympian's trademark black circle and white starburst is perhaps the most recognized symbol in human history, and its quality is matched only by its ruthlessness. One of the corporation's largest starship construction and repair facilities is located above Obol, to take advantage of its abundant metal supply, and whatever chaos is coming to the system will surely involve that valuable property.

## *The Kindred of the Dominion*

Although The Invictus Protectorate like to project the notion that they are firmly in control of the corporate and political systems of the NTD, that simply isn't the case. They encouraged rapid expansion but as a result could not hold on to their monopolies. The Sunless Lords are still a force to be reckoned with, to be sure, with the largest number of megacorps, colonial governments, and associated militaries under their direct control, but embarrassment from the surprise Unmasking still rankles them. Some still maintain a mortal screen and dismiss tales of vampires, though it's a failing pretense at best. They are

not shy about using military force when political and economic maneuvering fails, however, and prefer overwhelming displays of power that cow any hopes of future resistance. The Protectorate may not control everything, but the oldest systems are firmly in their grasp, and other groups check their strategies carefully before engaging them.

Predictably enough, **The Carthian Confederation** represents the single largest competition to the Invictus in the realms of business and politics, having made smart moves to entrench themselves in frontier territory early on. They were the driving force behind the Unmasking, and have done their best to keep the Invictus off balance ever since. They position themselves as a more progressive force compared to the archaic notions of the Invictus, though they don't seem to have a problem enforcing their own versions of the Tax. The Insurgents are especially big in the weapons and agricultural industries, which has proven useful in warding off the Protectorate – when your side has a solid pipeline of weapons and supplies, you can make even a minor takeover a costly affair.

Although it commands massive resources of its own, particularly in the fields of medical science and geoengineering, the **Dracul Research Consortium** is still notably smaller than the Protectorate and the Confederation and thus prefers to stay neutral whenever possible. They make no secret of offering research assistance to anyone who pays their price and more than once have supplied both sides of a conflict with their latest prototypes. The Consortium pioneered the technologies that allow efficient, long-term Vitae extraction from Tax victims, as well as ghoul serums and dhampir treatments that have improved the efficiency of the previously unstable servants. Rumors continue to dog them about cruel and bizarre experiments conducted on humans and Kindred alike, but so long as they keep the advancements coming, no one is inclined to look too closely at their methods.

The **Church of the Endless Night** is probably the most divergent faction compared to its origins on Earth; the Sanctified were forced to make massive changes to reflect the realities of the exodus and early colonization. However, as the Kindred adapted, and humanity expanded, the Church crafted a new dogma, one that stressed unity among the far-flung worlds of the Dominion... and obedience to the undying masters that rule them. According to the new doctrines, the Kindred are the farseeing architects with a vision for an eternal empire, elevation to their ranks a gift beyond price, and it is humanity's natural role to serve them in ensuring that no more worlds are lost to the endless night. The Church is the state religion across the Protectorate and in many Carthian systems as well, and wields considerable power through its endless ranks of Kindred and human worshippers.

The **Crone Cult** is the only covenant that does not lay claim to one of the titanic corporate, military, or political entities that govern the New Terran Dominion. They control a scattered handful of smaller organizations, but nothing close to the level of the other covenants. Alone among the factions of the Kindred, Acolytes have focused on planetary life on the new colony worlds, abandoning space travel and living in orbital stations as abhorrent

and unnatural. The Cult now exerts authority primarily through small heretical temples and native cults on every world, offering bloody, wild, and intimate rites to contrast the bloodless doctrine and dogma of the Church.

Although it might seem that the **Venture** would be the first to retreat to orbital sanctuaries and plot long-term strategy, they are frequently called upon to be the stick to the **Daeva**'s carrot. Humans whose positions require dealing with their Kindred masters directly know that if a Serpent arrives, the organization is still at least nominally "playing nice." If a Lord arrives, then you have a decision to make – be ready to sit down and do as you're told or stand and fight with everything you have. No other options exist.

Predictably enough in an interstellar civilization teeming with intrigue, **Mekhet** have only expanded their niche when it comes

to espionage. If a corporation is up to something underhanded, a planet's secret police are coordinating dissident sweeps for the next Tax payment, or a black ops team is flying dark en route to sabotage a rival orbital station, chances are good a Shadow set it up, if they're not actually along to make sure it goes as planned.

When it comes to planetside activities, the **Nosferatu** handle urban or orbital environments, while the **Gangrel** typically take point out on the frontier. The Haunts have demonstrated a talent for running the teams of ghouls and dhampirs who comprise the "boots on the ground" component of most Kindred operations. The Savages are valued as solo operators for their adaptive capabilities. The fact they are "relegated" to planetary activity more often has not escaped either clan's notice, but it also gives them inroads into areas their fellow Kindred often miss, so the rewards are well worth the supposed second-class work.

# Rain Falls

*What the hell you on about, 'the meaning of your existence?' It ain't got no meaning, nothing's got meaning. You go on regardless, you turd. If you don't, there's a long line o' licks waiting to take your place. A chain of Princes eager to sup on your blood. A gathering of owls keen to suck the marrow from your bones. So, you quit your whining, pick yourself up, and damn-well keep going.*

— Maria Lion, Daeva Firebrand

## Themes

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was a middling president, and that's putting it generously. His administration was bogged down by a string of self-inflicted scandals by a womanizing president. Kennedy's ties to the mob didn't help any either, giving rise to a new golden age of organized crime. If we're being charitable, he did pull the USA out of Vietnam, ending both the war and the Flower Power movement back home. He passed the Civil Rights act in 1964, at the end of his first term, before going on to a second term that was even more mediocre. Watching the promise of the handsome young politician wink out of existence, America lost its idealism and drive. Capitalism thrived as it always does, corporations and criminal enterprises mingled until there was no discernible difference, and everyone else lost.

*Rain Falls* is an alternate-history noir setting for Vampire the Requiem. It's a game about getting ahead in a world stacked against you, where oppression is a feature rather than a flaw. This setting revolves around the hierarchy of power, how it keeps vampires down and how they must still climb that ladder no matter how much they hate it. More than any Requiem game,

*Rain Falls* also relies on atmosphere: *noir* is a visual style evoking dark and dreary nights, as much as a world filled with down on their luck, struggling to get ahead characters.

## Requiem + Masquerade

He holds down three jobs while his boss grows fat on his labor. He keeps smiling as he breaks his back for her, because she *likes* his smile. Better keep smiling when she pinches his butt, too. He goes home to pay the scummy landlord – if he made enough money this month – and remembers to pay Silver-Tongue Johnny for his 'protection,' too. If he doesn't, Johnny's goons break his kneecaps. Maybe he gets a new job, a bigger apartment in a nicer neighborhood, with another asshole boss, a slumlord building owner, and silver-tongued criminals. He keeps doing that for the rest of his life. And then, he dies. Except he didn't die, not *fully*, and it turns out death has the same bullshit. His sire telling him to smile while she screws him over. The Prince expecting him to pay through the nose for the privilege of living in her domain. The Sheriff taking a lease on his soul if he *ever* needs her protection. He thought life sucked? He just got an eternity of the same. Try finding meaning in that.

Fortunately, the Masquerade is much easier. Mortals are just as overworked and underpaid as he is. They're too tired to notice he only answers his phone after dark; and if they do, they're too tired to care. The city is overflowing with homeless people, and the police doesn't care if one of them goes missing. A homeless woman could show up dismembered in the dumpster behind the vampire's building and the cops will think it was a mob hit – and the mob pays them well to look the other way. His existence might be meaningless, but at least it's easy to blend in with the herd. So, he gets himself to the club and has a drink; the pretty young thing whose neck he's sucking on offers warmth and a reprieve from the world.

### Sex, Blood, and Jazz

With spiritual purpose and meaning at a premium, the Kindred instead turns to lose herself in material pursuits. Blood remains at the top of her list, and after that she should probably pay off her debts. Or at least some of her debts – just enough to keep on the good side of the mob and Baron. After that, it's time to party. Mortals do the same. The city offers everything from smoky jazz clubs to midnight raves in an abandoned subway station, every single one filled with deliciously warm bodies. It's easy to fall in love for a night, and she does.

### Old + New

Technology has made strides since the days of Kennedy, as has equality. Yet the more things change, the more everything remains the same. People of every gender can work for a boss who pinches their ass when they go home at night. Everyone can be in a snarky marriage rent asunder by unpaid bills. Everyone can work hard, struggle tirelessly, and never get ahead; except for the one-percenters – they live the good life, but that's not us. The Kindred did *die* though, and that gave her a whole bag of tricks to put her ahead of the mortals. Too bad it also propelled her into a goldfish bowl filled with other monsters who've been at this much longer than she.

### Getting Ahead and Getting Even

One of these nights, she'll show them. Topple the whole damn pyramid scheme and watch them burn. It's easy to mistake revenge for justice with the Beast howling in her veins. Easier to no longer care: The deck was stacked long before her Embrace, and no one's gonna fix it, so shouldn't she at least benefit from it? She clawed and bled to get where she is now, and she is not sharing any of it. Meanwhile she becomes as uncaring to the resentful masses beneath her as the former Baron was. Revenge is a snake biting its own tail – no, it's an owl rising from the ashes of the first broken promise, and it is coming for her.

### Pity + Blasphemy

God is dead. No one's entirely sure when that happened, but it did, and He is. Clever people can tell by all the fucked-up shit in the world. When Kennedy got the USA out of Vietnam,

### Sexism is Bad

Sexism is equal-opportunity in *Rain Falls*, but it's still sexism and some players deal with that enough in their real lives. Ask before making sexism a staple of your campaign, and if someone says they'd rather you don't – *don't*. And if they let you, remember: A boss who slaps your ass is a villain.

people thought that was it: the last war, now straight on through to democracy and prosperity for all. Didn't happen. The USA has been bombing the hell out of people all over the world, and nothing changes. So, God's dead. Where does that leave the vampire? Guess that's up to him, but here's a question for him, an ethical dilemma if he will: If he needed the promise of heaven and the threat of hell to act good, was he ever really good? Is that question too hard? Not a problem, he can just go back to the club. Booze, pills, and VIP lounges are the new gods now, and their temple is always open.

### Inspirational Media

Storm Front (Jim Butcher), Mad Men, Moonlight

### A World of Rain

Constant rain clouds the street. It's equally incessant and insidious, inviting people to stay and brave it, but enough to see them thoroughly soaked by the time they arrive at their destination. The streetlights are dim; the city government that pays for them is near broke as wealth flows to the mob. Trash collection is sporadic for the same reason, but tenants can ask their building's protection racket.

*Rain Falls* uses the weather to instill a sense of dreariness. Clear skies are a trap – 'leave your umbrella at home!' – to precede more rain. Rain should be a nuisance: not enough to pack it in, but enough to never let them settle into their own skin for the tap-tap-tapping of droplets on their shoulder. Most importantly, it should be common: The coterie should never question that "of course everyone's inside, it's been raining three nights straight," when in reality, the empty streets and rising fog presage the coming of owls.

No one is *good* in *Rain Falls*. They can't be – the cold sludge of despair twists the vampire until she finds the hard place inside that lets her do *whatever it takes* to get even. When the vampire finally gets her revenge on those who kept her down, it's bittersweet. She defeated the Baron who asked for a majority cut of her nightclub and made her existence miserable. Now she is the Baron and she has to deal with the Duke, and he is also a raging asshole. In fact, it's raging assholes all the way to the top.

She can take them down one at a time, as long she's willing to be an asshole, too.

This cycle of treachery and revenge calls to creatures made of hate and shadow. The Birds of Dis (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 197) spread dark wings against the night, come to claim their own vengeance while sowing paranoia and distrust in the All Night Society. The Strix are not the main enemy in *Rain Falls*, that distinction falls to other vampires, but they are ever-present. When a fledgling disappears, it's *probably* because she offended the Duke and he ordered her execution — at the back of every vampire's mind, however, remains the terror-filled thought that it could also be *them*.

## Playing in the Rain

This a world of **scarcity**, where all power and resources flow to the top while everyone else — including the player characters — fights over scraps. The Storyteller reinforces this by selecting Merits key to the hierarchy of needs, such as **Feeding Grounds**, **Haven**, **Herd**, **Resources**, and **Retainers**, and establishing that for each, the total — combined across all named characters — cannot exceed a preset maximum. If a player wants to invest more dots in **Haven**, she must knock someone else's rating down first. Maybe her character's apartment building is owned by the same slumlord as her rival's, and after his building burns to the ground, hers finally gets that fireproofing she wanted: That character loses **Haven** dots, while she gains them. Perhaps she performs a hostile takeover on his club, effectively raising her own **Feeding Grounds** at the expense of his.

The player selects her character's target, and the Storyteller draws up a connection between the two to potentially sabotage his Merits while elevating her own — then it's up to the character to pursue it. Groups should discuss beforehand whether they're fine with player characters going after each other in this manner, and where the boundaries lie, or if they'd rather play a supportive coterie.

The sanctity of Merits still applies in this system. If a player loses Merit dots, but can't spend them anywhere (for example because he wants to increase his **Herd** and all those dots are taken), he records the dots to spend at a later time.

Covenants are more important than ever *Rain Falls*. Carthian Merits such as **Carthian Pull** and **I Know a Guy**, or the Invictus Merits **Friends in High Places** and **Invested** all grant a little extra room in an otherwise pinched system. The other covenants have caught on, too. One per story, a character can convert half her Covenant Status rating (rounded up) to scarcity Merit dots, which she adds to her own rating. The Storyteller and player work out what this looks like. For example, a Sanctified could gain access to a cult to boost his **Herd** rating. An Invictus may gain a Retainer in city hall. These temporary dots revert back at the end of the story, and do not count towards the setting maximum.



The clans are all equally suited to the rainy nights. **Venture** and **Daeva** stand at the head of mortal enterprises, though one tends to a criminal bent and the other to entertainment. **Nosferatu** and **Mekhet** feast on nightmares and secrets, both of which the city has in plenty. The **Gangrel** sends flocks of ravens, feral cats, and stray dogs to

spy on and attack his enemies. Clan matters far less than covenant, though.

Merits that enhance the character's self-sufficiency are crucial in *Rain Falls: A Cacophony* Savvy Kindred needn't rely on others to tell her what's happening. The Beast itself becomes restless in the tightly packed city, giving rise to **Cutthroat** and **Enticing** Kindred.

# War Drums

*"The battle is about to be won. Beat my war drums. Do not announce my death."*

— Admiral Yi Sun-sin, last words at the Battle of Noryang, 1598

## Themes

Western calendars record the year as 1596. While Shakespeare's actors strut on London stages half a world away, a battered Korea rests momentarily in the eye of a mighty hurricane. An invasion by Japan in 1592 was eventually blunted and turned back with the aid of allies from the Ming dynasty, but Korea suffered mightily, with many thousands dead and vast swathes of countryside burned. For the past several years an uneasy truce has held as China and Japan negotiate, and Korea warily rebuilds. Three empires are poised at a turning point, with hundreds of thousands of mortal lives in the balance and the course of history up for grabs.

*War Drums* is set against the backdrop of these tense, high-stakes negotiations, as the Kindred at court make moves designed to control the destinies of nations while vampires in the countryside struggle to keep everything around them from burning ... or strike the spark themselves. Mortals believe

renewed hostilities to be almost inevitable, but whether or not the Kindred will permit all-out war to resume — and what advantages they will seek for themselves either way — remains very much open to debate.

## Requiem + Masquerade

The Traditions are as binding in *War Drums* as they are in any other time and place. Kindred keep their true natures hidden and dare not create too many of their own kind or find mortals rising against them. Acts that would give rise to a veritable army of witch hunters during peacetime may draw little additional notice during war. When fortresses fall, cities burn, and rivers run red with blood, even normally reserved and cautious Kindred may find it difficult not to let the Beast indulge its desires. After all, if not now, when?

It is also important to note that knowledge of vampires varies widely, often by social class and location. In many poorer rural

## Historical Accuracy?

As with many historical settings, *War Drums* applies artistic license as well as condenses events from actual history in order to bring it into the *Chronicles of Darkness*. For example, *War Drums* is presented chiefly from a Korean point of view; this is not done as a slight to the other nations involved, but because it was the battleground of the conflict. Likewise, the incorporation of vampires and supernatural factions as both architects and agents of the conflict is a natural part of adapting events for *Vampire: The Requiem* chronicles and should not be construed as disrespectful of the actual historical figures who steered these momentous events.

Players who wish to research the Korean setting in more depth, or explore it from Chinese or Japanese perspectives, are all heartily encouraged to avail themselves of the wealth of available scholarly resources surrounding the conflict. These range from firsthand historical accounts by various participants to modern scholarly analyses and can serve as excellent inspiration, as well as provide the grounding and veracity that makes historical games so compelling.

areas ravaged by the war, the local peasants actually know quite a bit about the undead; while many things they hear are useless superstition, the fact remains that there is a great deal of truth buried in those tales, too. Enough, at least, to make the witch hunters dangerous.

Although it might seem the Kindred are severely restricted in this period, there is another side to the prevalence of legends of vampires. Apart from the uniquely open niche occupied by the “night guardians” found at court (see below), even rural vampires can get away with a certain amount of predation because vampires are considered as real as beasts and trees and weather. Savvy Kindred can also make use of local legends to mask their activities as the actions of spirits, witches, or other strange beings, even setting themselves up as entities in need of sacrifices to forestall some dread fate.

### *The Night Guardians*

As the peace talks go on, the existence of the Kindred at court is something of an open secret, or more precisely, an arms race. While open supernatural displays are still out of the question, if having a useful “night guardian” as part of one’s retinue or diplomatic mission means the occasional peasant goes missing, everyone at court politely ignores the guardian’s ... eccentricities. Likewise, a peasant village might overlook the fact that the pale wanderer who just took up residence at the edge of town never goes out before dark, so long as the bandit attacks stop. Which is not to say any of these mortals, noble or common, are precisely happy about these arrangements, but if survival requires keeping devils to counter other devils working against you, then so be it.

### *Old + New*

The Kindred are, in many ways, the truest servants of history, able to strategize in ways that mortals and their firefly lives can only dream of emulating. Though certainly not every vampire seeks to master the course of nations in this fashion, even those who express a distaste for politics or the wheel of ages often find themselves coming around to such a position eventually. Eternity in an unfamiliar land is a frightening notion, after all, and so even the most apolitical Kindred often seize on a particular thing – a place, a style, a philosophy, even a family line – and work to safeguard it from the depredations of fate. War only serves to make those vampires tighten their grip and retreat into tradition as they protect the touchstones of their immortality.

Of course, where there is conflict, there is also opportunity. Old power structures in China are showing signs of weakness, much of Korea is in need of rebuilding, and Japan faces a regime change. Leaders fall in battle or are dismissed in disgrace for their failures, leaving vacancies that ambitious juniors battle to claim. And in an era where entire life stories rest in the memories of a village or perhaps some imperial records, a single blaze or a single massacre can allow anyone to walk away from their old life and become someone – or *something* – totally new.

### **Timeless**

While *War Drums* is presented as a historical setting, it does not necessarily follow the established canon presented in the *Dark Eras* books, and can be viewed a free-standing take on this particular era in Kindred history.

Those who prefer modern to historical games should also note that *War Drums* need not necessarily be set in the past. For example, it could easily be partnered with *Crown Games* to create an overarching setting where the great monarchies of the ancient world have continued essentially intact into the present. With or without that connection, it’s also possible to use *War Drums* so Korea, China, and Japan might find themselves locked in a protracted, possibly Kindred-engineered stalemate that traces its roots all the way back to 1596.

There are many possible ways to utilize *War Drums*, from a historical setting to an alternate present with roots in the past, to a global shift with feudal dynasties still reigning across the world. Storytellers should talk to their players and use whatever approach works best for their chronicle.

### *The Sound of Drums*

As the peace talks falter, a war-weary Korea becomes increasingly tense. This is reflected by what the Kindred refer to colloquially as “the drums,” or how close a situation or even the nation in general is to another explosive conflict. Working a percussion motif into conversation is thus an indirect way of discussing how tense the situation is, but over time the war drums have come to touch the Beast as well. Kindred find it harder to control their Beasts as the tension among nations rises, a slow but inexorable increase in savagery that seems linked to the collective fear and bloodlust of three nations heading toward another savage struggle.

### *Inspirational Media*

*Scholar Who Walks the Night*, *The Admiral*, *Faith*

### *The Empires*

What follows is a brief primer on the state of the three pivotal empires in *War Drums*: their status, their goals for the conflict, and the arc that history will take them (if it plays out as it did in history). Bear in mind that while events took one path, that doesn’t mean the actions of the Kindred can’t change it in your own chronicle; think of it as a springboard for different possible arcs based on the actions of the characters.

If Japan successfully invades Korea or even China, for instance, the entire balance of power in the region would have massive long-term changes, possibly even resulting in Japanese hegemony sweeping most of the continent. Or if the invasion is crushed and the combined forces of China and Korea pursue the fleeing army to the Japanese islands, a very different war would follow. There are countless possible arcs – use what is provided here to start and feel free to improvise afterward.

Deciding whether “regular” history is fated to occur or free to change is something the Storyteller and players should determine early on. Being unable to fundamentally change fate makes excellent fodder for tragic stories, while altering the outcome allows players to forge their own timeline with their triumphs... or their failures.

### *Joseon (Korea)*

Korea is reeling from the invasion. While the invading Japanese were turned back from the northern lands and the navy had great success disrupting their efforts to land more troops and supplies, the land has suffered greatly. The invaders razed farmlands, destroyed entire villages, and massacred thousands in an effort to cow the population, though civilian militias and insurgents known as “righteous armies” arose in response and harried the would-be conquerors. Among the ruling elite, a traditional distaste for warfare resulted in numerous missteps early on, though particularly among the younger generation a hardened corps of commanders is emerging, and the navy has proven its worth time and again. Though it suffers greatly, heroes are emerging as well, the sort of individuals the entire nation can rally around...and the Kindred claim for their schemes.

### *Ming (China)*

Though China remains a mighty force in the region, its attentions are spread thin, with multiple conflicts and crises consuming vast amounts of soldiers and resources. It is hardly a secret that the attack on Korea is part of a greater Japanese plan to invade and subdue China, but that does not always mean harmonious relations between the Ming and their Joseon counterparts. Fairly or not, dispatches from the officers and officials in the field describe abysmal preparedness on the part of their Joseon counterparts, and Ming forces grumble about carrying the brunt of military efforts. Back home, events conspire to bring about the end of the Ming dynasty and the rise of the Qing dynasty to replace it, and so the Chinese Kindred are frequently distracted by scrambling to maintain power as the old dynasty falls or aligning themselves with new power centers arising.

### *Momoyama (Japan)*

For Japan, it is a time of great ambition. Under the leadership of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Japan aims to use this invasion to

conquer not just Korea but China as well, and once those nations have been subdued take other territories from Taiwan to the Philippines. A rising empire eager to exert its power and sensing weakness in the fading Ming dynasty, Japan sees itself as the natural successor in the role of regional superpower and acts with equal parts tactical cunning and ferocious zeal to fulfill that destiny. While history tells that the invasions will fail, albeit after more bloody conflict, the Kindred who sail under the rising sun may yet alter that course, and even if they fail to do so, their place on the world stage will be changed forever.

## *Those Who Walk the Night*

*War Drums* sees the Kindred organized into variations on the standard covenants, the better to reflect the political situation of the setting. While the clans have not fundamentally changed in terms of mechanics, to add unique character to this setting Korean names and nicknames are provided with English phonetic pronunciations. Storytellers should also feel free to utilize Chinese and Japanese variants for clan names and nicknames as well.

The **Immaculate Ministry** is a massive covenant that emulates the form of the sprawling bureaucracies of the time and functionally serves as a sort of combination of the roles of the Invictus and the Lancea et Sanctum in the West. Accordingly, there are two distinct factions within the Ministry – secular members who lean more toward politics, business, and military strategy are known as Magistrates, while those who zealously study religion, philosophy, and public morality are known as Scholars. At times united in purpose, more often bitterly opposed, and always scheming for dominance of the Ministry, the Magistrates and the Scholars plot endlessly to advance their arcane and calculated agendas.

Although the Ministry is ostensibly above such petty concerns as mortal borders, national identity plays a strong role in the situation as well, for reasons ranging from simple cultural pride to long-term schemes requiring the dominance of one empire over others. All of which means that while they might put forward a united front to the other covenants, in truth on top of the usual divide between Scholars and Magistrates the Korean and Chinese Ministers are watching each other suspiciously even as both groups negotiate with their Japanese counterparts in the Ministry, with every group hoping to advance the interests of their nation as well as their covenant.

The **Righteous Armies** (Carthian Movement), on the other hand, sprang up alongside the peasant forces that give them their name, and seek an end not just to the war but what they see as the corrupting influence of the Immaculate Ministry on both mortal and Kindred affairs. They wish to chart their own course, and seek to topple the structures that destroyed their nation and kept Kindred society stagnant for so long. While an increasing number of older vampires have defected to the cause from other covenants, particularly as it gains popularity, quite a few members were embraced just before or during the war itself, and their still-fresh ties to mortality are reflected in their actions

as well as their outlook. True, the Ministry views them as little more than rabble who've yet to learn what existence as part of the Kindred is really like, but behind their screens they take note of just how many of the Righteous there are....

The **Children of Reeds** (Circle of the Crone) are enjoying a surge in power as a battered and terrified populace quietly embraces old ways and traditions in hopes of surviving these lean, bloody years. For their part, the Shamans are comfortable playing both the roles of wise woods witches or mysterious shamans as well as the hungering monsters that devour those who stray from the path, sometimes both in a single night. The Children of Reeds see themselves as the true caretakers of the areas outside the cities, protecting the villagers from outsiders even as they use them as herds for themselves. It's a viewpoint that has led to friction with the "people's champions" of the Righteous Army, though for now greater enemies keep them working together. Any Kindred who wishes to travel through the wild and desolate places of Korea, much less take up residence there, would be very wise to make offerings and reach out to the local Shaman. They already know you've arrived.

The **100 Dragons** (Ordo Dracul) attempt to ignore the war and turmoil as much as possible, staying in their ruined monasteries and abandoned temples (or insinuating themselves into active ones and suborning the mortals to their will). They use this seclusion to contemplate the mysteries of vampiric existence, employing strange alchemy, esoteric rituals, and rigorous physical testing to transform themselves in pursuit of a perfected expression of the vampiric form. This is not to say that the Monks do not take part in politics or conflict — what good is a form that is never tested? — but they choose their moments with great care, preferring to wait for a perfect moment and take swift, sure actions as opposed to the ceaseless politicking and gossiping of their fellow Kindred.

**Venture:** "Eui-jeong-bu." If ever there was a time when the Councilors felt assured in their place at the apex of both humanity and the Kindred, this is that era. Nearly all of the Councilors are drawn from the ranks of the nobility directly and use their familiarity with power and high society to devastating effect. Those few who were not born to privilege must prove their ruthlessness and political acumen early on or be used as fodder by their peers, and regardless of lineage, no clan is more unforgiving of failure.

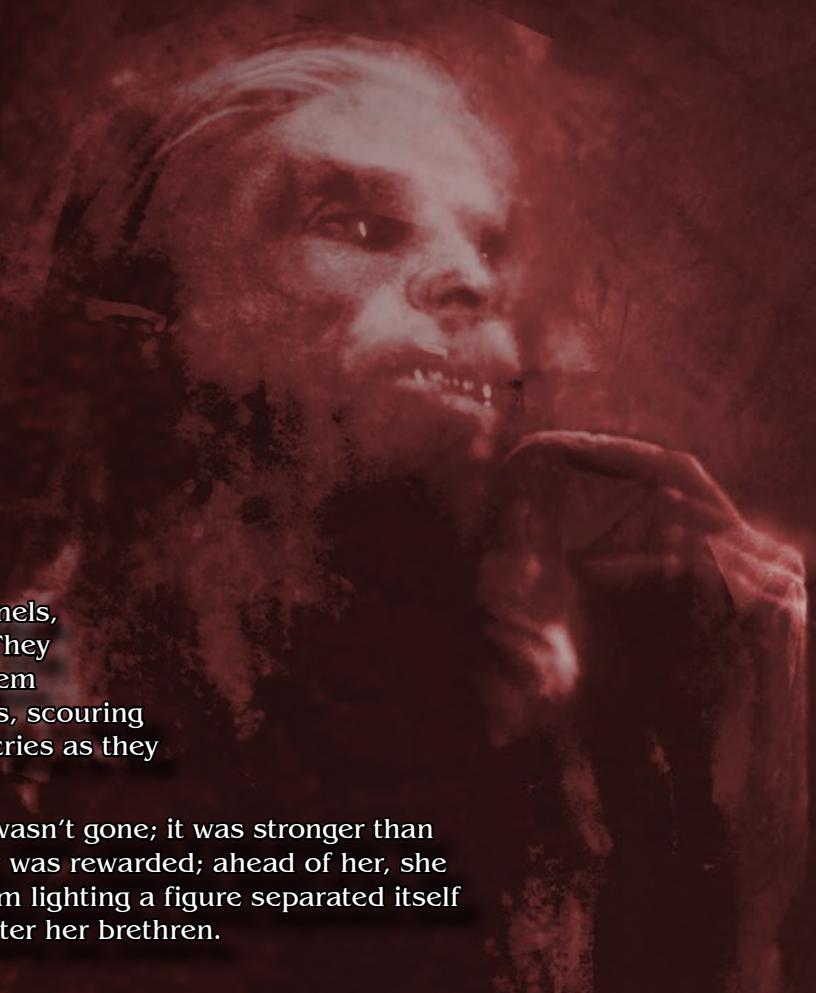
**Daeva:** "Ghee-saeng." As ever, the Entertainers find themselves the silk to the Councilors' steel, the quiet word to the shouted command. Between the two clans they occupy many positions of power, particularly in the Immaculate Ministry, though an increasing number of the Entertainers are drawn to the Righteous Armies, some even defecting from the Children of Reeds to do so. Something about the passion of the group is enticing to them, of course, and the fact that it's a political entity the Councilors haven't had a chance to sink their claws into yet doesn't hurt.

**Nosferatu:** "Moon-doong-ee." Let the Councilors think this is their time — the Lepers know better. Nothing floods a nation with delectable fear like a war and its attendant panic and starvation, and no one better understands how to use desperation to their advantage. And now, right now, with peace talks faltering, the truce straining, and another invasion looming, the drums are beating louder than ever, and the Lepers sense their time is finally at hand. They do not intend to let it pass them by.

**Gangrel:** "Yah-mahn-een." The Barbarians find their skills much in demand as scouts and sergeants among the Kindred. Their natural talents are well suited to screening bodies of soldiers and their wanderlust neatly channeled into staying one step ahead of both friend and foe. Those rare Barbarians who find court holds their interest command great respect as bodyguards and champions, and those who play the game of politics often enjoy being greatly underestimated by their opponents.

**Mekhet:** "Gum-gaek." Through it all, as the Councilors and Entertainers continue their endless struggle for political dominance while the Lepers make opportunistic strikes and the Barbarians feign aloofness while savoring the carnage, the Assassins watch, as ever. Three nations going to war makes for a bountiful harvest of whispers, after all, especially when the intrigues of clan and covenant are piled on top of it. Every wise leader wants an Assassin councilor, or better yet spymaster, even if they know better than to fully trust them, and the clan is only too happy to oblige. Let the others think the coming war will be won with steel or shouted commands; the Assassins know it is the letters never delivered and words left unsaid that will truly shape history.





She could hear his ragged breathing, punctuated by his footsteps splashing through the muck between the rails of the abandoned subway line. He didn't need to breathe anymore, but apparently it was a habit that wasn't leaving without a fight. Around her, the shrieks and jeers of her fellows echoed off the tiled walls, eerily multiplied as they bounced ahead of their owners; they followed him like bloodhounds tracking a scent. The prize for hunting down the last of the old regime was almost too good to be true; "dead by any means" was the order from their master, with forgiveness even for the dreaded diablerie.

The group of them reached a fork in the tunnels, their target's scent gone, leaving his trail cold. They paused for a scant half-second before one of them barked an order; the others split into two groups, scouring both trails and still voicing taunts and guttural cries as they searched.

She lingered, still sniffing the air. His scent wasn't gone; it was stronger than it had been anywhere on the path. Her scurrility was rewarded; ahead of her, she heard something shift in the dark, and in the dim lighting a figure separated itself from the grimy wall, peering down the tunnel after her brethren.

"Got you."

He turned at her hissing voice just before she slammed her fist into the back of his skull. He fell to his knees, clearly unprepared to defend himself from her attack. Before he could get his bearings again, or even think of a counterattack, she wrenched one of his arms back into a half-nelson, landing her knee on his other hand as she knelt behind him. In the dark of the tunnels that were once his, she sank her teeth deep into his neck and glutted herself on the sweet Vitae that flowed forth, until he was nothing more than a husk, and then ash.

Still dizzy, she sifted through the remains until she found a prize within: the old Nosferatu's ring. Surging with her newfound strength, she sprinted back out of the tunnels, skidding to a stop in front of the sharply dressed man standing at the boarded entrance. He looked her up and down before extending a waiting hand, giving her pause.

"You promised."

"I did, and all will be forgiven. But first, the proof."

Still hesitant, she handed over the ring. Wasn't she enough proof? One of the Kindred now? She could feel the new strength in her Vitae, beyond what she'd ever felt before.

He was turning the thing over in his hands, no doubt making sure with his own gifts that it was genuine.

"I proved I could do it. I found him and I took him down, everyone else ran right past—"

"I know." Apparently satisfied, he slipped the ring onto his own finger. "Come, then. Whoever makes it back alive will get a second try."

"Is it over?"

"He was the last. The city is ours." He grinned. "Welcome home."



# CHAPTER TWO

# THE CENTER

# OF BEING

*Friendship is held to be the severest test of character. It is easy, we think, to be loyal to a family and clan, whose blood is in your own veins.*

— Charles Alexander Eastman

When building a city, it's important to remember that its leaders will influence the lifestyle and atmosphere, even beyond the All Night Society. The Kindred might do their best work in the shadows, shielded by the Masquerade though, as they interact with the local kine, they'll find ways to impose their own desires and install their own people in positions of power. Each clan and covenant has its own unique tastes and desires, and cities with prominent majorities in either will reflect it in

their atmosphere. Despite their immortal status, the Kindred are as attached to creature comforts as any mortal; the different clans and covenants have similar enough tastes and fetters that when enough of them are gathered, they can hide in plain sight with their vices and virtues. The examples laid out here are rough guidelines and suggestions; they aren't set in stone, and Storytellers can take and leave what they wish when fleshing out their cities and settings.

## Clans

While it's unusual for one clan to 'rule' a city, it's not uncommon for Kindred society to be weighted toward one clan or another. In cities with diverse Kindred populations, it's not uncommon for territories to be divided along clan lines with contrasting or complementary elements depending on who borders whom. Some clans are rigid about maintaining their borders, while others are more willing to blur the line between territories, but often that relies on exactly who their neighbors are. Princes can use this to their advantage if they have a firm enough grip on their city, drawing territory lines that will help them further their own plans and push populations toward conflict or peace.

## Daeva

Fitting for their passionate and dramatic populations, Daeva cities range from glittering tourist traps to centers of high society and haute couture. Anything that glitters can be gold to the right person, and with their penchant to pursue even the most fleeting impulse in order to truly feel something, Daeva tend to cultivate eclectic territories. Burlesque clubs and BDSM dungeons sit on the same block as renowned art galleries and churches to any and all deities, lofty apartment buildings overlook artists' collectives, and performance halls hosting symphonies one night give their stages to slam poets the next. Older Daeva tend toward Rococo

opulence, but newer Kindred have begun using their status to patronize more abstract and avant-garde ventures, giving Daeva territories some of the most varied aesthetics, while remaining instantly recognizable.

When the Daeva make up the majority of Kindred population, Requiems are one big party. The Serpents enjoy everything in excess, and their habits and hobbies wash over the other Kindred in waves. Their passion is unavoidable, and it seeps out of every inch of the cities they occupy. Nowhere is louder, flashier, or more quietly dangerous than the territory of the Serpents. For many clans, their proclivities are overwhelming and even disgusting; the Ventrite and Mekhet alike shun the grandiose displays and wanton abandon, while the Nosferatu and Gangrel find it easier to turn indulgence to their favor — the Savages by participating, and the Haunts by observing, collecting, and using knowledge as leverage later.

For kine in a Serpent's city, things are much the same: vibrant, inviting, and addicting. Mortals can spend whole days or even weeks without ever being sober, lost in the shallow high of drugs and the deeper pull of a vampire's Kiss. Their flash and splendor make Daeva cities popular locations to visit, bringing in an ever-rotating herd with spring breaks, summer vacations, and seasonal occupants. Of course, one trip leaves its mark, and the mortals that leave yearn to return for reasons they can't quite explain.

## *The Serpent's Den*

'Bright lights, big city' might be the most fitting descriptor for Daeva territories. Even those cities in more rural locales or lacking the hustle and bustle of larger metropolitan areas feel just a little more lively when the Serpents have their way. In uptight and conservative communities, the Daeva run the underground party scenes where the rebellious masses can gather, and in more urban areas, all the newest trends come out of the communities and artists they patronize. Common features in Daeva cities include speakeasies, refurbished warehouses, experimental restaurants, avant-garde theater houses, and large-scale art installations.

Elysium for the Daeva is a place to see and be seen. It requires the best dress, the most charming smiles, and the most cutting wit. While other Kindred might say the Serpents play up the proceedings to the point of parody, it's the exaggeration that makes the Daeva precisely what they are: more, and more, and more, and never quite enough. Elysium as crafted by the Daeva is an experience in its own right, a dazzling spectacle meant to tantalize and tease, and make even the most unfeeling heart long again.

**Common Locations:** Theaters, private clubs, art galleries, outdoor amphitheaters

## *Beautiful Lives*

Daeva surround themselves with mortals who reflect the most beautiful, talented, charismatic, and alluring traits. A Daeva obsesses themselves with beauty to a near fault. Sometimes that beauty is physical, but other times it's found in the purity of emotion in a mortal who has just gone through a heartbreak or had a new baby. Many of the mortals the Daeva seek in their lives are highly vulnerable; they are deeply emotional artists, insecure beauties, people going through intense emotional times in their lives, or young adults who still have that edge of naiveté to their souls. The herd of a Daeva is often a beautiful wreck of bodies after the wildest of parties where most people present got too drunk. The ghoul of a Daeva is the perfect muse who has forgotten how to think for themselves. They are always beautiful, often unsettling, and undoubtedly broken.

A city that is predominantly Daeva looks somewhat like Amsterdam in the 1960s – full of culture, drugs, beauty, and instability. Without any of the other clans to influence mortals, and with the Daeva sinking their supernatural teeth into the populace, the clan slowly sees their cities fall into beautiful ruin. Like just before Rome fell, they party all night, and few people are awake during the day to see the fires burning in the distance. Mortals who have managed to stay out of the Daeva's influence see their friends and colleagues slipping out of control into more decadent lifestyles. These people tighten up, trying to avoid falling into the same trap. Or, perhaps, they decide it looks so fun they end up traveling down the same path. It only takes attending one Daeva party for a mortal to get a taste of the eternal beauty and forget their daytime priorities. Daeva do not function well as a sole clan in a city, but they do make it a fun time for the others who are there – both mortals and vampires alike.

## *Gangrel*

Impulsive in an entirely different direction, Gangrel territories could be politely described as 'up-and-coming' or 'rough-and-tumble' parts of town. Usually situated in either the most desolate canyons of concrete jungles or the densest areas of urban or suburban woods, Gangrel prefer areas delineated and marked to further subdivide the territory. They are populated by small, discrete groups of tightly-knit individuals, each of which tags or otherwise marks their own place in the territory as a whole. Counter cultures thrive in Gangrel territories, where survival of the fittest dictates the pecking order while still leaving most everyone to their own devices.

With the Gangrel running the show, Kindred watch their backs more often than they watch their words. The Savages have rightly earned their name, and while strong-arming doesn't need violence to be effective, it's a nice punctuation to a well-made statement. While Kindred society operates in a pecking order or a formalized hierarchy, it's usually unspoken or quietly enforced. Not so for those cities dominated by the presence of the Gangrel, who are equally likely to bully you down into your place with intimidation as they are to literally beat you back down into it.

The kine under the yoke of the Gangrel are cautious; they know the city streets are dangerous, but rarely see anything happening. It lurks at the back of their mind that something could happen one day, that people have disappeared and gotten hurt, but only those who wander into the rough parts of town. The ones that live in the rough side of town know who they can target and who is untouchable. Anyone who forgets why certain buildings are off limits or why certain groups are at the top doesn't get a warning, just a gruesome, bloody reminder.

## *The Savage Garden*

When it comes to survival of the fittest, the Gangrel have things on lock. Their territories often display the simplicity of brute strength; the buildings are solid and geometric; the streets and open areas are cold and devoid of decoration. Savage-run cities are concrete and brick monstrosities, leaving no place for soft edges or comfort. Like the Kindred that run them, their territories are meant to beat down the souls and spirits of their inhabitants, leaving only the strongest and most resilient at the top. Typical features include barbed-wire fences, high-level security measures, paved-over parks and lots, and seedy bars.

With a Gangrel in charge, there isn't much in the way of subterfuge. The Savages are exactly that, and Elysium is little more than a place to remind everyone of who truly holds the power. Posturing and cloak-and-dagger machinations are laughed at, and any would-be conspirators are crushed, sometimes literally, into dust. Only outright displays of power are respected in a Gangrel's court, and if someone can't back up his claims, he's likely to lose more than his dignity. Ruthless tyrants when in charge, a Savage's Elysium is meant to make anyone who enters feel insignificant and exposed.

**Common Locations:** Vacant lots, construction sites, boardrooms, skate parks

## *The Hunted*

To a Gangrel, mortals are often little more than food. The Beast sees the humans around it as nothing other than prey, and it likes to hunt. Some nights, Gangrel packs participate in games of chance about who can hunt the best kill. Maybe it's the head of a biker gang, a mob boss surrounded by protection, or a politician who is in town. It is rare that a Gangrel forms a bond with a mortal, so when they do it is deeper than most other Kindred with their retainers. A capable ghoul is a favored pet to a Gangrel. When she proves herself, her master invites her to join the pack.

Cities that are heavily plagued by Gangrel are some of the most dangerous, ragged areas in the world. News stories of dangerous new gang initiations become prevalent in the papers. The police can't figure out what new drug is turning people savage, but they are certain there is something going around that makes people rip each other apart. The savage nature of the vampires closest to their Beasts reflects in the mortals through constant gang wars, mob fighting, heightened domestic-violence cases, and a general sense of lacking control. Empty, abandoned storefronts, crumbling warehouses, and seedy docks comprise the landscape of heavily Gangrel cities. But, many Gangrel are most happy in the country. A rough suburb close enough to a large city-center full of mortals to hunt, but with the open country to run free, is the most ideal home for a comfortable Gangrel.

## *Mekhet*

Not as austere as the Ventrue or wanton as the Daeva, Mekhet occupy the space between passion and pomp. Quiet and cunning, the clan as a whole hoards secrets and information like gold. Mekhet territories feature libraries, museums, and historic sites of any kind — anything that might cough up a secret or two with the right prodding and due diligence. Aside from perhaps the Nosferatu, the Mekhet are among the most solitary of the Kindred, coexisting more than cooperating with each other or forming larger communities.

Mekhet cities are quiet things, unassuming and deceptively peaceful. The Kindred, however, know that when the Mekhet are involved, more than the walls have ears. Paranoia rules Kindred society when the Shadows are out in force, and the usual machinations within the All Night Society are buried under layers of doublespeak and obfuscation. Everyone has an agenda but few are willing to openly admit it, allies are only trusted so far, and when things go sour, any secrets that were shared in confidence are eagerly spilled to try and curry favor with targeted parties. Outright violence is rare, but there are so many other ways to register displeasure, especially for those who pursue arcane secrets.

## *The Shadowed Halls*

The Shadows either settle near or establish libraries (both occult and conventional), museums, research facilities, and observatories. In fact, if it weren't for the rumors of arcane cults,

Mekhet cities might almost be cozy. Bastions of knowledge and research, the Kindred keep everything rather conventional, at least in outward appearances. The kine bring the 'occult' touches to the Shadow's cities, frequently starting up spiritual shops, pagan circles, and what passes for covens in the mortal world. More conventionally, curators and experts on obscure and archaic topics flock to the rare collections on display in Mekhet territories, where they can usually also find patrons for their research.

Usually as mysterious as the Mekhet themselves, Elysium under a Shadow Prince is an experience unlike most others. Nothing is quite as it seems, no one says what they mean, and to get anything meaningful done often feels like a herculean task. Even other Mekhet spend their time in Elysium on their toes, well aware that the eyes and ears in the room perceive far more than they let on. Breaking the rules of Elysium, after all, is only a problem if you get caught. Usually held somewhere dark, quiet, and ancient, a Mekhet Prince is eager to show proof of his knowledge and collection of secrets, without ever revealing quite what they might be.

**Common Locations:** Catacombs, archives, libraries, museums

## *Hauntings*

Some families just seem haunted. It may be because they are quiet and subdued, or something seems a little off about the entire household. It's unnerving enough that no other families want to bring their children over for parties. These are the families that Mekhet often call their own. Be it as herd or as ghouls, the mortals Mekhet surround themselves with are a step away from life and often never understand why. Sleep becomes a little harder when the shadows grow long in the house, nightmares are more frequent, and paranoia heightens in the household the moment the darkness comes with the sunset. It is not an abrupt change for humans affected by this clan, but a slow distancing from what their happy, normal routine once was into a haunted, pale version of life.

Cities with a heavy Mekhet presence are the most haunted cities in the world. New Orleans, Prague, and Poveglia Island are all excellent examples of what happens to a city with a strong Mekhet presence. Mortals tell stories of seeing ghosts down every corner and feeling dark spirits as they walk the streets. Fortunately, mortals seem to enjoy these old ghost tales. So, while the regular population of a Mekhet city may suffer for their presence, many of these old cities become tourist traps with fresh blood for the vampires who live there.

## *Nosferatu*

Nosferatu more than any of the other clans embody and exude an air of decay, of things better lost to the past and history better left unstudied. Its fits, then, that the more Nosferatu present in an area, the quicker it declines into something bleak and ominous. Drawn to things most would consider repulsive, Nosferatu are just as likely to gravitate toward unpleasantness as

they are to bring it to the places they occupy. Wielding revulsion as a weapon as they so often do, Nosferatu territories make passers-by turn up their collars and hasten their step, avoiding looking too closely around for fear of what they'll see. Of course, given the architects, even looking down doesn't help much.

Few of the other clans enjoy a city overtaken by the Nosferatu. Their cackling madness, their embrace of all things uncomfortable, eerie, and repulsive, and their eagerness to remind everyone just how inhuman the Kindred are rubs other vampires the wrong way — something the Haunts only revel in further, to the dismay of their brethren. The Daeva and the Ventre in particular suffer amongst the Nosferatu, who find their attachment to old lives and old practices to be hilarious and unnecessary.

### *The Haunted Parody*

The creeping, unsettling fear that dominates Nosferatu territories extends, by matter of imagination or fact, to the physical world around it. Previously pristine communities descend into shabbiness, parks and playgrounds that were once inviting turn ominous and unsettling, and even infrastructure seems to deteriorate faster than expected. The Haunts, unlike other clans, don't so much have a hallmark of their territories; they don't gravitate toward or support any kine institutions or set up their own, instead bringing with them an entropy that eventually claims everything around it. If there is something they do seem to enjoy, it's places where the living shouldn't walk, and where their very presence is blasphemy.

With a Nosferatu Prince, Elysium is likely to sit somewhere designed to remind the rest of the Kindred of what every Nosferatu knows: In the end, no matter the clan, vampires are all the same. Princes often quite literally force the haughty Ventre and Daeva down to their own level and drag the tight-lipped Mekhet through the mud on the way to such important neutral ground, an experience meant to humble the clans that would look down on the Nosferatu for their twisted appearances and auras. Far from the finery and glamour the other clans find in the All Night Society, Nosferatu live among what everyone eventually becomes: dust.

**Common Locations:** Sewers, swamps, junkyards, landfills, graveyards

### *Wayward Souls*

Due to their unnerving presence, the Nosferatu have the most difficult time getting mortals under their sway. Without the blood calling a mortal back, they instinctively run as any prey animal does when a predator is near. Only a few specific types of mortals live among the feeding grounds of the Nosferatu: adrenaline junkies, the mentally ill, other societal outcasts, and social workers who overcome their anxieties in attempts to assist those who are falling through the cracks of their communities. If an area is full of enough of these sorts, a Nosferatu may be lucky enough to find easy feeding. If not, the Haunt finds himself needing to stalk the streets as the hunting beast that he is. To

feed freely, they must actively hunt their prey; many Haunts have come to enjoy this. Due to their difficulties with mortals, Nosferatu are more likely to take ghouls as companions than any other clan. When they find a mortal who can look beyond the discomfort of their state, it is difficult to let that connection go.

Nosferatu-controlled cities are few and far between. Mortals abandoned most of the ones that tried long ago. Of those that remain, the people are irrevocably changed for being under the constant influence of the Haunts. Buildings rot, abandoned by their previous owners and no others willing to buy. The remaining mortals turn to religion, drugs, or heavy escapism to try and handle the constant feeling of unease.

### *Ventre*

Few places are as unforgiving or regimented as a city held by Ventre. Fitting into the modern world as corporate cutthroats, the clan operates under a dizzying maze of unspoken rules — and more's the fool of anyone thinking they'll get an explanation of what they expect. Holding strong to their belief that experience and failure are the best teachers, only the sharpest minds and quickest wits rise to power under the yoke of the Lords. A natural progression from the Daeva's elaborate Rococo taste, the Ventre prefer Baroque austerity, and hold territories that display their wealth and power for them in the most exclusive parts of town.

Among the Ventre, the other Kindred must find their place. There's no clear instruction, and nothing so aggressive as a Gangrel's correction, but nonetheless, Kindred who forget or don't know their place are frozen out, shunned, derided, and mocked until they learn to properly embody whatever station the Lords have deemed appropriate for them. Most consider the hierarchy of the Ventre to be unhelpful at best and abusive at worse; at least in a fight with a Gangrel, there's a chance to prove your worth or even come out on top. It's significantly harder to get a leg up when most of the city won't acknowledge your existence.

While the Ventre appear to be focused all on pomp and appearances, style without substance doesn't befit the Lords. Prizing excellence of being above empty claims and grandstanding, this clan has little patience for those who lay out extravagant claims and can't back them up. Bragging about their status or connections at all is considered gauche by the Ventre, who prefer to let their accomplishments speak for themselves. The Lords believe they shouldn't have to lay out their plans or extol their own status; if they've truly earned it, others will do it for them, in hushed whispers as they walk by. Whatever the Ventre has decided is her domain, she will naturally rise to the top of its community. Is she truly a Lord otherwise?

### *The Lord's Manor*

Ventre territories exist to prove that there are subtle, nuanced ways to display power, as opposed to the ham-fisted methods of the Gangrel. If the Savages deal in cement and mortar, Ventre territories are metal and glass: just as cold and uninviting, but elegantly so. With territories made of ivory towers and gated



communities, the Lords make a point to highlight just how exclusive and elite their neighborhoods are, and nothing entertains them more than watching the kine scrabble through the rat race, secure in their place above it all. Common in Ventre territories are sculpture gardens, sweeping grounds and sprawling mansions, wrought-iron fences on property lines, and country clubs.

Masters of every situation and self-described Lords of the Kindred, a Ventre Elysium is all about decorum and tradition. It lacks the ostentatiousness of a Daeva Elysium and masks the naked displays of the Gangrel, but nonetheless, the Ventre Prince commands a room like no other. Her presence is neither inviting nor oppressive; as her clan suggests, she is simply regal, and others respond to her aura by falling in line. Elysium itself reflects her mien, stately and proper and designed to put the rabble in their place. Inscrutable yet entrancing, a Ventre's playground is best known to her and her alone.

**Common Locations:** Banquet halls, banks, penthouses, private yachts

### *Workaholics*

Mortals love the Ventre and they in turn love the mortals who make up the gleaming institutions of their cities. Most mortals, especially in a capitalist culture, lust after the power and prosperity that the Ventre clan embodies. They see the glory of an indomitable will, the success of prominent businessmen or politicians, and natural leaders of their community. The power and charisma of a

Ventre means they can easily find mortals to occupy their herd. A corporate gala, tech conference, or business networking evening is easy feeding for the powerful clan; and there is always another meeting next week. The Ventre often need mortals to be more loyal than business networkers, so they pick ghouls from among the best and brightest and groom them for bigger duties. A Ventre ghoul ends up as a CEO, city councilperson, or police commissioner who runs the daylight institutions that assist a Ventre in keeping her ultimate power at night.

Ventre have dominance over multiple cities across the world. These cities flourish in business and governmental organization. These are the cities that get the most infrastructure grants and have new businesses flocking to open their doors on a routine basis. A good example of a heavily Ventre-run city is Palo Alto in California; it is far enough away from the old cities that other clans didn't have a huge foothold, it has enough space for growth, and a few key investments turned it into a tech capital of the world. On the surface, Ventre are healthy for the mortal populations around them. However, no population can truly flourish under the influence of a predator in their midst. The cities that harbor Ventre, and their driven retainers, are the ones written up in mental health journals about workplace burnout and illegally long hours. Ventre-based economies have no regard for work-life balance; humans under the influence of Ventre work for power to the exclusion of their loved ones and personal health. Eventually, a Ventre city burns out under its own pressure to succeed.

## Covenants

While clans trace the lineage of Kindred ‘families’ by the affinity of their blood, covenants represent something more akin to a meeting of the minds. Ideologies by which the Kindred live, the five covenants offer different philosophies on a vampire’s state of being, how their power should be wielded, and what it means to be cursed. As the Kindred elect to join covenants, it’s more common for these diversified groups to have a hold on a city. It’s far easier to please everyone if they’re all pointed in the same direction, after all. Covenant territories are often more accepting of certain clans than others, depending on how the clan’s attitude fits the covenant’s ideals. While all five covenants don’t have to be represented in a single city – and often aren’t – there’s more likely to be swathes of neutral or clan-possessed ground between covenant territories, especially in cases where the two are likely to vehemently oppose each other. Of course, if the covenants are on friendly terms, they may have neighboring or even shared territories. The Invictus, for example, are far more likely to want to share borders with the Lancea et Sanctum than the Carthian Movement.

## The Carthian Movement

The ways of the Kindred and the All Night Society are archaic and oppressive, fit for the feudalism of the dark ages and not for the contemporary world. Better to burn it to the ground and watch those afraid of change flee the flames and build a new world in the ashes. As their dogma implies, cities controlled by the Movement aren’t always the most stable, but their volatility works toward their purpose: taking the power from the hands of the ancients and allowing everyone to have a voice. Cities ruled by the Carthian Movement aren’t as uniform as most of the other covenants, if only because its fractured chapters lack a central authority; the message is the same, though every city implements it differently.

Kindred are often sharply divided in cities run by the Carthian Movement. While it’s not necessarily a split drawn on generational lines, the goal of the Movement – to upend the traditional norms of the All Night Society and give a voice to every vampire – rubs most everyone outside of the movement the wrong way. Tensions among Kindred are high in Carthian cities, with both sides watching their backs and looking to undercut the effectiveness of the other. Even when compromise and appeasement are on the table, there’s enough conflict within the Movement to continuously spark protest and revolt.

If absolute power corrupts absolutely, sharing it spreads the corruption around. The true bane of the Carthian Movement is their desire to break the wheel and build it anew; while the covenant agrees that this is necessary, trouble starts to rise in the rebuilding. Too often the varied members of the group find the new regime installed by their compatriots falls to the same corruption or enforces the same oppression as the old ways, just covered in a new coat of paint or in the name of “equality.” Thus, the cycle begins anew, as the Firebrands begin to undermine

themselves when even their friends get corrupted by power.

## The Huddled Masses

As might be expected from a Firebrand, Carthian cities are volatile. Their views on the All Night Society, and their desire to fundamentally alter the system, bring them into conflict with nearly every other covenant, inevitably creating friction with their “good intentions.” The ones stirring the pot, then, usually find or build places to retreat to when things finally erupt. To such an end, underground bunkers, abandoned buildings fortified into strongholds, and open public areas are all common features in Carthian cities. Sometimes, the best defense is an eyewitness, making parks, pavilions, main streets, and sports fields excellent ways for the Movement to not only spread their message, but prevent retaliation from those who keep the Masquerade.

Elysium as held by the Carthian Movement is a chaotic experience, especially as compared to one run by Invictus or the Lancea et Sanctum. Deliberately meant to throw the ‘old guard’ off balance, it’s not uncommon for issues within the city to spark protests on such common ground, or for debates and arguments to surge forth and dominate an evening. Harmony within the Movement isn’t always a common thing, meaning even neutral ground can get heated, and many a counterrevolution has started with a conflict within Elysium’s protection. This is doubly true for anyone who proclaims herself a Carthian Prince.

**Common Locations:** Government buildings after hours, skate parks, underpasses, community centers

## Foot Soldiers

Mortals are as much pawns of Carthians as they are any other group of Kindred, but they often get a little more power along the way with this covenant. Carthians take some of their best ideas from mortal revolutions. When they are trying to influence the power of a city, they often reach to the daylight populace to make the changes happen. Power comes in numbers and there is no doubt the human population outnumbers vampires, so the Carthians do their best to sway those numbers to their advantage. Sometimes they do it through mass civil disobedience protests, sometimes riots. The mortals the Carthians use are the first line of defense against the institutions of old – vampiric and human alike. Some Carthians do it through making a few particularly influential new thinkers in any given city into ghouls, gaining the vampire sway over their followers. But just as often, the Carthian preaches a new way of thinking to the mortals of a city, working them up into a fervor before releasing them to the front lines of a political fight. After all, if mortals get themselves killed in an uprising, there are plenty of replacements.

Carthian cities rarely look the same twice. Because the Carthian Movement is always a grand new experiment in social dynamics, their cities follow the same pattern. However, there is constant conflict between the mortals in a Carthian city. The shifts in power caused by Carthians manifest through social

changes such as student protests, fresh gangs flooding the city, or uprisings like the Occupy movement. The mortal establishment of a city is in danger when Firebands move in to take over an area. They overthrow the old clans' and covenants' trusted retainers just as they have their nighttime masters. The Carthians have no care for the innocence of mortals manipulated by other vampires; they are all part of a broken system and need deposing. The LA riots are a perfect example of what happens when the Movement comes into a city with the intention of taking back the power from older institutions. Rarely does this leave Kindred blood in the streets, but it certainly costs mortal lives.

## *The Circle of the Crone*

While a city dominated by the Circle of the Crone isn't exactly a free for all, it's only got fairly loose ideas on centralized leadership. There exists a Prince as always, but beyond that, the priestesses in the covenant want their followers to take what is theirs, letting the strong survive and using the weak how they may. The Masquerade, while not as sacred to the Mother's Army as it is to others, is usually observed, if only because it helps them keep their own secrets from outsiders. Cities and territories held by the Circle of the Crone are places in flux, as the Kindred push their boundaries against each other in an ever-shifting pecking order.

The only thing a vampire has in a city held by Acolytes is what she can take for herself. Her allies are few if she's outside of the Circle, and even within it, she only trusts her companions so far. In the scramble to get ahead, Acolytes are often eager to use each other as stepping stones, especially when their external enemies are few. The Acolytes work together best when persecuted, and without a force driving them to close ranks and cooperate, their desire to do and be more is often a wedge between them more than a galvanizing force.

## *The Bloody Circle*

The volatile nature of the covenant being what it is, cities held by the Circle of the Crone are always in bloody, violent flux, but among them a few things manage to remain stable. The acolytes can't function without a city to live in, after all, and despite being more disparate covens shunted together under a single banner than a functioning whole, the same themes and concepts underscore the varied sects that call themselves Acolytes. Magic shops, body-modification parlors, botanical gardens, and spiritual centers all feature heavily in cities held by the Circle, often allowing them to practice their own dark sorcery in plain sight.

While a Firebrand's Elysium might be chaos, the Crone's is bedlam. Cities controlled by the Circle are exceedingly rare in part for this reason; neighboring territories aren't particularly fond of the lawless wastelands cities controlled by the Acolytes inevitably descend into, and such an unstable system can only support itself for so long. When the Kindred in a Crone city do gather for formal occasions, it's for high-profile executions and other grotesque displays of power by those clinging to their

place at the top or else looking to advance. Amidst the turmoil, only one truth holds: Blood is power, and power changes hands.

**Common Locations:** Monuments, shrines, battle sites, shorelines

## *Followers*

One of the healthiest relationships in the Chronicles of Darkness between Kindred and kine is the bond between the Circle of the Crone and their mortal followers. These vampires, while needing to hunt, usually respect the unique kind of power mortals give to the world around them. They have found a way to incorporate mortals into their rituals and need them for matters beyond just being food. A mortal may join The Mother's Army as a cult follower, but if she is lucky and learns well, she may become a practitioner herself one night. However, it is difficult to generalize what the Circle of the Crone does to mortals across the board as each small group operates differently from other cults. Acolytes in one city could worship mortals as the pinnacle of humanity and treat them with reverence, where another city's Acolytes see mortals as gods given experimental blood for the powerful work and treat them like little more than fruit flies with some independent thought.

The Circle of the Crone very rarely holds cities, as they don't have the same power as the other covenants. However, they influence pocket areas of cities or the outskirts of suburbs spilling into more rural areas. These are the areas mortals often whisper about being places of power or "good energy." There are a few villages around the world, however, where Acolytes are the rulers of the night. These are places with myths of old women with keys to great wisdom for those willing to take the pilgrimage. Rumors spread about mortals who go to these villages and never return. However, that is because if a human believes enough in the power of the Acolytes who are there, she often finds herself among them for good. The Mother's Army controls some stronghold villages that date back thousands of years in places throughout eastern Europe and Russia.

## *The Invictus*

The only group with more rules than Clan Ventre is the Invictus. A dizzying menagerie of hierarchy with rules both written in stone and unspoken, the rigidly organized First Estate is an intimidating presence for a neonate to encounter. Cities overseen by the Invictus hold tightly to the Masquerade, and cater to those who are best at deciphering the things that go unsaid. With a heady mix of decorous displays and backroom assassinations, the Invictus rewards cunning, subtlety, and ruthlessness. Those at the top might seem paranoid to newcomers; if they are, it's only because they know what they did to get there.

Rigid doesn't begin to describe life for the Kindred within the First Estate. Their cities are carefully organized; every Kindred is categorized and slotted into the hierarchy of the Conspiracy. Of course, there are far more slots at the bottom than at the

top, something that rankles those within the lower tiers. The only way to get ahead when the Invictus holds a city is to play by their rules. Attempting to circumvent the Invictus' sphere of influence is far more likely to reveal just how wide it is — at least more so than actually finding useful allies outside of their far-reaching grasp.

Of course, following every rule to the letter, while safe, hardly benefits anyone looking to make their own way or advance through the ranks. Undermining others, bending the rules when no one's looking, and pushing to get ahead of anyone perceived as a rival is the core of the Invictus. There is no way to get ahead without stepping on someone's neck; a clever vampire either makes sure her stepping stone can't get up afterward, or is so devoted that he's glad to play the part. Looking back isn't an option, but looking down is something different. It's the only way to be sure the past isn't sharpening its claws.

### *The State House*

Invictus cities cater to the well to do, sweeping anything unsightly or unseemly under the rug, never to be spoken of again. Doormen stand at every entrance, valets monitor every lot, and strict dress codes rule restaurants, clubs, and offices. Everything comes down to property value for the Invictus, and woe to the one who brings the neighborhood down. High-rise apartments, golf courses, private marinas, and exclusive meeting halls all blend seamlessly into the landscape of Invictus cities, where the First Estate can comfortably isolate themselves from the rabble and go about their business undisturbed.

Ranging from opulent to austere, an Invictus Elysium is always one thing: impressive. Meant to display the power and influence of the First Estate, they often have unique installments that highlight the condition of the Kindred, ranging from mirrored halls that reflect only shifting shadows even when full of bodies, or fountains that run red and tempt those who haven't yet hunted (to partake, of course, is a faux pas of the highest degree.) Meant to intimidate and disorient those not within the fold, the locations are often sprawling, labyrinthine establishments, decorated with a careful eye and impeccable attention to taste.

**Common Locations:** Penthouses, plantations, vineyards, gardens

### *They Live to Serve*

The Invictus have more power over cities, and the mortals who fill them, than most other groups in the Chronicles of Darkness. The Invictus view mortals as not only something to use but also to protect. They must keep the mortals around them unaware of Kindred existence through tight control of any who risk the truth getting out. Invictus have perfected the art of making just the right people into ghouls. Examples of appealing Invictus retainers include high-ranking law enforcement officials, popular journalists, a chief of staff at a hospital, or a dean of a university. While Invictus do this to protect the greater cities around them, they do not think enough of mortals to worry about pesky things such as free will. It is better to ghoul one mortal than to kill

100 who have witnessed the supernatural. An Invictus' closest retainer is their eyes and ears to the goings on during the day. They will report back loyally and, as their time with the vampire continues, learn to proactively clean up messes even before the Kindred rises that evening.

Invictus cities are those who make the top 10 lists in lifestyle articles: "Top 10 Most Livable Cities," "10 Safest Cities to Raise Children," "Cities for Your New Small Business." They attract corporate moguls and brilliant new graduates looking for a place to flourish. Just as the Invictus run the Kindred with an iron fist, they keep their cities organized and mortals safe. Not all Invictus ride the new tech wave or progressive government stylings of the modern age. An Invictus city is just as likely to be an old European retirement town, full of happy mortals who are living out their golden years in peace and safety, as it is a booming tech sector in California. Because Invictus cities are so organized and attractive, mortals flock to them by the thousands. The Invictus are partially to blame (or thank) for the growth of organized urban areas since the industrial revolution. By organizing mortals into companies, offering better employment, and keeping their cities safe, each new generation has found more appeal in these cities and moved there at higher percentage rates yearly. Now, the biggest challenge facing Invictus cities is overpopulation. There are colder Invictus who have culling plans in mind, when needed.

### *Lancea et Sanctum*

Much like their allies in the Invictus, the Lancea et Sanctum are natural community leaders. More inviting to the common folk than the First Estate, the Second Estate offers something relatively rare to a Kindred's Requiem: purpose. The familiarity of religious devotion makes the Sanctified comfortable, and that's precisely what makes them dangerous. Sanctified cities can be unforgiving to those who don't follow their doctrine, and cities dominated by their presence ostracize those who refuse their teachings. Finding one of the Sanctified in the seat of power is exceedingly rare; looking just beyond the Prince apparent in a Sanctified city often reveals the true seat of power.

While the Crone and the Carthians focus on frenzying the mortal masses, the Lancea et Sanctum turns its fire and brimstone fury to its own kind. Sanctified cities are filled with Kindred who truly believe they are sent to test and judge mortal and monster alike. Even those less moved by the covenant's teachings are expected to fall in line with their practices, at least attending services as a show of good faith. The laity know the clergy see them as misguided (save perhaps the Invictus), but the Church Eternal is kinder to outsiders than all the rest.

### *Unholy Ground*

Peaceful yet haunted, cities ruled by the Sanctified appear pristine and flawless at first glance. Linger on any one place or item too long though, and its rough edges and unfinished seams become more and more obvious. The Lancea et Sanctum makes it their job to pluck the loose threads, patch the holes, and buff

out the scrapes and scuffs of their city, but at the same time accept that it is an unending and thankless task. To such an end, the Sanctified establish soup kitchens, food pantries, and homeless shelters to cultivate herds and ferret out targets for justice, as well fund high-profile charity organizations and businesses that allow them to cover their tracks when their own edges start to unravel.

The Lancea et Sanctum, more than any covenant, does its best to make sure Elysium feels open and welcoming to all. It's considered polite to observe certain habits of the Church, even among the laity who don't follow its beliefs as closely as the Sanctified themselves. So long as the common folk show the proper respect to the Sanctified and their teachings, everyone else is willing to play nice. Formal meetings in Elysium run by the Sanctified often include a full service, or at least an opening malediction, and artifacts of the Church Eternal are often prominently displayed.

**Common Locations:** Abandoned cathedrals, desecrated holy ground, catacombs, church basements

### *The Laity*

There are many different relationships between the Lancea et Sanctum and the mortals around them. They generally fall into two categories: complete avoidance or utter temptation. These interactions are normally determined by the higher ups in the clergy, who dictate to their followers what the healthiest interaction with the mortal populace is. Those who avoid mortals are the Sanctified who consider themselves a complete damnation upon this world. They worry their interference with mortal society will bring about the downfall of weak-willed mortals and try to avoid it at all cost. When a Sanctified of this mindset does, inevitably, corrupt a mortal, they use them as an object lesson to further their own damnation. However, there is a large sect of the Second Estate who considers it its sacred duty to test mortals in their own damnation. They act as the tempting forces of sin to try and drive the mortals away from corruption. Sadly, all too often, mortals fail at these trials and end up dead or joining the ranks of the Kindred.

Cities with heavy Lancea et Sanctum influence have a highly devoted mortal religious presence. They are the old cities filled with beautiful, historical churches attended by locals and tourists alike. While it is unlikely the Sanctified directly influence the piety of the mortals around them, the mortal populace acts like a foil to the covenant's damnation and devotion to religious principles. When Storytellers are building cities with heavy Sanctified presence, they should always keep in mind the mortal devotion to the churches around them. Even looking at modern cities, the more popular coffee-shop-talk churches that are popping up across the world reflect the Second Estate's beliefs. These are places where younger generations can go to discuss their morality and examine the best ways to avoid the temptation of sin. While most of these services happen during the daylight hours, the invention of the internet allows Sanctified to interact with these modern practices and even run some of the discussion groups themselves.

### *Ordo Dracul*

Foreboding and secretive, cities overseen by the Ordo Dracul hide layers upon layers of secrets, each darker and more twisted than the last. The Dragons are peculiar even by the standards of the Kindred, and when they congregate and pool their knowledge, they achieve truly awesome and terrible results. If the Sanctified seek to ascend, the Ordo Dracul seeks to transcend, becoming more than they ever were before. When the Dragons rule, no one is safe; childe, denizens, and kine are all prey to their whims as they seek to expand their knowledge and tear down everything but themselves.

In the rare cities ruled by Dragons, Kindred life is a varied and peculiar experience. Members of the Ordo Dracul have little interest in the trappings and keepings of most vampiric traditions, preferring instead to forge their own ways forward with more scientific and arcane purpose. The Kindred condition is something likely to shift in strange and dramatic ways when the Dragons have control, as they toil away undisturbed by anyone who would wish to hamper their research and progress. Woe, of course, to anyone outside the covenant; the Order doesn't turn in on itself for test subjects, after all.

### *The Dragon's Lair*

Despite their odd tastes and gruesome experiments, those few cities ruled by the Dragons are unassuming things. Accustomed to operating under the radar and avoiding attention, members of the Ordo Dracul have perfected the art of making leaps and bounds in their craft without calling attention to themselves. Their cities and havens are all perfectly average to the untrained eye, but behind soundproof doors and in windowless underground facilities, the Dragons carry out their research. Common fixtures include laboratories, medical and scientific libraries, and educational institutes all make up the core of most of their cities, where Dragons can hide their work in restricted wings or conduct their hideous experiments in peace.

While Elysium as hosted by Dragons is a rather hands-off affair, it's in a different way than covenants like the Circle of the Crone or the Carthians. The Ordo Dracul is too refined to support outright slaughter to get ahead and too invested in its own interests to bother with giving everyone a voice. As such, the rare Elysium overseen by Dragons is a quiet affair, uncomfortable for anyone outside of their circle. The Dragons have no interest in appeasing the others, and don't so much laugh at their machinations as ignore them entirely. Naïve, however, is the vampire who thinks that means he can overthrow his distant leader.

**Common Locations:** Hospital basements, mausoleums, universities, morgues

### *Useful Tools*

Of all the covenants, the Ordo Dracul has the least to do with mortals. That is not to say they don't ever interact with the herd around them, but they simply have the least interest in mortals beyond the need to feed. Vitae, and its power, is what holds the

most interest for the Ordo Dracul. Therefore, cities heavy with the Order don't see much change in their mortal population. The most common interactions between this covenant and humans involve the study of the blood. There have been many Dragon experiments studying the effects of Vitae on human subjects and many ghouls turn into long-term science projects more than useful retainers. A particularly wise ghoul of the Order makes himself useful as more than a test subject, but that involves the

person being self-aware enough to realize what is happening to him. Otherwise, his master may discard the experiment and start her next theorem fresh with a new subject. Dragons hunt in clinical, quick ways. Never messy enough to cause a scene, but without the pomp and circumstance of some other Kindred. Unless a member of the Ordo Dracul is testing a specific theory of the vampiric condition, feeding from mortals is just another annoying distraction from the great work.

## *Planning the Danse Macabre*

While the backdrop to all the action is compelling and helps a setting come alive, it can still feel hollow and empty without other living beings populating it. While the players and characters are the ones influencing the story, they're far from the only ones involved, and giving them a rich world with which to interact is an excellent way to keep players engaged and characters moving. While it's not necessary to have a fully fleshed-out character sheet and backstory for every Storyteller character or to make every building historically important, having a loose idea of the key locations and their significance, as well as general concepts and motivations for the people with whom the characters interact helps keep the game engaging. Below are some topics to explore to put the final touches on a city and its population, as well as some questions to get Storytellers and players alike brainstorming how they want their city to feel and what kind of harmonies influence the character's Requiem.

### *The Dancers*

While the stories told at the table center on the Kindred and their machinations, some of a vampire's greatest tools are the connections she's made throughout her Requiem. Even the Kindred can't be in more than one place at a time, so having allies and patsies to call in favors and pull strings to make things go her way significantly reduces the burden on the vampire. These allies, pawns, and advisors are all likely to have varying degrees of loyalty to the characters and may have split loyalties. Kindred allies are likely to have their own agendas, but powerful and influential members of kine society are likely to have been wooed by more than one faction amongst the Kindred as well. When creating Storyteller characters, either to serve as connections a player character has through backgrounds and merits or as featured characters in a chronicle, determining their motivations and desires will help the supporting cast feel as well-rounded and established as the characters. Some points to consider when creating Storyteller characters:

- Is this character blood-bonded? If not, what motivates her to work with the characters?
- How does this character benefit from interacting with the Kindred? (Note that it doesn't have to directly improve his life so much as just keep it from getting worse; the 'benefit' could be that the vampire doesn't kill his Vitae-addicted sibling.)
- What, if anything, could cause this character to turn on the player character(s)?

- What leverage, if any, does this character have over the player character(s)?
- How useful would other non-player character Kindred find this character?

### *The Ballroom*

Even if it no longer relies on concepts like monetary value or honor, any given society has an economy, and the All Night Society is no different. What makes the world go around once the fetters of human life fall away? Is the almighty dollar a cornerstone of the Invictus' hold on the city? Has the Nosferatu Prince decided the only useful thing in this world is a secret he hasn't yet learned? Figuring out how to participate in a culture that has marched on for centuries without them is a difficult task for new vampires, who can struggle to unlearn the machinations of mortal society and learn tools and trades of the Kindred's Danse Macabre. Most Kindred say their sires believed experience to be the best teacher, forcing their childe to learn how to make themselves useful in their new world. Offering only the barest guidance and watching the neonates sink or swim is a double-edged sword; the actions of the childe reflect on the sire, after all. Most fledgling vampires, given a loose set of guidelines by their sires, learn quickly which rules must be followed no matter what, and which ones they can break when no one's watching. Using the questions below can help characters establish how to become players in the larger game.

- What do the characters need to support themselves?
- What can the characters use to manipulate Storyteller characters?
- How important is traditional currency to Kindred society?
- How do the characters earn their resources (particularly if they have dots in the Resources Merit)?
- Who can the characters turn to when they need help?

### *The Melody*

Entering Kindred society usually means characters struggle to keep hold of the life they once knew. While many understand this on a superficial level, especially if they've been groomed for the Embrace, it may not entirely hit home until the change is complete. Starting all over in a place so familiar and yet so strange

is difficult for most young vampires, who have to reconcile the loss of their old lives with the start of the new, and find ways to keep their Touchstones without breaking the Masquerade. Their world is turned upside-down by the Embrace; how do the characters learn to cope in an unconventional city? How do they gather whatever capital circulates and keeps the Kindred from descending into chaos, and how might they be well- or ill-suited to the task? The answers to these questions all lie in the kind of setting the Storyteller built and the players wish to explore. While the questions above are things to explore over the course of the chronicle, below are a few points to consider when building the city itself. Creating an alternate setting like the ones described in **Chapter One** relies heavily on exploring the themes and tropes of the group's chosen genre through world building, and the questions below are meant to help build an appropriate atmosphere for any setting – even an unconventional one. These decisions color how the characters interact with their surroundings, and how they go about achieving their goals and overcoming obstacles.

- What were the character's lives like before their Embrace?
- How much of their old lives have they been able to continue participating in?
- How likely are high-ranking Kindred to use lower-ranking vampires in their schemes?
- How kind or unkind is the city to neonates? Fledglings? Ancillae?
- How attached or disassociated to mortal habits are the Kindred in this city?

## *Others in the Orchestra*

Vampires aren't the only supernatural beings that lurk behind human facades. Most supernatural groups usually keep to their own devices, though different denizen populations can converge within a city, offering new avenues for conflict or even some exceptionally odd allies.

**Werewolves:** While popular culture often pits werewolves and vampires against each other in eternal war, vampire covenants and werewolf packs aren't honor- or duty-bound to attack each other on sight and can even ally themselves if both parties are amenable. When incorporating werewolves into a **Vampire: The Requiem** game, it's common to ask why the groups are in conflict, but it often creates a more interesting narrative to consider why they might be working together. Is there a weaker coterie or oppressed covenant that has struck a deal with the wolves for protection? Perhaps the Prince struck a deal with them ages ago, when malevolent spirits ravaged the city?

**Mages:** Vampires are wary and distrustful of mages; it's hard to trust a being who can summon your most primal fears and banes with a thought. Incorporating mages into a **Vampire** game takes a light, careful hand. While they may work with arcane organizations like the Ordo Dracul or see value in the pursuits of the Mekhet, their own desire to unravel occult secrets often leads them to make the Kindred the subject of their studies –

something vampires hardly appreciate, especially when treated less as scholars and more like lab rats. Pitting the groups against each other without direct conflict works well; forcing them into a race to discover an artifact or unlock the secrets of an inscrutable occult text allows them to oppose each other without necessarily going toe-to-toe.

**Prometheans:** While Kindred may not recognize what a Promethean is, they can quickly place exactly what he is not. Not truly alive or dead, and not one of their own, most vampires despise Prometheans, and others fear the Disquiet they sow wherever they walk. Commonly considered a breach of the Kindred's sacred Masquerade, Prometheans are typically shunned and forcibly exiled from cities with large vampire populations. Finding a compelling reason for the Kindred to interact with one of the Created is often a temporary one. Does she need to be escorted across the city to avoid a pursuer? Has he heard of the Ordo Dracul's experiments, and wants to see what they can do for his kind?

**Changelings:** Vampires and changelings have some of the most potential to interact, especially in a city with a large Daeva population. Changelings, who feed on human emotion, are drawn to the excess and exuberance of human expression and the fantastic range of high to low the Daeva inspire in the kine. With one foot in our world and one foot in their own, changelings don't have the focus to prove much of a threat to the Kindred, and the two groups can coexist in relative peace, possibly without realizing the other exists. The way changelings and vampires rely on humans to keep their sense of self offers interesting avenues to explore; perhaps a vampire's Touchstone is also a changeling's anchor, or the vampire's Touchstone was replaced by a changeling's fetch.

**Hunters:** There is almost nothing that could possess a vampire to work alongside a hunter. For those mortals awakened by some unknown force to hunt down creatures of the night, Kindred make prime targets. There aren't many hunters that deviate from the "shoot first, ask questions later" mentality, making them a difficult group with which to negotiate. Hunters make excellent external threats to vampire communities, acting as a galvanizing force to otherwise-disparate groups. If the group is dead-set on including or interacting with a hunter, the question becomes: What in hell or on Earth could force the two groups to work together?

**Sin-Eaters:** Sin-Eaters, though rare, either coexist in an uneasy truce with the Kindred or rail against their practices, particularly if they leave traumatized dead or dabble in necromantic magics. As the Kindred aren't quite alive or dead, Sin-Eaters have little to do with them directly but will intervene if the lines begin to blur or cross at a vampire's hand. They can either be boons or bitter rivals to the Mekhet and the Ordo Dracul, and certainly don't approve of the aftermath left by the Circle of the Crone.

**Mummies:** Even rarer than Sin-Eaters, mummies are perplexing to the Kindred. They spend years in torpor, unwillingly, and awaken for an external and mysterious animus. Some speculate that mummies and vampires are related somehow, while others dismiss such wild speculation as a confusing of correlation and causation. Either way, mummies remain an uncommon enigma, with little opportunity to study and catalogue them.

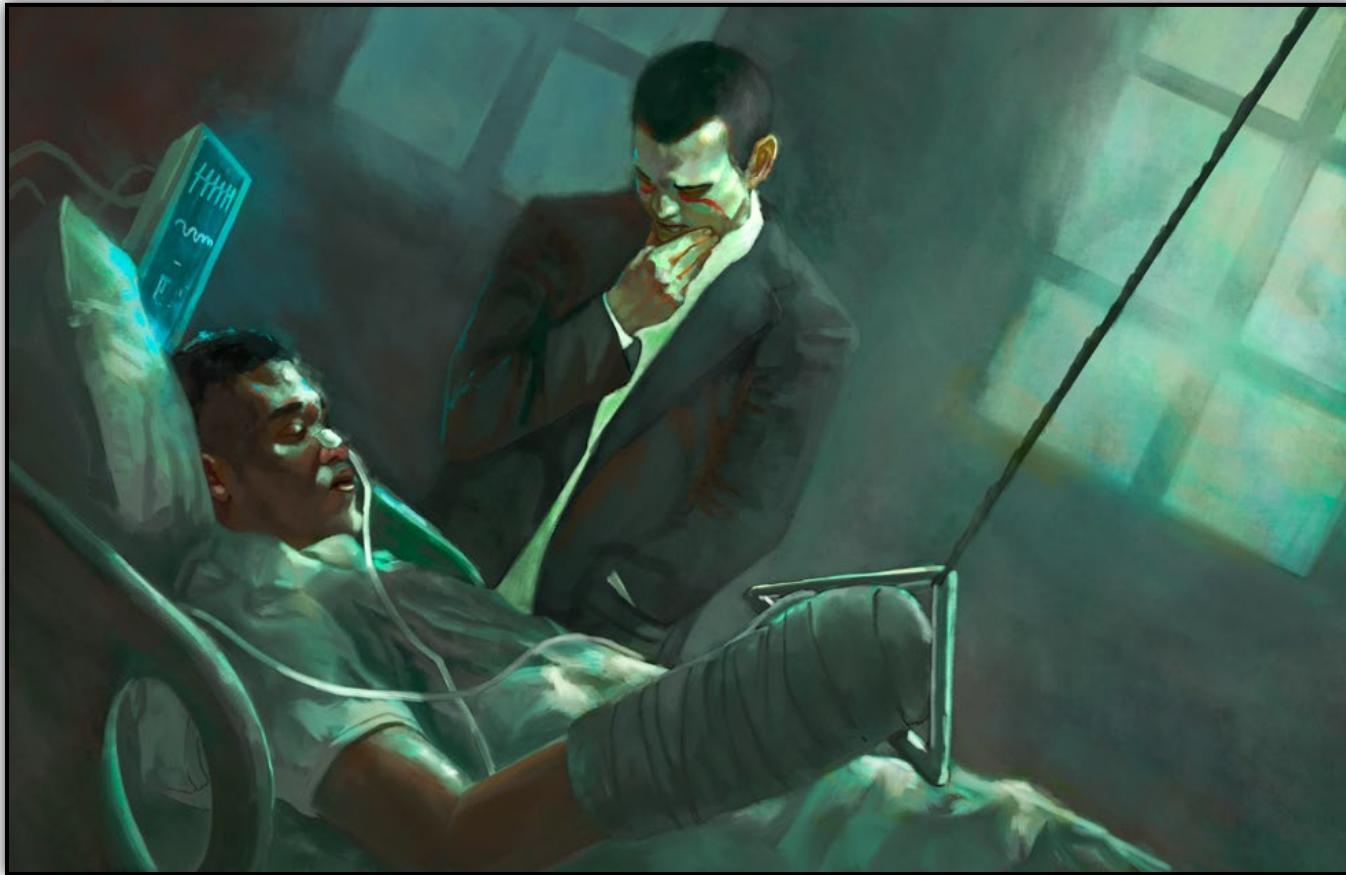
**Demons:** Vampires trust demons even less than they trust hunters. Demons exist, it appears to the Kindred, to prove that they aren't the master manipulators and masterminds they fancy themselves as. Their schemes pale in comparison to those of the God-Machine, and all their posturing and posing as masters of the night means little. Demons on the other hand give little thought to the vampires in their midst, other than to wonder if they might be working for the God-Machine. If demons exist to prove to vampires how little they know, there is one lesson the Kindred have taken away from them: All the "building cities and forging empires and playing chess with the mortal world over the ages" rhetoric? Remember that demons made the board, wrote the rules, and carved the pieces. So, ask yourself, who's really playing?

**Beasts:** Much like changelings, the Kindred and the Begotten can coexist without stepping on each other's toes, or work together in a sort of symbiosis. Beasts find it easy to get along with other monsters. They can even use the other's presence to their advantage, and in return can empower the stranger members of their brood. To that end, a Beast could have a vested interest in making sure the standing Prince stays in power, or in backing a new leader and bolstering her and her supporters. Of course, this support comes with its own cost as the vampires become embroiled in the Beast's own fight against misguided Heroes. Are the characters at the table insular, fearing outside influence? Or are they willing to learn a new way to navigate the *Danse Macabre*?

## *The Audience*

For every vampire there are hundreds of humans. Herd, retainers, allies, or ghouls are the living, thriving beings that make up the landscape of a city. They walk about in the day; they keep the businesses running, the politics flowing, and the heart of every city beating. While the vampires may steer the direction of a city, nothing happens without the mortals carrying out the course. No story in the Chronicle of Darkness is truly complete without the mortal world around the vampires. They need mortals for not just food, but also running their businesses, fighting their wars, and keeping them in touch with what it is to be alive. It's clear that Kindred need mortals far more than the mortals need them.

When Storytellers are creating mortals to fill out their chronicle, they should be certain to give a face to the most prominent living beings in the characters' lives. It is easy for a player to toss away a ghoul or some of their herd when they are simply nameless, faceless objects and points on a sheet. However, when an actual person with a name, goals, family, emotions, and history comes alive in a vampire's story, it heightens the tragedy of the inevitably awful things the vampire does to this person. As your players create their retainers, contacts, and herd, coach them to put names to each of these people and even brief backstories. The type of city, and Kindred therein, constantly influence the story of the mortal city around them. A Carthian-run political experiment looks far different from an Invictus stronghold.



## Ghouls

Ghouls are the halfway step between mortals and vampires in any chronicle. They are a living, breathing example of what it is to be human compared to the vampire's life even as they find themselves drowning in the supernatural world. Flesh out all ghouls fully with a backstory, name, and personal motivations. Ghouls, as PCs or NPCs, should have an ever-present life in the vampire's story. While the vampire might not consider them important, the vampire is the center of the ghoul's world. The Vinculum between a ghoul and a vampire makes that ghoul not only addicted to the regular consumption of that vampire's blood, but obsessively in love with the vampire's presence. That love does not always manifest as romantic love, it can be an insane level of loyalty or a deep familial bond. However, should a vampire neglect a ghoul, the ghoul's obsession only grows worse. A forgetful vampire has a ticking time bomb of a retainer on their hands within a few months of neglect.

Choosing to play a ghoul in the *Chronicles of Darkness* is a significant risk that comes with high reward. A ghoul's story is one step separate from the vampires around them. A ghoul player takes advantage of being able to walk in the daylight, function easily with other humans, and still retain their humanity. But they are never at the front lines of the political action in the nights the Kindred rule. Their masters debate the fate of the city while they are quiet in corners. They keep the police away from big scenes like Masquerade-breaking combat. Playing a ghoul is an emotional choice — it involves reminding vampires consistently of their lost humanity, taking actions outside of the main scenes, and walking down the path of losing their own humanity.

Ghouls do not stay normal mortals for long and should never forget the deep effects of blood addiction. They are a foil for the vampire who owns them, a weaker reflection of that vampire's clan, covenant, age, and what they have left of humanity. Inhuman Nosferatu allow their ghouls to become monstrosities early on. A bleeding-heart Daeva, however, does everything in his power to keep his ghoul as human as possible. Storytellers may encourage each player to make a secondary character who is a ghoul for another player. This gives the ghoul a real face, interactive motivations, but does not mean a single ghoul player is bored during vampire-only scenes.

## Touchstones

The struggle to retain humanity is the pinnacle tragedy of the vampiric story. In a Kindred's desperate attempt to hold onto the last scraps of what she once was, she reaches out to people who put her back in touch with her humanity. When creating a Touchstone, both player and Storyteller should keep in mind the goal of the character — to be the bastion of humanity that reminds the vampire of what they once were. The Touchstone is not an easily discarded retainer or routine food. Vampires hold them in much higher regard compared to any other mortal. Most

vampires refuse to allow the Blood to influence their Touchstone, as it would pull them away from their own humanity and risk the vampiric life corrupting them irreparably. Young vampires usually find Touchstones among the human life they used to keep. Examples of Touchstones for a young vampire include: a lover they had during mortal life, a blood relative, a teacher they had growing up, or a friend from school. Older vampires, however, do not have those mortal connections anymore and so it is more difficult to bond with a Touchstone, but also makes them more treasured. Some start grooming them as projects and find they care for the person too deeply to continue making them a retainer; others see reflections of their younger selves in an innocent human. A person can become a Touchstone for myriad reasons, but they should always be important and emotional.

Touchstones are well-rounded (usually) human characters who emotionally affect the Kindred as much as the Kindred's own coterie, covenant, or clanmates. Here are some questions to keep in mind when creating a Touchstone:

- **What is this person's daily life like?**
- Are they lower, middle, or upper class?
- **What are the most stressful things in this person's world?**
- Do they have other people relying on them?
- **What are their personal goals?**
- Do they have faith?
- **Why do they keep coming back to the Kindred?**
- What makes them place trust in this vampire and what could break that trust?

The deeper the Kindred player explores their motivations behind taking a Touchstone, the more compelling the roleplay. Be willing to take risks with a Touchstone to get to the meat of a character's humanity. As a Kindred player, here are some questions to use when developing the relationship with the character's Touchstone:

- **What was the first thing that caught the Kindred's attention about this person?**
- What sets this person aside from all other humans in the world?
- **What about this person touches closest to the Kindred's own humanity?**
- What about this person does the Kindred love?
- **What risks their anger?**
- How far would the Kindred go to protect their connection?
- **What is something in the past which tested their bond?**
- Has the Kindred ever considered revealing their secret to this human?

## Tensions and Conflict

*The night no longer felt safe, as it once did. They were infallible, or so he'd thought. Now they were driven from their havens, put to the stake and left for the sun, flushed from their hiding places and slaughtered like animals. They never once thought the sullen silence of those beneath them meant they were plotting, or that they could possibly unify enough to mount a successful coup. Now here he was, fallen among the grime and the muck, torn.*

*Swear fealty to his new masters, and give up the fight once and for all? Or do exactly as they had, and plot their demise?*

Below are three general temperaments for cities, and how Kindred on the “winning” or “losing” sides might feel or be treated. These examples are optional guidelines for including large-scale conflict within or between cities. The Storyteller and players can work together to decide where the characters fall within the conflict, if they want to explore it at all.

### *Nominal Peace*

Despite the constant backstabbing and machinations endemic to vampiric society, many cities operate entirely peacefully on most levels. There may be the occasional territory dispute, or an external threat that city must rally against as a whole, but diverse populations of vampires co-existing in relative peace is more common than most would expect.

Certain cities, especially those run by the Carthian Movement, tolerate all clans and covenants equally. When such cities are stable, their population is expected to respect the public peace and observance of the Masquerade. Of course, just because things appear peaceful on the surface doesn’t mean there isn’t conflict; clans, covenants, and coteries still fight over resources, territories, and hunting grounds, but are expected to resolve their issues quietly. If the matter at hand is something far-reaching, or nearing the point of boiling, Princes or their emissaries may step in to mediate, but they expect their word to be final; as such, the Kindred try to settle smaller, personal matters among themselves. Many consider the Princes in these cities to be weak, but it’s often far from the truth; Princes with apparently laissez-faire policies often have quieter, more insidious power, with representatives in all major factions steering things toward the Prince’s vision. Kindred living in these cities learn how to use subtlety to their advantage and how to cover their tracks; while bruisers have their place, they’re not the preferred weapon when things are supposed to be civilized and cordial.

### *All-Out War*

On the other side of that token, of course, are the cities in open conflict, either drawn on the lines of allegiance or blood. The violence and bloodshed is generally kept behind the veil of the Masquerade, but in notable occasions, all such decorum is thrown out the window, leaving the kine huddled in fear at night and questioning their sanity during the day. Such affairs

are short-lived if neighboring cities hear about the breach of confidence and have the power to silence the ones who have so gravely erred.

When a city has no clear leadership – a Prince with a tenuous-at-best hold on his city, or even a rival Prince declaring himself in an already-governed territory – open conflict leaves it unsteady and brimming with paranoia. Whether the Kindred employ guerrilla tactics against each other or engage in open warfare, few among them feel safe anywhere outside their havens. The decorum of Elysium may or may not persist; if it does, it often serves as a negotiation space for more civilized conflicts, where leaders of either side can meet and discuss concessions, ceasefires, and terms of engagement. Such practices are more common among older vampires accustomed to ‘gentleman’s warfare’ from their lifetimes, but younger Kindred less interested in bloodshed might also employ a negotiation table.

Of course, Kindred of any age are equally likely to enact a scorched-earth policy. Without a standing Elysium, cities in conflict tear themselves apart until one side prevails or both are so weakened that neither can continue to limp forward. Well-provisioned and powerful enclaves often avoid conflict themselves, sending their ghouls and any revenants out to solve the problem, only participating if all else fails. Meanwhile, weaker and less-outfitted groups often resort to Embracing swathes of kine to use as foot soldiers, which inevitably has the secondary effect of upending the careful ratio meant to ensure the Kindred in the city have a sufficient herd to feed off. Often a last-ditch effort, it usually relies on most being wiped out in the conflict to avoid having to support them once the dusts settles.

With a city in shambles and all decorum gone, Kindred find themselves with strange bedfellows. Sworn enemies find themselves united against a common foe, covenants without much in common defend the little ground they share, and the elite and the disenfranchised work together to attack their enemies from different angles. Desperate times call for desperate measures, forcing the Kindred to get creative and overlook their prejudices in order to survive. What are the circumstances that could force the Sanctified to partner with the Circle of the Crone, or the elite of the Daeva to empower and aid the lowest of the Nosferatu? How do the tactics of the Invictus and the Carthians complement each other, bolstering the other’s weaknesses and reinforcing their strengths? Conversely, what are the obstacles that would prevent one clan from working with another? Are there centuries-old grudges between coteries that can’t be overcome? What happens when an ally’s actions threaten a vampire’s Touchstone?

Consider as well the schisms that can happen within a clan, covenant, or coterie. If a group defects to make their own way, the power dynamics shift drastically – often for the worse for the divided parties, unless one joins a larger force. Sires and chilider find themselves on opposite sides of deadly conflict, outcasts can find a place among factions desperate for manpower, and friends and loved ones try to broker peace when they’re kept apart by old

promises and debts owed. While war has the potential to split even the strongest foundations, it can galvanize the most unlikely of forces into something stronger than any of its requisite parts the way only staring into the face of certain death can.

## *Tyrannical Reign*

Achieved with or without help from outsiders, the resolution of war in conflicted cities is often an iron-fisted, tyrannical reign by the new Prince apparent. Whoever places herself at the top must prove she is worthy of the position, and anyone who opposes her regime must be made an example of. Whether she installs members of her bloodline or covenant to encourage majority rule or attempts a more democratic approach, dissenters and those who disrespect the new systems have no place in her city, and she teaches all her subjects their lesson with extreme prejudice.

Majority reign often happens along covenant lines, though it can occasionally occur if a single clan dominates a city's population as well. In particularly rare cases, both of these instances converge, creating powerful and unshakable dynasties. Life goes well for the group (or groups, in certain instances) in

charge. The largest and choicest territories theirs to claim, they never want for victims when hunting and have robust herds, impressive havens, and powerful contacts. Kindred with personal agendas often have enough influence to set them in motion with ease, and while there's in-fighting and jockeying for higher positions within the regime, even the lowest among them are afforded opportunities of which 'outsiders' can only dream.

For the oft-oppressed minority groups, those clans or covenants outside the exclusive cult of leadership, things are more difficult. Gaining an audience with those in power requires going through a number of obfuscating and arbitrary channels, and even then they're likely to only speak to ghouls in the estate's service or low-ranking individuals. Most are left to hope their concerns are even heard, let alone addressed. They're often left to divide up whatever scraps of the city are left after the others stake their claims. At the same time, dissent and whispers of revolution are violently quashed, with the would-be uprising put to flame or sunrise. What constitutes conspiracy against the court varies, depending on the paranoia of those in charge. Paranoia rules the day for the underrepresented, who often create underground communities hidden as best as they can be from the iron hand of their leaders.

## *The Completed Requiem*

Once the Storyteller or group has established the tone, setting, and state of their city, it's time to put the pieces together and form the basis of the narrative the characters will play through. Mixing and matching the specifics can create endless scenarios, and shifting the style and focus of conflict can keep a chronicle feeling new and engaging, session after session. Below are examples of cities, combining the elements above into basic settings for parties to explore.

## *Hell Broken Loose*

*The city had been tearing itself apart as long as we could remember. It was just murmuring that some defected from the Church to join the Circle at first, but not long after that the rumors were explosively confirmed in a rather literal way — Elysium up in smoke, untold numbers injured or dead after the fire. Far more than we'd expected had gone over to the Mother's Army, and struck back against our ways in the Lancea et Sanctum.*

In this Mekhet-dominated city, the mysteries of Theben sorcery aren't enough for the masses, and many have defected to the Circle of the Crone, where they pursue the dangerous and alluring practice of Crúac. All decorum has broken down with the loss of Elysium; when its walls fell, so too did the curtain of the Masquerade. Characters can pick which side they'd like to join in the conflict, or play the risky game of being a mole or a double agent as the Witches seek to wrest control from the Sanctified, and the Church seeks to put the Acolytes to the stake and the fire. The Mother's Army champions their new Prince, while the Sanctified have locked ranks behind their standing ruler. Where does the party stand on a line drawn in blood and ash?

## *Members Only*

*We tried to bring a voice to the city. Tried. They just turned the music up louder, closed the doors, and doubled security. They run the fucking city like some exclusive nightclub, all VIP rooms and velvet ropes and invitation-only meetings. Meetings where they decide what to do with 'the rest of us.' They won't listen. They never do.*

*We'll just have to drown everything else out.*

Led and populated primarily by Daeva and Ventru, the Invictus have the city in a stranglehold. The Carthian Movement, recently slapped down and its members stripped of any status but their own, ruminates and licks its wounds in the corners it has left. They're only barely allowed in Elysium, and only if they're looking to repent. Spooking the herd to shake things up will only end in death; despite their never-ending party, the ones in charge live, die, and kill by the Masquerade. Characters can play the role of the oppressors or the oppressed, or someone outside of the dichotomy looking to shift the balance of power. Underneath the carefree, even reckless facade of the city, everyone looks over their shoulders to see who or what might be the next target when the hammer inevitably falls again. Will you set the target or run from the blow?

## *Organized Chaos*

*The entire city seems to run on the idea that it's better to ask forgiveness than permission. There are a lot of 'don'ts' and not so many 'do's,' mostly because the Council can't agree on anything, but each one of them sure knows what they want to ban.*

So if you disagree with one of the don'ts – if you don't want the bitch in charge of Ordo Dracul telling your Carthian ass what you can and can't do – go ahead and do it anyway. Your people will defend you if the others try to retaliate. If you and yours are strong enough, you can do whatever you want.

Run by a council of 10, comprising an elected leader from each clan and covenant, this city is a wash of conflicting interests and overlapping laws that keep its creaking foundation together. Its citizens all know their representatives and provide lip service to respecting those outside their own circles, but for the most part are left to their own devices. The only two agreed-upon laws across all factions are that Elysium is an open floor for anyone to air grievances or petition for policies, and that the Masquerade must be enforced. Where do the characters fall when they world is their oyster? What plans do they make when anything goes?

## Story Hooks

None of this matters without the meat of a game – the story. If you are having issues figuring out where to start your campaign, here are some ideas to start your plot. The players should choose the type of setting they want, start building characters and character ties before you choose from this list. It's also a great idea to simply ask your players what kind of story they are interested in telling – do they want to redeem their Beasts? Tell the downfall of a morally good Kindred? Are they interested in a war story or political intrigue? All these questions help you define the arc for your setting.

## Clan Hooks

Daeva storylines focus on beauty and social objectification. Possible Daeva plots include: a new arts company flourishing in town started by a young, brilliant actor who catches the Daeva's eye and soon the whole coterie is pulled into supporting this floundering endeavor; the beautiful destruction of a once-passionate painter who burns himself out serving his Daeva; or the Daeva's failure to inspire beauty in someone they loved as a mortal.

A Gangrel storyline always centers on the drives of their Beast. Story hooks could include: the Beast's hunger for more challenging prey, a Gangrel's struggle to control his Beast after slaughtering dozens of mortals in a frenzy, or an encounter with a stronger vampire's Beast and the Gangrel's first taste of fear in years.

Good Mekhet stories always include some form of secrecy. Perhaps the Mekhet overheard an assassination plot and is presented with the conundrum if they should act; a Mekhet coterie is hired as spies for the city's Prince and must decide between their loyalty to each other or their boss; or they stumble on the ghosts of an entire Kindred city mysteriously murdered by forces unknown, which are now stalking the Mekhet.

Nosferatu stories are of personal horror: A Nosferatu trying to regain their humanity while driving insane the only people willing to speak to them; the Haunt faces a blood shortage because mortals, having grown wise to their creep, suddenly fled the area; or a Nosferatu driven out of

their court getting vicious revenge on each Kindred who abandoned them.

Lastly, Venttrue tell stories of control: a young Venttrue's determination to rise up and take control of their whole court within a year; an old Venttrue looking for a replacement and unable to find anyone as suitable to rule as they are; or a coterie of Venttrue planning the downfall of a Carthian-ruled city because they don't think it's being done properly.

## Covenant Hooks

Carthian-themed stories are all about change. Possible hooks include: an early chronicle story where players examine the corruption of a city and make a long-term plan to overthrow the previous powers; the exploration of what happens to the change makers once they have succeeded and must keep a city long term; or how Carthians slowly turn into oppressors themselves once they have been in power too long.

*The Circle of the Crone tells stories of embracing the monster within, the power of the blood, and dangerous wisdom. As the army of the Mother of Monsters, Crone stories focus on seizing the power of the blood. Storytellers could: run players through attempt to call an old spirit through blood magic and, when successful, the Kindred claims to be possessed by the actual spirit of Mother Crone; humans in a nearby village realizing what the cult is doing on the edge of town and falling into a classic witch-burning frenzy; or a few of the young women in a local town trying to join the coven despite the warning tales.*

An Invictus story is that of feudalism in the modern age, with the Invictus as the nobles of our time. Invictus-centered plots include: the pressures of noblesse oblige – the city is struggling with a pandemic that is running through the mortal population and it is the Invictus' duty to protect their herd; the struggle of picking just the right retainers for control; the difficult in making the decision between the mayor or a senator as the best chess piece for control; and, for a true challenge, present the players a no-win scenario, where they must choose which assets to sacrifice to protect others.

*Lancea et Sanctum stories are those of damnation and temptation. Ideas include a carefully planned excursion into the city on a weekend to tempt the partying mortals with one each of the seven deadly sins; a wise elder Sanctified faltering in his beliefs so his congregation must step in and preach what they have learned; or a coterie of Sanctified trying to do work so good in a city they may start to clear the damnation from their souls (heresy among the Second Estate).*

There is power in Vitae and the Order knows it; every story from the Ordo Dracul should reflect that reaching for power. A Dragon story could start with a half-burned journal from a dead, brilliant occultist so the players spend the rest of the campaign trying to piece together the powerful secrets therein; a single Dragon discovering blood magic which allows them to become human again for a little while and the decision to share with their fellows or not; or a powerful experiment going horribly wrong and turning half the Dragons in a coterie into mad, ravenous beasts. There should always be an air of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde with the Ordo stories.

## Faces of the Night

Characters are central to the stories we tell, whether they belong to the players or are NPCs controlled by the Storyteller. The following characters are examples of how the clans and covenants intersect. They may be used by Storytellers to drop into a locale, or they may be used as inspiration for players to flesh out into a complete character.

### The Carthian Movement

#### THE WEALTHY SOCIALITE

##### Clan: Daeva

The Wealthy Socialite is a face known throughout the city by the All Night Society. She attends all the right parties and knows all the right Kindred. Her membership in the Carthian Movement is no secret, but it's rude to talk of politics at polite soirees. Young members of the Movement grouse about her not doing more to support the Revolution, but experienced Carthians know they couldn't operate without her funds keeping them afloat.

##### Mask (Martyr)

The Wealthy Socialite makes a show of sacrificing for her position of power. Her overbearing husband has impossible demands, while she maintains their prosperity in a male-dominated business world.

##### Dirge (Authoritarian)

The Wealthy Socialite loves nothing more than the attention her money brings. She is not a true believer in the Revolution. They need her though, and she makes sure they never forget it. Even outside of the Movement, her riches ensure she has a steady stream of Kindred groveling for favors.

##### Touchstone (Spouse)

In life, the Wealthy Socialite's husband leashed her by the purse strings. In death, a little Majesty makes sure he dances to her tune. Still, the sight of him reminds her of when they first met and the whirlwind romance that followed. She knows he's a liability she should cut loose, but the memories refuse to die.

##### Aspiration

Someday, the Wealthy Socialite will take her proper place at the top of the Carthian Movement. In the meantime, she's content to exact favors from as many of the local Kindred as possible.

### CARNIVAL WORKER

##### Clan: Gangrel

Often mistaken for a vagrant, the Carnival Worker travels from town to town along the fair circuit. While the festival is in town, he's a pair of hands doing

any odd job that needs doing — barker, ticket taker, setup, security, whatever. When the event pulls up its stakes, he does too and heads to the next one. He knows the routes well, and guides other Kindred to where he's going, for a price. More importantly, he helps the Firebrands organize. He passes messages from one city to the next and spreads a vision of the Revolution.

##### Mask (Rebel)

In life and death, the Carnival Worker refuses to conform to so-called normal society. A steady job is nothing more than a trap to force a person to obey. Only suckers fall for it. He found a way out.

##### Dirge (Nomad)

Deep in his blood, the Carnival Worker can't stay in one place for long. More than simply restless, his Beast feels trapped. He'd do anything to get away, even sell out the Revolution.

##### Touchstone (Murderer)

One night the Carnival Worker was mugged by a young junkie after money for his next hit. The bullet went through its mark, but the guy kept standing. Since then he's made sure the kid stayed scared sober.

##### Aspiration

The Carnival Worker desires freedom above all else. He'll be a Firebrand as long as it serves him, but he's slowly collecting favors in case he needs to disappear in a hurry.

### PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

##### Clan: Mekhet

Kindred always need dirt on each other. Who's fucking who? Where are the bodies hidden? For a price, the Private Investigator can find out. His unique skill set means no secret is safe from him should he take an interest, and he's always interested. The Revolution can't win on ideals alone, after all. Knowledge is power, and it needs power over those in authority. With the right blackmail, the sheriff looks the other way. Threaten the right mortal, and the Prince will grant any favor.

##### Mask (Questioner)

What secrets can damn a man? The Private Investigator must know. In his profession, no secret can stay buried long. The harder people work to

keep their secrets hidden, the more he redoubles his efforts.

### **Dirge (Conspirator)**

The Private Investigator is fascinated by the tangled web of lies Kindred weave. He can't help himself from adding to it. If a situation seems like it's going to resolve itself too quickly, he'll make sure someone's secret comes to light just so he can watch the dead scramble to cover themselves.

### **Touchstone (The Orphan)**

Before his Embrace, the Private Investigator handled a case involving a deadbeat dad. Over the course of his investigation, he got to know the daughter. Even now, he continues to check in on her and makes sure she has everything she needs.

### **Aspiration**

The Private Investigator wants to see the who's who of the other covenants taken down a peg, especially the Prince. One night soon, he will reveal all the skeletons in their closets.

## **STUDENT PROTESTER**

### **Clan: Ventre**

Raised in a conservative household, college life opened the Student Protester's eyes to the injustice that permeates all levels of society. The Student Protester sees the rot and her blood burns to do something about it. Naturally charismatic and a gifted organizer, she quickly aligned with the Revolution after her exposure to Kindred society. Despite her young age, she is a rapidly rising star in the Movement. She is politically savvy and knows what pressure to apply to get results. Even with how the Firebrands are prone to infighting, she still manages to achieve cohesion and get her Kindred working on the tasks for which they are most suited.

### **Mask (Visionary)**

The Student Protester has a clear vision of the society she wishes to create. It's that vision she uses to unite everyone and inspire them to fight for her Revolution.

### **Dirge (Idealist)**

The Student Protester's Beast thrills every time she rises higher in the Movement. She sees her ideal future with absolute clarity. Those who don't must be brought to heel. For their own good, she'll take absolute control.

### **Touchstone (Friend With Benefits)**

Before her Embrace, the Student Protester shared a special friendship with her roommate that blossomed into something more. Being dead now complicates things, but she's determined to make the relationship work.

### **Aspiration**

Her girlfriend is starting to ask questions. The Student Protester realizes she needs to find a way to involve her in the climb to the top of the Movement somehow without violating the Masquerade.

## *The Circle of the Crone*

## **LOCAL NEWS ANCHOR**

### **Clan: Daeva**

The Local News Anchor is the face known and trusted by nearly everyone in the city. Her nightly report showcases all the major events in the city worth talking about — everything from local celebrity gossip to hard-hitting scandals in the metro government. She smooth talks her way into people's confidence, gaining access to places and information that should be closely guarded secrets. Despite knowing better, her subjects can't help themselves. The stories she's truly interested in, though, are the ones she can't report: the strange lights workers see in the subway tunnels late at night, the electrical buzzing noises in the park during a lunar eclipse. These stories lead to greater mystical understanding for the Acolytes.

### **Mask (Social Chameleon)**

The Local News Anchor could always travel in any social circle, a trait she puts to good use. She's the neutral party everyone trusts with their stories, no matter how dangerous or far-fetched.

### **Dirge (Questioner)**

Everyone hides something. Nothing is ever what it seems on the surface. The Local News Anchor knows the truth is never as it seems and questions everything. She does whatever it takes to get to the heart of the matter.

### **Touchstone (Former Partner)**

Her cameraman is the only person willing to follow her into any situation in which she finds herself, making her look good the entire time. She longs to reveal the truth to him, but she knows her secret would destroy him.

### **Aspiration**

The Local News Anchor has seen enough to know that the world is a lie. She wants nothing more than glimpse beyond the veil to the true workings of reality.

## **RIOT GIRL**

### **Clan: Gangrel**

The Riot Girl hasn't been dead long, but she's devoted to the Mother's Army. She's the sledgehammer applied to kneecaps when the Circle

of the Crone needs muscle. In life, she beat asshole misogynists to bloody pulps in defense of herself and her friends. Now she's in the thick of a whole new sisterhood the powers that be want to tear down. She's not about to let them — these so-called "Kindred" bastards have the most punchable faces she's ever seen.

### **Mask (Competitor)**

The Riot Girl is a fierce competitor up for any challenge, and right now her biggest challenge is the roller derby championship. She knows her team is the best and is eager to prove it. She'll carry them to their rightful place at the top, just like always.

### **Dirge (Monster)**

The Riot Girl loves causing pain. Nothing is more exquisite than feeling bones crunching under her fists. Luckily for her, the Circle of the Crone provides plenty of worthy targets of her wrath.

### **Touchstone (Victim's Lover)**

After a match, the she got hot and heavy with her teammate's boyfriend. Things went further than she meant, and now he's dead. Her teammate doesn't know about the affair or the murder, and the Riot Girl will do anything to keep it that way.

### **Aspiration**

The Riot Girl can't wait for the night the Mother's Army is the dominant force in her city. Until that night arrives, she's happy to smash the smug looks off of anyone who dares bring her down.

## **GRAFFITI ARTIST**

### **Clan: Mekhet**

The Graffiti Artist moves unseen through the city streets, keeping a watchful eye on Kindred and mortal alike. The absurdity of their nightly routine calls to him. Their constant comings and goings serve as his muse, and the walls and sidewalks along the neighborhoods he stalks provide his canvas. His work is known for its satirical insight throughout his city's artist community, even if his name is not. Fellow Acolytes recognize his work for other reasons. It is part of the Cacophony and hides messages for the Mother's Army. It warns of dangers to the Circle of the Crone, points to safe havens for Witches, or contains overheard plans from the other covens.

### **Mask (Spy)**

The Graffiti Artist knows everything that goes down in his city yet goes to great lengths to make sure he remains unidentifiable. A true artist maintains the mystery.

### **Dirge (Perfectionist)**

Art gives his existence meaning. The Graffiti Artist is never truly satisfied with any of his work. While he

normally begins and finishes a work in a single night, he occasionally revisits pieces that don't meet his standards — a practice that once came dangerously close to unmasking him.

### **Touchstone (Witness)**

The Graffiti Artist blends in among the city's homeless population. They've seen what he's capable of and welcome his protection. Their struggles keep him grounded, and when he's with them, his anonymity is assured.

### **Aspiration**

The Graffiti Artist continues to provide support to the Circle of the Crone, although he dreams of a time when his art is mentioned along with the likes of Banksy.

## **RECLUSIVE OCCULTIST**

### **Clan: Nosferatu**

Every city has that one house that seems permanently shrouded in mist and shadow. It's the house where school-age kids dare each other to knock on the door, though none except the most foolish actually go through with it. In this city, it's the residence of the Reclusive Occultist. He cares little for the world outside his walls. He ventures out only long enough to feed, although human curiosity ensures a certain amount of blood willingly walks up to his door. He spends his time reading tomes of the otherworldly and theories of the arcane. Knowledge is, after all, the greatest power.

### **Mask (Scholar)**

The Reclusive Occultist has a reputation in the local occult community for his uncanny ability to dig up lost scraps of lore. He's willing to go to any length to fill out his personal library and will do the same for anyone who pays his price.

### **Dirge (Deviant)**

He is well aware of his status as a local urban legend and revels in it. When trespassers wander onto his property, he makes sure they leave so frightened they'll never disturb him again. If he needs a sacrifice for an infernal ritual, a missing person only adds to the legend.

### **Touchstone (Intrepid Detective)**

One particularly foolhardy girl rang his doorbell on a dare long ago. Far from being scared, she was fascinated by the grotesque artifacts. In the intervening years she continued to come around, wanting to learn all the mysteries of the occult.

### **Aspiration**

The Reclusive Occultist cares nothing for politics. He joined the Acolytes for their mystic knowledge. He delves ever deeper into Crúac and won't be satisfied until obtaining complete mastery.



## *The Invictus*

### WORKING STIFF

#### **Clan: Gangrel**

Manual labor was always the Working Stiff's bread and butter. He was the biggest and the strongest, so he always got the heaviest loads. No matter how hard he worked or how many hours he put in, bills always piled up. He always thought death would finally be his way out. How wrong he was. Now instead of working for the man, he's working for the Prince. He sees other Kindred partaking in the finer things, but his debts just keep growing. Still, he believes that if he keeps working, he'll finally get his due.

#### **Mask (Competitor)**

The Working Stiff is always up for a challenge. If someone carries a crate, he takes two. If someone claims to be the strongest, he'll arm wrestle them. He'll outdo any physical challenge set before him.

#### **Dirge (Conformist)**

As much as he complains about never getting ahead, the Working Stiff wouldn't know what to do without the structure his work provides him. He'll

follow any order, even at great personal risk, as long as there's a promise of pay after the task is complete.

#### **Touchstone (The Orphan)**

He may be dead, but he still has mouths to feed. The Working Stiff doesn't see his children as often anymore, but they're not far from his thoughts. He dutifully sends his child-support check every month.

#### **Aspiration**

The Working Stiff just wants to move up the ranks. He knows he'll probably never get the corner office, but he'd be satisfied not having to scrounge from one paycheck to the next.

### BIG DATA ANALYST

#### **Clan: Mekhet**

While he may not live in Silicon Valley, the Big Data Analyst embodies the culture. He prefers the company of money to people and loves his algorithm more than anyone. His is a strategy of disruption, and he is working on the ultimate in disruptive technology for the First Estate. He is perfecting an algorithm to data mine the Cacophony looking for patterns that reveal their rivals' next moves. No more will the Conspiracy of his city need to rely on informants who betray their masters so easily. Soon he will have all the knowledge his superiors can buy without leaving the comfort of his haven.

### **Mask (Perfectionist)**

Technology is the future. Humans are too fallible to compete with the efficiency of a computer. It never tires, never makes a mistake, and as long as it's designed correctly, is incorruptible. The Big Data Analyst works tirelessly to make the future now.

### **Dirge (Survivor)**

Greed is the Big Data Analyst's true motivator. In life he wrote algorithms to give himself an advantage at the stock market. Now he does the same for the Kindred in the hopes he'll never want for blood again.

### **Touchstone (Former Partner)**

The Big Data Analyst still corresponds with his analytics professor over email and social media. His professor opened his eyes to the possibilities of data mining, and he still feels a spark of wonder when they discuss data theory.

### **Aspiration**

The Big Data Analyst wants to finish his algorithm as soon as possible. He is convinced it will win him enough prestige with the Invictus that he will never want for anything again.

## **DIRTY COP**

### **Clan: Nosferatu**

She joined the police with idealistic notions of protecting and serving, but everyone on the local force has done something shady. She never dared go to Internal Affairs for fear of retaliation. Fed up with everyone else getting ahead through corruption, the Dirty Cop finally caved. She thought the money came from the mob. She did their dirty work too well — the Invictus brought her into the fold. She's all in with the First Estate now because she knows they'd force her to watch the sun rise otherwise. On the bright side, no one in the precinct dares mess with her anymore.

### **Mask (Follower)**

The Dirty Cop has learned to go with the flow. She carries out other's wishes without giving them a second thought. She doesn't dare think too hard about her situation.

### **Dirge (Idealist)**

Despite everything, the Dirty Cop still has a spark of idealism. She does her best to kill it, but that inner voice of who she used to be still gnaws at her. Eventually, it's going to get it her into trouble or worse.

### **Touchstone (House of Birth)**

Before joining the police, the Dirty Cop was close with her mother. They talked on the phone daily and got together every chance they got. Worse than not being able to stand herself, she couldn't bear her mother's judgement. Now she doesn't dare make contact since it would only doom her, too.

### **Aspiration**

The Dirty Cop is desperate for a way out. The First Estate controls everything though, and she believes she's cursed to be under their control for eternity.

## **LAWYER**

### **Clan: Ventrue**

The rule of law is the only thing keeping society from descending into brutal anarchy. The Lawyer doesn't just understand the law, she is the pillar upholding civilization. After her Embrace, she quickly realized Kindred need a strong guiding hand even more than mortals. She joined the Establishment and went to work. She keeps the mortal authorities from coming after her Prince and brings the full weight of the law down on the First Estate's enemies. In the halls of Elysium, she passionately argues for the Invictus' right to rule.

### **Mask (Conformist)**

Law and order mean everything to the Lawyer. She follows the law to the letter and expects everyone to do so, too. Sometimes this puts her at a disadvantage to her enemies who don't follow her code, but she would rather lose than compromise her principles.

### **Dirge (Authoritarian)**

The lawyer is unmatched in her skill at using the law as a lethal weapon. She does not abide challengers to her authority, and anyone who goes against her quickly regrets it.

### **Touchstone (Spouse)**

Her enemies and allies alike think the Lawyer is absolutely heartless. Despite all appearances, that's not true. She is devoted to her wife. She knows the Lawyer's secret and is a willing vessel to slake her lover's thirst.

### **Aspiration**

Keeping her Prince in power is a nightly challenge. Sometimes it feels like he actively works against her with his numerous indiscretions. Still, she firmly believes he is better than the alternatives. If she could make one wish reality though, she'd drive the Carthian Movement from her city. They are the antithesis of everything she believes.

# The Lancea et Sanctum

## NIGHTCLUB WAITRESS

### Clan: Daeva

In life, the Nightclub Waitress was a devout believer. Her Embrace broke her faith. How could an all-powerful, loving God permit the curse to exist? The inescapable conclusion, she realized, is that her God is either callous or weak. Either way, He certainly doesn't warrant her respect. She became one of the Sanctified not out of devotion, but as a "fuck you" to the God she once loved. She doesn't believe the Second Estate's tenets, but she is all in on their methods. She works at a popular nightclub frequented by the who's who of her city's elite, including wealthy religious leaders with enough influence to keep their visits out of the papers. When she spots them, she offers irresistible temptation followed by damnation.

### Mask (Courtesan)

The Nightclub Waitress knows how to show self-righteous assholes a good time, not that it takes much. Since her revelation, she's convinced they all secretly want to go to hell.

### Dirge (Deviant)

The Nightclub Waitress can't stand divine authority and does everything she can to weaken God's grip on the world. She takes His mortal servants from Him. She has her sights set on the Second Estate next.

### Touchstone (One That Got Away)

In spite of everything, the Nightclub Waitress still keeps tabs on her former church group. She was going to share her revelation with them, but she can't bring herself to break their spirits.

### Aspiration

Mortals are trivial to corrupt. The Nightclub Waitress is slowly finding like-minded Sanctified. Soon, she'll start corrupting the dead, too.

## LIBRARIAN

### Clan: Mekhet

The Librarian tends to the theological books and holy relics kept by Lancea et Sanctum in her city. She is a scholar, looking for insight into the divine plan for all of creation. She seeks out new writings and new artifacts with which to gain greater understanding. Any Kindred with questions are welcome in her library. She helps them with their research and patiently answers all their inquiries. She only asks for a small donation in return to

assist in expanding the collection and the building's upkeep. If her collection is threatened she unleashes her Beast to become a bloodstained angel of vengeance.

### Mask (Guru)

The Librarian is a fount of divine knowledge. She spent many years in quiet study and is eager to pass on her wisdom to others who seek truth. For those on a truly pious spiritual journey, she will even allow the use of the library's mystical artifacts.

### Dirge (Martyr)

The Librarian would gladly sacrifice herself to keep the knowledge in her library safe. Some of the relics in her collection are extremely powerful and must be kept out of the wrong hands at all cost.

### Touchstone (Therapist)

The pastor of the church the Librarian grew up in was an inspiration to her. His command of scripture and advice following her confessions is her guiding light.

### Aspiration

The Librarian's books detail certain religious artifacts that have been lost to time. She is convinced they still exist and is determined to recover them.

## STREET GRIFTER

### Clan: Nosferatu

The Street Grifter prowls the city's nightlife looking for an easy mark. He doesn't need the money: The Second Estate takes care of all his worldly needs. No, he's after souls. His curse corrupts everything near him. He can either let it destroy him, or he can put it to use serving a higher calling. After every natural disaster, victims come forward saying how much the experience taught them about family and faith. Only by losing everything do people see what is truly important. The Street Grifter is a walking, intelligent, natural disaster choosing those most in need of saving.

### Mask (Deviant)

The Street Grifter walks with the lowlives of mortal society. Those with a pulse mistake him for a pure con artist, swindling without remorse. His cons may last an hour, or months. Either way, he leaves his victims completely destitute.

### Dirge (Penitent)

Poor choices in life left him dead with his soul damned for all eternity. He learned his lesson the hard way. Now his existence is one of endless regret. His methods may be harsh, but he's determined not to let his fate befall anyone else.

### Touchstone (The Ex)

In life, the Street Grifter never realized just how much his boyfriend really meant to him. He doesn't dare

make contact out of fear his corruption will spread. The absence cuts him to the core every night.

### Aspiration

The Street Grifter won't let himself end a night without pulling off at least one con. Too much is at stake to neglect his duty.

## PROFANE PRIEST

### Clan: Ventrue

The Profane Priest is a true believer — more devout dead than he ever was alive. Before joining the All Night Society, he took a sabbatical from his parish in search of direction from God. The Lancea et Sanctum found him instead. Now, the Beast raging within him is all the proof he needs that true evil exists in this world. He uses his status in the Church to keep mortals on the path of righteousness. He knows Kindred can never walk the path of light, but he leverages the Second Estate to direct the damned to commit the necessary atrocities not meant for those with souls.

### Mask (Nurturer)

The Profane Priest cares deeply for the souls in his parish. He listens carefully to their confessions and measures out penance, so they may avoid hell's grip.

### Dirge (Authoritarian)

He knows beyond a shadow of doubt he's damned, but that doesn't stop the Profane Priest from enjoying the power that belongs to the Sanctified. Not all of his orders are for the greater good. Sometimes, he only wants to see how high Kindred go when he says jump.

### Touchstone (Gravesite)

The Profane Priest can't lead his human congregation in Mass as often as he once did, but those occasions remind him of his life before he lost his soul and gives him fleeting hope he might one day avoid hell's embrace.

### Aspiration

The more Kindred the Profane Priest can bring under the banner of the Lancea et Sanctum, the more meaning he brings to his damnation. He hopes it will someday open a path toward reclaiming his soul.

## The Ordo Dracul

## DRUG DEALER

### Clan: Daeva

Chemistry is alchemy refined to sublime perfection. Chemistry underlies everything in the world. Even life itself is nothing more than a glorified chemical reaction.

Why shouldn't Kindred use chemistry to gain better understanding of their existence? The Drug Dealer concocts new formulas — new, potent substances to unlock perceptions and free the mind from its earthly limitations. Mortals are his lab rats. He never pressures them, but they always come back to try his newest offering. Only after he refines his formula does he deem it fit for Kindred consumption. His fellow Dragons alone are worthy of the new vistas he unlocks.

### Mask (Perfectionist)

The Drug Dealer can't abide a substandard product. His ingredients are carefully measured out. His equipment is kept immaculately clean to avoid any contamination. Everything he creates is tested to exacting standards. His customers demand a transformative experience, and that's what he provides.

### Dirge (Junkie)

A dealer should never sample his own wares, but the Drug Dealer just can't help himself. That's the whole reason he got into the business after all. When all is said and done, the only mental state he wants to alter is his own.

### Touchstone (Former Partner)

The Drug Dealer's uncle taught him his trade. Most of his mortal clients come from his time working for his uncle. While he doesn't have direct contact with his uncle anymore, he still keeps the competition off his back.

### Aspiration

In one of his early experiments, the Drug Dealer had a vision for a new Coil. He's refining his formula to bring himself understanding of it.

## STREET FIGHTER

### Clan: Gangrel

There is money to be made fighting, especially if the fighters know how to put on a show and actually spill blood. The Street Fighter knows how to do both. Mortals pose no threat to her, so she rakes in the cash. While these fights are good for money, they don't challenge her. She joined a Kindred fighting ring to hone herself to the next level. Other members of the Ordo Dracul want to better themselves by physical alterations. She believes the potential to surpass their limitations already exists in all vampires. It just takes dedication, training, and a great deal of pain tolerance to unlock it.

### Mask (Competitor)

When others hit her, she hits back harder. When others crumble, she keeps standing. The Street Fighter won't back down from any opponent.

### Dirge (Masochist)

Where others seize up when faced with overwhelming pain, it drives the Street Fighter. Pain

lets her know she's surpassing her limits. It gives her existence meaning and she knows it's fundamental to her transformation.

### **Touchstone (Terminal Patient)**

The Street Fighter can't stop thinking about one of her fellow professional fighters. She suffered a grievous injury in the ring and is now confined to a hospital bed.

### **Aspiration**

The Street Fighter wants to prove herself against the strongest Kindred in the city. After that, she'll take on the top fighters in the world. Only then will she become what she was always meant to be.

## **PLASTIC SURGEON**

### **Clan: Nosferatu**

The Plastic Surgeon honed her skill for years before the Embrace. A burn victim herself, she devoted her career to allowing the disfigured to walk in public without enduring the same stares from adults and horrified shrieks from children as she did. Her first act as a Defiant was to operate on herself. Fueled by her Beast and a lifetime of frustration, she reimaged herself as a predator almost, but not quite, passable as human. Now she is the hand of the Dragons. After the others research and draft plans, she creates, bringing their theories into bloody reality.

### **Mask (Perfectionist)**

She is a sculptor, and flesh is the Plastic Surgeon's medium. She is meticulous in her work. Every tool in its place. Every cut, every stitch is carefully planned out. Her work is transformative, and she won't settle for anything less than perfection.

### **Dirge (Monster)**

The Plastic Surgeon recreates people anew, transforming mortal and Kindred alike. She holds all the power over anyone on her operating table. Her work can be a blessing or a curse, and she delights in cursing her enemies.

### **Touchstone (Witness)**

The Plastic Surgeon's nurse has been with her ever since she started her practice. She's the only normal person who never flinched or shied away from her, at least before she joined the ranks of the dead.

### **Aspiration**

The Plastic Surgeon's heard rumors of a secret Ordo Dracul technique of molding flesh with nothing more than a touch and the Blood. If it exists, it will be hers.

## **COLLEGE PROFESSOR**

### **Clan: Ventrue**

Even in life, the College Professor was more interested in his research than his students. Since joining the ranks of the Dragons, the new studies he oversees consume him. As long as he nominally covers his duties to the university, a few well-placed words with the dean keep his department's resources flowing to his work. All he needs are a few graduate assistants to teach and make sure his name continues appearing in the right academic journals. The student body provides an ample pool of test subjects for the Ordo Dracul. A certain percentage of students burn out every semester. He prioritizes quality over quantity in his research, so few ask questions when one of his students vanishes.

### **Mask (Guru)**

He's not the most personable of the university's faculty, but the College Professor maintains an air of dignified authority. He is the expert his peers seek, and the voice of guidance to unsure students.

### **Dirge (Authoritarian)**

The College Professor doesn't just mold impressionable young minds, he delights in breaking them. When some upstart has the audacity to challenge intellectual superiority, he doesn't hesitate to shut them down in the most public and humiliating way possible.

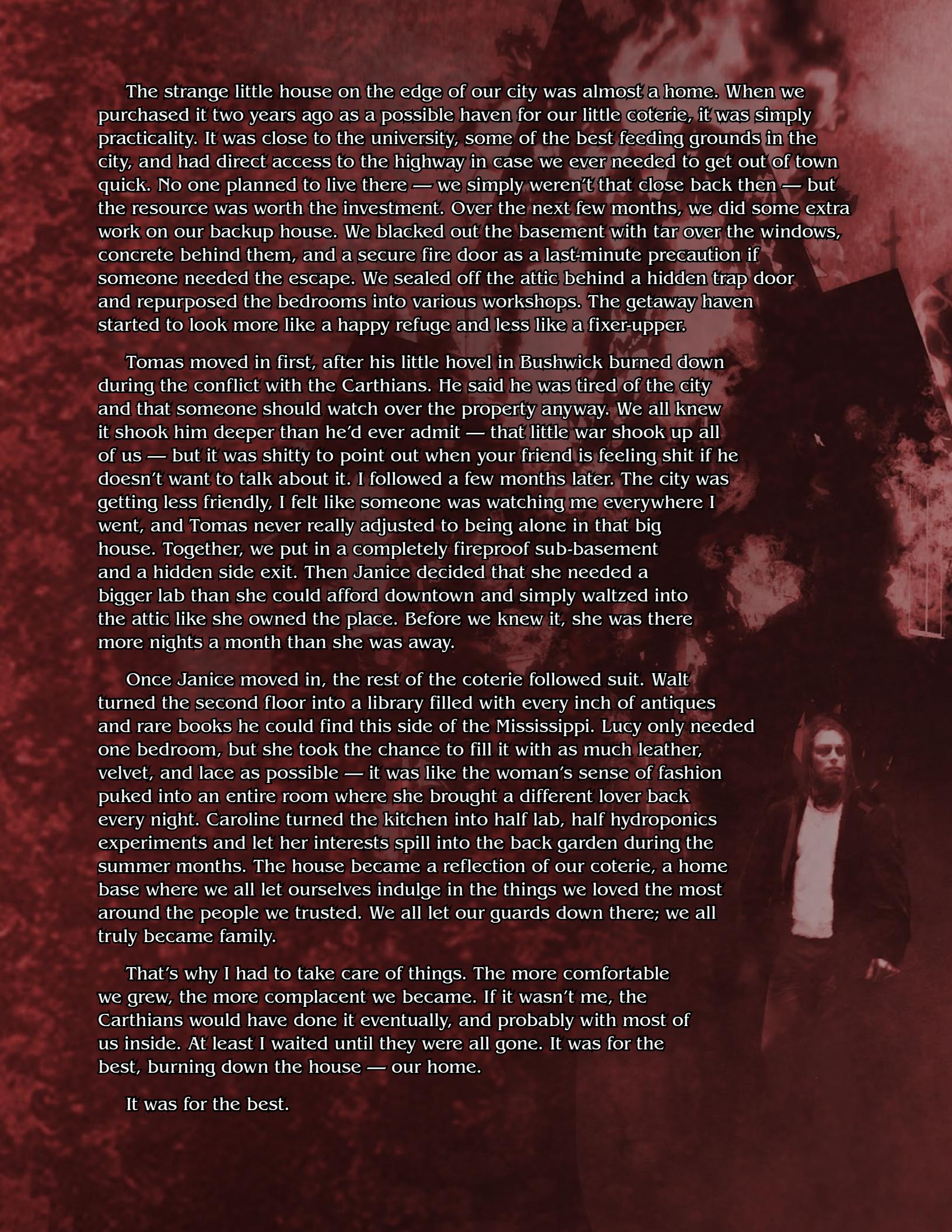
### **Touchstone (Friend with Benefits)**

Before his Embrace, the College Professor respected one of his colleagues from another department. They would regularly get together and discuss students or the university over coffee. Even in death, he never misses a date with him.

### **Aspiration**

The College Professor is the foremost researcher for the Dragons in his city. His goal is to discover a new Coil.





The strange little house on the edge of our city was almost a home. When we purchased it two years ago as a possible haven for our little coterie, it was simply practicality. It was close to the university, some of the best feeding grounds in the city, and had direct access to the highway in case we ever needed to get out of town quick. No one planned to live there — we simply weren't that close back then — but the resource was worth the investment. Over the next few months, we did some extra work on our backup house. We blacked out the basement with tar over the windows, concrete behind them, and a secure fire door as a last-minute precaution if someone needed the escape. We sealed off the attic behind a hidden trap door and repurposed the bedrooms into various workshops. The getaway haven started to look more like a happy refuge and less like a fixer-upper.

Tomas moved in first, after his little hovel in Bushwick burned down during the conflict with the Carthians. He said he was tired of the city and that someone should watch over the property anyway. We all knew it shook him deeper than he'd ever admit — that little war shook up all of us — but it was shitty to point out when your friend is feeling shit if he doesn't want to talk about it. I followed a few months later. The city was getting less friendly, I felt like someone was watching me everywhere I went, and Tomas never really adjusted to being alone in that big house. Together, we put in a completely fireproof sub-basement and a hidden side exit. Then Janice decided that she needed a bigger lab than she could afford downtown and simply waltzed into the attic like she owned the place. Before we knew it, she was there more nights a month than she was away.

Once Janice moved in, the rest of the coterie followed suit. Walt turned the second floor into a library filled with every inch of antiques and rare books he could find this side of the Mississippi. Lucy only needed one bedroom, but she took the chance to fill it with as much leather, velvet, and lace as possible — it was like the woman's sense of fashion puked into an entire room where she brought a different lover back every night. Caroline turned the kitchen into half lab, half hydroponics experiments and let her interests spill into the back garden during the summer months. The house became a reflection of our coterie, a home base where we all let ourselves indulge in the things we loved the most around the people we trusted. We all let our guards down there; we all truly became family.

That's why I had to take care of things. The more comfortable we grew, the more complacent we became. If it wasn't me, the Carthians would have done it eventually, and probably with most of us inside. At least I waited until they were all gone. It was for the best, burning down the house — our home.

It was for the best.

# Chapter Three

# CLOSER THAN FRIENDS

*I woke up one morning thinking about wolves and realized that wolf packs function as families. Everyone has a role, and if you act within the parameters of your role, the whole pack succeeds, and when that falls apart, so does the pack.*

— Jodi Picoult

Coteries are one of the easiest ways to help players and characters bond within a **Vampire: The Requiem** campaign. The next chapter contains most of the information you will need to build exciting story around coteries. It discusses how to make a coterie, what happens when vampires within coteries grow too close, example coteries, and offers a new variation of Climbing the Ladder focused on coterie gameplay.

## *Building a Coterie*

Coteries are the heart of collective storytelling in a vampire campaign. At their core, Kindred are loners whose beasts are constantly challenging each other, but such a lonely existence becomes maddening after a few decades – much less thousands of years. Most games where the players wish to create a collective experience together – even if their characters are at odds with each other – revolve around coteries. Building a coterie with all the players' collective input, while building the individual characters, makes for a more cohesive chronicle. Use these steps early in the process of campaign building and they will make group story easier as the chronicle continues.

In the initial stages of building a coterie, a Storyteller sits all her players down around the table and directs them through the following steps to help build deeper character ties between the player characters. These questions can come before or after players have done the initial steps of climbing the ladder for their individual characters, but should still happen in early character creation.

## *Relationship Building*

Once again, have players sit across the table from each other. The Storyteller instructs the players to pick someone across the table, reads them the questions, and then lets the players discuss for up to five minutes per relationship question. By the end of this exercise, players should have personal background ties to at least two people in their coterie. These ties are outside of the collective coterie background the whole group develops together – they allow the players to help focus on more personal stories while still supporting other characters' stories

in their group. After the five minutes are up, the players return to the table and start the next portion of the exercise. They do not need to share these character ties with the group at large, unless people wish to have a wholly open narrative campaign.

Positive relationships come first. Instruct the players, once they step away, to build a reason why their two characters have positive feelings towards each other. Have them build this relationship from a multitude of reasons – it does not have to be a single scene. The characters could always end up in battles together, fighting side by side, and now understand each other's tactics better than anyone else. One could have saved the other's life by uncovering an assassination plot. They could be on the road to becoming lovers. No matter the reason, this is the person in the coterie who has your back when things get tough.

Next, the players should change partners and build a negative relationship with another player. These relationships should not be so vicious that they will tear the coterie apart; they are the creeping discomforts between people that slowly break apart social circles over time. Perhaps one of the Kindred caught the other betraying the coterie to the Prince about a minor matter and is keeping it as blackmail material, but still doesn't trust the other Kindred. Maybe the Kindred were at one time close friends but were both fed bad information about the other by an old, higher-status member of the city and that broke their trust. Maybe they fought over a lover, a ghoul, or an area of the city. For whatever reason decided, these characters highly dislike each other and will generally not opt to work together in the team. This creates drama down the line in two ways – when the rest of the coterie learns about the situation, and rebuilding feelings when they finally work together.



## The Sliding Scale

The Sliding Scale dance is a small activity any group can perform to better understand their characters and their relationships to each other. Have players stand in a line along the wall and ask the following questions. Each end of the line presents a different extreme of the question — so the western end of the line is white-knight morally good and the eastern end of the line is pure evil. With each question, the players arrange themselves in comparison to each other and where they think their characters land on the spectrum. These are some example questions, but feel free to make up your own:

- Does your character think of themselves as good or evil?
- Do you think your character is good or evil?
- Is your character easily willing to kill mortals, hesitant, or do they avoid it at all costs?
- Is your character willing to kill other vampires?
- How much does your character enjoy their unlife?
- Does your character still have the capacity to love?
- How loyal is your character to their covenant?
- How loyal is your character to their coterie?
- Does your character believe in the Prince's rule or think they should overthrow the government?
- How close to their Beast is your character?
- Does your character miss their mortality?



If you are playing with a larger group, build other types of relationships in the same fashion. These relationships are shared-history based, more than emotional, but they make for better ties among all the characters. With each question, the players should break into new pairs until everyone has formed at least one tie with everyone else. If there is an odd number of players, feel free to make these ties in groups of three. Storytellers can present any or all of these extra relationships to the players:

- Trust: Write a historical scene together where your characters realized they could trust each other.

- Nostalgia: Pick one thing historically your characters have in common and discuss why they both miss it.
- Happy Memories: In the last year, your characters experienced a great happiness together — what happened and why?
- Loss: Your characters lost someone who was highly important to both of them; discuss who it was and how it affects them to this day.
- Politics: Your characters share a similar opinion about something in the coterie — what is it and how will you work together to push this on the group at large?

## Climbing the Ladder

Ten years. It's been 10 years since this coterie formed. Sure, some members have come and gone, a few are dead, but the core of you is still here. It feels like you've been through hell; it feels like you only started together yesterday. Your family was pretty fucked up when you were alive, but nothing compares to the family you chose when you died. And, really, you wouldn't trade them for the world. You knew you were in deep when you all left Florida, after you killed about a dozen people. You could have gone back, cleaned it up, started a better life. You could have atoned for your sins. But losing your family wasn't worth the blood on your hands, so you stayed. This is your coterie. This is your family. This is your world.

If you want all the instructions on Climbing the Ladder, go to p. 282 of *Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*. However,

those are individual character instructions, not made for a group. The following is a series of steps you can take to use the Climbing the Ladder method to determine your coterie's history. As always, you do not have to use all the steps, but everyone in the group will gain an experience for every step they do together. If the Storyteller feels that is too much experience, these steps can be used instead of the personal Climbing the Ladder steps.

## Confront Vulnerability

In this step, the group examines a point in their histories when they were at their weakest. This explains why the coterie is stronger

together than they are apart. Each character should consider what was lacking in their lives to force them to decide to join this coterie. Did the group decide to form all at once, or did a core start and the others trickled in later? While this might not have been your first coterie, what changed in your life to bring you to this group?

### *Looking Inward*

Vampires are, by nature, loners. Figure out what made your characters so afraid to remain in the safety of solitude that they reached for a group. Tell the group about why you are no longer a lone Kindred in the world. Remember one night where you confronted that reason, shortly before you joined the coterie, and why you never want to go back to being alone.

### *Looking Outside*

**The Betrayed:** When you joined with this coterie, you left someone behind. Be it a lover, the Prince of another city, a political partner, or your old coterie. You decided your unlife and your Beast's safety would be better off with this group of people around you than the person behind you. Look around the table. Acknowledge who these people are and why they are important. Write down the name of who you abandoned and tell them: "I left (person) behind in (place) because you are my coterie and you are more important than the past."

### *Believe in Someone*

In the first days of a coterie's formation, goals are often shaky at best. The reasons for the group being together may be safety or similar ideals, but the way ahead is unclear, and everyone's Beasts are still feeling each other out. During this step, the group figures out whose ideas and voices spoke the loudest in those initial days. Who was the guiding light forward for this coterie, even if their ideas did not work out in the end?

### *Looking Inward*

What answers was your character looking to find within their new family? Go around the table and tell everyone what your character most needed from the coterie in those early days. If you think your character could provide something someone else needed, step in and offer the answers they are seeking. Do you think it worked, or ended in chaos? Did you lie to each other just to form closer bonds? Was one of you the other's false prophet? What did you have to give up to each other to get the help you wanted?

### *Looking Outside*

**The Flawed Leader:** In the early days of your coterie, someone gave you ideas and goals – they did not work. You have, since, lost this Kindred from your presence. Maybe they died. Maybe you cast them out of the coterie for their failure. Maybe they abandoned you on their own. As a group, decide who this character was and what goals they gave your coterie. Discuss how it failed and why

they are no longer with you. Which of you was the most betrayed by this loss? Who still believes in this flawed leader?

### *Find Power*

For a coterie, this is clearly not their literal sire. Instead, this is what makes the coterie stable, tight, and holds them together over the years. This is the one true strength that the coterie has compared to their many flaws as vampires. Without the thing that 'makes' them, their Beasts would have ripped them apart long ago.

### *Looking Inward*

What is your coterie's strongest guiding principle that no one member would break? Are you dedicated to fighting for freedom or supporting this city's political structure? Are you family before all else? Discuss with your group the single greatest quality that makes your group dynamic work. Maybe you have a "no one picks on my sibling but me" protective dynamic or are all passionately in love with each other? Maybe you have never broken a promise in the group?

### *Looking Outside*

**Your Foil:** Once you have found the one greatest strength of your group, define who its polar opposite is. Who in the city represents all the things that your group is not? Give this person a name, associations, and brief history with your group. They may end up the arch nemesis to your coterie, or something that tempts you all apart. This person should highlight all the weaknesses and temptations your coterie does not have.

### *Find Darkness*

At the core of any coterie is something insidious, dark, and horrific that feeds each other's Beasts. Kindred are terrible creatures, and, in packs, they make themselves worse. This step explores the worst habit the group collectively promotes among itself and, if it gets too bad, what will happen if the group loses full control.

### *Looking Inwards*

They say vice feeds vice, so what is the vice your group feeds each other by being together? If your group is codependent on each other's sin, which one do you most encourage by working as a coterie? Do you dive into your hungers together, or hunt with your Beasts? Is it a need for power you keep playing into among your group? What is the most awful thing you can't help but explore when you are together and, in fact, enjoy indulging more because you aren't doing it alone?

### *Looking Outside*

**The Nightmare:** You might be bad together, but at least you're not as bad as this Kindred. Make up someone who is the complete embodiment of your worst vice. Your group looks at them and excuses your sins because you'll never be as bad as they are. Give them a name and a history. Discuss how



you could be worse than them someday but have managed to restrain yourselves — for now.

### *Someone Else Knows*

This step examines a secret that could compromise your entire group if it gets out, and the one person who holds it over your heads. No coterie is perfect or indomitable — with a big enough power block, smart players can take over an entire city. This is the step that keeps the coterie's power in check, unless they decide to do something about it as the game goes on.

#### *Looking Inward*

What did you do that no one can ever know about? Did you breach the Masquerade? Kill the sheriff and burn the body? One night, your whole coterie performed an act of a completely unforgivable nature and now it haunts them. Decide what this secret is, why you did it, and what steps you took to cover it up. How long ago was it? Would you do it again if you had the choice?

#### *Looking Outside*

**The Witness:** No crime is perfect, and someone saw yours. Maybe they were involved with the person you removed, or maybe

they used to be a member of your coterie and left after it happened. Either way, there is a person in this city who knows your secret and is holding it over your head. Who are they? Why aren't they telling? Are they collecting blackmail from you now or saving it as a future favor? Are you planning on taking them out and, if not, why don't you?

#### *Almost Lost*

Kindred on their own may feel immortal but are easily outnumbered and therein lies danger. A coterie often feels untouchable as a group. A wisely built coterie has a range of disciplines, protections, and strengths to cover all their bases. However, nothing is truly immortal. This step examines the time when the coterie came the closest to shattering and how they recovered from that edge.

#### *Looking Inward*

Something nearly tore you all apart and no one is certain if you'll ever fully recover. Was it a political loss and an internal argument? Or was it a fight where half your number was in torpor and two dead? Decide as a group what nearly destroyed your coterie, how far in the past it happened, and what you permanently lost because of it. There should be one thing — be it a person, place, goal, or resource — that the coterie will

never regain from this near destruction. Name that thing, and promise to each other that you will never forget it.

### *Looking Outside*

The Fixer helped hold you together when your coterie was at their lowest and you can never repay them fully. This person might be one of your Touchstones, another Kindred in the city, or maybe even one of your own. Who was it that helped you regain cohesion, what did they do and, most importantly, why? What was it about this person that reminded your group about everything they fought for and why they should pull together again? Is this person still in your lives? How are you repaying them?

## *Remember Your Victims*

For a coterie, vampires are either with them or against them. The coterie does not trust you and will easily discard you if you are not a part of it. It's a callous attitude, but it keeps coteries alive when cities are falling apart and other vampires are falling to madness under the weight of their lonely years. However, it's not always easy to be that careless. This step covers the memory of someone your coterie used, abused, and left in the dust.

### *Looking Inward*

It seemed easy at first, stringing this person along and using them, but it got harder as things continued. Eventually, there was no going back. You needed them to complete your goal, but you couldn't keep them around forever. You had to kill them, or they'd talk and compromise everything. Who did your coterie use to further their own goals then destroy? Was it a human, a vampire? How did they murder them? Were you split in the decision to kill this person? How does it affect you to this day?

### *Looking Outside*

**Those Left Behind:** The person you destroyed knew other people. They may have had their own coterie or their own family. They filled a role in your society and you pulled them out of it. This step looks at not the person, but the ripple effect their absence has on things. What else fell apart because you took this person out of the story? Does anyone know you did it? How will the destruction of this person come back to haunt your coterie in the future?

## *Find Allies*

No coterie exists in a vacuum. The city is full of Kindred who attempt to drive your group away the moment they think you might be a threat. While these people are not your family – no one your Beasts trust – they are the next level of support in a world of distrust and competition. They may be members of a closely held covenant, or another coterie with whom you've made a pact.

### *Looking Inward*

There is something between your coterie and this other group that drives you together. Do you have blackmail material on them, or do they have something over your heads? Did you work together to overthrow a Prince, or a mortal authority? You share sins, and this is the point where you look at your coterie and see your sins reflected in another group. Why does their damnation speak to yours? What is the line where they could go too far, and you could not stand for this alliance any longer? Do you have a line?

### *Looking Outside*

**Your Dupe:** There is a person in this city who, despite not being a member of your coterie, worships the ground you walk on. They will do any favor asked and routinely try to roll with your group when not invited. Though you find this person annoying and they have yet to earn a place among you, they are useful, and you haven't dismissed them from your presence. Why does this person put such faith in your coterie? What have you done to earn it? How far will you push them before they break?

## *Seize the Night*

Your coterie has been through a lot together and come out stronger for it. Decide your next steps building upon your group history. Together, you lust for more power and you know just the ways you can take it. Discuss as a group how you are going to make yourselves prominent in the city – are you taking over a covenant, the city, or a mortal institution? Maybe you have a fresh experiment and all the tools to conduct it at your disposal, or a new plan for politics going forward. Look at your strengths and how you can best use them to gain more power as a coterie.

### *Looking Inward*

What has your coterie learned from its mistakes? Where has it failed in the past? Examine your past errors and discuss what you learned from them to make you stronger in the future. Put one name down on a piece of paper – this is a person you used, abused, and failed. This person has paid for your sins. How do you make certain, as a group, that doesn't happen again? Once you have seen your error, outline a plan to not make it again as you make your next grab for power.

### *Looking Outside*

There is one person in this city that you need to make this plan finally work. They might be a Kindred from another coterie or a mortal retainer. But they aren't yet yours and you need a plan to get them under your sway. Put this person's name on a piece of paper. Discuss why each of you has a relation to this person and how you will use that relation to get them under your thumb. Plan to ensure this person's loyalty then use them as your first step in the direction of your next great goal.

## Winding Up

You have now gone through a lot of history as a coterie — you have shared losses, victories, and goals. You understand each other better and have connections to several people on the table outside of your group. Climbing the Ladder isn't just about

making your coterie closer knit but also remembering that your coterie doesn't live alone in a city. Lean on those names and character ties when you need them. Pull them out to ramp up the action and drama for each other at appropriate times. This is a shared narrative you built; don't be afraid to keep telling the story.

## Intimate Connections

*Rosa and Bryan crept up the stairs, avoiding the creaky steps and not placing any weight on the rickety bannister. Any noise might wake the occupants on the second floor. Rosa gestured at Bryan to walk across the landing, and he peered inside the bedroom where two figures slept, a cot beside them holding a little baby, its arms above the covers. Bryan looked for a long moment, his eyes flicking back and forth between the figures, taking in the man's breathing, the mother's snore, and the baby's gentle sigh. He nodded, gesturing for Rosa to follow him back downstairs. "They're safe for now." The Carthian ran his fingers over his stubble before drumming his chin in thought. "We need to keep them that way. The best way for us to do that is move in downstairs. Keep a permanent eye on this little family of ours. You feel it too, don't you? The bond we've formed with them?" Rosa nodded, chewing the inside of her cheek. Ever since the Singhs inadvertently saved the coterie from a Sanctified ambush, every one of them felt an attachment to the family. They owed them more than their lives.*

Touchstones are fundamental to the vampire intent on staving off the Beast's many voices. They maintain Humanity, provide a vampire with something to fight for, and remind that same Kindred of what it was to be human and fragile. Closely bound coteries quickly discover that while a single Kindred may possess a few mortals or items of significance, the coterie can hold people in places of equally precious veneration. To do so conveys great risk to the coterie, as all suffer with the destruction of a Group Touchstone, but it also acts as a communal object of importance. For as long as a Group Touchstone exists, each member of the coterie benefits.

The difference between a single vampire's Touchstone and that of a coterie generally comes down to size. When a coterie forms a Group Touchstone, they do so from a group of kine, a sizeable building, or number of items that played a critical role to the Kindred in their coterie. At least proportionate to the size of the coterie, the collection of mortals or objects designated as a Touchstone are often important for what they represent, more than for who or what they are.

Unlike with individual vampires, who gravitate primarily to mortals of deep importance, coteries may form Group Touchstones from locations, objects, and pets, though the latter is risky due to most animals' short life expectancies. While this is possible for solo Kindred, coteries find an easier time placing importance on a communal haven, vehicle, or collection of items. Any Touchstone of this type must still be of great importance to the coterie's Humanity.

Group Touchstones convey different benefits than the versions individual vampires hold. A coterie must invest in the Group Touchstone Merit to acquire a Group Touchstone.

## Example Group Touchstones

Though some Touchstones can simply be expanded versions of those presented in *Vampire: The Requiem*, pp. 88-89, others are presented here as examples for a coterie to use from the start of a chronicle. Storytellers may introduce Touchstones such as these and offer them as Group Touchstones upon resolution of an encounter

### Group Touchstone (• varies, see Prerequisites)

**Prerequisites:** Each member of the coterie must acquire at least • in this Merit, with the total number of • equal to the number of vampires in the coterie. One vampire may purchase more than one • to cover other Kindred in the coterie. A coterie can only possess one Group Touchstone.

**Effect:** Every member of the coterie gains a communal Touchstone on the sixth or lower dot of Humanity (whichever lacks a Touchstone). The Humanity dot does not need to be the same for all coterie members. A Group Touchstone conveys three additional dice and prevents acquisition of the Bestial, Competitive, or Wanton Conditions (the coterie communally chooses one of these when acquiring this Merit) on detachment rolls. All coterie members regain a Willpower point when even one member of the coterie defends the Group Touchstone, and regain all spent Willpower if a member of the coterie is seriously harmed in the Touchstone's defense.

**Drawback:** A Group Touchstone is a heavy investment. If damaged in a significant way, such as a family losing more than a single member, a building of importance being gutted by fire, or a group of friends being forcibly separated by employment, prison, or death, the Group Touchstone only conveys one additional die to detachment rolls, and grants no immunity to gaining Conditions. If the Group Touchstone is destroyed, the coterie members possessing it must lose a Humanity dot or gain the Languid Condition.

between them and the coterie. In such a scenario, it is up to the Storyteller whether acquiring them as a Group Touchstone carries the normal cost of purchasing the Merit, or whether acquiring them is something that happens organically within the chronicle.

## CONGREGATION

The small congregation attending a church in the coterie's territory can serve as a Group Touchstone. They never question the un-aging vampires but always offer them a place to come in out of the rain and a hymn to sing. Maybe they remind a coterie of nights when "charity" was not a dirty word. This Group Touchstone may appeal to a coterie primarily comprising Sanctified Kindred, and compel the coterie to encourage church attendance. Of note, only the original congregation members act as parts of the Group Touchstone.

## FAMILY CAR

It shouldn't matter as much as it does, but the coterie has used this beaten-up old station wagon to get from A to B since it came together. It's seen a lot, and is now a real object of care and affection for the vampires who routinely ride in it, even when one of them is injured and stowed in the trunk. Keeping the car running despite its age gives a vampire purpose. For it to never start again would signal that all things die, except for the vampires of course.

## FIRE CREW

The fire crew that saved the coterie from their burning haven stands a good chance of becoming a Group Touchstone. The coterie would need to keep a close eye on the fire station and shift rotations, to protect their saviors. Feeding the fire chief a dose of Vitae would help ensure the fire brigade always responds to flames at the coterie's haven or territory as a priority.

## GUN COLLECTION

Some coteries, particularly nomadic ones who enjoy the thrill of the heist—cutting and running from town to town—love their guns. While many vampires do not understand it, the fetishism some Kindred (and mortals) possess for their weaponry drives them to action, confidence, and display. The coterie with a prized gun collection likely names every weapon, and identifies each with a specific owner. Use of these weapons makes them feel alive.

## LOCAL KIDS

Innocent children play close by the coterie's territory, and despite the vampires' dark deeds, the coterie cannot help but look

out for the kids as they play in the park with their collectible cards and action figures, under the flickering lamplight. A profound attachment forms when a member of the coterie saves one of the children from being hauled into an unmarked van. The kids may become informants for the vampires.

## NEIGHBORING FAMILY

The family with whom the coterie shares a building and who they see every night, waving across the hall at them or holding open an elevator door, may ground a coterie and become a Group Touchstone. Maybe they share a strangely innocuous relationship, occasionally inviting each other over for movie nights or playing board games, or perhaps they double as a local herd. The coterie knows the ins and outs of this family's life, from every grievance to each celebration.

## OLD HAVEN

The coterie has slept in the same communal haven together for years now. They each have their spot and they all know the place like the backs of their hands. The haven is as much a part of the coterie as they are, reminding them of the home they grew up in, or maybe even the first property some of them owned. Were it to be demolished, sold from underneath them, or suddenly home to squatters, all members of the coterie would feel it.

## PETS

A risky Touchstone, but one many Gangrel and Ventrite coteries opt to possess. The coterie's communal pets keep them down to earth. Caring for creatures that can't answer back or betray them gives a vampire comfort. The coterie prizes these pets as a rarity, as animals that don't spook in their presence. They do not judge a vampire for her monstrosity or balk at the sight of blood spray. Sadly, many such pets will find themselves caged inside a haven, to prevent run-ins with traffic or other threats.

## SOUP KITCHEN

Kindred feed on any kine in times of desperation. Even the haughtiest Invictus Ventrite deigns to drink from a vagrant when times are hard. Sometimes the homeless become more than a food source, however. The Kindred forced to sleep in an alcove beneath a bridge, made to hide among the unwashed while hunted, or simply seeking information from the same vagrants week-in, week-out, realize these outsiders share many similarities with vampires. Others overlook them, and they're no less capable of conversation and thought, or of possessing goals and dreams.

## SPORTS TEAM

They're nothing on the national level, of course, but watching the local hockey team slam a puck or basketball players chuck a ball in the neighborhood provides the coterie a rare solace. Maybe the Kindred even play with them from time to time, toning down their powers to play fair and feel alive, just for a short while. Keeping this Touchstone together requires supporting the local community, but never allowing them to become so big that one might get scouted.

## SUPPORT GROUP

Maybe the coterie started by preying on these members of Alcoholics Anonymous, or a similar support group, but familiarity has bred empathy, leading to the survivors in the meeting place becoming a Group Touchstone. Perhaps their addiction speaks to the suffering the vampires also endure. Such a Touchstone requires time from the coterie, members of which likely need to continue attending the group, but it also acts as a catharsis, allowing them to speak about their own unnatural addictions through veils and metaphors.

## TEAM RINGS

It's an old tradition, but the coterie is bonded enough to share a trend in jewelry or other apparel. Perhaps they wear the same

team rings, handkerchiefs in their pockets, or, in rarer cases, used their Vitae to permit the same tattoo between all members. Somehow these objects of importance became Touchstones. They are simple enough, but remind the coterie of their communion and a time when they would have been proud to join a society, sports team, or similar.

## THE OFFICE

Even vampires need money from somewhere, maybe to pay the rent, perhaps because they're still recognized by the taxman. In such a situation, it's common for a coterie to take over a business in the capacity of silent partners. As they get involved in the night-to-night of the business operations however, they come to know their employees. They find out about one man's trouble at home, an employee's struggles with depression, and the obstacles these people face just working there. They take an interest, and the office staff soon becomes members of a Group Touchstone.

## YOUTH GANG

The gang of youths the coterie caught sneaking into a closed-up shop one night, but chose to observe instead of stopping their thievery may have rejuvenated a desire for outlaw behavior. These young inspirations are a Group Touchstone reminding the coterie they didn't have to follow the law when alive, so why should they among the dead? Appealing to a coterie of Carthians, this Group Touchstone may also serve as members of the Allies Merit.

### *Colony of Bats*

The damned realize theirs is a struggle between what is humane and bestial, what is civilized and grotesque, an eternal climb to preserve their humanity, or a slow descent into the dark chasm of the Beast. Their greatest enemy, the Beast, is dangerous and self-serving, whispering to Kindred all the selfish decisions that take her through the night.

Death. Ostracism. Frenzy. Hunger. Loneliness. Degradation. The Kindred are brutal to those who won't go far enough. The depredation of other vampires often pushes neonates into accepting the All Night Society is not just a masquerade ball, but a merciless meat grinder, and to survive they often turn to the Beast. It teaches a vampire how to be the worst fucking monster in the prettiest clothes, and to look after herself.

The colony is born when what is human bubbles to the Vitae-stained surface. When a vampire clings to humanity, when familiarity with another Kindred is so strong she subdues her Beast for their sake, the Beast is forced to change. It cannot, and will not, see anything outside itself as more than prey or a threat, and so it merges.

Instead of gnawing at each other, the chaining bonds two vipers and twists the Kindred involved. Hunting ceases to be a

lonely endeavor, and the Kindred can feel their partner like they would someone of their blood.

To be shackled to another means the Beast has acquiesced in that it has found a match. Individualistic by nature, a vampire's instinct is to look after herself, but in the colony a Kindred isn't just herself. She is many, and the instinct is to preserve all of her selves.

### *The Contaminant Worm, Redux*

Colonies are not the norm. Some whisper of them as a dreadful curse and a bane of the Beast, while neonates romanticize the event. The birth of a colony happens for a plethora of reasons, but two elements seem present often enough to establish causality, according to Ordo Dracul specialists.

The first element is why young vampires naively look at colonies in a positive light. Many colonies originated from Kindred who refused the Bestial instincts and risked their own interests to the benefit of another, forcing their Beasts to adapt to each other.

The other side of the colony is not as altruistic. As any ancilla knows, sometimes the taint of the Beast latches onto hunting

grounds or kine she has haunted for some time. A lesser-known fact is that the Beast sometimes foregoes the claiming of territory and kine altogether, sinking its jaws into another Kindred and changing both as a result. Despite the catalyst, this dark assimilation is commonly known as the colony, or chaining, and it's the act of a Beast incorporating another Beast into itself. This chaining is more intimate than the Vinculum, and can lead to far more erratic behavior.

## Family Business

Different Beasts take to a colony in different ways, and clan has a great influence on how a vampire's Beast responds to a colony – and how she interacts with it.

### Daeva

*The awareness of her dependence hit Astrid like the setting sun, lighting her nerves ablaze. Even now, wrapped in her favorite black dress and showered in the dizzying strobe of the nightclub, the Serpent seethed, envious, as one of her coterie-mates addressed the Prince, cajoling that decrepit fool to curry favor. The impression of something vain slithering within her breast, whispering of the ways it could make that old bat disappear, made Astrid bite her bottom lip. Maybe the Praxis needs a new Prince who knows what she's doing. Maybe then she would have the coterie's undivided attention.*

Daeva need an audience, and when the Serpent's Beast chooses its favorite crowd it refuses to have it for a single performance: In a Daeva's mind, she is the star of a nightly show, and whomever she wants in the front row better make sure they clear their agendas. This is how most Daeva are lured into colonies.

Not famed for their willingness, or ability, to control their own passions, these vampires become possessive of whomever their Beast assimilates into itself. Instead of seeing them as rivals or potential competitors for attention and adulation, it is their eyes, their lips, and their touch that is a balm to the Daeva's endless burning for the carnal. The Serpents who become part of such coteries are more focused, driven, and dangerous. Unlike others of their clan, they seem to have finally found the ultimate prize of their endless quest.

At least for as long as she is beloved. A Serpent's mind twists in ugly spirals whenever not getting admiration from her coterie-mates, corroding her concentration and feigned civility. Some describe the sensation as outsiders feeling unworthy of the Serpent's grace, but few put into words the shivers of rabid, ugly fury whenever their rightful spotlight is stolen, be it by a childer, a fellow Kindred, or a Touchstone. More than one coterie has ended in tragedy over the lengths a Serpent is willing to go to see these thieves don't get a second chance of usurping what is rightfully hers.

### Gangrel

*Mother taught her to listen the Beast's advice, to heed the primeval wisdom in an exposed, fleshy neck, and in the tortuous drip of blood*

*down the throat after feeding. She knows that tomorrow, when daysleep eases its grip with the sun's absence, guilt will rise with the throbbing moon. Now, however, Valerie has danced to this song too many times and knows she cannot resist when Mother leads the pack, and for as much as it feels so wrong when she is alone, nothing feels so right when she is surrounded by the pack.*

The Savages and their Beasts exist in a state of profane symbiosis the other clans could never comprehend. To the Gangrel, there is no dark passenger, and the Beast is no intruder, but a facet of the unliving condition – a second voice they trust to push them through the finish line. While there are many dangers to this sinister bond of man and monster, there is also a primeval understanding of the world in which vampires exist. To them the colony is called the pack, and it isn't just phenomena: It's part of their very identity.

Going against the stereotype of the lonely survivor, a Gangrel in a pack is a demanding presence, culling perceived weakness in the Beasts bound to her own. This is no act of kindness, as the Savages loathe weak links. The pace they force upon other Kindred often brings them to the brink of exhaustion and the very limits of their own Humanity. When the Gangrel Beast perceives others as extensions of itself, the chimera forgives none who fail to pull their own weight.

Many Gangrel are often the greatest threats to their own pack. To some Savages, making the colony stronger means getting rid of anything that makes the vampires in it "soft." A Gangrel may deem a Touchstone dulls her packmates or she perceives ambitions as frivolous or petty; these are the signs of an unhealthy packmate, and the Gangrel's Beast cannot abide stalking with weaker predators. In a pack, the Savage must either respect her packmates' choices and accept her own place, or cull dead weights from her partners' Requiems.

### Mekhet

*She felt her lips twitch and curl into the facsimile of a smile in tandem with the one on Brandon's handsome features. She was aware the joke was terrible, but Selina also knew she would smile when he did, in a very Pavlovian way. Poor bastard was trying to keep things light, pretend he wouldn't be sweating like a pig if he could. But Selina just lowered her head the way he liked her to, like how she used to before becoming Sheriff. Oh, she had found the corpses, all of them, and had unearthed the motive from his head, but said nothing. Before the Prince gave her marching orders, she would have some time to figure out what to do about his mess, and whether Brandon deserved to be vouched for. She wouldn't miss smiling all the time.*

The Mekhet are the self-fulfilling prophecy of the All Night Society, a clan of Kindred forever cursed to become the horror legends born from their own, ceaseless hunting. Their sigil is the ouroboros, the snake that feeds itself, and it symbolizes the Mekhet nature of dimming each night, and becoming the faded memory of the vampires they once were, a literal shadow. In being unknown, they lose almost all reference of self, their identity found only in the most vague, trembling stories shared by the edge of the firelight.

The colony throws a wrench in the Mekhet's well-oiled machine, usually chaining the elusive shadowy Beast in a chaos of awareness that burns like sunlight. It wishes to be in the dark again, and Shadows in the colony often become paranoid about exposure. To what? It varies from Shadow to Shadow. Some rationalize the All Night Society is too dangerous to have a publicly known haven. Others try to erase the names of their partners from the minds of other Kindred, adopting sinister monikers to better hide themselves. Few Mekhet see their need to hide for what it is, the rebellious monster within, trying to lull the colony back into the dark of the cave and dragging them all by their chains if needed be.

Paranoia isn't the worst a Mekhet must contend with when merging into a colony, however. Their lack of identity becomes a void other Kindred fill without realizing, and the way the coterie looks at the Shadow sometimes becomes how the Mekhet understands herself. They reciprocate smiles like muscle memory, and become more sociable the more their coteries engage them, the amalgam of impressions and behaviors directed towards the usually unseen monster shaping its behavior, even if the Shadow is nothing like how they are seen.

Likewise, the Shadows become obsessed with understanding their colony, and their partners become the Mekhet's favorite field of study. Because they are so vulnerable to the perception of others, their Beasts urge the Shadows to defend themselves the only way it knows how: by extensively researching their partners' existence. Only in understanding their coterie to the most profound lengths can a Mekhet surrender herself to being the mirror they want her to be.

## Nosferatu

*They had all eaten when Frank approached the weakened athlete. Holes everywhere, they hadn't worried about much when feeding. Of course they didn't. Frank always takes care of their business, getting rid of bodies and playing cleanup crew. Other Nosferatu tried to warn him this would happen, but even in confirmation of their advice, the tall, gray-skinned man knelt to feed. The others would never know how it is to never feed alone again. At this point, that is all Frank can ask for.*

Forever condemned to roam the Long Night alone, the Haunts may survive on blood, but they fester on fear. This is the nature of the Nosferatu Beast, a warped thing that coils possessively around the Kindred to keep everything else at bay. It prowls for those the Haunt is fond of, and unlike what happens in other clans it gladly bonds into colonies to further poison the Nosferatu's heart and put his loneliness in perspective – an eternal reminder that even in the tightest knit melting pot of Kindred, the Nosferatu's Requiem is a lonely journey.

In the colony, the Nosferatu sticks out as the wildcard, and the nature of their curse denies them a true merging as their Beast seems to save its ugliest for when other chained are close to the Haunt. Bouts of hissed insults, bursting pustules, a maggot carving to the surface of the Haunt's skin, every interaction with those she was supposed to be close to is tainted, for only

when lonely among one's closest allies can a Nosferatu feel true desolation. Only then can their Beast can truly gorge on its own Kindred.

The result is a Nosferatu who is always the outsider in their own coterie. They tend to do the tasks others seldom want, or play the devil's advocate as they are already cursed with their partners' revulsion. Distanced, they often perceive the colony's cannibalistic nature, and this separation positions the Haunts to more effectively act on their own to benefit the others. However, even in the event their Beast fails to sabotage them, there is always that nagging fear that one night it might succeed, and bring the whole sand castle down.

## Ventrule

*Nothing was more heartbreak to Klara than a disappointing childe. She had nursed the young woman back from the grips of Hades, feeding unto her the godly blood running through her veins, gracing the former nobody with the essence of the kings among the gods of night! All for naught, for if those lips once sang only praise for her sire, they now spill rancid tomfoolery about revolution and the oppression of neonate masses. Her beautiful, perfect childe is now a petulant dullard, what a cruel twist of the Fates. Knowing the righteousness of her cause, the older Ventrule leaned over the bound body of her childe, staring into those scared eyes. She wouldn't change much. Just a little tweak here and there, so everything could be just the way it was when her childe was strong, a worthy Lady of the All Night Society.*

The Ventrule is a fiend that dons the mantle of power like a second skin, the colony's king of kings. A master of the world around her, she refuses to be chained with the recalcitrant or pathetic, for their failure is a smear on her image, and their inaction a symptom of her incompetence. The Lords won't allow themselves to be associated with anything but the most impressive specimens of the All Night Society. And if their subject-partners are found lacking? Well, sometimes one must cut a sickly member to preserve the healthy body, to hell with the pain that comes with it.

Eternally egomaniacal and the priest-king in its own cult, the Lordly Beast is fast at work the moment it identifies a prospective partner. Theirs is the burden of excellence, the curse of perfection, and however much it is allowed to shape those chained to it, the Beast does. This obsession reflects more powerfully on some Ventrule than others. Some require only that the coterie dresses sharply to official Praxis business and feels a pang of hatred when they fail to do so, but some feel no qualms about remaking the Requiems of the Damned chained to them to fit their design. Nothing is beyond their critique or immune to their changing gaze. From posture to Touchstones, there is little some Ventrule won't do to make their coterie like themselves: the crème de la crème of the All Night Society.

While perfection is a worthy end, many Ventrule realize some Kindred struggle with the concepts of unchallenged greatness. They fail, time and again, to mold into better versions of themselves, no matter how many times the Ventrule strikes her

hammer. Even when turning their Dynasties into a colony, a Lord is bound to face opposition from those who feel, wrongfully, are damn fine as they are. When the colony growls inwards, a Ventrue is often in the spotlight, and how they handle it divides the Lord-Pretenders and true kings of the Damned.

## *The Outside Looking In*

Most colonies tend to occur between vampires in coteries when one or more have little else to cling to. Covenants usually give a grounding force in a vampire's life, which helps prevent colony formation. Although, some covenant memberships seem to encourage colony formation. Either way, they all have strong opinions on coteries who undergo the chaining.

## *Carthian Movement*

*The chants died out as Morris raised the skull that was the Sheriff's. The gathered Firebrands felt the twist in their dead guts at the implication of what the man had done, and looked at each other for a cue of how to act. Merlinda was the first to yell so loud the veins in her throat threatened to pop, followed by the usual suspects: Morris' coterie. The Movement soon joined, the chants growing as tall as the fires around them, while the former Sheriff's haven burned.*

Alone among the covenants, the Carthian Movement not only embraces colonies but believes they exemplify its core beliefs, pushing them front and center as a testament of their righteousness. If even the Beast can be made to act in the interest of the collective, think the Firebrands, then the complacent elders have no excuse not to adapt. In the cacophony of colonies screaming their manifestos to the night sky is where the most effective, and dangerous, revolutions are born.

The Carthian Movement and colonies work well when their passion lies with the same goal, or two colonies serve as opposition to one another, strengthening the Movement by questioning its members incessantly. Some Premiers theorize the Carthian Law itself is a form of hive-mind manifestation of the furor of multiple Beasts screeching all at once with one goal in the black morass of their hearts, and swear it is made stronger when invoked by the one-mind of colonies.

A Movement that screams with one voice is dangerously close to becoming a roaring grotesquerie unaware of its own weaknesses, incapable of adaptation and innovation, always recycling the same voices within itself. In that, the Movement either is destroyed, or worse: It becomes the stale, unmoving status quo.

## *Circle of the Crone*

*At the edge of the forest the three Fates gather to feed the soil their infectious blood. An imperceptible shiver that passes for a gust of wind takes the treetops as the priestesses disrobe. Jeans, corsets, and bandanas, the drapings of civilization are cast aside to reveal markings etched on skin with primitive tools, older than the advent of their discarded phones or their hometown now left behind. Lachesis steps*

*forward to slash the whimpering camper's belly, and the leaves above take the color of blood as Vitae boils. Crúac spills from their three-headed Cerberus' foaming mouth, and three become one.*

The Mother's Army lies closer to their Beast than most vampires, not because they are interested in power or compelled by their dark gods, but because it is the natural embodiment of what it is to be a vampire. To the Circle of the Crone, being faithful is the only goal, and this often leads Acolytes to accept colonies as a matter of sacred matrimony between Kindred – a natural step in the bonds formed by blood and Beast.

In some cities, the Circle of the Crone celebrates colonies as a sacred union, an event that marks a new stage in the Requiem of the chained. Those who request the old gods for the favor of Crúac are more prone to form colonies among others of their ilk. As with many Acolyte ceremonies, these are often marked with the chained spilling Vitae in a bowl and taking a sip after the dark essence of their beings becomes one in the pool of red.

Still, rumors circulate about practicing Crúac within a colony, a tale as sinister as it is elating to some. Those who perform rituals to the gods as a colony sometimes develop their own language, communicating and then acting as one. These coteries often behave not like a sum of their members, but like something else entirely. As legends go, coteries bound in such a way never last in the Circle, often vanishing never to be heard from again.

## *Invictus*

*"Please, take a seat," murmurs Don Marzullo to his granddaughter, Francesca. Behind him, two of the Family's most trusted soldiers stand immobile, with Nico still sporting the bullet wound on the side of his temple from when the Carthians ambushed him downtown. "My childe," whispers the Don, "When have I ever wronged you so to earn betrayal in such a fashion?" If she could grow any colder, Francesca would. Her lips parted, but his words stopped her pleas. "The time for talking is over. You will tell me where the others are, and then go to your room, and wait until I am done."*

The Invictus cares for the All Night Society it built around it like both sword and a shield to ensure its own victory, time and again. For it to work it needs all the Kindred in the chain of command to play by the rules of the Conspiracy, wittingly or not, and one such rule is: every vampire for herself. When there is union, that is where problems like the Movement or the Circle appear, melting the Invictus' beloved hierarchy into a heap of senselessness.

The Invictus isn't fond of colonies. They muddy the waters, making the Kindred unpredictable and organized outside the structure provided by the covenant. To deal with colonies, the most experienced Board of Directors usually assigns the colony to the same division, using its intensity in favor of the Conspiracy and quarantining the virulent nature of the abomination in their hands.

The First Estate doesn't always harness colonies in such a way, especially when it has members to spare. Sometimes the Establishment cares nothing for what it considers an abysmal risk-reward ratio and it deals with them in a different way. In

the light of day, without warning, goons take torpid bodies from havens, never to be seen again. "Skipped town," is the official statement from the Conspiracy.

## *Lancea et Sanctum*

*Even as the pyres roared into the night sky, clouds of smoke taking the colony's sins away, the parish remained in silence, the deafening self-doubt hanging over each Kindred like a bucket of gasoline. Even in death, the chained had exposed their most intimate secrets and shameful truths that resonated with many of the assembled vampires. The burden, then, fell onto the Bishop to don his mask and take the shame, leaving the area first. By his example, the rest of the parish then did the same, leaving their sins laid by the foot of their sacrifice, a demonstration of the Lancea et Sanctum's everlasting pursuit of purity.*

Vampires were made Damned by God, but in damnation there is a design, a role for them to play beneath Him. This role is that of the Adversary, to tempt those mortals of little faith into sin, cleanse His flock from the weak. In this holy pursuit there is no space to worry about the dead, for only the living have souls that can still be corrupted. A colony fails to understand this truth, and turns its gaze inwards, which in turn has forced Bishops throughout history to torch these chained to keep the covenant's purpose pure.

The official stance of the Lancea et Sanctum is that colonies are dangerous and lead to a Requiem of double damnation. They are not to be admired or sought after, and ideally should be exposed whenever found. The covenant has a severe stance, publicly, but behind the thick walls of a parish's havens, the Sanctified clergy sometimes train paladin colonies whose unifying objective is to die for their charge. Although colonies are bad for the faith, they are useful to the Lancea et Sanctum, from a pragmatic standpoint.

Woe to the Bishop who fails to properly indoctrinate the colonies in her parish, however. Much like the Icarians once did, even the smallest coterie of zealots within the Lancea et Sanctum can bring a Praxis to its knees. Although such stories are properly swept under the Second Estate's expertly-woven rugs, the clergy has often been put to the sword by these coteries, accused of heresy themselves. It is in control where the covenant thrives, control a colony seldom allows the Sanctified to establish.

## *Ordo Dracul*

*"You are full of shit! Fuck you, Raven," hissed the chained Kindred at the Swarm of the Dying Light. Idly, the other vampire took some notes, then uncrossed her legs to stand up and leave.*

*"Believe what you will," she whispered in that faint Slavic accent,*



"but Miss Torres has long since left us." Leaving the screams of denial behind her, within the padded cell, the Twilight Dragon eyed the students waiting outside. "As you can see, despite repeated proof his associate isn't among us any more, the so-called chained remains aware of her existence. Speaking of which, our next subject has exhibited her own signs of withdrawal from their little collective."

The Order of the Dragon is, unsurprisingly, pragmatic regarding colonies and is not of one mind about them. Like most Kindred phenomena, it is to be explored and harnessed, and there is no covenant more motivated to make use of the potency of a colony than the Order.

Mostly devoid of interest in politics, the Kindred of the Ordo Dracul are still highly structured, sometimes overbearingly so, if one counts their many societies as part of the official pyramid that leads up to the Kogaion. These societies are the most common source of colonies in the Order, to no Dragon's surprise, and although this works fine for members of that segment of the covenant, the movement is often monitored by the vampire at the top, so no one society grows too fat and ambitious. The other segment of the Order of the Dragon where colonies are born with some frequency is the Sworn. Amongst these members of the covenant, loyalties and their own dedication form strange bonds the covenant uses to its own advantage.

## *The Strength of the Chain*

The changes brought by the act of chaining are not merely behavioral. Vampires whose unlivess are inexorably linked together by this change display a myriad of different aspects of the curse.

## *Colony Aspirations*

The Kindred may be oblivious to it, but the colony always has an objective, a goal the chained Beasts all pull the coterie toward with irresistible zeal. These are never trivial and are always trying to put one or more Kindred in the colony in a better position for survival. If the local Sheriff has a problem with the Daeva chained to the group, then the Colony Aspiration might be to take out the Sheriff and put one of the characters in his place. Although unaware of this invisible want, the vampires seldom question the impulsive decisions that lead them to move up the undead totem pole. This is a long-term Aspiration and works like any other, but all characters in a colony possess it, even if on a subconscious level.

## *Blood Sympathy*

The colony is more than a group of vampires. Some say they are the same thing – one freak – and there is credence to this theory. Kindred in the colony are considered to be twice-removed from each other through blood sympathy. Although this is not real blood sympathy, it still affords them all the benefits and drawbacks of such a condition.

## *Touchstone Assimilation*

The obsession among Kindred makes them want to permeate each other's lives and instill in their new partners the values of their own blood. A Gangrel wants hardier coterie-mates while a Ventru wants his mates to be winners. The characters in a colony go through a similar process with each other's Touchstones, forging bonds of their own with these anchors. Characters in a colony can utilize each other's Touchstones as if they were their own. In the advent of the original Touchstone owner degrading to the point of losing their Touchstone, so does the colony, as the vampires suddenly lose all interest in that anchor and find it devoid of meaning.

## *Blood Bond*

The vampires in the colony belong to each other, and no one else, the blood of outsiders burning swiftly from their veins – a seed planted in barren soil. Kindred in the colony break any blood bond with outsiders after one month without taking a new sip of blood, instead of the full year as in other Kindred. This makes colonies anathema to immortal rulers who resort to this form of control to keep the Praxis in check.

## *Lashing Out*

A pack of predators that hunts together becomes more than the sum of its parts. When a vampire in the colony lashes out, characters chained to her may spend a Willpower point to join in as secondary actors. They must also hiss and otherwise urge their Beast outwards, and if successful the primary actor may impose a Condition associated with her Beast, or any of the aspects (Monstrous, Competitive, or Seductive) emulated by the secondary actors.

## *Colony Banes*

Colony banes are exactly like normal banes in that they are acquired upon the loss of Humanity, and award a Beat. Unlike usual banes, the colony banes do not impose a  $\|-1$  penalty to further detachment rolls nor do they trigger from her Humanity. They instead twist a vampire and make her dependent on the colony, and any social roll against outsiders other than Intimidation suffers a  $\|-1$  penalty for every colony bane possessed.

**Instability:** Although all colonies possess a version of blood sympathy, your character is vulnerable to that connection. If another character chained to yours is afflicted by a mental Condition, your character suffers the effects of it as well. She suffers from the Condition for as long as her partner does.

**Daysleep:** Your character's sleep is governed by those chained to her, and daysleep takes her as soon as it takes them. She may not roll to stay awake unless they do, and her successes are limited to the least amount of successes gained in the colony. This means that if at least one of them fails to resist daysleep, your character automatically fails as well.

**Blood Tithe:** Your character may not feed from mortals without the company of those chained to her without paying a toll in blood. Whenever she feeds alone, she must drink twice as much to replenish one Vitae. This bane has no effect on the blood of other vampires, which the Beast selfishly keeps to itself.

**Dependence:** Whenever away from its partners your character's Beast grows lethargic and lazy. Activating any Discipline away from the coterie costs one extra Vitae, even if the Discipline itself doesn't cost Vitae.

**Frenzy:** Your character is subject to the fury of those chained to her, and whenever they frenzy, you do as well. You may resist the frenzy or ride it, as usual, but the threat of losing one's self to the Beast is triggered whenever the others feel it.

**Pain:** Your character's connection with the colony is so deep, she can feel their physical pain as if it was her own. For each colony member currently suffering from wound penalties the Damned receives a  $\text{d}1$  penalty on all rolls, up to  $\text{d}3$ .

## *Making Stories that Matter*

**Vampire: The Requiem** is, at its core, a game of personal tragedy and horror. However, without being able to get to the personal, build characters players care about, and stories in which they emotionally invest, it is impossible to find the tragic or horrific elements. Loss cannot happen if no one cares about what they are losing. The next section covers the best ways for Storytellers to ensure the players invest themselves in the chronicle, how to build a story that deepens their investment, and how to help the players destroy everything they care about.

on the table. Once it's all finished, go back and ask your players the same questions you did at the top of the session. See if their answers have changed at all or if they can explain more deeply why certain storylines have caught their interest.

## *During the Campaign*

Once your story starts, give the players a session to get their feet under them with their character dynamics. A simple plot the players resolve in one game is an easy way to allow everyone to get a taste of things and see how they react to each other. Continue listening to your players and see where they try to steer the story during those hours. Keep a development notebook separate from your plot document. Take notes about where your players are the most reactive. After a session or two, you will see which NPCs or types of plotlines are most inspiring to your players. Then it is time to build plot directly around these elements.

The basic of tragedy in any story is a deep loss. The thing lost must be of great personal significance to the party who is losing it. Pepper the players with constant defeats from the beginning might be a good reflection of the difficulties of the vampiric condition, but it will make them stop trusting their ability to change the story or emotionally investing in the game. The start of a campaign should be many small victories. Let the players form deep relationships with each other and NPCs. Give them hope that, just maybe, their Requiem will be different. Let them be the hero for a few innocents, or the savior to a smaller coterie in town. These successes encourage the players to open themselves more and take bigger risks with their story.

### **Collective Story Building Questions**

- Who are your favorite characters in media and why?
- What was your favorite interpersonal relationship you ever roleplayed?
- What was the first movie that ever made you cry?
- What is the one thing your character cannot risk losing?
- What do you think is the most horrific element of **Vampire: The Requiem**?

Now that your players are emotionally ready, and you are armed with compelling ideas, it is time to instill the horror. Start with your players who are easily on board with tragic plot – they will be the easiest to move with the losses to come. Further ramp up the intensity of relationships with the story element the player loves the most and then, through their own vampiric condition, make them destroy it. If the player is unwilling to dive into their Beast, that is fine, you can come up with other reasons in another session. Eventually, make them kill their own darlings. After a few of your more emotional players fall to these losses, the stiffer players in the group will think themselves invincible – clearly, they have dodged such plot. That is the time to hammer home their losses. Perhaps it's their own people who betray them after their plot breaks them. Maybe it's an outside enemy or just their own hubris. No player should remain unscathed by the end of your campaign.

### *Touchstones and Loss*

The easiest tragic loss for a vampire is that of their Touchstone. The players emotionally dedicate themselves to these elements and they exist to specifically play up the loss of humanity. However, destroying the Touchstones of every player in a campaign is emotionally exhausting and your players will stop investing. Whenever possible, avoid these NPCs being the sacrificial lambs of your tragedy. Instead, use Touchstones to highlight the heartbreak of whatever loss the character just had. Let them be a shoulder for the character to cry on who still understands what emotions are. Encourage them to feel their losses and personal horror by keeping these characters as an outside ear and a safe space. If necessary, you can use the destruction of a Touchstone to get your most emotionally resistant players, but don't do it more than once a chronicle.

### *After the Losses*

When you are successful at putting your players through emotional hell, it's wise to do debriefing both as players and Storytellers. While we are all still playing pretend, emotions are real, physical responses in the body. Giving players a place to find closure for them means they'll come back for more instead of walking away feeling damaged. After a particularly emotional session of roleplay, save 20 minutes at the end of the night to discuss their experiences out of character. Ask them what they would like to leave behind in the space about their characters or storylines. Give them room to process the emotions and transition back into the real world as themselves. If characters betrayed each other in game, encourage the players to talk with each other out of game in this time.

Lastly, when you pull dramatic emotions from your friends as a Storyteller, you should take time to debrief yourself. While you told these stories for your friends to give them enjoyment, in the moment you were hurting them – that can bring up some unexpected after effects. If you have a player you are close to in the chronicle, speak with them about what you most liked in the story and what was the hardest thing to run for them. If you cannot find someone in your game, ask another gaming friend, whom you trust, if you can talk a few minutes about your experiences. Outline what worked in the story and what did not. Examine the experience clinically and get out any leftover emotions you might be feeling. Simply talking through these emotions leaves you far more cleansed than trying to box them all up and pretend nothing intense happened. It will also help you organize your thoughts in preparation for the next session.

### *Storyteller Coteries*

Coteries are a natural formation within the Danse Macabre. Cynical Kindred claim vampires only stick together for mutual security, that no true relationships of affection or trust can exist between predators. The persistence of the coterie model defies this frequently told tale, especially with some Kindred belonging to more than one coterie at a single time.

This freedom to join groups, serve, form bonds, and develop affections is by no means exclusive to the protagonists in a chronicle. Just as the players' characters may together learn new Disciplines, claim titles in a domain, or strike down enemies to reach their goals, other vampires in a city do the same. Just as the players' characters do, those Storyteller characters form coteries based on mutual desires, interests, and hatreds.

Storyteller coteries should rarely be the center of attention in a plot, instead existing on the periphery of city activities. If the protagonist coterie consumes the city's attention, they draw all the praise as well as all the reprimands. But, if the coterie destroys the Hierophant's warehouse of mandragora on the same night a rival coterie plans to hold up a Nosferatu-run bar downtown, the other coterie shares the attention, acts as a distraction, and can even be brought into the protagonists' fold. It is easier to

accomplish misdeeds when plentiful targets exist in a domain.

The Storyteller should have in mind the reason for introducing other coteries of vampires, but should not feel restricted to giving them an immediate purpose. Sometimes, coteries just exist because they're interesting and an organic part of the setting. It often feels more rewarding for the protagonists to inquire about the Storyteller invention, rather than having them thrust in the players' faces as a new ally, enemy, or rival.

A domain contains many coteries, and it is likely they're at odds more often than they hold hands and march as one. It is in Kindred nature to jockey for position and power. Preventing another coterie's success spells a guarantee for a future clash.

### *The Coterie as Allies*

Whether purchased as a Merit, or introduced in a chronicle and adopted as friends or peers of the protagonists, Storyteller coteries can become the protagonists' allies, giving them firm points of contact, reliable sources of information, and trusted accomplices during dangerous escapades.

## Coterie Names

Depending on the setting and secrecy of the characters involved, a city's coteries may possess unique names by which other Kindred know them. In an inner-city chronicle with crime as a focus, coteries may possess names similar to gangs, notifying others of their territory or their accomplishments. The "Run and Gun Gang," "Red Park Sticks," and the "Hyde Park .45ers" all tell another vampire something about the coterie they're up against.

From plays like *Romeo and Juliet* to movies such as *The Warriors*, gangs, coteries, families, and factions become more ingrained in a setting with the benefit of a strong name. It means a lot to players when they know their characters' territory is marked with graffiti tags depicting their coterie name, when they can buy a property using their coterie for the trust name under which the building is purchased, or when vampires in court speak in frightened whispers about this coterie's actions.

While few Storyteller coteries blindly follow the protagonists, or throw their existences on the line just so the players' characters can profit, a bond of mutual interest makes for a fine reason to trade services. The benefit from introducing an allied coterie is primarily that the characters gain set Kindred in a domain with whom they can interact. Storytellers will find players asking after the members of an allied coterie — what they have achieved, what ills have befallen them since last they met, what they require — and in turn can have that coterie inquiring after the protagonists. If the players' characters find themselves staked and facing certain destruction, the feeling of *deus ex machina* is lessened considerably when the protagonists' long-term friends and associates rescue them, undoubtedly to levy their price later.

Allied coteries should not remain that way without cultivating the relationship. A coterie the protagonists pluck from the metaphorical fire owes a hefty boon, but does not suddenly see the players' characters as friends, especially if it has mentors or employers in opposition to their saviors. Firm alliances take time to mold, but the benefits for doing so — a potential source of money when required, boots on the ground when danger approaches, spies against a mutual foe — are huge. Diplomacy among the dead is possible, and necessary for a coterie to survive. Why make one friend when you can make four or five, forging a link of debt or trust with a gang of compatriots?

When considering how to construct a coterie for this purpose, the Storyteller should aim to reflect protagonist abilities, backgrounds, covenants, or clans, to a limited degree. While an allied coterie should not be a carbon copy of the original, the two require enough points of reference to instigate a natural bond. It is far less likely a protagonist coterie of working-class, neonate Venttrue befriends a coterie of haughty VII elders, though of course, in a roleplaying game, anything can happen.

**System:** When two coteries acknowledge each other as allies, it eases relations between the two to the extent that each member gains an additional die on Social rolls involving both parties. Additionally, when coming to the defense of an allied coterie, any combat rolls gain an additional die, symbolizing the understanding between both groups. The two groups have a basic understanding of where they each are at any given time due to

their regular communications, unless one attempts to conceal these actions from the other, which can be done without a roll unless their counterpart is seeking them out. Note this system only takes effect if the allied coterie is purchased as the Allies Merit.

**Example:** The coterie known as the Prince's Men greet their allies and counterparts from the Red Gloved coterie in Elysium, sharing a booth as they discuss business. As the two groups settle to talk over terms, the building's front window smashes inward under a hail of gunfire aimed at the Reds! Protecting their allies, the Prince's Men fire back at the bikers shooting in at the bar. Agneta of the Prince's Men would normally roll six dice, with her four dots in Dexterity and two in Firearms, but due to their standing up for the Reds, she gains an additional die. If the Red Gloved coterie stood to defend their allies, its members would also gain a die.

## The Coterie as Rivals

Rivalries range from the respectful and competitive to the bloody and deadly. If one coterie vies for the Ordo Dracul Master's favor in a domain, and another achieves it before them, tempers can burn hot and initiate immediate reprisals, or set in place a slow-burning fuse of corrosion and subversion. When a Storyteller coterie wrongs the protagonists, or the other way around, the aggrieved party makes efforts to prevent this occurrence from repeating, potentially with finality.

Basic rivalries stem from matters close at hand, such as feeding rights and territory, humiliation in court, or one coterie consistently outperforming the other in accomplishments. Whether the Storyteller coterie is the underdog that always fails or the bullies who constantly boast about their achievements and recognition from the Prince, they do something to upset the protagonists and take on the mantle of rivalry. Basic rivals such as these are unlikely to set blood feuds in motion or harm the protagonists' mortal connections, but they can act as the spark to something catastrophic in the future.

More complex rivalries emerge when handling the inner workings of clans, covenants, or Disciplines. Competition

encourages vampires to sabotage each other, resulting in covenants and pacts built on lies and betrayals. The characters' coterie may be opposed to their rival coterie due to a territory dispute, but this simple rivalry evolves as the rivals insinuate their way into the Primogen Council's good graces and block the protagonists' progression. Now, the protagonists can't strike at their rivals without also antagonizing the Primogen.

Deadly rivalries emerge when basic or complex rivalries lead to carnage. In the previous example, perhaps the protagonists are so aggrieved by their loss of status that they take out their ire on their rivals' herd, inadvertently destroying one of the coterie's Touchstones. Maybe the protagonists ask their rivals to fight for dominance like old Gangrel, but one of them takes the pummeling too far and mutilates or murders their opponent. Deadly rivalries are difficult to salve. An eye for an eye becomes a cycle of bloodshed only resolved when one coterie is destroyed, or a figure respected by both parties intervenes.

Rival coteries differ from solo rival vampires in a simple, yet effective way: the numbers game. While a single vampire may despise her counterpart from an opposing (or perhaps even the same) covenant, when a coterie finds itself at odds with another full coterie, tactics change. A single vampire can hope to predict what her rival does to counter her. In the case of a coterie, one group must assess the skills, capabilities, and drive of every vampire in the rival group. Accounting for one vampire's actions is a simple task when compared to the need to account for many vampires, particularly when a coterie comprises Kindred of diverse origins. The creepy-as-fuck Nosferatu in the coterie who almost permanently lurks in his haven is easily avoided, his presence almost signposted. But if avoiding that haven takes a vampire through unknown territory also under the rival coterie's control, it poses the question: Do we face the bastard we know or take our chances against the bastards we don't? And what happens when the rival coterie's territory spans a vast area? Prudent Kindred know the lay of the land and who controls what.

Storytellers should keep in mind the excellent story possibilities rivalries contribute. Many heroes in literature and on film are defined more by their enemies than their own actions. The players enjoy encountering their rivals in various roles, and the inevitable moment where they have to work with former enemies to defeat a common foe. Rivalry can be bloody until a greater threat rears its head. As the Bedouin saying goes: "I, against my brothers. I and my brothers against my cousins. I and my brothers and my cousins against the world." Working with rivals may make a coterie feel dirty, but it may also grant them relief from the constant threat of sabotage or destruction.

**System:** When two coteries consider each other rivals, it exacerbates negativity between the two. The rivalry causes each coterie member to gain an additional die on Physical rolls when opposing vampires in the rival coterie, as the Vitae explodes with nervous energy. Additionally, whenever a coterie harms their rivals in a significant way, the coterie's members each regain a point of Willpower.

**Example:** The coterie of Acolytes and Dragons concludes the Shadow's beating. It was the Mekhet's fault for misstepping onto their

city patch. As the vampire groans and attempts to crawl away, the Gangrel Acolyte loses her temper and stalks over to the Shadow, before putting her steel toecaps to the crawling Mekhet's head. The Gangrel's player rolls Strength + Brawl, which is a total of seven dice for this character. As she's kicking a member of her rival coterie, she adds an additional die to the roll, resulting in eight dice. In this example, she kicks with enough accuracy and damage to make the vampire fall into torpor, missing half its skull. All members of the coterie gain a point of Willpower for weakening their rivals in such a way.

## *The Coterie as Mentors*

Uncommon, but possible, is a coterie of supporting characters comprising the coterie's mentors. These Kindred may be sires, tutors, or simply elder vampires to the players' characters. Whether from the same covenant, clan, or mortal background as the coterie, these Kindred form a bond of mentorship, giving them reason to support the coterie and provide guidance whenever necessary.

A mentor coterie's formation may occur when its members each decide to Embrace mortals and lead new childer into the All Night Society. The sires group together as the players' characters do — perhaps they were a coterie of neonates once, just like the protagonists — and stick together despite or because of their new Embraces. They possess bonds of companionship between them, and share a familial connection to their childe. Such a mentor relationship need not be restricted to sire and childe, as the neonate is no doubt introduced to the sire's coterie-mates, and may form strong bonds with them. In this way, a young Ventrite may fall under a Daeva's tutelage, or a Carthian may spend a lot of time listening to a devout member of the Lancea et Sanctum.

A mentor coterie may form due to a covenant's plans to groom the protagonists as Prodigies for their sect. If the mentors are all members of the same covenants as the players' characters, they may have much to offer in the way of tutelage and common wisdom. A mentor coterie of this type likely encourages the protagonists to achieve goals for their covenant, seek out greater power or status, and perform missions sanctioned by their personal sects.

Mentor coteries act as sources of inspiration to other vampires. They may be unaware of their role as mentors, despite the group of young Carthians who always chat about their deeds. The fledglings whisper about the old revolutionaries who blew up the Prince a century ago, and rumor has it, the elders still meet to chat about their conquests outside the same café in which they met. Worshipped from afar, mentor coteries of this type house heroes for the Kindred, whether due to the vampires' personal achievements, motivations, or mythical status.

Mentor coteries need not attach themselves to the characters' coterie, however. They may conspire to mentor a single vampire, perhaps selected from their covenant for great things. Such a target is on one hand blessed, and on the other cursed. They benefit from teachings but suffer scrutiny over their every action.

**System:** When a coterie acknowledges another as their mentor coterie, and the mentors in turn acknowledge them as followers, disciples, students, or a variant on that theme, all

associated vampires gain an additional die to Mental rolls when addressing, teaching, researching, or working with each other. This additional die represents the way tutors know their pupils, and the way a coterie examines its mentor coterie for all the legends surrounding it. Additionally, learning a new level in an out-of-clan Discipline taught by members of a mentor coterie costs one fewer Experience. To learn an out-of-clan Discipline, the vampire must still drink Vitae from the mentor in question.

**Example:** *The Blood Shepherds coterie returns to the city library with the crate it relieved from guards at the docks. Their mentors wait eagerly with crowbars, prying the box open and exposing the carefully wrapped scrolls to the dim light within the building. "Can you read the words on this document, children?" The Sanctified Bishop assists the neonates in interpreting the text. The player of the coterie's scholar rolls Intelligence + Academics to decipher the ancient scrawl. With four dots in Intelligence and three in Academics, he would normally roll seven dice. In this case, as the Mental roll is being made in coordination with the mentor coterie, he rolls an additional die.*

## *Sample Coteries*

Potential allies, rivals, and mentors are in part situational, and in part by design. The sample coteries provided may not gel with every protagonist coterie, but their reasons for seeking friendship or enmity can be extracted and placed into another template without difficulty.

### *Bounty Hunters*

The vampires the Primogen call when they require independent operators, unaffiliated with the city's political situation, Bounty Hunters act just outside a Sheriff's purview and are nothing if not professional. Combined with their reputation for effectiveness comes notoriety for flamboyance or trademarked activity. Bounty Hunters easily fall into the trap of becoming Kindred celebrities, renowned for their deeds, but hunted in equal measure for the reputation their killers undoubtedly gain.

**Why take them as an ally coterie?** Being on the right side of Bounty Hunters is never a bad thing. Skilled Hunters can assist in another coterie's defense, or in taking down a dangerous opponent, for a fee. They may also help friends build a reputation as fellow Bounty Hunters. Bounty Hunters as allies must make the tough choice of hunting the protagonists or warning their friends, should such a conflict of interest ever arise.

**Why take them as a rival coterie?** Life is never dull with Bounty Hunters on a coterie's tail. Life expectancy likely decreases, though the fame gained through surviving the concerted effort of a Bounty Hunter coterie follows a coterie around for a long time. If the protagonist coterie also comprises Bounty Hunters, this rivalry becomes more competitive than bloodthirsty, with the Storyteller's coterie attempting to one-up the protagonists' deeds.

**Why take them as a mentor coterie?** Bounty Hunters live and die by their notoriety, and groom followers to continue their mantle and actions following their passing. Bounty Hunter

mentors teach a coterie self-defense, attack strategies and tactics, and how to squeeze a good price out of a desperate client.

**Example coterie members:** Kevin Moyer, Still-Blooded Sharpshooter; Rutina Bellfleur, Ordo Dracul Blood Researcher; Holly Bauer, Mortal Kidnapper, Immortal Bodysnatcher; Deborah McMillan, Survivalist Turned Trap Specialist; Kris, Former SWAT Team Member

**Example coterie names:** Smash 'n' Grab, The Big Dogs, Fishers of Kindred, Guns for Hire, The Night Mercs

## *Cosmopolitan Elite*

Cool without trying to be, unaligned because they don't give a shit, and in demand in every domain from here to the border, this coterie knows the fashions, the Kindred to get close to, and the best locations for the hottest parties. Playing more to social forces than any kind of physical threat, the Cosmopolitan Elite is a coterie of movers and shakers. Their word carries weight.

**Why take them as an ally coterie?** This coterie acts as useful contacts, likely to know all the goings-on between popular Kindred. They know where to be seen, and who to see there. The Cosmopolitan Elite can hook an ally up with the latest looks and mortal celebrities.

**Why take them as a rival coterie?** For coteries looking to make their own mark on a city's social scene, the existing Cosmopolitan Elite stand as a strong barrier. As soon as this coterie identifies a threat, they do everything to humiliate and discredit their opponents. Having this coterie as a rival leads to games of social one-upmanship.

**Why take them as a mentor coterie?** These Kindred are more likely to skip the domain than succumb to boredom, leaving them with potential apprentices to recruit and train in their ways, running Elysium, learning the secrets of the city's Kindred, and encouraging courtly etiquette. As mentors, the Cosmopolitan Elite can teach a lot about every vampire's dirty secrets.

**Example coterie members:** Julien Latendresse, Avant-Garde Fashion Designer; Isabelle Keeso, Daeva Queen of Ceremonies; Conrad Pao, Networking Master; Maxim Legare, P.R. Specialist; Laurence Antoine, Club Operator

**Example coterie names:** The A-List, Cats, Fashion Squad, The Harpy Contingent, Suits

## *Covenant Prodigies*

Some coteries predominantly comprise members of one covenant. The Lancea et Sanctum and Ordo Dracul are fond of teaching neonates as a group, encouraging them to work and experiment together, and then leaving them to explore the Danse Macabre as a cohesive unit. Other Kindred often see such coteries as students given special treatment, resorting to classifying them in high-school terms as the nerds or class captains. Of course, when these nerds practice the terrifying limits of Crúac, Theban Sorcery, or similar covenant-specific powers, the mockery soon stops.

**Why take them as an ally coterie?** A little like making friends with the best kids at school and stealing a look at their



homework, having a coterie of Covenant Prodigies as allies means the protagonists likely find a warmer welcome with the Prodigies' own covenants and benefit from the rub of hanging with successful Kindred. Covenant Prodigies let little tokens of power and influence slip to their allies, perhaps through pity or respect, perhaps through genuine friendship.

**Why take them as a rival coterie?** If a coterie wants a challenge, choosing Covenant Prodigies as rivals is a good way of going about finding one. Covenant Prodigies have the backing of their covenants in whichever domain they are present. A rivalry may form as a result of conflicting ideologies, or a rivalry born of jealousy due to both coteries claiming membership in the same covenant.

**Why take them as a mentor coterie?** Covenant Prodigies make fine teachers for their banks of knowledge, if not for their natural ability in mentorship. Likely insular and bookish rather than being extrovert coaches, Covenant Prodigies quietly leak information regarding a covenant's inner workings to their apprentices, subtly guiding them to the correct way of behaving within the covenant structure. Alternatively, a Prodigies coterie may be strict hardliners, acting as mentors but without kindness or empathy. They make sure the protagonists' coterie keeps to the correct hierarchy and etiquette, and levy punishment if their commands are ignored.

**Example coterie members:** Ella de Matteo, Strict Disciplinarian; Tony Helm, Scholar of Covenant Mysteries;

Anna Hawkins, Everyone's Favored Student; O.D., Reclusive Information Broker; Felicia Huang, Compassionate Tutor

**Example coterie names:** The Baby Dragons, City Savants, Class Princes, Librarians, The Praetorians

### *Discipline Gurus*

Vampires never refer to Disciplines by their names, or even as Disciplines. However, none can deny the gifts at their disposal, and so many titles for their powers have entered popular nomenclature. The students and masters of these Vitae-borne abilities are generally deferred to on the subject of Discipline analysis. Discipline Gurus receive requests from Kindred far and wide for understanding and explanation of unusual powers, especially those wielded by bloodlines of the larger clans. Coteries of these Discipline Gurus form partly as research groups similar to book clubs or lab staff and partly as an exercise in what vampire powers can do when refined and coordinated.

**Why take them as an ally coterie?** Discipline Guru coteries are difficult to obtain as allies, simply due to the strict focus of their studies. However, a coterie that displays similar interest in their gifts may receive interest from these Kindred. As allies, they may offer the use of strange powers to assist a friendly coterie, or pay a fee for recovery of an uncommon vampire. They effusively explain the inner workings of each clan's Disciplines, which may assist a coterie in its own research.

**Why take them as a rival coterie?** To defeat Discipline Gurus and acquire their collected research would be a massive boost to any coterie's powerbase. The Gurus themselves rarely seek out rivalries, unless similar scholars seek to discredit them or interfere with their studies. Gurus inadvertently make enemies through their cold approach to experimentation, kidnapping Kindred from bloodlines and small covenants as a way of expanding their research.

**Why take them as a mentor coterie?** Discipline Gurus make superb mentors. Though many coteries of this type remain introverted and unwilling to share their secrets, plenty of others do so enthusiastically. Even the quieter coteries pay followers in information for the acquisition of interesting test subjects or simple feeding vessels. A coterie of this type makes its followers diversify their Discipline palates as a priority.

**Example coterie members:** Christopher Benson, Experimental Vitae Technician; Hatchet, Specialist in Strength Application; Tamara Craven, Multi-Talented Workhorse; Jamal, Diablerie Addict; Mind Job, Ventrue Interrogator

**Example coterie names:** Blood Masters, The Creepy Clique, The Unhinged, Vitae Twisters, The Zoo Krewe

### *Gear Fitters*

Gear Fitters attempt to stay modern, not through consorting with the kine so much as playing with their toys. A coterie of this type builds cars, traffics weapons, and educates old Princes on the best, or most up-to-date, ways of defending their domains. No matter the power in their Vitae, few Kindred can measure up to the fastest sports car, the biggest gun, smallest surveillance drone, or hottest bomb. Gear Fitter coteries act in a supply role to the rest of the city, while building a rich nest for their own interests.

**Why take them as an ally coterie?** Gear Fitters are invaluable allies who can supply friendly coteries with deadly weaponry, effective haven defenses, and expensive cars at a fraction of the market value. They can also assess the gear a rival coterie equips, acting as sage counsel when needed. A coterie that befriends Gear Fitters finds its haven well-protected from sabotage.

**Why take them as a rival coterie?** Gear Fitters often form rivalries with other Gear Fitters, as each attempts to corner the market on technology. Kindred are not stuck at one point in time, but elders require reliable Gear Fitter coteries to push them up to speed. Gear Fitters hate it when another coterie slides in and steals their client. Besting a coterie of Gear Fitters may inflame a situation to the point of open warfare, while their complete destruction leaves a great cache of dangerous weaponry and tools.

**Why take them as a mentor coterie?** A coterie of this type can teach an apprentice coterie how best to defend their property and important kine, always relying on the functionality of machines over the unreliability of living minds. Mentor Gear Fitters introduce their

followers to contacts in the auto-theft and weapon-trafficking trade.

**Example coterie members:** Nut, More Machine than Man; Benedict Thomas, Weapons Dealer; Aklima Rahman, Acolyte Gadget Enthusiast; Jefferson Jr., Tooloed-up Gangrel Gun-Nut; Cold Sun, Trafficker of Heavy Weaponry

**Example coterie names:** Gearheads, Kindred Traffic, Oil Barons, The Metal Crew, The Smiths

### *Outlaw Gang*

Sometimes coteries detest playing by the rules, thumbing their noses at the Invictus Prince or Circle Hierophant. They ride off into the suburbs and wilderness to form plans of revolution or sabotage. Other Outlaw coteries exist within domains, stealing from other Kindred or making merry hell of the Masquerade for their own thrills. Sometimes, an Outlaw coterie is only outlawed because of a Prince's too-strict decrees. In such cases, it may be more common to be Outlaws than not.

**Why take them as an ally coterie?** Coteries of this type know the underworld of criminals and outsiders. As an ally, they likely share a hatred for authority figures or owe the protagonists' coterie for saving them at some point in the past. Outlaw coteries always join a fight against tyrants or provide escape routes for escaping a domain under fire. They also canvas domains for weak spots worth burglarizing or tagging with graffiti, just to piss off the bureaucrats on top.

**Why take them as a rival coterie?** If the protagonists' coterie is law-abiding and clinging to the city hierarchy, an Outlaw coterie picks them out as rivals ripe for attack or destruction. Rival Outlaw coteries occasionally appear, each trying to outdo the other in criminal misdeeds. Criminality comes in shades of severity however, so some Outlaw coteries despise each other for acts the other would never do. A chronicle involving a rival Outlaw coterie is likely to be action-packed.

**Why take them as a mentor coterie?** Outlaw coteries rarely act as mentors to any Kindred outside those banished or otherwise punished by the system. Their role as mentors is to generally pull a disgraced coterie up to its feet, dust its members off, and plant some good advice in their heads before taking off. Outlaw coteries with more permanent mentor relationships teach their followers all the best ways to take down the Elysium, the Prince, or their Primogen. Such coteries are involved with each other for the long game.

**Example coterie members:** Chainz, Rough and Ready Biker; Bloody Annie, The Vampire Tattoo; Hood, Mekhet Professional Thief; Ronald Dinh-Robic, Invictus Securities Fraud Expert; Shinji Seguin, Drug Dealer

**Example coterie names:** Cat Burglars, The Hogs, The National Treasures, Rebel Scum, Rogues Gallery

## Coterie Story Hooks

Chronicles may vary in scope from focusing on the personal struggles of individual vampires to Strix attacks on a domain's establishment, but one thing remains constant throughout any chronicle: Kindred handle their situations best when supported by a coterie. Whether attempting to rescue a kidnapped ghoul, salve a relationship with a mortal Touchstone, carve out feeding grounds for a childe, or oppose a pack of frenzied Gangrel, all Kindred benefit from seeking counsel, utilizing their companions' skills, and facing their problems as a unit.

This section provides story hooks to engage the coterie as a whole, with the aim of leaving no vampire out. Each contains a mixture of physical, social, and mental challenges, though their themes vary from the personal to the political and the mundane to the supernatural.

### *All Night Society*

Following the Embrace, few neonates desire to spend time in the company of other vampires. Only as the bridges they built between friends, employers, lovers, and family steadily erode, do Kindred migrate fully into the All Night Society. It provides a vampire with comfort to surround himself with others like him, even when their shared feature is a lust for blood and an aversion to daylight.

### *Be Our Guests*

The domain's ruling Kindred tasks the coterie members with hosting a new Elysium in their territory, providing little notice they are to perform this task. Perhaps the ruler is testing the coterie, or maybe she seeks to humiliate it when it all goes wrong. The coterie needs to scout out locations on its turf, ensure the safety of visitors, and arrange entertainments for whichever Kindred choose to attend. If successful, their social cache no doubt increases in size.

**Mental:** Entertaining the city's Kindred is no small task with many vampires of different backgrounds and interests represented. The coterie needs to research the big hitters in the domain and cater the Elysium to them, while not neglecting the vocal vampires without as much power. Investigating the Kindred involved to best accommodate their needs is a must, just as it is to work out whether the coterie is being set up for a fall.

**Physical:** When the coterie explores their desired Elysium spot, an interested mortal gang takes exception. Whether a crew of drug dealers claims the space or the Women's Institute sees the spot as their own, these mortals will not move without a fight. For additional challenges of this nature, another coterie of Kindred may seek to sabotage the location, drawing the coterie into a battle.

**Social:** Rubbing shoulders with Kindred should put a coterie at ease, but when that coterie is responsible for hosting the members need to make small talk with the Archbishop, come equipped with ready answers for when the Prefect involves the coterie in

a political diatribe, and smooth over violent situations between hostile guests. The coterie needs Elysium to remain peaceful for its reputation to stay intact.

### *Visiting Dignitary*

The coterie receives word of an important vampire making her way to the domain using a cover identity. They are advised to keep the dignitary's visit discreet, but must arrange for her guardianship up until after she has a meeting of importance with the head of her covenant. Trusted to take care of the visiting vampire, perhaps due to their ties to the covenant, or maybe as a trial run before being asked to do something bigger, the coterie has a life on its hands.

**Mental:** Understanding the reason behind the dignitary's visit rewards the coterie with valuable information. Additionally, discovering her background, the covenant she represents, and the reason she's so hated arms the coterie with material it can use for or against her. If the dignitary's meeting is in a private place, the coterie would do well to scout it out beforehand, potentially set up security and surveillance measures, and uncover the truth behind these clandestine activities.

**Physical:** The visiting dignitary is unpopular with a segment of local Kindred. Maybe she represents a covenant disliked in the region, speaks as the voice of an exiled Prince, or through her personal activities has crossed another of the city's coteries before now. Shepherding her to her meeting and caring for her before and after requires defending her, or eliminating threats before they act.

**Social:** Getting to know this dignitary could pay dividends for the coterie. She is clearly a vampire of importance, and depending on who she represents, could reward a coterie that treats her courteously. Conversely, making a deal with one of the visitor's many enemies to turn her over or leak information as to her haven, travel route, or visiting plans could win the coterie social points at the risk of crossing her covenant.

### *The Beast*

All Kindred hear the Beast's call, driving them to selfish or destructive deeds. It is the worst part of every vampire, but it need not be endured alone. As part of a coterie, the Beast is more manageable. When a Kindred sees the tell-tale signs of that inner voice growing louder in a companion's head, she can act as counsellor, friend, or rock, as the case may be. In some cases, coteries prepare stakes in the event of a frenzy, each member having agreed to take paralysis and torpor over losing control.

### *The Treacherous Hyena*

The coterie notice that objects and cash have been going missing from its havens in recent months, someone appears to be drinking from their preferred vessels, and their cars have been vandalized more than once. At first, the suspicion falls on an

outsider who despises the coterie, but soon it becomes apparent only the coterie's members could access all the things gone awry. In following this plot, the Storyteller must suggest privately to one of the players that the Beast compels them to perform these actions. If the player is intrigued, the chronicle can evolve to show whether the perpetrator was ever aware of their actions.

**Mental:** Investigating the crime scenes and analyzing the evidence requires a member of the coterie with strong mental skills. The Storyteller is encouraged to place conflicting clues as to the perpetrator's identity, without involving so many red herrings as to make the mystery unsolvable or confusing. Aptitude in Investigation can lead the coterie to the conclusion that the miscreant is one of their own, while Occult helps the coterie understand the Beast they're dealing with in this scenario.

**Physical:** When the coterie initially investigates the cause of this apparent sabotage, it likely applies some physical pressure on the suspects involved. If they see a vessel or valuable Touchstone at death's door, getting them to the hospital in a hurry may become a priority. If it comes to it, physically restraining the Beast-driven vampire may be the only way to stop them.

**Social:** Empathy is necessary to understand the reasons behind the betrayal in this story. The coterie needs to look inward and determine how loyal it is regarding treachery from one of their own. They need to use a combination of Persuasion and Intimidation to convince the saboteur they forgive him, or to cow his Beast back into the depths of his soul.

### *The Predatory Wolf*

The Beast's most infamous voice forces vampires to frenzy, tearing apart anyone close by, whether loved one or enemy. Recent events have been pushing the buttons of one of the coterie's allies in recent nights. This ally's struggle is increasingly visible, as the vampire twitches, shouts at himself, and occasionally shifts into a bestial, enraged form. How the coterie members handle this is up to them, but if left to fester, the ally soon takes his frenzy out on the coterie's possessions.

**Mental:** A mixture of Investigation and Politics reveals to the coterie why its ally's Beast is so enraged. They discover their ally has been consistently shamed by another member of his coterie. While he's able to refrain from frenzying in the midst of his own companions, when outside its sanctuary, the Beast spills from inside him.

**Physical:** It may come down to staking or destroying the frenzying vampire. He asks for death, unwilling to go through the devolution of succumbing completely to the wolf snarling in his head. Taking this action, if placation is impossible, may bring peace to the coterie's territory, but angers the frenzying vampire's coterie and leaves his herd without a steward.

**Social:** The frenzying vampire is an example to the coterie-mates of how far they can descend if their buttons are constantly pushed. Animal Ken may allow them to speak with the vampire's Beast, soothing it for a time, while Persuasion is useful for convincing his own coterie to apologize and make amends for pushing him this far.

### *Clans and Covenants*

For many vampires, coterie comes before clan and covenant. Most Kindred choose the peers they meet each night, but do not choose their family, and do not always choose their philosophical or political allegiances. When a clan comes to apply pressure on its members to behave a certain way, or a covenant rallies the troops to pursue a grand agenda, coteries naturally resist if it's not in the best interests of their members. Compromises must be reached or the coterie suffers.

### *Blessings Shared*

Some members of the coterie have performed well for their respective clans or covenants in recent nights. One such clan offers the members of their line in the coterie a rich gift containing an investment portfolio, high-end property, and an offer of tutelage, but only if the gift isn't shared. This offer may be a test to examine how closely bonded the coterie is, could be a way of guaranteeing loyalty, or perhaps is simply a graceful offering.

**Mental:** The coterie needs to decide how to apportion this gift, electing whether to keep it for the clan or covenant member chosen, or split it between each of the Kindred present in defiance of the gift giver's wishes. Understanding the politics of the situation assists the coterie in identifying whether this gift is a cursed chalice.

**Physical:** The gift is a rich one, and implies great wealth on the part of the gift's donator. Vampires, like mortals, get hungry for more when given a taste of fortune. Larceny could be called for, or even a kidnapping of someone important to extract more wealth from the giver. Crossing vampires in such a way is rarely wise, but if the coterie's Kindred can pull it off, they could vastly inflate their fortunes.

**Social:** The coterie must understand the social ramifications of accepting or rejecting the gift, using Empathy to discern the reasons and Socialize or Streetwise to pry rumors from the All Night Society as to why this gift was donated to the group.

### *Ready for War*

Each member of the coterie receives a notification – whether by call, private meeting, text message, email, or any other means – that their covenant prepares for an upcoming war. Tensions in the domain have grown sufficiently that the clans or covenants are closing ranks, ready for war in case it arrives. A coterie faced with this plot is effectively being asked to split up and potentially attack each other in the near future, though they could go rogue or play the diplomats.

**Mental:** The coterie needs to know which side is strongest in the coming conflict, which has the most to offer, and which is the easiest target. Academics and Politics rolls may come in to play when making such an analysis. Additionally, it is in the coterie's interest to investigate who lit the fuse behind this war and what they have to gain from it.

**Physical:** When war comes, the physically able vampires are the ones duking it out in the back alleys and shooting at

sneaking vampire nobility attempting to escape the warzone. Stealth and Survival rolls are necessary to avoid the crosshairs of other coteries, just as much as Firearms and Weaponry rolls are needed to take out the opposition.

**Social:** At some point, the war has to end. Around the negotiating table, the most socially capable vampires hold sway. Expression rolls assist any diplomatic declaration, while Intimidation may be required to pacify reckless coteries still spoiling for a fight.

## *Masquerade*

Important to all Kindred, the Masquerade is what keeps the true nature of vampires away from the kine, especially in the form of the press and interested government agencies. When the Masquerade is breached on a coterie's territory, it is that coterie's responsibility to patch up the mess. When a member of a coterie receives blackmail threats from someone claiming they have evidence of that vampire breaking the Masquerade, it becomes a concern for his peers as well.

## *Blackmail*

The coterie is normally so careful with feeding, but tonight, a coded email arrives in one of their inboxes, with attachments portraying a recent drinking event attended by the majority of the coterie. The blackmailer starts with small requests, expecting the coterie to insult the host of the next Elysium or drink from a doped-up vessel for kicks. These threats grow in severity as the coterie realizes it's now very difficult to extricate itself from a blackmailer's many plots.

**Mental:** Identifying the blackmailer with Investigation rolls is the most straightforward use of Mental skills in this story, though Computer and Academics rolls assist in deciphering their code and linking it back to their IP address, motifs, or reasons for the blackmail.

**Physical:** While the blackmail continues, the coterie is tasked to perform dangerous activities, including sending messages to start fights or stealing valuable pieces of information for their extortionist. These physical skills come to bear again when the blackmailer is identified, of course.

**Social:** Whether attempting to locate the blackmailer through schmoozing in Elysium, or attempting to deceive the vampire behind the curtain through skilled use of Subterfuge rolls, the coterie undoubtedly has to focus on maintaining its social veneer and patching up broken relationships following the blackmailer's capture or disappearance.

## *Witnesses to a Crime*

The coterie responsible claims innocence at first, until they realize the protagonists saw them perform the act. No matter what it was, how light or severe, it was a Masquerade breach. The guilty coterie's members beg for mercy when they realize they were seen, offering service in the future, tutelage in Disciplines,

or simply defense when the going gets tough. At the same time, their guilt leads to a fine reward from the ruler and the domain's appointed Sheriff, should they be turned in.

**Mental:** Mental skills help the coterie understand why the Masquerade breach occurred, and can even assist in teaching the wrongdoers how to avoid such problems again. It is possible they performed their actions on purpose, independently or commanded by an enemy of the coterie. If so, investigating the political situation surrounding this errant coterie is wise.

**Physical:** If the coterie witnessed a Masquerade breach, perhaps someone else did and requires silencing. A Humanity-affecting task, the coterie may need to permanently silence a loud-mouthed mortal or other vampire.

**Social:** This story enables the coterie to form a new alliance with the indebted coterie, or gain social points by turning them over to the domain's law enforcers. The coterie might squeeze the vampires responsible for the breach in order to get more out of them, using Intimidation or Persuasion to reap further rewards for their "kindness."

## *Territory*

Like mortals, Kindred want a place to call their own, whether to hunt, study, or sleep. In many domains, Princes dole out territory to vampires who prove themselves loyal to the leadership or the defense of the domain. Sometimes that territory extends to a haven, other times it merely suggests a vampire might feed there without penalty. A coterie has greater needs than a solitary vampire, likely requiring more territory than a single block of houses and apartment. The pressures of maintaining or expanding that territory might lead into many an interesting chronicle.

## *Blood Supply*

As the coterie habitually visits the same feeding grounds each night, the mortals become scared or move away unless forced to stay in place. Only those with no capacity to move remain for repeat feedings. The blood supply thins as fewer people move to this part of the city, buildings erode in price and popularity, and the herd dies out or grows in defiance. The coterie needs to work to rejuvenate its territory or claim a new patch elsewhere in the city.

**Mental:** The coterie might identify this problem before it occurs, yet witness the blood supply still reducing. A Science roll indicates the mortals are suffering some blood contagion, possibly transferred from a vampire not of their coterie. Medicine helps the coterie care for the weakened mortals, or at least lets them know the kine need hospital treatment to survive.

**Physical:** When the territory is ruined, the physically inclined vampires need to claim a new scrap of land, potentially from another coterie. The Storyteller should be prepared to divide up the domain map into territories possessed by different coteries, and grade their threat levels to the protagonists. In the event the coterie decides not to move as its turf degrades around it, Survival rolls become increasingly common.

**Social:** The coterie's vampires may attempt to ingratiate themselves with the kine, befriending them, rejuvenating their homes and jobs, and persuading them to stay. Streetwise is useful for working out the cause behind the territory's erosion through speaking to those on the ground.

### *Mortal Interests*

A religious order popular in the city takes a keen interest in the territory the coterie claims as its own. The territory may not require physical cleaning up but these people wish to demonstrate their commitment to the faith and the community by boosting the area's popularity among their flock, bringing spiritual light into the residents' hearts, and meeting every inhabitant in this part of the city. Slowly, some of these religious types may smell a rat as they discover the coterie only comes out at night, and mortals across the town suffer anemia-like symptoms.

**Mental:** The coterie wants to know everything about this religious order, which appears to be new to the domain. Why

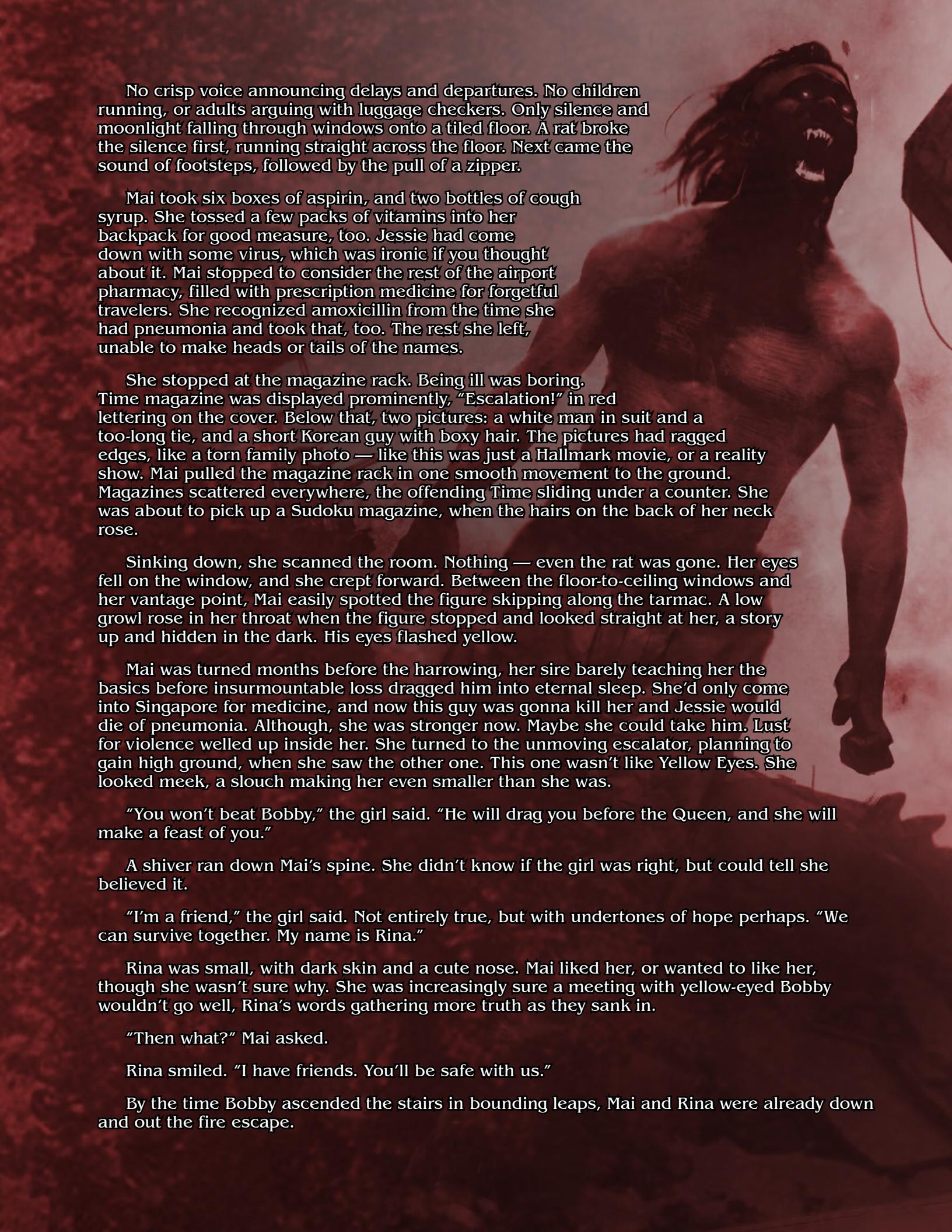
are they interested in the coterie's territory, and do they have another coterie sponsoring their activities? It is possible they are simply mortals looking to help a part of the city, but paranoia might strike the coterie into thinking the kine are Hunters with a decent cover story. Investigation assists the coterie in finding out the truth, while Occult rolls reveals the nature of the order's religious background.

**Physical:** The coterie may have to eliminate the heads of this religious order, or at least their backers elsewhere in the city. Likewise, as the order identifies the unnatural creatures in this area, they may strike out, requiring the coterie to act in defense.

**Social:** It is possible the coterie befriends these interlopers, using their good will to revitalize their part of the domain and bring fresh blood to their mouths. This cynical approach works well with Persuasion and Socialize rolls. Alternatively, the coterie may attempt to turn their herds against the newcomers, bullying them into forcing the religious order out, or spreading lies with Subterfuge rolls to make these preachers offering salvation seem worse than the Kindred.







No crisp voice announcing delays and departures. No children running, or adults arguing with luggage checkers. Only silence and moonlight falling through windows onto a tiled floor. A rat broke the silence first, running straight across the floor. Next came the sound of footsteps, followed by the pull of a zipper.

Mai took six boxes of aspirin, and two bottles of cough syrup. She tossed a few packs of vitamins into her backpack for good measure, too. Jessie had come down with some virus, which was ironic if you thought about it. Mai stopped to consider the rest of the airport pharmacy, filled with prescription medicine for forgetful travelers. She recognized amoxicillin from the time she had pneumonia and took that, too. The rest she left, unable to make heads or tails of the names.

She stopped at the magazine rack. Being ill was boring. Time magazine was displayed prominently, "Escalation!" in red lettering on the cover. Below that, two pictures: a white man in suit and a too-long tie, and a short Korean guy with boxy hair. The pictures had ragged edges, like a torn family photo — like this was just a Hallmark movie, or a reality show. Mai pulled the magazine rack in one smooth movement to the ground. Magazines scattered everywhere, the offending Time sliding under a counter. She was about to pick up a Sudoku magazine, when the hairs on the back of her neck rose.

Sinking down, she scanned the room. Nothing — even the rat was gone. Her eyes fell on the window, and she crept forward. Between the floor-to-ceiling windows and her vantage point, Mai easily spotted the figure skipping along the tarmac. A low growl rose in her throat when the figure stopped and looked straight at her, a story up and hidden in the dark. His eyes flashed yellow.

Mai was turned months before the harrowing, her sire barely teaching her the basics before insurmountable loss dragged him into eternal sleep. She'd only come into Singapore for medicine, and now this guy was gonna kill her and Jessie would die of pneumonia. Although, she was stronger now. Maybe she could take him. Lust for violence welled up inside her. She turned to the unmoving escalator, planning to gain high ground, when she saw the other one. This one wasn't like Yellow Eyes. She looked meek, a slouch making her even smaller than she was.

"You won't beat Bobby," the girl said. "He will drag you before the Queen, and she will make a feast of you."

A shiver ran down Mai's spine. She didn't know if the girl was right, but could tell she believed it.

"I'm a friend," the girl said. Not entirely true, but with undertones of hope perhaps. "We can survive together. My name is Rina."

Rina was small, with dark skin and a cute nose. Mai liked her, or wanted to like her, though she wasn't sure why. She was increasingly sure a meeting with yellow-eyed Bobby wouldn't go well, Rina's words gathering more truth as they sank in.

"Then what?" Mai asked.

Rina smiled. "I have friends. You'll be safe with us."

By the time Bobby ascended the stairs in bounding leaps, Mai and Rina were already down and out the fire escape.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# PUTTING IT

# ALL TOGETHER

*“There is no first moment; no single word or place from which this or any story springs. The threads can always be traced back to some earlier tale.”*

— Clive Barker, *Weaveworld*

This chapter contains practical advice on chronicle building: how to sit down with your players to design the setting and themes for the story, and adding twists to setting elements — worlds, covenants, and coteries — presented in previous chapters. It also offers mechanics to support the theme of your chronicle. At the end of the chapter you’ll find three ready-made chronicles, mapped with themes and moods, clans, and covenants, based on the Many Worlds chapter.

## *Mapping Your Chronicle*

**Guide to the Night** offers alternate worlds, a closer look at covenants and coteries, and a chapter chock-full of mechanics still to come. Before going into the *how* of putting all of that together to plan your chronicle, let’s go into the *why*.

*The coterie lies defeated at the hands of its immortal enemy, the Baron. They’re still reeling from the shock — they planned so long and so cleverly, the night should have been theirs, but the world seemed to conspire against them. The Baron raises his fist, wreathed in shadow, and prepares to strike the coterie down forever, when howls pierce the silence. Feral dogs, all teeth and claws and mangy flea-ridden fur, pour out of every alleyway to envelop the Baron. Howls quickly turn to yelps of death as the Daeva turns his rage on the pack, but the distraction lasts long enough for the coterie to escape. They never saw their savior, but they know who it was: the Baron’s blood-sister. What they don’t know is what she wants in return.*

So, your players rolled poorly and a perfectly good in-character plan went awry. You’re nowhere near the end of your campaign though; maybe the Baron isn’t your Big Bad yet, or maybe you just really like this group of characters. You want to throw them a lifeline. Had you brought in the Baron’s sister last minute, the players might have felt cheated that you gave them a *deus ex machina*. Fortunately, you introduced talk of the Baron’s younger sister as early as the first game, making sure to seed gossip of her hatred for him. That prompted the Mekhet character to pursue a deal: acts of sabotage against the Baron in exchange for secrets. The coterie earned their timely rescue by paying attention to the rumor mill and striking the right alliances early on. If the players rolled well and the coterie didn’t need saving, you can always have the sister show up in a later session. Chronicle building is sowing little hooks and seeds for you to reap if you ever need them.

Mapping your chronicle ahead of time also gives you a leg up when you’ve been studying all week, or working all day, and it’s game night. You didn’t have time to prepare, but you charted your story already. Maybe you didn’t hammer everything into place — players will probably monkey wrench it if you do anyway — but you outlined the major events. For example, “Revelation! The coterie meets the HoR, and they’re someone it trusted” tells you that the characters should encounter the Herald of Ravens, and that person is a Kindred the coterie previously thought it could trust. Create stats for the Herald, or reuse old stats from a Storyteller character that didn’t see much use, and you have your game for the evening.

Lastly, and most importantly, mapping your chronicle gives you a coherent theme and mood to hang everything else on. You’ve sat down with your players, and determined the themes for this chronicle are isolation and betrayal, and the mood is noir. Mapping your chronicle, you can see how you’re alternating between them: This situation makes them feel isolated, and then another sees them betrayed at the hands of an ally. You can decide when to deliberately deviate from your themes, so they can return with renewed force later. Important Storyteller characters all have aspects of your themes in their background: The Baron gets betrayed by his sister, who also plans to betray the members of the coterie later by having them take the fall. If she succeeds, erstwhile allies will renounce the coterie — adding to the theme of isolation. Even if you have to add an interlude in your chronicle, because you didn’t have time to prepare this week either and you already used the last of your road map, you can cater the interlude story to your themes. That game session might not add to the overarching plot, but it still maintains the atmosphere and immersion of your chronicle.

## Modularity

**Guide to the Night** introduces an abundance of options for your Requiem chronicle, with ideas, settings, and rules that players new to the game and seasoned veterans alike can adopt. This book is intended to be modular — Storytellers are encouraged to mix and match components in whatever way sparks their interests. Players can find new inspirations for building characters and collaborating with their Storyteller.

### Picking and Choosing

If you’re a new Storyteller, the sheer amount of information and options presented here might seem daunting. Don’t feel as though you have to use every new Merit or Twist here, or that your space noir chronicle has to adhere exactly to the setting presented in Chapter One. Take what works for you, save the rest for another game.

Try out a new element for a session or two and then evaluate. Did it work the way you’d intended? If you used Storyteller Beats, did they accumulate at a rate that felt rewarding all around? Seek your players’ input. Did they understand *why* you used that new mechanic? Did it help immerse them in the game or get them more excited about a particular part of the setting?

Likewise, if several different ideas are calling to you, and you want to use them together, go for it! Want to run a story about a Daeva coterie solving crimes in a technoir setting? Have some ideas about a branch of the Circle of the Crone on an interstellar journey? Take the elements you need and have fun.

Whether you have a group of characters who have been everywhere and done everything in the *Chronicles of Darkness*, or new players who are making a change from heavy fantasy- or science-fiction-based games, the settings presented in Chapter One let you explore unfamiliar territory in familiar ways. Requiem veterans understand how the Kindred work in a modern-day city, but the change of scene (or solar system) presents new complications for the All Night Society. Players who have dealt with 100 hull breaches but never done so as a vampire on the edge of frenzy get to look at an old problem in new ways.

If you’ve always wanted to play one clan off against another, or imagined your characters being at the center of a grand Carthian conspiracy, Chapter Two takes a deep dive into each clan and covenant being ascendant, and gives Storytellers ideas to consider when pitting two movements against one another.

If your party needs more cohesion, Chapter Three’s rules for creating coteries can be applied to a preexisting one as well. Sometimes a group needs a change of direction. Working through the “Climbing the Ladder” steps can help a coterie that’s lost some of its magic get back together, and helps the Storyteller refocus the plot so both the individual characters and their coterie can achieve their goals.

Chapter Four offers new takes on **Vampire: The Requiem** and **Chronicles of Darkness** rules. If your players are conservative

when it comes to spending Willpower, the twists and Storyteller Beats offer incentives for them to take more risks.

Lastly, if you have characters that are great orators, but impassioned speeches aren’t entirely their player’s forte, the social combat rules in Chapter Five can help heighten the drama.

### Taking It to the Next Level

So you’ve delved into a new setting, and played around with some twists and social combat. Where does your next chronicle take you?

Here are some ways to build on the concepts presented in this book:

#### Genre-mashing

Taking two seemingly-disparate genres and putting them together can be immensely fun, and offers not only new physical settings for Kindred intrigues, but also opens up new ways to explore familiar themes and discover new ones. Consider some of the major themes and questions two different genres address — where do they dovetail? Where do they conflict?

How might the royals from Chapter One’s “Crown Games” fare in the post-apocalyptic setting of “The End of the World”? How would you port the Joseon Korea setting to a space-opera version of Mars?

Find a list of common plots, or boil one of your inspirations down into one line: *a stranger comes to town, mistaken identities, or outsmart your rivals*. How would you fashion a Requiem game around those? This is where themes can help add nuance to a story as well. On the outside, a chronicle might appear to be about finding the traitor within the covenant, but when you dig deeper, it’s really about learning just how deep corruption can go, or who you can trust when the rest of the world is against you.

#### Character Sketches

Chapter Two offers 20 example characters, and guidelines for cities and domains run by one clan or covenant. If you’re looking to run a short (one to three sessions) game with new characters, assign a number to each of the characters and settings in that chapter. Have your players roll a 20-sided die or choose a random number to determine who they will be playing, and do the same with the locations, NPCs, and other elements of the setting.

This can also be used as a sort of cut scene in your chronicle. Is there another group of characters the coterie is working against, or whose help it’s seeking? If the main cast has some down time — laying low while they recover from a nasty battle, or called away by their sires to attend to clan business — let the players take on a brief adventure with a new cast. Following

are a few prompts combining the sample characters and new settings, that can provide a jumping-off point for these short sessions. Storytellers are encouraged to tailor the scenarios to tie in to their ongoing chronicles.

### Bleeding Edge: Slice of Life

The Nightclub Waitress works high up in the Loom, in an establishment whose windows look out over the endless lights of the arcology. The Wealthy Socialite is at her usual table, accompanied by the Plastic Surgeon, who needs funding — and the Socialite's blessing — to continue his research into overcoming the Steel Paradox.

### Crown Games: Court Imposter

The Street Grifter's managed to convince the powers that be that he hails from some obscure branch of the House's family tree. The Lawyer knows he's false; she's the one who forged his papers, with the Private Investigator's help. Tonight's a grand affair at court, and the three intend to use the pomp and spectacle to help them uncover secrets the other Kindred would like to keep hidden. If he's lucky, the Grifter might get to drink from the queen before his ruse ends.

### Night Without End: Traveling Show

The Librarian and the Carnival Barker travel the Waylanes, bringing news, nostalgia, and New Terran Dominion-approved entertainment to the outposts. Their travels take them to Memphis Valley and the Stygian Stones. It's an excellent chance

for the Librarian to glean what knowledge she can, but the Reclusive Occultist dislikes intruders.

### Rain Falls: Fingers on the Pulse

The lives of the Student Protester, Local News Anchor, and Dirty Cop converge in the midst of a riot. Maybe the Protester started it, maybe she was just in the right place at the right time, but the News Anchor's got her on camera facing off against the Dirty Cop, and the story's going to be huge.

### *Exploring New Themes*

Over the course of a chronicle, some themes might emerge as character-specific rather than coterie- or chronicle-specific. If you are a Storyteller using any of the rules above that reward players for engaging with the themes, consider allowing that player to substitute his character's personal themes in place of the chronicle's.

Players who notice these themes, or have new ones they'd like to examine, might want to discuss them with their Storyteller so they can incorporate them into the story. What other themes stand in opposition to them? How do they fit with the character's current arc? Are there ways these themes might also apply to the other characters? The coterie?

Some themes can be granular. In a game where the characters' Masquerades are solid, what parts of the Requiem itself cause conflict? Do clan and covenant put certain aspects of a character's nights at odds?

### *Building Your World*

The image of chronicle creation brings to mind that of the Storyteller toiling away alone, carefully planning the twists and turns the players will guide their characters through without their help or input. While this has the potential to create a certain thrill and intrigue, it places a hefty burden on the Storyteller and can leave the players feeling like they don't have much agency in the story. Without enough background or setting information, players find it difficult to engage with a world whose rules they don't fully understand. Working together as a group to lay out the bones of the city and the setting makes it much easier for the Storyteller to fill it with scenes in which the characters can play. It also provides the players with a clearer idea of their setting, the important characters and conflicts, and avenues they can explore to influence the story.

Brainstorming is an easy way to quickly engage everyone and open opportunities for characters to enter the scene. Sitting down with the entire group to tease out the particulars of the setting, themes of play, main characters and antagonists, and the general arc of the first major plot can bring an unfamiliar group together. One of the biggest advantages to sorting out

the beats the group wants to hit ahead of time also means they can hash out subjects and topics they'd rather avoid. While *Vampire: The Requiem* intrinsically deals with the topics of death, loss, and isolation, making sure these topics and others are explored in a way with which everyone at the table is comfortable is an important part of the gaming experience. As dark as the themes and topics on the table are, and as cruel and depraved as vampires can be, the people playing the characters are human. Respecting each other's boundaries at the table is paramount; everyone playing the game is looking to have a good time, and to torture their imaginary characters, not themselves or each other.

In earlier chapters, this book explored the steps that go into building a city, building a coterie, and how to use alternate settings and themes that might not immediately seem to fit in a *Vampire* game. Now is the time to explore those concepts with your players, to see which conventional aspects your party would like to keep, what unconventional concepts they'd like to explore, and when and where they'd like to set the game.

## Coming to the Table

Everyone approaches gaming from a different perspective and uses gaming as a different kind of escape or catharsis. As such, making sure everyone is on the same page, and remains respectful of everyone else's motivations, is a key part of building a chronicle and gaming in a way everyone can enjoy. No matter the approach, the desired outcome, the play style, or how lightly or seriously the players take the game, if everyone participating respects the Storyteller and the other players at the table, the chronicle is sure to be an enjoyable experience.

### Setting the Tone

One of the most important things to establish for a chronicle is the tone of the game. It's hard to keep a group of players working together in the same direction if one is treating the game as a chance to goof off and blow off steam, while another is looking to use it as a chance to plumb the depths of immortal misery and insanity. With two such wildly differing attitudes toward the game, players are all but guaranteed to come into conflict. Such different expectations lead to one player feeling that someone is disrespecting his style of roleplay and putting down his negotiation attempts as "melodramatics;" meanwhile, the other player is annoyed that someone is "bringing down" her game session with overwrought theatrics when all she wants to do is beat down the werewolves trying to expand into territory that isn't theirs. A failure to communicate the game's tone properly leads to disparities like this, when each player is expecting a different experience.

While the Storyteller may have to mediate conflict between players when each has a different idea on how to tackle a question brought up by the plot, players attacking each other for their styles of play shouldn't be an issue at the table. If the players seek different styles of play, there's nothing wrong with clearly labeling roleplay and combat sessions. Suggesting that players have multiple characters can help delineate multiple play styles as well. Having different mindsets to enter for different styles can help players acclimate to play styles they aren't used to, and exploring the techniques their friends prefer can open them to a side of gaming they haven't previously considered. An easy way to separate out characters and mindsets in this manner would be to have a set of 'elite' or 'ruling class' characters who make the big decisions and have to use diplomatic means to reach solutions, and their 'boots on the ground' troops who have to enforce the policies the elites establish. The two groups need never directly interact, or the party can be a mix who works closely together.

Of course, that's just one example, and there are multiple ways to run chronicles featuring opposed groups, single groups, or a mix of the two. Find a way that works for your players and have fun!

### Why We Play Games

Everyone comes to gaming from a different place and brings a little bit of their own past with them when they take a seat at a

table. Whether they discovered the hobby as a coincidence when looking for literature, grew up with gaming as a centerpiece of their life, or found it as an alternate form of cooperative storytelling, everyone wants to get together and do one thing: tell a good story.

Much like setting the tone as discussed above, what the players want from the game and what kind of story they want to tell is an important point to consider. What style of game is best-suited to your players? An action-packed city on the edge of internal or external war? A slow-burn political drama, where backroom deals and cloak-and-dagger tactics rule the night? Are their characters heroes or villains, saviors or harbingers? Tailoring the stories to the roles they wish to play before establishing the coterie in detail helps to find proper roles for the characters they'll eventually build, and the connections they'll make with both each other and the Storyteller characters that populate the game. Coming together on the same page for story direction helps everyone accomplish their goals in a more fulfilling way. If there are character-specific side plots and arcs, having the main story concept laid out can help bring characters into each other's stories, allowing them to engage when one story or another is highlighted, instead of feeling useless or excluded. Laying out the aim of the chronicle also allows characters to approach certain problems together from unconventional angles, so long as their methods fit the agreed-upon tone and setting of the game. More often than not, the collaboration will bring more vibrant, creative, and dramatic twists and turns than one person working to plan everything alone.

### Keeping the Table Safe

As mentioned earlier, gaming is meant to be an enjoyable experience for everyone in the group. While the nightly lives of vampires are often violent, sexual, dangerous, and depraved, it's important to remember that the people playing such immoral immortals do have boundaries. What one player is willing to explore might be a hard line for another – a topic that, for whatever reason, they have no desire to delve into. Hash out a list of topics to avoid before building the setting, rather than running headlong into such a topic in the middle of a game session, where the player may feel pressured to push past their discomfort in order to avoid "ruining" the game for his friends. Some groups might find it easier to write the topics down and display them as a reminder, working together to craft the list. If the group isn't comfortable listing their taboos aloud, simply have the players write them down and pass them to the Storyteller, who can then compile the list. All players should be aware of what topics are forbidden, and do their best to respect the boundaries of everyone else at the table. If the Storyteller notices the session shifting toward a listed subject, she should gently steer the players away from the topic, reminding them if necessary that it isn't suited to the table.

Of course, there are times when something unexpected comes up, and a player might realize partway through a scene that

they aren't comfortable with what's going on. For these times, it's useful to have a hand gesture, prop, or code word that tells the group things have taken a turn someone isn't comfortable with. Even Storytellers can make use of these tools if a player is pushing for something that makes her uncomfortable. The most important rule for using any of these tools — predetermined lists, mid-scene indicators, or other tools your group may devise — is that there is no questioning, cajoling, or teasing whoever

uses them. Part of respecting your fellow players is accepting when they hit their boundaries, and they do not owe the table an explanation, nor do they deserve to be mocked for or pressured into something that makes them uncomfortable. Redirecting the scene should be a quick and simple process and doesn't have to interrupt the game, but it might be a good idea to check if anyone wants to take a short break before continuing.

## *Setting Up*

Most chronicles include a "Session Zero," a chance for the players to get together and draw up characters, discuss ties, and sort out group dynamics. Incorporating world building into this first session is an easy way to make sure that everyone starts on the same page and can come up with character concepts that fit whatever the group is looking to do. Brainstorming how a concept someone is excited to explore might fit into an unconventional setting is a lot easier when others are there to make suggestions! If the general setting and time period haven't been nailed down yet, now's the time to establish the basics and go from there. What are the themes the group is looking to explore? Is the setting anchored in the real world, or set somewhere else entirely? It's okay to go into this session with a loose concept or idea and refine it as a group. Giving everyone the chance to contribute something they want to see as a focal point in the chronicle gives them something to build off, and something for other players to connect with as well. Be it a central theme, a particular location, or a character they want brought to life, the anchors players come up with create an instant connection in the game world with which they can interact, and often lead to more depth once they finalize their characters.

Setting everything up can occur after character creation, of course, but it might lead to players having to tweak or even overhaul their character concepts once the world is finalized. The other players' suggestions could inspire them to set their character on a different path, or they might just realize what they had in mind doesn't quite fit with what the chronicle is leaning toward. Building the world before the characters is helpful to ensure no one feels like they've wasted their time, or that the richly detailed backstory they wrote for their character is invalidated by a detail in the setting. Once you've established some of the major antagonists and allies, players can also decide if they want to use them as mentors, retainers, or contacts, or if they want to come up with additional figures to flesh out the world. On the whole, players coming in with general character concepts is fine — they can help shape the world you build as a group — but building a world around a number of finished characters with specific and possibly contradictory wants and story elements is a little more difficult. Rather than trying to shove anachronistic characters into inappropriate settings or time periods, it's usually easier to shape a loose idea to fit the world once it's established.

## *Some Assembly Required*

Putting together a comprehensive overview of a brand-new world and its inhabitants isn't an easy task, even if it's a world that's meant to be disconcertingly similar to our own. Stepping outside of the familiar and setting things up becomes an even more daunting task. However, much like working together to build relationships in a coterie as discussed in Chapter Three, the Storyteller and players can all work together to build the setting and add layers of complexity to the city.

Working together, players and Storytellers can make a "character sheet" for the city itself, using it to list out important figures the characters are likely to know, and drawing ties between the non-player characters and members of the coterie; they can also determine what the population of the city is like. Which clans and covenants have the most presence or influence, and where are their territories? Groups can decide upon the goals they wish to achieve, allowing the Storyteller to lay out obstacles and allies along the way. If there are extra elements at play, like technology beyond what we have today, or setting oddities to take into account, hash them out here, before play starts. Having the concept behind the setting written down helps not only to keep things consistent, but to track goals as players achieve them.

## *Pieces of the Puzzle*

Deciding to sit down and work out of the setting with your players is fantastic, but what do you need to establish together? The Storyteller can pick and choose what she wants to leave up to the players or allow them to contribute and what she wants to plan out on her own, but listed below are some starting points and suggestions for world-building elements to consider when setting up your city before letting the characters first take the stage, and some methods for building a city out of your players' pieces.

## *Commitment*

The single biggest hurdle most gaming groups run into is setting a date and time to get together and play. Establishing with your players how often they are able to meet, how often they want to play, and how important it is for everyone to be

together to run the game can head off a number of issues and player frustration down the line. Is everyone expected to meet in person once a week for an evening game session? Are game sessions day-long affairs that only run once a month? Can the Storyteller and two or three players get together to forward their own plots, or does the entire group need to be present? Can players telecommute to game with a video or voice call?

Knowing the level of commitment expected from them can make it easier for players to schedule around the game and allow them to prioritize appropriately. The attitude surrounding regularly attended, lengthy gaming sessions can be quite different from a pick-up game played whenever enough players can make it, and can inform the type of game the group might want to play.

### *Tone*

Deciding the tone of the game will largely affect the way the characters interact with the world around them. Characters in a hopeful setting are more likely to try changing things for the better – as far as that can be done for the Kindred, anyway – but in a fatalistic setting, the characters may just be searching for meaning in their Requiem. This doesn't mean characters can't have opposing outlooks, but the overall tone should set the stage for most of the general population. A city with a populace of detached vampires searching desperately for meaning night after night likely feels just as oppressive and full of ennui for the kine as it does for the Kindred, while a more revelatory setting, with Kindred who gleefully celebrate their immortal status, might inflict a general euphoria on the city as a whole... or even terror, if the Kindred prefer to exercise their dark gifts too often. A general concept for the mood of the chronicle, the tone should set the baseline for how Kindred and kine society act independently, and what happens when their paths intersect.

### *Genre*

Chapter One of this book discusses using alternative settings and unconventional elements to use in a **Vampire** game. Deciding the genre is tied directly to those kinds of discussions. There's nothing wrong with playing a conventional game, set in a world similar to ours with deeper shadows and darker secrets, but if your players want to explore something outside of our own world, decide that with the genre. Do they want to play a group of vampires trying to remain undetected in a world with open supernatural elements? Are they more interested in exploring what would have happened if humans had colonized Mars and unwittingly sent a group of predators into space? Would they prefer to add the tropes and trappings of a noir setting to their game, with femme fatales, hardboiled cops, and secrets around every corner? Or perhaps explore what it's like in a cyberpunk setting, where computers track the vitals of every being and a simple infrared security camera can reveal them for what they are? The kind of world you and your players want to explore is as open as the group's imagination.

### *Appropriate Elements*

Genres are broad, and even within them no two settings have quite the same rules. Deciding what elements do and don't work in the setting sets some of the basic laws of the universe. Your group might dictate what magic can do in a fantasy setting (if it even exists), the level of technology in a futuristic setting, or what laws of physics can or can't be broken by McGuffins. It can be applied to a real-world setting to include or exclude certain elements, or lay out the outer extremes of what science can accomplish. In a steampunk setting, for example, it might be worth declaring that most modes of currently available transportation are possible. A character could feasibly, for example, put together a steam-powered airship more like a conventional airplane than a dirigible, but nothing so compact as a steam-powered jetpack. In a setting with more magical ties, powers outside Disciplines might be able to affect inanimate objects, but not living beings. Not every instance needs to be laid out ahead of time, but having a few rules along these lines helps to make those decisions quickly and easily when they do come up in play.

Every genre and subgenre has quintessential elements, but how do you work them into a game with the living dead? Asking questions relating to the core of a genre helps build the rules of the world in which you plan on playing, and sets a precedent for further questions down the line.

- **Period:** Is there a given decade or social movement your group wants to use as a backdrop? How did vampires participate in the Women's Suffrage Movement, or the Italian Renaissance? Which clans or covenants stood for change, or influenced innovations?
- **Steampunk:** Just how advanced can steam technology get in the Victorian Age, and how does it impact Kindred society? What experiments can the Ordo Dracul perform? How do the Ventrue assert themselves among such advancements?
- **Dieselpunk:** Somewhere between post-war reality and the idyllic myth of the 50s and 60s, steampunk's cousin is just a bit grittier and greasier than its predecessor. How do the Kindred survive in a smog-choked world? Which is more valuable, fuel or Vitae? Is there an exchange rate between the two?
- **Fantasy:** Is the world familiar with the myths of the undead? Do they live in rightful fear of the masters of the night? If mortals can wield magic, how different are they from the Kindred?
- **Solarpunk:** Who rules the night when the sun powers everything? Is there an uneasy peace between those who stir at night and those that seize the day? Are vampires recluses and shut-ins, or a tightly-knit group of rebels?
- **Lunarpunk:** The entire world is a nocturnal setting, giving vampires an unprecedented advantage. With an eye toward sustainability and renewal, how do your characters justify herds? Are there synthetic alternatives to blood? Is there still a Masquerade?



- **Retro-futuristic:** Space travel and off-planet colonies exist, in all their nuclear-family, plastic and metal, brightly-colored 1950s glory. How do you and yours get by when half the population lives on the moon? Is there a colony where revenants are shipped off to hide them? What happens when someone frenzies in an airtight bubble?

### *Who You Know*

Whether it's only in passing or you have formalized bonds, the characters in a chronicle have some people they already know in the All Night Society. Whether it's simply knowing the Prince's name, having connections inside a covenant, or a deal with the ghoul who runs the nightclub that serves as a public hunting ground, characters have some connections when they come into the game and are at least aware of the major movers and shakers in their world. They may not have leverage on them or the power to exert their own will over what these characters do, but giving them names and positions gives players something to latch on to when they aren't sure how to get something done on their own.

These Storyteller characters can range from helpful to outright antagonistic, and while it isn't necessary for everyone to have a deep and meaningful tie to every Storyteller character, having some sort of connection, positive or negative, to at

least one can help create drama and intrigue. Storytellers and players alike can work to come up with which figures might be important, and who might best serve as antagonists.

### *Where You Are*

Once you've decided the game's genre, figure out the important parts of the city. Is it a futuristic world of sleek chrome and odd angles? A dimly-lit subterranean bunker large enough for an entire society? Something even stranger, or something more conventional? Building the world around the setting can lead to a number of interesting options, especially as your group considers some of the cornerstones of vampiric society. Where is Elysium in a network of tunnels, and what does it look like? How easy is it to keep a haven secret, or secure it from intruders, when everyone is assigned living quarters? Where is The Rack in a peculiar setting like an underwater dystopia? No matter the setting for your game, discuss the major areas everyone knows, if and how territories are split among the Kindred in the city, and which areas are considered neutral or safe grounds. Plan out where each of these locations is within the city, and describe what they're like.

### *Denizens of the Dark*

How big is your world? Are the Kindred the only things that go bump in the night, or are there more creatures you and your

group want to use in the chronicle? If you have a player or two that wants their character to be something outside of vampiric lore, take the opportunity to discuss how they might fit into the setting you're creating with your players. If everyone's set on playing Kindred, are the only threats they'll face from within their own community, or are there bigger, badder things out there in the night that want to interfere with the characters? Decide with the group who or what else occupies your world, and in what capacity. In some settings, even creatures that might not usually get along can be allies!

### *Plot Arcs*

Deciding plot arcs ahead of time doesn't mean you have to sit and plan out every action the characters will take. Setting up stories is more figuring out what the players' goals are, and what beats they want to hit along the way. Overarching plots should involve the whole group and lay out the goals they want to accomplish together. Starting with the end goal, move backwards to the major obstacles in the way. The players might want to contribute to these, but the Storyteller can also keep one or two a secret if she chooses, slotting in challenges where she sees fit to keep some mystery for the players. Having more than one overarching goal for the players to chase at a time can give them interesting choices to make, possibly having to sacrifice progress in one to further the other, but having a single line of objectives to achieve one after the other is also a perfectly reasonable play style.

### *Personal Goals*

Everyone in a *Vampire* game has their own goals they want to accomplish, sometimes at the expense of other players. While each player might not want to state their own intentions aloud, especially if it might pit them against the other players, having everyone write down two or three things they personally want to pursue throughout the chronicle can help to flesh out character stories and relationships. Once the core plots are established, it's easier to figure out ways individuals might want to branch off from them, or even for the Storyteller to set up tasks that could advance or hinder the main goal. Deciding how cooperative or competitive the game is also helps to set boundaries for what personal plots are acceptable. As an extreme example, a player is likely to be put out if someone else has made it her personal goal to kill his character, especially without discussing if he's willing to participate in that level of character-on-character violence. While vampires are usually willing to stab each other in the back and throw others under the bus to get ahead, you might decide your coterie is especially tight-knit and has made a pact not to harm each other. This still doesn't stop them from undercutting one another, but solves the issue of direct action disrupting the group. As discussed in the Revisiting Your Decisions section below, these choices can always change if the party wants a change.

### **How to Decide?**

Sitting together and hashing out the different elements everyone wants to see in a game can be harder than it sounds, especially if there are contradictory elements that players want to see. There are a few ways to go about determining certain setting elements that are difficult to compromise on. Of course, you can always jump right in to one of these methods as well. Many of them are fantastic ways to build one-off adventures and flex the creative muscles of the group.

- **Majority Rule** — simple and straightforward. List out the themes and genres players want to explore and vote. The most popular options set the scene.
- **Scenes from a Hat** — for a more randomized setting, have players write three or four options they'd like to see in the game on slips of paper, and draw to a predetermined number. It should be larger than the number of options any one player can put in, to ensure that there's more than one player's ideas in the mix.
- **Ad Lib** — Going around the table, ask players one by one for things like emotions, names, and locations. Fill in the blanks of simple sentences like "the main antagonist is \_\_\_\_," "the group needs to \_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_," or "Elysium is set in \_\_\_\_." Once you have a few options for each sentence, reveal it to the players and finalize your choices. Having more than one option for answers will keep the players guessing, and allow the group to pick and choose what might better fit the game they want to play.

You can also combine any of these methods, or come up with your own! The results of any of these don't have to be set in stone, and some might deserve more hands-on tweaking. For certain topics, like Storyteller characters and personal plots, it's useful to make sure everyone has something they wanted to see or with which their character can meaningfully interact. See what you and your group can come up with!

### *Revisiting Your Decisions*

There can come a point in the chronicle where either something has the potential to dramatically shift the setting, or where the group realizes somewhere along the way the themes and notes in the story have veered off from where it started. There's nothing wrong with touching base with the players to see if they dig the new direction, aren't sure but are willing to explore it, or aren't happy with where things are headed and want to re-center closer to where the story began.

This can be especially true for games that run for a long time, or are meant to span large gaps in time. If the players started in a low-tech historical setting but are catching up to the modern day and not sure how they feel about the new setting elements that could bring, it's worthwhile to discuss what options they might have. In the example above, would it be satisfying to steer the world's progression toward neocolonialism? What about instituting a plague that brings about a second "Dark Age," halting scientific innovation just before the era of cellphones

and handheld devices? Brainstorming what a new or altered world would look like as your chronicle progresses, especially if the characters' actions are meant to be far-reaching and influential, is a great way to keep players invested and bring in new elements to a setting that might start feeling stale. The check ins don't need to be elaborate, and can easily happen at the ends of chapters or story arcs, but they provide an opportunity for players to give feedback on how they think the chronicle is progressing and how the setting is working for them.

## *Twists*

The *Vampire* core book serves most campaigns well, but custom-tailored rules often enhance a campaign's setting. Many excellent Storytellers create their own house rules to better support their settings. While we present some twists in the core book and below to cover a wide variety of stories, remember you always have the power to create your own. When considering a twist for your campaign, examine the following questions: What are the most important themes of this setting? Are there any mechanics that are not relevant to that theme? Which mechanics are the most important? Once you've figured out which mechanics closely relate to your setting, decide how you can bring them to the forefront through minor changes in implementation. If you find mechanics that don't matter at all to your genre, you can replace them with something that encourages players to reinforce your setting in their character choices.

Lastly, twists do not always have to be mechanical in nature – they can simply be a story element you are bringing to the forefront due to the nature of the campaign. If you decide to put new twists into your game, discuss them with your players ahead of time and help them to understand the reasons behind the new rules, as well as how to use them outside of Storyteller narration. Twists should encourage a collaborative process between Storytellers and players to better enhance the whole story. The following section describes some possible twists you may wish to use in your campaign.

## *No Clans*

Where you got your blood doesn't matter – it's what you do with it that the world sees. All expectations of clan and the roleplay therein disappear. Players still use clans when putting Disciplines on a character sheet but, once you finish character creation, everything else clan related goes out the window. In a chronicle with no clans, players can focus purely on the choices their characters make to drive their roleplay. Coteries become the only family Kindred uphold.

Without the natural personality types clans offer, less-experienced players might find it a challenge to easily nail down a character, but it also gives them freedom to create characters outside the typical clan mindset. A Daeva could have no care for beauty, art, or passion – they could use their skills, instead, to gain great wealth and political power. A player can build a

refined and vicious Gangrel – using their animal-like instincts like a dandy out on a fox hunt instead of being animalistic themselves. Challenge players to twist their Disciplines to supporting a different type of story than traditional stereotypes.

**Effect:** When creating a campaign without clans, banes do not need to follow the actual clan listed on the sheet. Let the players decide their characters' full personality, reason for involvement in a coterie, and best position in their city. Finish fleshing out the character, then go back and look at the full list of banes. Choose the one that will be the biggest challenge for the character in their current state, not the one that naturally goes with the blood. You can even put personal twists on banes, as discussed below.

## *Personal Banes*

Each clan has its own bane, but what if banes went deeper than clans? The purpose of a bane is to be an aspect of the Curse that affects the familial lines of Kindred. But what if banes were an inherent part of the Kindred curse that manifests itself according to each Kindred's greatest weakness? When using this twist, the bane a vampire carries grows from who they were at the time of their Embrace. Humans are innately flawed creatures and, through the Blood, the Beast shines a spotlight on the person's greatest flaw. As a new vampire learns to control their Beast and hunger, the worst parts of their human nature rise to the surface to challenge them further.

When creating a personal bane, consider what that human may have had as a fatal flaw. Was it pride? Jealousy? The inability to say no to someone, no matter how overworked they already felt? Once the player decides what their character's biggest drawback in life was, figure out how to play that up in the afterlife. If a character's deepest flaw was jealousy, give them a jealous Beast. Make that player roll for possible frenzy any time someone in a scene takes something that they want. If the character has no ability to reject someone, give them a bane where Social mechanics easily sway their Beast.

**Effect:** Creating a personal bane is easy: Decide the fatal flaw, look up the mechanic that most closely relates to that flaw, then put some sort of weighted roll onto that mechanic every time the flaw comes up in a scene (Example: a roll based on their current Humanity rating.) When making up banes in this fashion, they operate like Conditions – feel free to clear or

replace them as the story grows. Write personal banes on the character sheets in the notes section. If the character's Requiem changes so much they manage to clear it like a Condition, simply go back to the beginning of the process, figure out the current greatest weakness the Beast can manipulate, and create a new bane for it.

## *(Un) Lucky Dice*

In the core book, there are rules for using 8-, 9-, and 10-agains. However, to add an element of chance to every roll possible and support the themes of a campaign, you can put mechanics on the roll of any special number.

**Effect:** Instead of using the roll-again rules, a Storyteller can decide to add plot elements any time a certain number comes up on the table. Lucky number seven is a good example — any time a player rolls a seven, the Storyteller gives the player a "luck token" to represent the good graces of fate. Once a player earns five luck tokens, that player can cash them in for a "get out of jail free" on an important failed roll, or to take momentary control of a scene in a dramatic moment. The players store up these tokens and then spend them to create a particularly heroic moment.

Conversely, many cultures consider three a number of power. If you are playing a supernaturally heavy campaign (Crones or Ordo particularly), you can put a rule in that any time a three comes up in a roll, a player earns a magic token. These tokens represent the trickles of greater power and understanding that come over the course of doing such intensive blood magic. Once a player earns the magic number of tokens, the player can trade it in for a greater understanding of a Discipline, a successful blood experiment, or an extra supernatural incident within the campaign. Bonus: if a player rolls three threes at once, the Storyteller automatically inserts a dramatically supernatural element into the scene. It represents the fates aligning to make the perfect moment between blood magic and experimentation, or a particularly thin moment between the veils.

Lastly, there is an option of turning rolling ones into a cumulative failure. If a player fails a roll, but doesn't wish to take the failure, they can gain unlucky tokens. Once a player has four of these tokens, the next failure they roll puts them over the unlucky edge. At this point, the Storyteller should make some awful element of the player's backstory (or current campaign) rear its ugly head in a dramatic way. This buildup of ones represents the vampire's continuing to ignore problems because Kindred so often think they are immortal, but bad luck comes to collect on everyone eventually.

## *No Need to Hide*

In Chapter One, there is a setting in a more medieval-like world. Magic is real, people believe in vampires, and there is no need for a vampire to hide the truth of what they are. What is the world like for Kindred when they can be out to the public?

Are they treated like rock stars, nobles, renowned artists, or the monsters that they are? Without a Masquerade, the class structure in Kindred society is far more defined. Daeva are stunning gods among men with a large fan base of mortals flocking to them for the blessed Kiss. Sanctified openly practice in the church with mortals and offer their services to priests — either as watch dogs or vessels of temptation to their flock. Venttrue are well known for having the best heads in business and many mortals pay them greatly for their wisdom.

However, while some clans are cast in a happy light, the less human-friendly clans are even more monstrous. The more accepted clans treat the Gangrel little better than attack dogs. Families warn their children away from the beastly animals and tell old fairy stories about them being more violent than werewolves. Other clans regard the Nosferatu as the true monster among all the vampires — when Kindred need something to point to when they say, "at least I'm not like that," the Nosferatu are the most logical target. Humans fear them, and Kindred deride them as barely being the same type of creature.

**Effect:** Without the Masquerade, coteries are stronger power blocks and form to protect both mortal and Kindred interests alike. Particularly useful mortals may even be welcome to join on a junior level. Ghouls are not only fully aware of what vampires are, but seek out the precious blood in hopes that one day they may become one of the lauded Kindred. Humans, despite painful lessons, hunger for the promise of immortality from publicly known Kindred. Feeding is easier, but also more policed. Sloppy feeding brings a danger on all the 'good' Kindred of the world, who cooperate with mortals and show respect to their food.

Lastly, the working hours of the public dramatically shift in a world with no Masquerade. Kindred, while outnumbered by humans, still represent a vast block of power and resources. Businesses stay open far later into the night to accommodate their undead customers. Churches hold more evening Masses so their fellows in the Lancea et Sanctum may comfortably join the service. Universities hold more night classes — especially history departments — in attempts to take advantage of the vast store of knowledge that an aged Kindred represents. No longer needing to hide their special demands, Kindred shift the entire state of society to better suit their needs.

## *The Whispering Beast*

A Kindred's Beast is an ever-present entity in their lives, but it's normally portrayed as a snarling, hungry, territorial animal and little else. Using this twist gives the Beast a more active, intelligent presence. Instead of simply reacting on animal instincts, the Beast is the Devil actively whispering in a Kindred's ear. It tempts them to their greatest sins, pushes them into their banes, seduces them down a path of self-destruction, and is a constant reminder of their lacking humanity.

**Effect:** When using this twist, either the Storyteller or another player can portray the Beast for each character. If it's

another player, assign each player in the campaign a different partner, so you don't overload a single player with the narrative duties. It's better if the player is not closely related to the other player's character, that way they can be a third element in any personal scenes in which the character is participating. The Beast shouldn't constantly be talking to the player — that will become incredibly distracting — but the person portraying the Beast should listen in for key points where that Kindred may fall to temptation. They can then get up and whisper in the player's ear just what the Beast may be saying to them. A few key words said at the right time leads a player down a dark road far better than a constant barrage of mutterings.

In settings with less moral themes (like noir stories), the Beast represents the constant pull of darkness and temptation against the heroes' better judgement. While the Kindred is trying to be a good person — a redeemable creature who does their best to inject lightness into a dark world — there is always something that tempts them back down into being a vile person. Your players should outline their biggest fatal flaws, or temptations, in the notes section of the character sheet. Share these notes with the person who portrays that whispering Beast, so they can use them at the moments of greatest vulnerability.

## *A Zero-Sum Game*

As discussed in the Coteries of the Sky setting, an interesting twist on the game is the limit of feeding resources. Not only in that chronicle, but you can also use them in other settings as a way to heighten the drama by limiting haven resources for all the characters. If you wish to play with such rules, you should decide on a total number of dots in your chronicle to assign between the Merits Feeding Grounds and Herd. A good suggested number is two dots per player — that way, if all the Kindred of the city are playing nice with each other, everyone could reasonably have enough food to survive. But, food is power, and Kindred are rarely equitable or kind to each other.

**Effect:** In a five-player game, there is a total of 10 'resource' dots the Storyteller spreads out between the characters. Your players might not buy up all 10 at the start of the chronicle but, as the game goes on and they increase in power, they will eventually use all the points. If your players aren't the sort to enjoy conflict among each other, you can also have NPCs buy up the points to give the players a hard target to fight. Once the players hit that 10-dot ceiling, no other feeding resources are available to the Kindred of the city. If a character wishes to obtain more access to food, they must do something that directly affects another character's resources. They can either do it openly, or in the shadows, but it immediately becomes a vicious game of chess to keep the resources the Kindred need to survive.

You can expand this mechanic to any resource in the game that would heighten the drama in its limitation. When looking at your setting, it's easy to see what the most difficult resource would be to obtain — maybe it's blood, maybe it's mortal control, medicines, or magic. Once you decide which element you wish to limit, calculate the point ceiling the same way as described

above. You can hide this ceiling from the players or, if you have a fully open narrative, let them know that this invisible barrier is on the horizon. Deep into the campaign, you can even open ways for the players to increase that glass ceiling. It's an effective way to reward them for amazing roleplay or create a lofty goal that forces them all to work together. Remember, these alterations in rules are only good for as long as they are working to make your story interesting.

## *Freedom from the Blood*

The magic worked. Blood calls to you no longer. Whether it was the success of a grand experiment for the Ordo Dracul, some dark magic worked in a coterie of Crone, or simply the pure cleansing of the soul for particularly devout Lancea, this group of Kindred no longer needs to feed on blood. Yes, they are still undead. They do not breathe, their hearts do not beat, and they cannot step into the sun, but the blood is no longer their tyrant. With this twist, a Storyteller can give their players one of the greatest dream achievements for a vampire. But, as with any Requiem, even this dream turns into a nightmare.

**Effect:** While the blood is no longer what fuels a vampire's gifts, the Beast still craves food. Vampiric powers still need energy. When exploring a storyline of a vampire who has overcome need for the blood, the first question to answer is: What indulgence will feed them now? Traditional tropes would be for the vampire to feed straight from a person's life force, but it's more interesting to make the feeding directly applicable to the vampire's personality. A Daeva now finds themselves feeding off the passion of the artists around them until they completely drain all their creativity to the last drop. A Gangrel now drinks of the primal drive that keeps a person's survival instincts sharp. While a vampire may achieve the ability to sustain without blood, they will never be free of the need to feed. This twist wraps victory with the tragedy that fuels the thematic elements of most Requiems.

## *More Potent, Less Human*

In this twist, blood potency is not only power, but a representation of how far a Kindred has fallen away from their Humanity. Instead of needing a certain amount of Experiences, time in chronicle, or other achievements to increase Blood Potency, a vampire only goes up in Blood Potency when she commits an act that directly separates herself from her Humanity. A good example is the purposeful harming of a character's relationship with their Touchstone. It's one of the easiest ways for a Kindred to drop Humanity as a Touchstone is one of the strongest anchors to a vampire's human side. They keep a vampire on even keel and unwilling to see every human as mere food. However, as a Kindred wishes to advance on his path as a vampire, he must be willing to draw ever further away from what Humanity he once held. This loss could be through committing physical injury to his Touchstone, but it could also be an emotional betrayal.

**Effect:** When characters earn Blood Potency in this manner, the vampire's bane should be at the forefront of the Storyteller's

mind. The effect of a bane doesn't go away just because the vampire has grown more powerful — if anything, it grows stronger the further down the Humanity ladder the vampire falls. A Storyteller should add more risk to the rolls that trigger a vampire's bane when using this system. When narrating

scenes that involve Humanity loss, be certain to emphasize the Kindred's detachment from the mortals around them. As a Kindred becomes more powerful in blood, they also grow more alien in emotions and actions.

## Mechanics

Storytellers can use many of the chronicle-building strategies in this chapter to help tailor the mechanics in their games. A group that wants to describe big, cinematic fight scenes might happily spend a session kicking ass and rolling dice. Others are more interested in what happens *after* the fists have flown; their Storyteller may wish to streamline the physical combat so the characters can go verbally spar with their rivals.

Having players fill in some of the world-building blanks also gives Storytellers a sense of what the players are excited about. When a part of the setting grabs their attention, or a particular theme garners a lot of discussion even before the game starts, you have an excellent direction for plot hooks. In addition to gauging what fires up your players' imaginations, remember to note what excites *you* as a Storyteller.

Likewise, players, engaging with the aspects you've helped create lets your Storyteller know they're heading in the right direction. Is there a location in the city you'd like to explore? An aspect of your character you'd like to highlight or a personal theme you see emerging? Let your Storyteller know. Games work best when they're collaborative.

The following sections discuss ways Storytellers can enforce theme, setting, and mood in their games, and offers some new ways to reward players who engage with those elements.

## Engaging with Theme

Themes in *Vampire* often have a dichotomous aspect to them: The Requiem versus the Masquerade, the old against the new, piety at odds with blasphemy. As a Storyteller, you can reward players who show their characters feeling that push and pull, and let it drive their actions. How do the themes affect their Aspirations? Their Touchstones? In what way does choosing to uphold an aspect of her Requiem complicate the character's Masquerade?

Storytellers can also create new themes to support the chronicle they're building. What are the characters' goals and what stands in opposition to them? How does what a person *wants* to do conflict with what that person actually *needs*? Consider your story's genre. What overarching moods and themes do you want to showcase? What conflicts drive the plot? In a chronicle where the vampires are all members of an SVU-like team, perhaps their Masquerades are solidly in place, but their complicated (and messy) personal relationships are at the fore. In a game where all the characters are Gangrel, how is letting your Beast run rampant both freeing and terrifying?

In Coteries of the Sky, the Hierarchy of Needs is a prominent theme. What happens when a character's Touchstone comes seeking protection, and puts the coterie's hard-won haven at

risk? A vampire walking Nocturne Noir's rainy streets searches for humanity in an inhumane town. What losses are acceptable in pursuit of salvation? If fulfilling your Aspiration means contributing to the city's corruption, do you give in or let go? In the arcologies of The Bleeding Edge, the balance of power between mortals and Kindred has begun to shift. How do you remain the apex predator when your prey becomes your peer?

If your chronicle focuses on a particular clan or covenant, consider how that group's singular traits affect the theme. Ask your players what words best describe members of the clan and turn those into themes for your chronicle. For example, where the Ventru hold sway, *uncertainty* might be a theme. The Lords don't let anyone feel confident or secure in his interactions. What's your Requiem like, when you're never exactly sure where you stand? How do you know if you've *really* achieved your Aspiration, when no one will acknowledge the work you've done? The Storyteller and players might reinforce the motif with descriptions of objects that seem out of place in their surroundings, or floors that feel a degree or two off from being level. A city controlled by the Carthian Movement could have *stasis* and *revolution* as opposing themes. When the Kindred in power constantly push for upheaval, how do you build a steady unlife? What do you fight to keep, and what do you toss on the pyre? Meetings take place with riots as background noise. Elysium's location is an abandoned, crumbling strip mall whose walls are covered in the resistance's slogans.

## Engaging with Mood

Where Theme refers to the underlying motifs in a story, Mood is about the feelings the story invokes. Melancholy, paranoia, anger, hope — these are all moods a Storyteller might aim for over the course of a chronicle.

Take a look at the "Inspirational Media" list for *Vampire (Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition, p. 9)*, or other books, TV shows, and movies that influence your game. What do you feel when you watch an episode? Do you pick up a story by one author when you're in the mood for light and fluffy and another when you're looking for gritty and heart-wrenching? Take a look at how the writers shape the story. How do their descriptions of the setting inform how you feel? How do costumes, camera shots, and the score reinforce those feelings? A claustrophobic thriller might never let the camera pan back to show the whole room. A child singing a nursery rhyme can be sweet and nostalgic or utterly terrifying, depending on the context.

Storytellers and players alike can help reinforce the mood when describing settings and actions. Consider a room where



the furniture is broken and in disrepair, with water-damaged ceilings and an ominous rusty stain on the floor. Now imagine one where every item is exactly — almost *too* perfectly — in its place, and the air smells of bleach and harsh chemicals. Both rooms are sinister, but they're still distinct from one another.

If you're a Storyteller who has music playing during a game, you might already choose songs that support the mood. Invite players to suggest their own, and consider how cover versions of a familiar song can change its feeling. Songs from a specific era reinforce theme, mood, and setting alike — think Vietnam-era protest songs for a chronicle set in the late 1960s and early 1970s, or jazz for a noir game.

The End of the World scenario lends itself to moods as varied as the potential locations. Survival and scarcity are ever-present concerns. In some empty cities, the mood is one of grim determination: How do we live through the night? Where do we spend the day? Other Kindred might set themselves up as Princes of their remote outposts and live as decadently as they can. They consider these nights their last hurrah before the Hunters come or the Vitae runs out.

It's only been a couple of years since the world went to hell. Contrasting what a location is like now with how it used to be can have a big impact. The characters' footsteps echo along streets where once, you couldn't hear yourself think. The Storyteller might describe how packed Elysium used to be, with

well-dressed Lords vying to impress the Ventrue Prince. Now it's just a handful of vampires, their suits hanging shabbily on their frames, or traded out completely for practical clothes. You never know when you're going to have to skip town fast. Players can discuss the places their characters used to frequent before the apocalypse hit. What was it like back then? How has the collapse changed it? How does it make the characters feel to see it this way?

In War Drums, the mood is tense as the truce that's held the last few years threatens to dissolve. Any action might send three nations into war, and no one knows what the ultimate catalyst will be. A Kindred in this setting might feel like she's always on the brink of frenzy, even when she's calm and sated. Something has to give, somewhere, she just doesn't know *what*, or *where*, or *who*.

Alternately, those Kindred who thrive on being in power are likely exhilarated. He's shaping history. Everything's at a crossroads and he's the one who picks the path, or guides his proxies onto it. Rather than the dread that goes with frenzy, the Vitae sings within him, like he's drunk from the sweetest veins.

### *Engaging with Setting*

Having unique settings elements can make a story come alive for players, and encourages them to interact with the people

and places the Storyteller has established. It invests them in the story, makes it feel immediate and relevant, and can help the players engage with the chronicle's themes and moods. A well fleshed out setting gives players a foundation to riff off of, both to collaborate with the Storyteller and get inspired for their own characters' arcs.

Small details can go a long way: Is the local bar one of those places that has cutoff neckties pinned to the walls, snipped from business-types that came in trading stocks on their cell phones? What does the Prince's glass-and-steel and super-minimalist office say about her? Consider how recurring images can be shorthand for a game's themes. Think about Dr. T.J. Eckleburg's eerie billboard in *The Great Gatsby*, or the significance of the color red in *The Sixth Sense*.

One way to help players engage with the setting is to collaborate with them on its elements. Following are a few ideas to get your creativity flowing.

### *Index Cards*

The Storyteller writes a list of common objects that might appear in a scene on a set of index cards: a desk, a picture frame, a set of wine glasses. Broader concepts work here, too: the view from the Prince's window or the cemetery where a rival's gravesite is located. At the start of a new scene, players draw from the pile and describe the item or scene written on the card.

### *Drawing from Backstory*

Character backstories are rife with fodder for the setting. Ask your players to write down some significant places from their characters' pasts. Where did she hang out before her Embrace?

## *Rewarding Engagement*

Storytellers can reward players for playing to the chronicle's themes, moods, and setting. Following are new mechanics Storytellers may wish to adopt to encourage their players to do so.

### *Theme Tokens*

Start your game with a fixed number of tokens in a pile. Designate a space on the table to either side of the main pile for each of your game's themes. Each time a character acts in a way that engages with one of your stated themes, move a token into that theme's pile. For every five tokens (or any amount the Storyteller feels is best), the players gain a temporary resource or Merit to use for the rest of the scene or session.

For an additional spin on this, Storytellers might wish to declare a certain number of tokens as a Limit Break, granting players a bonus for playing strongly to one theme, but complicating its counterpart in some way. For example, if the game starts with 15 tokens in the neutral pile and 10 or more end up on the Requiem side, the coterie gains a level of status with their city's Kindred leadership... but that means its members are entrusted with a task that threatens their Masquerades. Do they attempt

When he wanted to be alone, where did he go? Where was the Daeva when her sire first noticed her? Did her family bury an empty coffin? Who still visits the grave?

If the players used the Climbing the Ladder sections in this book and **Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition**, have them note the significant characters who might come back into their lives. Does her sister know she's still alive? Does the Dragon he screwed over hold a huge grudge?

At the start of a game session, players can choose a couple of elements they'd like the Storyteller to incorporate into the adventure. These don't necessarily have to be the exact people and locations, but might instead be objects with some significance: an ex's leather jacket, a bottle of wine from her sire's cellar.

As the list of places the characters have been and people they've interacted with grows, your group might want to start a shared document online or create a simple wiki to refer to.

### *Using Aspirations*

Players can also use your Aspirations to reinforce setting. Take a look at some of the locations your Storyteller has introduced. How can you weave them into your character's short- or long-term goals? A Ventrue character looking to "Bribe the journalist" might bring him to the posh, invite-only club her coterie frequents. Someone whose goal is "Get the traitor to admit guilt" could do so in the confessional of a Lancea et Sanctum church. In a Night Without End setting, she might trade the claustrophobia of the confessional booth for the threat of an airlock.

## *Willpower*

to restore the balance? Or dig in deeper?

Storytellers can adjust how many tokens they begin a session with, depending on how quickly their players build up and spend them. Try five tokens per player to start. If the group runs through all the available tokens and your list of Storyteller Beats in one session, you might want to reduce the number of available tokens for the next game. Or, if they're spending their tokens in interesting ways and having fun, there's nothing wrong with increasing the amount and expanding the list of bonuses. Players might even have some suggestions for what kinds of rewards they'd like to work toward.

If, at the end of the night, the players have unspent tokens in their pool, it's up to you whether to reset the count or let them carry over to the following session. Did you find your players leaning toward one particular theme over another? You might want to tailor future sessions to let them explore it further, as it shows they enjoyed it.

### *Willpower*

Instead of using Masks and Dirges to regain Willpower, players replace those traits with the chronicle's themes, as

determined by the Storyteller. In a setting that has multiple themes, each player should pick two: Requiem and Piety, for example. When a character takes a small action that upholds a theme, they regain one point of Willpower. When he puts himself at great personal risk to support the theme, he regains all his Willpower. The Storyteller should encourage the player to use those themes to define how the character acts. Following are examples of how the basic themes and some of the new ones can act in the place of Mask and Dirge, but Storytellers and players should feel free to modify them to fit the characters.

## Requiem

The nights sprawl out before you, full of potential. You could build an empire. You could start a revolution. You could atone for all the pain you've caused, and all you've yet to impart.

**Single Willpower:** Prove you can hold your own against your superiors in Elysium.

**All Willpower:** Bring about the downfall of someone in power. You're a monster. Revel in it.

## Masquerade

You were human, once, and some nights you almost miss it. They're alive in a way you can never be again, and it's not just about the hot blood coursing through their veins.

**Single Willpower:** Rescue a mortal from imminent danger, even though she knows no human can move that fast.

**All Willpower:** Risk your carefully constructed cover story to save a human's life.

## Old

The world has changed since your Embrace, and some nights it's hard to keep up. But the old ways have value, too, and you know how to wield them to get results.

**Single Willpower:** Eschew a modern convenience to do something the old way. The *right* way.

**All Willpower:** Destroy that network of wires and steel, and see how the neonates fare without their technology.

## New

Your body doesn't change, but nothing says your mind has to stay locked in the past. You're living in the future. You'll be living in the future for the next 1,000 years, and you *love* it.

**Single Willpower:** Update a stale process into the modern era.

**All Willpower:** Render one of your rivals obsolete using tonight's innovations.

## Piety

You are a monster, and no one can make you repent but yourself. Overcoming your Beast's destructive imperatives takes strength, faith, and a divine will.

**Single Willpower:** Deny the destructive impulse to instill fear in someone who angers you.

**All Willpower:** Risk death to save someone else's soul.

## Blasphemy

The night is yours. There is no god, or if there is, he'd drink with you in the bar if you still enjoyed drinking. You're a monster. Enjoy it.

**Single Willpower:** Cause someone pain, simply because you can.

**All Willpower:** Let your Beast take the wheel. Someone else can clean up the carnage.

## Paranoia (Crown Games)

You can't trust anyone. Someone's always watching, always listening. The second you let down your guard, that's when they'll come for you.

**Single Willpower:** Take precautions so your pursuers don't catch you: a convoluted route home, a complicated password, 10 random purchases to hide the one thing you need. Can't be too careful.

**All Willpower:** Burn it all down and start over. If you've destroyed it, no one can use it against you, whatever it might be.

## Scarcity (End of the World)

Drink 'em if you've got 'em, because tomorrow night they could be diseased or dead. Pack light and don't get too comfortable. Nowhere's ever safe for long.

**Single Willpower:** Find food or shelter that will last you a few nights.

**All Willpower:** Build up a herd and a solid, fortified shelter – or take one from someone weaker.

## Temptation (Rain Falls)

Everyone else in this city indulges their worst impulses, so why shouldn't you? The only person who'll blame you is yourself.

**Single Willpower:** Accept a bribe and look the other way.

**All Willpower:** Gain control of an illegal or illicit enterprise of your own.

## Touchstones

During character creation, Storytellers might also ask their players to consider the themes when deciding on their Touchstones. How does this person represent the character's old life? How does that one reflect their new? What about this person brings out the best in you, and who is it that encourages you to follow all your worst instincts?

Consider how having a Touchstone from the peasant class affects a vampire's standing when she's playing Crown Games, or what a Kindred living on a space station might do to protect her descendants working in the mines of Obol in *Night Without End*. What lengths will a character go to in order to ensure his loved ones are safe should the peace talks fall apart in *War Drums*?

## *Storyteller Beats*

During a session, the Storyteller may assign Beats when a character's actions engage with the theme. She keeps track of them separately from the players' Beats, and determines how they are spent. These might take the form of bonus Merits that benefit the group as a whole, temporary resources, or other extras that affirm the theme, mood, and setting. Some possibilities include:

- Increasing the dot rating of a Safe Place or Haven
- Awarding a dot of Status in the characters' covenants
- Granting a coterie a new Ally, Retainer, or Touchstone related to the plot
- Awarding a Devotion
- In a Crown Games setting, allowing the character to feed from a particularly prestigious noble
- Where Rain Falls, the group receives a clue about who's been watching them, and what to which corrupt power that person reports
- In the Night Without End, the characters get in touch with a smuggler on Damocles Station who's willing to help them, for a fee

Alternatively, the Storyteller can let the players see how many Beats are in this particular pool, and give them the option to cash in some of those when their characters need a little extra luck. They might use these Beats to gain extra successes on a

roll at a crucial moment, to purchase a new Ally Merit, or to gain the resources needed to buy a specific item necessary to their plans.

## *Bonus Dice*

When a player describes her character using elements of the setting to bolster her actions, the Storyteller can reward her with one, two, or three additional dice to supplement any related rolls. This description should go beyond "I knock over the boxes to slow down my opponent," or using an item in the scene as an improvised weapon.

## *Keywords*

Before a session begins, the Storyteller writes a list of words that describe significant parts of the setting. This could be items in an enemy's trophy case, a graffiti symbol that appears around the city, the various objects in a victim's abandoned car, or anything else story-appropriate. When characters use an item on the list, or remark upon it during a scene, the Storyteller adds a token to a pool. Reaching a certain threshold of tokens unlocks a bonus. This could take the form of one of the Storyteller Beats described above. Alternatively, the Storyteller may offer up a clue or piece of information that will help the coterie in their current endeavors: The trophy case has a false bottom, with a compartment full of damning letters. The graffiti points to an underground club.

## *Sample Chronicles*

This section offers three chronicle settings. You can use them as-is, or adapt them to the style of your group. Coteries of the Sky is set in an apocalyptic landscape where surviving mortals and Kindred huddle together at the top of immense skyscrapers. With the covenants decimated, coteries rose to take their place in the All Night Society. Dragons in the House of Romanov explores the court of Czarina Nikola. Russian isolationism allows the Ordo Dracul to rule ascendant, unfurling the covenant in all its alien glory. Set in 1974, Nocturne Noir paints a world of eternal rain, blues, drugs, and people searching for an escape. Theirs is a world where heroes are often monsters and, perhaps, a monster can become a hero.

### *Coteries of the Sky: An End of the World Campaign*

Humanity was decimated by a virus. Survivors in the city of Singapore took up in skyscrapers, climbing ever higher to escape the stench of rotting bodies. Superstition coupled with an instinctive need to escape enshrined this drive upwards, until living in penthouses became a sign of good fortune: Closeness to the sun and sky grants survivors the blessings of health and fortitude. Even mortals who didn't hold these beliefs flocked

to the penthouses as a mark of prestige. When Kindred rose at night, they found their best prey, the hardiest mortals, in the penthouses. Most vampires haven't set foot on the ground since the end of the world.

Singapore was never the largest or most populous city in the world, but it was prosperous. Survivors flocked to the city hoping its technological advances could find a cure, or at least establish contact with other enclaves of survivors. When that proved false, they stayed for the wealth of canned and prepacked foods. Even now, runners scour warehouses in the packing district to find stale but edible goods. As mortals gathered in Singapore, predators followed. The city is home to three coteries, not counting the player characters – a staggering population of Kindred compared to other empty places.

**Themes:** Hierarchy of Needs, Us vs. Them

**Mood:** Post-apocalyptic cityscape. Vast emptiness where people should be.

## *Running the Game*

Coteries of the Sky explores what it's like to eke out a place amongst monsters. It does away with covenants to create a new intra-Kindred dynamic, though characters can still previously hail from covenants – this gives them access to Disciplines,

Devotions, and those Merits that don't rely on covenant status. The city holds two non-player characters who can teach Sanctified and Acolytes additional rituals without the usual requirement of covenant status.

The characters' coterie is new to the city of Singapore, and this gives the players several options. The group can be an existing coterie who traversed the country to reach Singapore, because that's where the food is. Maybe they've always been in Singapore, but, it being a big city, are only just now meeting each other. Or a few of them know each other already, and, using the various ties between them, decide to combine forces. Let your players decide, and use Climbing the Ladder (pp. 65-69 and **Vampire the Requiem** p. 282) as you can.

The hierarchy of needs takes central stage in Coteries of the Sky: The characters need a place to sleep, and they need food. If any additional drives came up during character creation, make sure to integrate them, too. Here's the twist: Herd, Haven, and power are an interwoven helix. Mortals flock to the highest towers in Singapore, so controlling those gives access to Haven, Herd, and Retainers. The coterie can then leverage those resources to take control of an even higher building, where stronger, smarter, and more organized bands of mortals reside. Rival coteries have figured that out too though, and the players can't just purchase those Merits. Limited mortal stock makes Feeding Grounds and Herd a zero-sum game in Singapore, and both are tied to the coterie's communal Haven.

### *Coteries of Singapore*

The end of human civilization put an end to clans and covenants. Kindred had no means to communicate over distances, effectively cutting both down to local cities — if the local Sanctified consisted of a sire and her child, that's all they were from now on. Shortage of prey forced Kindred into battle with each other and with loyalties divided between clan, covenant, and coterie, the latter won out. The close bonds between Kindred who rose through the night together proved stronger than now-defunct lines of power among global groups. Vampires without a strong coterie were killed or driven off, with the most promising Kindred assimilating into existing groups or quickly learning to form new ones.

### **The Parish**

The leader of the Parish is a tall Daeva simply called Bishop. Bishop was a priest in the Lancea et Sanctum, eager to rise in the ranks but refusing to accept its Christian slant. With no more hierarchy above her, Bishop could finally claim the position she always wanted. Her brand of religion is part Testament of Longinus, part Buddhism: She believes Longinus is an incarnation of Buddha, teaching Kindred to become their awakened selves. **Secret:** Bishop killed the original Bishop of Singapore in the first nights of the apocalypse, rightly thinking chaos and panic would provide cover.

Silent Kun serves as Bishop's eyes and ears. Kun was an exchange student from China before his Embrace, and feels overwhelmed

with guilt for not returning to the People's Republic when his tenure ended. His sire wouldn't have let him, but Kun knows his family was punished for it and he's wracked with guilt now they're dead. Kun is the exact opposite of Bishop, quiet and introverted, which is perhaps why they match so well. The Shadow was part of Bishop's coterie long before the apocalypse. **Secret:** Kun wants to return to China to perform death rites for his family, even if he has only halfheartedly made concrete plans to do so.

Lash serves as the Parish enforcer. No one knows what they look like — Lash only shows themselves when they're about to strike, and their fists send mortals to the grave and vampires into torpor. A few victims have survived: incoherent messes of screams and sobs, clawing their own eyes out. Other coteries speculate that Lash is just a myth to make the Parish seem more formidable, and does not really exist. **Secret:** Lash definitely exists. The Haunt is a slender, five-foot Malay woman named Fa.

**Resources:** The Parish teaches that suffering comes from holding on to an identity that was never yours. Bishop shows her congregation how to become one, as they mingle sweet blood and release. The Kiss indeed drowns their sorrows, clouding memories of lost families in momentary ecstasy. The mortal congregation is as addicted to feeding as its Kindred. Bishops keeps her favorite mortals, and those belonging to Kun and Lash, with her in a penthouse lavishly decorated in silks and velvet. The others must earn their keep, bringing new members to Bishop. They are not martially trained, but their suicidal devotion to Bishop makes them dangerous.

### **The Blood Brothers**

The Brothers began as a Carthian experiment: four siblings turned by Kindred of different clans, to see if a close bond in life might override the distances of death and blood. The experiment was a success, as the siblings turned to murder their sires when they understood there was no more Carthian Movement to provide backup or punishment.

Lai is the middle of the brothers. Handsome, naturally charismatic, and chosen by clan Ventrue, he leads the mortal branch of the Brothers. Doted on by his mother, and ignored by his overly strict father, Lai is accustomed to doing whatever strikes his fancy. **Secret:** Lai never killed his sire, instead keeping her as a private source of Vitae.

Chun is the eldest, openly carrying his resentment of Lai. The Haunt believes the Ventrue's blood should have been his, though anyone who knows his monstrous nature would see the Nosferatu made a perfect pick. **Secret:** Chun's resentment is both promise and trap; he would work to rid himself of Lai if it could be done without implicating himself, but so far has betrayed all plotters to Lai.

Hui and Xin are twins. Both assigned female at birth, Hui began living as his true gender before his Embrace. He is extroverted, perceptive, and utterly charming. Rumor claims his and Lai's sire originally fought over the privilege of embracing him, and the Daeva won. Xin is the only sister of the four, though she took the moniker of Brother to fit in better with her siblings. The Shadow is rarely seen, preferring to watch as

her brothers handle business. **Secret:** Hiu and Xin are fully blood bound to each other, and trying to create a Daeva-Shadow hybrid by using a mixture of their blood in the Embrace. Their first childe turned Daeva however, and the second Mekhet. They killed both.

**Resources:** The Brothers control the most openly aggressive gang in Singapore. The country's restrictive firearm laws see few firearms in the city, but the Brothers have accumulated most of them. Guns are worthless without bullets though, so the Brothers prefer to use machetes, spiked baseball bats, and weighted chains. Chun believes he has uncovered the location of a military cache, which would forever swing power over Singapore to the Brothers. He hasn't decided if he will freely share the information with his siblings, or leverage it against Lai.

## The Queen's Court

The Queen, born in Ventrue blood and groomed by the Invictus, was destined to rule Singapore. She labored under the yoke of her station for two centuries, learning everything her elders had to offer. Blackened fingers with nails torn out still serve as a reminder of lessons she didn't take to heart quick enough. Finally, she stood poised to claim her crown, her sire sunken into the earth to slumber, when the world fell apart. The Queen is the most powerful of Singapore's vampires, but cannot bring her rival coteries to heel without backup. She lacks a coterie of her own, having spent her nights with mentors and teachers, but never friends. **Secret:** The Queen turned to drugs to combat boredom and rising despair. She gets high on opioids coursing through the veins of other vampires, and has diablerized two such vessels.

White-Eyed Jane is a Mekhet, cursed with prophetic powers (Dream Visions Merit) after drinking poisoned blood. The Queen burned her eyes out, feeling that a blind prophetess looks rather more impressive, and keeps her with a chain leashed around her neck. Jane hates the Queen, and would refuse to serve if not for the Vinculum. She survives on the Queen's dinner scraps, half-dead mortals tossed to her after the Queen is done feeding. **Secret:** Jane has seen her own destruction, bleeding out as the Queen turns to ashes at her feet. Believing her and the Queen's fates are tied, she would reveal anyone who seeks to kill the latter.

Bobby is a Savage, although one better suited to the city than the wilderness. He hunts for the Queen, bringing back mortals and lone interloping Kindred. Bobby loves the Queen, and would do so even without the Vinculum she holds over him — Bobby is easily swayed by beautiful women. Bobby is young, given the Embrace mere nights before the apocalypse, but he's a quick learner. He flits from cover to cover, quick to strike from the shadows. **Secret:** What you see is what you get. Bobby has no personal secrets.

**Resources:** The Queen struggles to cultivate a mortal following, having grown up in a world of celebrities and politicians, though Bobby has a few in his employ as scouts and runners. He pays them in Vitae. The Queen's lack of street power has led to a stalemate, with the oldest surviving vampire in Singapore personally defending her haven, but

lacking resources to enforce her rule beyond. The apartments below the Queen's penthouse are filled with people desperate to be close to the sky, and the Queen picks the finest of these to serve as her herd.

## Other Kindred

Brother Damian is a young Spear, the only one to survive Bishop's pogrom. He keeps the knowledge of the Lancea et Sanctum (Lorekeeper Merit), his backpack overflowing with ancient scrolls. He is terrified of the Bishop and spends most nights in hiding, but can be coaxed into acting as a mentor to another Sanctified. **Secret:** Damian was never a Sanctified, but rather a layman who fell to religious fervor after the apocalypse. Bishop would recognize him from the Masses they attended together, which is another reason he hides from her.

Gray-haired and crooked, Nor looks every bit the Crone. She hates Singapore, only having come for an easy meal, but finds herself trapped. The virus left the Singaporean countryside empty and Nor is too old to survive on animals. She shares covenant secrets with other witches in exchange for their blood, relying on Crúac to evade the Vinculum. **Secret:** If Nor believed and trusted in the goddess, she would brave the countryside to escape Singapore. Her fall from grace means she cannot learn any new levels or rituals of Crúac, though she retains her impressive existing repertoire.

Various nomads come to Singapore, sometimes picked up by the three coteries to serve as spies, muscle, or (in the Queen's case) food. They lack the power to tip any scales, but rather serve as backdrop to the larger story — the Storyteller can use them to show what happens to lone Kindred in Singapore, as an in-character foreshadowing or warning. A Gangrel named Joanna ventures into the Queen's territory and is never seen again. A Firebrand comes into the city expecting the Brothers to take him in, to find they carry only resentment toward the Movement that damned them.

## Dragons in the House of Romanov: A Crown Games Campaign

The year is 2018, and Czarina Nikola leads the Russian Empire in an era of extreme isolation and paranoia. The Ordo Dracul, taking advantage of Russia's restricted borders, has risen to the top of the All Night Society. Normally uninterested in the burdens of rulership, the Defiant covet the dragon nests riddling the empire and the blood of the Empress, who is heir to both Peter and Catherine the Great. Their access to both relies on their ability to seize power, and outmaneuver the other covenants, in the ancient Russian Empire.

Kogaion Grigori leads the Ordo Dracul, magnetic and frightful as the sun in the sky. He delegates lesser tasks to his childe, Voivode Elena, who takes responsibility for relations with other covenants and the mortal empire. Where Grigori is the sun, Elena is the moon — often invisible, but always present and with pull of her own. Her rewards are few — she certainly

does not have access to the empress's blood — and resentment great. Other Kindred navigate between these two forces and the mortal court, supping on the most powerful blood in Europe and running experiments from gilded boudoirs.

**Themes:** Courtly Romance, Paranoia, Mysticism

**Mood:** Murder with poise and grace, cutthroat rivalries performed in perfect etiquette

### *Running the Game*

Russian Dragons have all their basic needs met: Characters start with one free dot in both the Haven and Herd Merits, representing a single room at the imperial palace (being the Catherine Palace outside St. Petersburg in summer, and the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg at other times of year) and access to servants of the aristocracy. A larger haven, or access to a noble herd, requires the purchase of additional Merit dots. *Dragons in the House of Romanov* uses the rules for Supping on the Divine, found on p. 137. Characters from other covenants gain these free Merits if they have a good relationship with the Ordo Dracul, which honors the laws of hospitality. They do not gain these freebie points to spend elsewhere if the relationship is sour, representing the disadvantage of residing at a hostile court.

Feeding in *Dragons in the House of Romanov* centers on courtly romance. A Dragon could feed unseen, stealing into the duke's room as he sleeps, but this is considered bad form.

Venture and Daeva set up elaborate games of seduction, stealing prey away for a tryst and sinking fangs into skin at the moment of ecstasy. Gangrel conduct affairs in the gardens surrounding the palaces, using the beauty of nature to seduce lovers who seek refuge from the palace. Even Haunts and Shadows send love letters and secret gifts, finally approaching enthralled vessels under the cover of darkness. The Herd Merit might be free, but feeding should never be taken for granted.

The Romanov court overflows with Dragons, granting young Defiant a plethora of potential mentors, rivals, and outright enemies. The Voivode forbids open warfare, lest mortals get caught in the crossfire, but Dragons have myriad other ways to resolve conflict. Duels are popular, and use Kindred Dueling (*Vampire the Requiem*, p. 117) for physical conflicts, or Dragon's Fire (p. 132) for an academic resolution. Tests of Mysteries are also popular, from braving sunlight and fire to impaling oneself. Issuing a challenge oneself, however, is both crass and shows poor impulse control. Instead, the Dragon should goad her target into issuing the challenge — incidentally allowing her to choose the means. Entering frenzy is similarly taken as a challenge to the Kindred who provoked it, to be resolved after the frenzied vampire regains control. A Dragon at court can never trust her friends and allies, for fear she'll reveal a weakness which they'll use against her later.

The third pillar of *Dragons in the House of Romanov* is mysticism. Dragons run experiments on Vitae, and develop new



Coils and Scales. Before play starts, the group should decide if all Coils and Scales detailed in **Vampire: The Requiem** are already discovered, or if they want to let their characters invent them later (granting the discovery in-game importance, without requiring the Storyteller and players to write new material). The Russian Empire is rife with dragon nests created by ages of supernal entities roaming the land. The Ordo Dracul has devised an intricate legal system where it owns all nests, be they known, hidden, or not-yet existent. This means any Dragon seeking to harness a nest's power, officially needs permission from the Kogaion. Unfortunately, no one informed the residents of such nests of the Order's claims, or perhaps they simply do not care, and Dragons exploring a nest often find it occupied by creatures as powerful as they are hostile. **Secrets of the Covenants**, offers Merits related to dragon nests, and two new Coils on pp. 199-202.

## Dragons

**Kogaion Grigori** is the oldest surviving Dragon in Russia. He is a Haunt or a Shadow, or possibly from a more ancient lineage than either of those clans. He studied at the feet of Mara, Bride of Dracula, to become the greatest Sworn of the Locust. It was he who saved Grand Duchess Maria from the Bolsheviks, lifting her up from the grave and setting her on the throne of Russia. He who manipulated the new Czarina to oust the Lancea et Sanctum, delivering Russia to the Ordo Dracul. He who will do battle with the great beast Baba Yaga to claim the Hut. Or, maybe, he's an imposter. The only thing proven, of all the myths surrounding the Kogaion, is that he is a master of Dragon's Fire, which he uses to expel all doubters and keep those lesser (meaning all other Dragons) in place. Grigori is a master of the Mystery of the Wyrm.

**Voivode Elena**, Grigori's childe, is responsible for maintaining the standing of House Romanov, the Masquerade, and relations with other covenants. Hers is the final word among Kindred of Russia, save Grigori's. Elena often feels Grigori foists the Order's practical and administrative duties onto her, while he pursues the Mysteries. While she rarely lets it show, Elena actively resents her sire for using her thus. Elena is a swordmaster, and aches to test herself in battle against her sire. So far, all their confrontations have ended with Elena losing her calm, after which Grigori chooses discourse to settle their dispute and discipline his errant childe. Elena is a master of the Mystery of the Voivode.

**Alexander Romanov**, a distant cousin of Czar Nicholas II, was embraced by clan Venttrue two decades before the failed revolution. Once a member of the First Estate, he has since switched his allegiance to the Ordo Dracul. Alexander, viewed as impartial by both Grigori and Elena, serves as the Twilight Judge who adjudicates internal disputes between Dragons. He really does do a good job, too, being resistant to most bribes. Loyal to his house above all else, including his clan and covenant, Alexander considers himself a true subject of the Czarina. Alexander is a nascent master of the Mystery of the Ascendant, using a mix of mysticism and fringe science to

conquer the vulnerabilities of the blood.

## Dragon Nests

The **Despair of Romanov** lies in the Alexander Palace just outside St. Petersburg. Once the favorite home of the royal family, Czarina Maria abandoned it after ascending the throne — this was where Bolsheviks kept her family prisoner, and it held too many traumatic memories. The nest was created by spirits, born of loss and despair, after the Romanovs were marched away from it. The nest holds energy attuned to the end of things, and the Kogaion has made sure to keep all subsequent czars and czarinas away from the palace, fearing that any closure they gain would lessen the nest.

The **Imperial Russian Library**, founded by Catherine the Great, in St. Petersburg holds a nest sporadically occupied by a dread creature. When the entity, a beast made of talons and shadow, is present, the library holds many more rooms than normal. These rooms are dangerous, trapping anyone inside when the entity leaves again, as is the aggressive creature itself. The rooms also hold new and wondrous books though, some of which have no copies outside the hidden library. The nest, regardless of whether its occupant is home, is attuned to works of knowledge and secrets.

**Baba Yaga's Hut** is the greatest nest in Russia. The subject of tales and legends, the Hut moves through time and space, though it cannot cross the boundaries of the empire. Dracula himself sought and found it, yet was never able to step across the threshold. As Grigori tells it, Baba Yaga is an ancient kin to vampires: either the last scion of an ended lineage, or a creature that predares vampires entirely. She has many forms: small girl, wizened crone, snake, dread owl, and winter itself. The Circle of the Crone reveres Baba Yaga, braving the Order's wrath to sneak into Russia in search of the Hut. They have never found it either. The Hut, if it exists, would unlock any mysteries the supplicant desires.

Russia is dotted with dragon nests great and small, and a coterie of Dragons could certainly have the Kogaion's permission to hold one. The players should design a nest, in or easily accessible from St. Petersburg, which they control in the Kogaion's name. The Storyteller designs the nest's original creator, assuming the creature is still alive, as well as any other obstacles to safely securing the nest. Grigori does no more than grant them official ownership — if they are too weak to defend it, whether against Kindred or other threats, they clearly don't deserve it.

## Nocturne Noir: A Rain Falls Campaign

The year is 1974, it's been raining for at least six months straight, the President is a puppet, the economy has gone to shit, gas is too expensive to put in your beater of a Cadillac, and most nights it seems like the whole goddamned world is against you. Everything in the world is a little bit too tarnished and gray, years

of grimy steel mills pollute the rain that falls, and the air is thick with smog. It paints the cityscape with constant grime. The world is run down and tired: the “good guys” live paycheck to paycheck forever struggling to make ends meet, while criminals – be they politicians or mob bosses – keep the power to themselves.

Escapism runs rampant as people try to forget their depressing lives. Jazz found a resurgence in the city along with drugs, bootleg liquor, and dirty movie houses. No one started off in this city planning on being the bad guy – in fact, a lot of sullied heroes still walk these streets – but the world has a way of dragging a good person down into the muck. Kindred don’t have it much easier than the mortals around them. Most of the money in the city flows through the Ventrule, who keep a stranglehold on the mortal mafioso and politicians. They are distant and untouchable, keeping their power with Gangrel attack dogs and regular penitence paid to their Second Estate lackeys. This isn’t their story. This is a story about the Kindred on the bottom – the ones who still love their city and what scraps of good remain haunting its streets. Nocturne Noir is a story about the fight to keep a glimmer of goodness, humanity, and light in the dark shadow of a Requiem.

**Themes:** The Anti-Hero’s Struggle, Finding Humanity, Temptation

**Mood:** Shades of Gray, Escapism in the Great Depression, Noir Heroes, Power vs the Everyman

### *Running the Game*

Nocturne Noir is a game meant to explore the good in vampires in the darkest of times. Sometimes it takes the deepest shadows to see how bright even a dim candle can shine. While most Requiem games are explorations of a Kindred’s fall to the Beast, this game focuses on what noble qualities remain in a vampire’s soul. It also explores a coterie that came together through mystery and happenstance instead of the careful, long-term planning of most Kindred. Lastly, this is a campaign focused on the city – the villains have control over it, everyone’s a slave to it, and the heroes have lived in it all their lives. The constant, exhausting, gritty drive of the city is pushing everyone to their limits. It’s only a matter of time before someone breaks. It’s a game that puts a twist on classic noir tropes and can go as campy or as serious as the players wish. The below character sketches, genders, and associations are completely flexible, but written along the lines of their classic tropes for this example. They are simply sketches for the player characters and the game doesn’t need them all to play to its fullest extent. Feel free to change them to best suit your campaign.

### *Our Heroes*

**The Detective.** Twenty years ago, a Daeva in red walked into his office. Life hasn’t been the same since and his death was even more interesting. He was a cop in the 1950s and remembers a time when this city was great. He has dreams of making it safe again, but he knows he’s outnumbered. He struggles against his Beast constantly and has been falling into violence more often

in recent years. He is nominally the leader of the coterie, for the sheer fact that he’s brought everyone together to solve this mystery. He is also the closest to falling to his Beast.

**The Reporter** is sharp, determined, witty, and angry. She never signed up for this unlife but isn’t going to simply lie down and die. She’s leading a double life now – trying to continue freelance news writing without letting her mortal colleagues know. In addition, she’s still figuring out life as a vampire. She has the most contacts among the mortals of the city and is closest to her human side.

**The Priest** hears the confessions of the city and his coterie with equal deference. He manages to control his Beast through his beliefs and does everything in his power to help his coterie-mates control their own. He’s not certain if God abandoned them or not, but he’s not willing to give up hope. He brings a level calm to the group and reminds them all of their light.

**The Actress** misses her time in the spotlight fiercely. When the detective first found her, she was drinking from drug addicts every night of the week and committing a slow suicide of madness. He gave her purpose – revenge. She is now the chameleon of the group, able to slip into social situations with almost anyone and come back with the information they need. She’s prone to fits of love and drama, but it’s just a reminder to everyone the strength of human emotions.

**The Muscle** once worked for the wrong side, but she’s seen too many people needlessly fall and, in a momentary glimmer of humanity, she reached out to the Detective to find a better life. Now, she is trying to make up for every life she’s taken by protecting two in exchange. She’ll throw herself in front of a set of fangs, a bullet, or a high-speed car if it means taking care of an innocent in this town.

### *The Villain*

**The Boss** has every politician, police commissioner, movie studio, hospital, and bank somewhere on their payroll. No one knows exactly how old this Ventrule is, or how much of their coterie does the work for them, but they do know the Boss has this city on lockdown. The Boss expects complete loyalty from the Kindred that work for them but, in exchange, they never go hungry. Their messes disappear without question. The Boss allows them to explore their darker sides at one of the many pleasure clubs the Boss owns.

### *The Mystery*

Over the last two decades, a Lady in Red has touched the lives of each Kindred in the Detective’s coterie. In fact, she is directly to blame for each one of their Embraces. She first hired the Detective almost two decades ago to investigate a strange mystery – her own murder. He laughed her off but couldn’t deny her beauty, implorations, or money. Eventually, he realized the truth of her situation but by then it was too late. He was her childe and she disappeared into the night as quickly as she came. He’s been looking for her ever since.

This search first brought him to the Reporter who was looking for a famous singer who went missing from the Boss’ club 15 years

ago. While she never found the woman, her investigations into the Boss' dealings, and her resourcefulness in the media, drew her to the Boss' attention. She found herself turned into a ghoul and then embraced within a few years. She's been fighting against the censorship stranglehold the Boss holds over the city ever since.

The Priest served the Catholic church of this city for decades until a Lady in Red came in to confess her sins. She begged for shelter and safe harbor in the church and he could not say no. Sadly, that night, half a dozen thugs burst down his door. She managed to escape, but the Priest was beaten nearly to death. Strangely, one of the thugs felt sympathy for the man and gave him the Embrace with no explanation to follow. He's done all he can to carry on his duties but could not resist joining the Detective's coterie in hopes of finding out why he was damned in such a fashion.

The Actress says she knew the Lady in Red, they were friends and performers growing up together, but no one is ever sure if she's fully telling the truth. The Boss himself embraced her, after saying she looked like his Lady, and ruined what chance she ever had at a career. The moment she heard the Detective was looking into the Lady, she came knocking at his door and invited herself into his life, his work, and his coterie.

The newest member of the group says it was the Lady in Red that told her she was better than just being a thug for the Boss. This woman planted greater aspirations in her head and she could never get rid of them. The Lady sent her to warn the Detective off the trail by threat, force, or death if necessary. Instead, she ended up joining his cause. She doesn't have a great amount of information on the Boss' set up, but she was an insider for a while and uses that knowledge to the coterie's advantage.

Over the course of the narrative, the players should continuously follow hints regarding the Red Lady. Scenes should develop where they realize that they have just missed her but end up fighting against various factions under the Boss' control. It should become clear that the trail she is leaving is directing all of them toward undermining the Ventre stronghold in the city. The narrative of the story, over the course of the game, shifts from figuring out the mystery of the Lady to destabilizing the vicious powers that control the city.

As the characters explore each hint, the players free various elements of the city in the Boss' control. The Actress gains control of the local theater district; the Muscle converts a team of the Boss' toughs to the coterie's side; the Priest convinces a

sect of the loyal Lancea et Sanctum that the Boss is more of a demon than the Beasts within all the Kindred; the Reporter exposes the Mafioso ties to the Boss' more legitimate businesses; and lastly, the Detective puts it all together.

### *The Climax*

As the Boss grows more desperate to keep their stranglehold on the city, the Red Lady slips up more. In the grand finale for our heroes, the Boss takes our mysterious Lady hostage in attempts to use the characters' interest in her against them. A grand confrontation takes place in the Boss' nightclub as the city begins to rip itself apart outside. Ventre-owned mortal factions tear into the humans of the city just trying to protect the common man's interest. Hospitals burn. Someone assassinates the newspaper's owner. The grand tragedy of the city reflects the tighter, character-driven narrative inside the nightclub.

Then the truth comes out. This was the Red Lady's plan all along. As the Boss' righthand woman in the shadows, she knew she could never directly act against him. But she also knew she couldn't stand by while a city she once greatly loved fell to ruin. So, she has been carefully manipulating the best vampires she knew in the city into overthrowing the Boss on their own terms. She doesn't expect to survive the night but, with the right plan and good roles, the characters could still save her. Once they free the city from the Boss' control, then the true temptation begins. The characters now have power themselves – will that power corrupt their Beasts, or will they still be able to fight the good fight despite the tragedy in their blood?

### *Twist: The Denouement*

It was the Actress all along. Star performer for the Boss, diva embraced in her prime, and an expert in disguise. A particularly apt player can take this role and double agent both sides of the story. She uses her rampant addiction to disguise the clever mind she has but doesn't dare reveal her plan until it's all over; otherwise she risks ruination of all her careful machinations. It means she knows all the inner workings of the coterie and can better set it up for the final confrontation – but the Boss could also use all her knowledge against the coterie if the Boss ever managed to get their hands on her long enough to realize what is going on.





Candles flickered in a dozen or more glass domes, each ensconced upon a pillar that cast the party below in flickering half-light. Astrid hated it. Everywhere else in the hidden sanctum had electric lighting on switches like any half-decent modern building might have. No, this was a special occasion celebrating the night and the Kindred's role within it, so all pretenses of modernity had been abandoned.

No one here drew living breath, yet the muted buzz of overlapping conversation filled the space of the open-air gathering. She held a goblet — cold and green with patina — in a pale fist. Why? For show; like everything else, an empty gesture. Around her, the other attendees followed suit, each and every one a monster masquerading as a noble in a court. Like a real court, however, no guest attended without an agenda. Every conversation held the potential for verbal battle, and every greeting meant more than just hello.

She and her sire had planned to sniff out his rival's enemies here at this Elysium soiree and begin to sow the seeds of discord. Enough nudges in the right direction and the carefully arranged house of cards would begin to tumble. Out of rote habit, Astrid raised the empty goblet to her mouth. Reflecting on her reflexive motion, she laughed bitterly into its empty space.

From the corner of her eye, she spotted Megara, the prized child of her sire's rival. Rising from her chair, Astrid crossed the room, weaving between gorgeously attired cold bodies to appear at the other woman's side. Megara regarded her coolly; a worthy adversary. Astrid slid a companionable arm around her waist and leaned close to speak.

She brushed her mouth against the other woman's ear, her fangs sensuously cresting over her bottom lip. "I was hoping to see you here."

"Were you?" Megara asked. If the alluring trick had worked, her face didn't show it. "I'm surprised, given our... history."

"I thought perhaps we could talk about that, and more, in private." She tugged her ever so slightly toward the edge of the room. "Come on."

Megara resisted. "Do you really think I'm going to fall for that so easily? Let you catch me alone so you can poison my thoughts?"

Before she could reply, a rumbling male voice echoed behind Astrid, "I see what you're doing, you little snake. You're not as clever as you think. Step away."

Her sire's rival glowered at her with murderous eyes, luminous in his midnight-dark face. He took a menacing step forward and Astrid felt dozens of predatory eyes upon her as a silence fell over the party. She swept her gaze around the candlelit enclosure, frantically seeking any ally within earshot. The elder vampire had issued his challenge and a duel was about to begin. She'd miscalculated.

"Well?" He demanded, fangs visible in his cruel smile, "What do you have to say for yourself?"

# Chapter Five

# New Tools and Toys

*“You talk about vengeance. Is vengeance going to bring your son back to you? Or my boy to me?”*

— Don Vito Corleone, *The Godfather* (1972)

While *Guide to the Night* offers plenty of setting, theme, and genre changes, it also gives suggestions for changing up the mechanics of how to play a vampire game. In the following chapter, you will find rules for engaging in blow-by-blow conflicts of a social nature. Following that, you will find new Merits, Devotions, and additional mechanics to support the various alternate settings presented in Chapter One. These mechanics may find a home in any *Vampire: The Requiem* game, and can be optionally added to any setting or genre, not just the ones for which they are presented.

## *Lingua Bellum: Games Monsters Play*

In the early nights of the first great vampiric civilization, a group of predator-philosophers outlined the basis for a society comprised entirely of blood-drinking children of the night. Just like the Kindred themselves, Rome would thrive or crumble in its resistance to the ravages of the Beast, for if vampires were unable to rein in their lower impulses the splendorous Necropolis would be a graveyard, and nothing more.

While Rome and its elaborate debating rituals are nothing but faded memories, the Invictus carry the dangerous torch of organizing the Kindred into something worthy of their birthright, and this something is collectively called the All Night Society. Monsters vampires may be, but the Old Man knows the Beast and what it whispers in their ears. Unlike the Roman undead, which shunned

the Beast and considered it unnatural, the model masterminded by the Invictus doesn't ignore what makes vampires conniving and barbaric: It counts on it to make their society function properly.

The *Propinquus* of Rome expected Kindred to be honorable and enlightened. Beginner's mistake. The First Estate knows the Damned to be blood-drenched butchers dressed in Armani aprons. This pragmatic approach has allowed the Invictus to weave a society where, when baser instincts win and a rival is dispatched without the Prince's permission, retribution soon follows by the hand of the fallen's covenant, dynasty, servants, and allies. As the Unconquered well know, no Kindred risks her Requiem with all-out war unless absolutely needed, and as such most just leave murderers to their own fates.

### **When to use**

The Lingua Bellum system presented in this chapter isn't a one-size-fits-all answer to social interactions. It exists to provide mechanical considerations to social exchanges where the All Night Society is represented in all its glory, the Elysium an arena caked in blood and cannibalized dreams. This system is meant to represent the hostility inherent to the Kindred, either during a personal exchange had in an elevator or the hallowed halls of the Prince's court, with the All Night Society watching rapt in attention.

Lingua Bellum is not to be used, however, to overcomplicate simple conversations in the game, or even impasses that are not of dramatic importance to the chronicle. Maybe the Gangrel was speeding, but there is no need to use Lingua Bellum rules to decide he effectively tells the cop to fuck off if a simple Presence + Intimidation roll would do.

The Beast may be ravenous, but it is self-serving and self-preserving. Welcome to the All Night Society.

How does one deal with their enemies among monsters if not through swift violence? The Damned found their answer long ago, and have learned to enjoy the game of bleeding their foes with sharp tongues. Like experienced matadors, the Kindred expertly dance around their subject, prodding and dodging the blunt and crass for the enjoyment of the undead masses. This Danse Macabre is the lifeblood of the All Night Society and the sight of a defeated vampire, heaving and ruined, under the light of candelabra and surrounded by silk-clad monsters is reason enough for some to leave their havens at night.

Social pariahs have no friends. They have no power. No protection. No guarantees. They must either bow to more powerful Kindred or be alone in the jungle of the All Night Society, where there are wolves at every step. New bonds form, bonds keep barbarism at bay, and the All Night Society goes on to survive another moon.

## Anatomy of Lingua Bellum

A full Lingua Bellum is called an **exchange**, and any number of Kindred or mortals can take part in it, and some vampires in fact are known to bring their friends into the court for the sole purpose of backing them up in their social struggles. To successfully win an exchange a character must **Maneuver** to position herself in the stage to better undermine her targets' **Dominance**. Different Kindred do it in different ways, but the goal is always the same: to leave their rival's public persona beaten bloody on the ballroom floor.

A vampire who allows her Dominance to be broken loses the exchange and pays the price of her hubris, the size of the **Audience** determining just how dangerous it is to fall prey to fellow Kindred in Lingua Bellum. Exchanges are never without **stakes**, and are as much about controlling your opponent as controlling the Audience, to come out on top. Below are the steps of Lingua Bellum, in greater detail.

## The Audience

Social exchanges can be a heated meeting in a hallway, or public spats the Damned love to watch, but the bigger the audience, the higher the stakes. Before Lingua Bellum begins, the Storyteller determines the Size and Intensity of the Audience Environmental Condition (p. 119). Audiences greatly influence the exchange, raise the stakes and are a weapon to be wielded by skilled vampires who know how to sway them and use the spotlight in their favor.

An Audience has a Size and an Intensity, and those can change as the exchange gets more heated. The Size of an Audience is determined by how many people are watching and putting pressure on the characters involved in the exchange. The more witnesses to their spat, the more weight their words hold and the more brutal the defeat. Intensity is how invested the

crowd is in the exchange. A domineering vampire might control the Audience and make it quieter, while a socially savvy crowd pleaser sways it until his allies are an extension of his voice.

An Audience may be swayed by characters through Maneuvers.

**Example:** Megara knew she would meet her rival again but did not expect for it to happen so soon, or so suddenly. The eyes of the Elysium turn toward the two and the room shivers in anticipation. As Megara declares she is not running away, the Storyteller decides the exchange will be under the effects of the Crowded Audience (Invested) Condition. This means all Dominance damage is increased by 2, and the Guile of all participants is reduced by the same amount.

## The Stage

When a vampire leaves her haven to feed, it is the instincts of the Beast that guide her. One lesson any neonate learns early is that, when hunting, the hunting ground is as important as picking the right, most vulnerable, prey. This instinct is as valid when engaging in ferocious verbal altercations as it is when seeking to bury one's fangs into soft flesh to feed.

When setting up the scene, the Storyteller must take into consideration whether or not the encounter is spontaneous or premeditated. Some vampires know how to pick the best battlegrounds when engaging their rivals, making sure they have some sort of advantage. This is a game of cat and mouse better left for roleplay, but if desired it can also be resolved by a contested roll.

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Subterfuge vs. Wits + Socialize

**Dramatic Failure:** The vampire has made her intentions obvious. The character's rivals gain +2 on their Timing rolls.

**Failure:** The character can't lure her rival to the desired place.

**Success:** The Kindred sets the stage to her advantage by making sure the exchange happens in a place of her choosing. The character gains a pool of dice equal to her dots in a relevant Merit (such as Staff, Haven, Hunting Grounds, etc.) to spend whenever she wants in the exchange.

**Exceptional Success:** Gain +2 on Timing in addition to the Merit dice.

These bonuses are not the only advantages Merits can confer to Lingua Bellum (p. 119) but symbolize how a strategic vampire can make use of them for greater effect. A Haven might not be useful to social interactions when it comes to most Kindred, but a smart predator knows how to make her home enhance her best characteristics, such as making her more menacing or more influential.

**Example:** Astrid knew Megara would be too aloof to realize this was coming. Her player rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge versus Megara's Wits + Socialize to make sure that when they finally come face to face, they do so surrounded by Astrid's cronies, represented by Staff. With that Merit rated at 4, Astrid now has four dice to 'spend' over the course of the exchange, as her crew does its best to make the vampire's attacks more effective with taunts and laughter directed at Megara.

## Maneuvering

In each turn of the exchange, characters resolve Maneuvers according to the Timing order. The objective of Lingua Bellum is to reduce your rival's Dominance to zero.

A Maneuver is a social trick or strategy employed by your character, wittingly or not, to gain leverage over one or more targets during Lingua Bellum. Each Maneuver is detailed below, and each has a different outcome and mechanics.

When a player scores an exceptional success on her Maneuver she may choose to use that momentum to sway the audience instead of other exceptional success benefits. She may sway the audience in a number of ways:

- Increase or reduce the Audience's Intensity by one (changing it from Indifferent to Invested, for example).
- Gain the Rising Star Condition.
- Gain the Crowd Darling Condition, or remove it from the character who has it.
- Regain one point of Dominance.

**Example:** Having scored the highest Timing, Megara acts first, deciding to use the Undermine Maneuver. She rolls her dice, after subtracting Astrid's Guile, and removes her target's Ego from her successes. Being left with 2 successes, Megara damages Astrid's Dominance in 4 points (2 for her successes and 2 for the Audience Condition).

On her turn, Astrid picks the Measure Maneuver, deciding to build up a dice pool for the next turn. Both players roleplay their actions out, with Megara launching a derisive comment towards Astrid while the other woman grins and sizes Megara up in silence.

## Resolution

Any character who has their Dominance reduced to zero loses Lingua Bellum. The vampire who dealt the final blow to their rival's Dominance gains The Edge Condition. The loser loses all her Guile for the night, feeling deflated, upset or appropriately distressed. Her head is 'out of the game.' Losing Lingua Bellum inflicts the Repressed Condition on the losing party, plus a consequence determined by the Audience Condition. The defeated vampire may spend a Willpower to avoid the Repressed Condition, but in that case the winner takes a Beat.

At the end of the resolution stage, characters who are still in the exchange may continue Maneuvering against each other.

**Example:** Although Astrid suffered a blow to her Dominance, she isn't out of the fight just yet, and decides to go on. Megara does the same, and they continue Maneuvering against each other.

The dispute goes on until one of the vampires loses the exchange upon having her Dominance reduced to zero. The loser takes the Repressed Condition and, given the Crowded Audience Condition, loses a dot of City Status. The winner takes The Edge Condition.

## Advantages

### TIMING

Timing is everything when it comes to social interactions; it is a derisive smile before your sparring partner even speaks, or the interjection of a quick phrase between bouts of screaming in the crowd. Time in Lingua Bellum is tracked in turns just like in normal combat, and Timing acts as the initiative.

At the start of Lingua Bellum, determine your character's Timing by rolling a single die and adding Presence + Manipulation. Characters act in order of highest score to lowest, with the character with higher Timing going first and the one with lowest going last.

### DOMINANCE

When monsters clash they do so for Dominance, and the more jabs a Kindred takes, the more her ego gets bruised while the All Night Society watches in rapt fascination. Dominance measures the social health of the actor, and when it reaches zero, she cannot make an impact in the scene anymore. She may have avoided her attacker's gaze, choked, got her ideas demolished by her rival, anything.

A character's Dominance is determined as Composure + Socialize + the character's highest rated Status.

### GUILE

The daft seldom survive in the All Night Society. A Kindred must be aware of the posture and language of fellow Kindred, always ready for when they might strike with even the subtlest jabs. Guile is an Advantage which, much like Defense, reduces

## Just Trying to Enjoy My Night

A character who wishes to leave may do so. She leaves the area and removes herself from the exchange. Others may chase her, but doing so generally results in physical combat as opposed to resuming Lingua Bellum. Successfully leaving does not award the remaining Kindred The Edge, but may inflict the Exposed Condition on the leaver, depending on the Audience Condition.

the attacker's dice pool by its rating from any Maneuver. It may be improved by Willpower for a turn in the same way as Defense.

A character's Guile is determined as the lower of her Wits or Composure + Empathy. For every character involved in Lingua Bellum after the first, reduce each character's Guile by 1. Constantly watching for the moves of multiple participants makes a Kindred vulnerable.

## EGO

Although they are born of violence, Kindred are social creatures by virtue of their own humanity. This need to connect, to feed off each other's status and integrity, is best represented by the Beast, a presence that unfurls from the deepest reaches of the vampire's soul and extends outwards, ever pervasive and unwilling to give up the one housing it.

The Beast is a dangerous partner. It sabotages the Kindred to feed its own lusts and desires, but is wickedly protective of the vampire attached to it. At the start of the exchange, and just once until it is over, the character rolls her Socialize + Blood Potency to measure the presence of the Beast once it feels the Kindred in danger; this is her Ego. Successes scored subtract from the successes of all attackers until Lingua Bellum is over, acting like an armor against social attacks.

The downsides of rousing the Beast are that with it so close to the surface, the cracks show easier. Any attempts to ride the wave, stifle frenzy, or act against one's Dirge lose an amount of dice equal to her current Ego.

## Basic Maneuvers

These are the basic Maneuvers all vampires may access during Lingua Bellum, regardless of their Status or Merits.

### ASSIST

The character decides to back another Kindred's move. She must act before that vampire, opening the way for their eventual strike. This works exactly like a Teamwork effort (p. 72, *Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook*).

**Drawback:** Kindred understand the need to submit to greater predators, but openly helping them puts a vampire in a position of submission in the eyes of others. All damage the main actor takes to her Dominance in this turn also damages the characters Assisting her.

### CHARM

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation or Presence + Persuasion

When a knife won't do, maybe a handshake or a smile will.

Charming is the art of hiding the hunger and lightening the mood, playing to another's emotions. The player rolls the Maneuver as normal, but instead of reducing her target's Dominance, she reduces their Guile by 2 for the next two turns.

### FUCK OFF

Nothing being said around the vampire is worth her attention, or she just shields herself against what are sure to be attacks against her person. She throws up walls that shield her from the advances of others, conjuring all the stubbornness immortality can afford the Damned. The character may choose to use this Maneuver any time before her action. It acts as a Social dodge. The character sacrifices the use of her normal Maneuver to double her Guile. Instead of subtracting from the attacker's roll, roll Guile as a dice pool and subtract successes from the attacker's successes. If this reduces the attacker's successes to 0, the Maneuver fails to have its intended effect.

### INTIMIDATE

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation or Presence + Intimidation

"It is much better to be feared than loved," argued the philosopher, but when it comes to the Kindred, who exist somewhere between primitive darkness and humanity, there are times when a glare or veiled threat is just the tool needed. The player rolls the Maneuver as normal, but instead of reducing her target's Dominance, imposes a -3 on Maneuver rolls made by her target for the next two turns.

**Drawback:** Characters who use Intimidate as a tool make others wary of them. She increases the Guile of all her rivals by 1 after using Intimidate. This penalty does stack.

### MEASURE

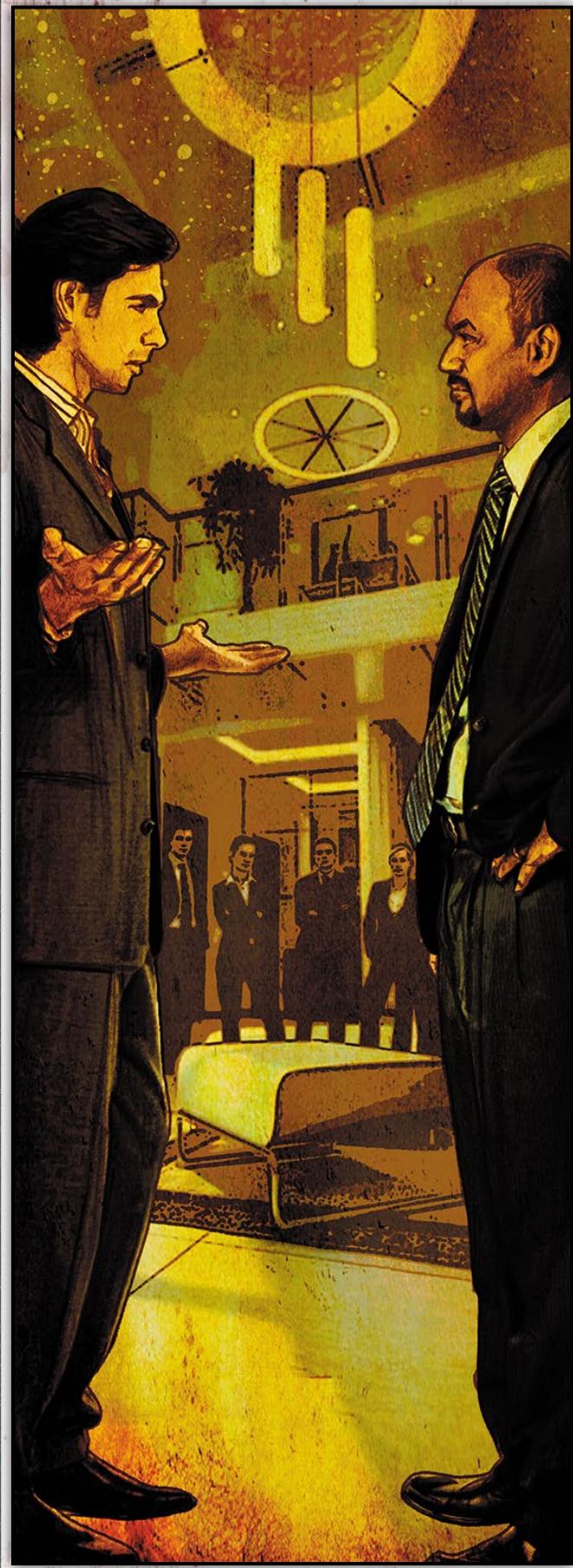
**Dice Pool:** Manipulation or Presence + Empathy

Knowing the intents of others around them keeps the Kindred away from the Final Death. Not to be underestimated, a vampire's ability to read her rivals separates successful Requiems from unlives of eternal subjugation. The player rolls the Maneuver as normal, but instead of reducing her target's Dominance, gains a +2 to her next attack. She may repeat this Maneuver and stack another +2.

### POISON THE WELL

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Subterfuge

The classic approach of liars is to fabricate half-truths and make their rivals look untrustworthy or stupid. Instead of



reducing her target's Dominance, she makes them vulnerable. If any Undermine attempts are made against the target of Poison the Well in the next turn, they inflict one extra point of damage to her Dominance.

**Drawback:** If this Maneuver fails, further attempts to use it suffer a -2 penalty. The penalties are cumulative.

## ROUSE THE CROWD

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Persuasion - Audience's Intensity

The character makes a social attack against her target, undermining their Dominance and damaging their point in the exchange in hopes to nullify their presence and 'beat' their opponent. Successes in the attack roll that are not negated by the target's Ego are subtracted from their Dominance.

## UNDERMINE

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation or Presence + Socialize

The character makes a social attack against her target, undermining their Dominance and damaging their point in the exchange in hopes to nullify their presence and 'beat' their opponent. Successes in the attack roll that are not negated by the target's Ego are subtracted from their Dominance.

### The Voice of a Character

All Maneuvers in an exchange use either Presence or Manipulation as their core Attributes. This represents two distinct approaches to social engagements, and minding those choices might help a player (or the Storyteller) find their character's (or Storyteller character's) voice more easily. A Venttrue who is constantly using Manipulation is very different than one that only rolls Maneuvers with his Presence.

Characters who approach a situation with Presence do so through sheer force of personality and charisma, an 'it' factor that makes eyes gravitate to them. They invade personal spaces, they interject into a conversation with a booming voice (or eerie silence), and overall tend to look more obviously dominant in an interaction. Characters who use Manipulation to get what they desire often play the players, and try to implant their ideas and motives into their marks' heads. They roll with punches, so to speak, are sharp of tongue, and exploit weaknesses.

## Changed Merits

The following Merits have been modified, with added functionality to represent the changes suggested in this chapter.

### Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook

**Closed Book:** This Merit penalizes an attacker's Maneuvers by a number of dice equal to your character's dots in Closed Book.

**Fast-Talking:** Replaced by the new Styles on this chapter.

**Resources:** Resources allow a character to acquire goods and services that would provide benefits, but money can only take a vampire so far in the All Night Society. Circumstantial bonuses may not go above +5.

**Pusher:** When spending Willpower to improve Maneuvers involving bribery, increase the bonus dice by your Subterfuge instead of the usual +3.

**Sympathetic:** At the beginning of an exchange you may spend one Willpower and roll your character's Manipulation + Subterfuge - the target's Wits. Subtract successes from the target's Guile for the rest of the exchange, as long as she doesn't Intimidate her target.

**Table Turner:** Whenever a rival's Maneuver fails against your character during an exchange, your next attack against them gains the 9-again quality.

### Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition

**Altar, Anointed, Carthian Pull, Lineage, and Sworn:** Whenever a character with one of these Merits is in an exchange with another member of their covenant, gain +2 dice to the Ego roll.

**Feeding Grounds:** If Lingua Bellum is held on one of the involved Kindred's Feeding Grounds, she automatically increases the rating of the 'armor' provided by Stage Four: The Beast by half her dots in this merit, rounded up.

### Secrets of the Covenants

**Twilight Judge:** When in an exchange with another Dragon, an audience that is majorly composed of Ordo Dracul always favors you. Furthermore, all Maneuvers made against Dragons gain the 9-again quality.

## New Conditions

### AUDIENCE (ENVIRONMENTAL)

There are eavesdroppers and witnesses to your exchange. The Audience Condition is composed of Size and Intensity. Size determines what the Audience influences, and Intensity is how big these modifiers are. Unless stated otherwise all penalties and bonuses apply to all characters in the exchange.

Audiences have three Sizes; Small Audiences (five or more), Crowded Audiences (20 or more), and Massive Audiences (50 or more). Small Audiences increase any damage done to Dominance by their Intensity. Crowded Audiences increase the damage in the same way, but penalize Guile by the crowd's Intensity. Massive Audiences stack the previous penalties and bonuses, but further penalize all Maneuvers by their Intensity due to the pressure to perform on such a big stage.

Intensity has three levels: Indifferent, Invested, and Roaring. An Indifferent Audience's bonuses and penalties equal 1, whilst an Invested Audience's equal 2. A Roaring Audience rates its penalties and bonuses at 3.

Losing an exchange under the effects a Crowded or Massive Audience always costs one dot of an appropriate Status. If the dispute is had in the Elysium, a character should lose a dot of City Status, for example. If she is only among clan or covenant members, she should lose one of those instead.

**Possible Source:** Engaging in Lingua Bellum while witnesses are present.

**Resolutions:** Leaving the room and the exchange entirely. Dispersing the crowd in some way. Finishing the exchange.

### DANSE MACABRE (ENVIRONMENTAL)

The characters are not simply surrounded by an Audience, but are being observed by the crème de la crème of the All Night Society. Every silver-tongued jab aimed at a rival's honor fills the room with hisses and the weight of failure looms overhead like an executioner's ax. When under the Danse Macabre Condition, vampires feel their Beast rouse more easily and add the highest of the character's Clan, Covenant, or City Status to the Ego roll.

This honed edge makes things tenser, however, and any character who is a victim of an Exceptional Success must check for frenzy. The Danse Macabre Condition also allows for riskier gambits. Characters who lose an exchange under the Danse Macabre Condition risk becoming Disgraced, whereas victorious Kindred may raise their City Status by feasting on the reputation of other vampires.

The effects of the Danse Macabre Condition are cumulative with those of the Audience Condition.

**Possible Source:** Joining an exchange in the Elysium, or the covenant or clan hunting grounds.

**Resolution:** Finishing the exchange or leaving the room.

## DISGRACED (PERSISTENT)

Your character's incompetence, fabricated or not, is now public knowledge, and her former allies start to wonder how the fuck they let someone like that get so high in their ranks. Disgraced characters lose access to whatever Status they have, which means even the leader of a covenant becomes all but a sock puppet while his former advisors now call the shots while this Condition is active. She is not taught any of the covenant-specific arts, such as Coils or Theban Sorcery, and should anything drop her to Status 0 during this period, she is kicked out of the organization. Reaching Status 0 on City Status might lead to the character being exiled from the domain.

**Possible Source:** While possessing the Exposed Condition, the character loses Lingua Bellum under the effects of the Danse Macabre Environmental Condition.

**Resolution:** Perform a feat that would earn a rise to Status 3+, prove the falsehood of any claims levied against her, or Disgrace another character as a scapegoat to her problems.

**Beat:** Your character's decreased Status prevents her from engaging in an important activity or ritual.

## EXPOSED

By weakness of your character's own doing or by having exposed her own incompetence, you have caused great damage to the trust of other Kindred in you, and your influence has diminished. All your character's Social Merits function as if they were two dots lower, to a minimum of one.

**Possible Source:** Being defeated in an exchange done under the effects of the Large Crowd or Danse Macabre Conditions.

**Resolution:** Perform a deed worth a Status increase in your character's covenant, clan or city, or defeat the offending party in an exchange. Wait a month until the luster of your character's fall has lost its shine.

## REPRESSSED

Your character can feel the bad taste on her tongue, the caustic tingle of fear and shame whenever that gloating bitch looks at her. She got lucky and they both know it, but the Beast is wounded, cowed. You lose two dice on all Lashing Out rolls when within Blood Potency x 10 yards from the Kindred that beat you.

**Possible Source:** Being defeated in an exchange.

**Resolution:** The character who inflicted this Condition on yours loses an exchange in front of her. Your character successfully Lashes Out against that character, or beats anyone in an exchange. Go a week without partaking in an exchange.

## RISING STAR

Everyone likes a winner, and your character has that 'it' factor about her. The galleries of undead roar when she roasts her enemies and they hiss when her rivals fight back. You reduce the penalties of the Audience Condition by your highest Status.

**Possible Source:** Rolling an exceptional success in a Maneuver, or defeating someone in possession of the Rising Star Condition.

**Resolution:** Failing a Maneuver roll, or the end of the exchange.

## CROWD DARLING

You saw the opportunity and went for it, charming the audience to take your side. You increase the Audience Condition penalties on all other characters in the exchange by 2.

**Possible Source:** Using the Rouse the Crowd Maneuver while under the Rising Star Condition.

**Resolution:** Failing a Maneuver roll or the end of the exchange.

## SUBDUED

Another nightly predator has shown to be completely dominant over you before the Praxis. When within Blood Potency x 10 yards from that Kindred, all your Blood Potency rolls lose their 8-again, 9-again, or 10-again permutations. If your character knows Crúac, she may not target that Kindred with it. You suffer a -3 penalty on all Social rolls against that vampire.

**Possible Source:** Being defeated by the same vampire who inflicted the Repressed Condition on your character, before she could resolve that Condition. The two Conditions must be imposed in different nights.

**Resolution:** The character who inflicted this condition on yours loses Lingua Bellum before her. Your character beats anyone in Lingua Bellum. Lose a point of Humanity.

## THE EDGE

The Beast revels in dominance over another, cresting over its fallen prey to announce its victory. The vampire beams with that confidence and power and gains +2 on all rolls to Lash Out and resist Discipline uses against her. The Edge is not without its drawbacks, however, and while she has it, the vampire cannot spend blood to look human, and all mundane Social interactions with mortals take a penalty of -4.

**Possible Source:** Defeating another Kindred in Lingua Bellum.

**Resolution:** This furor only lasts until the next sunrise or when the character is defeated in Lingua Bellum.

## Supernatural Status

Many players will notice Status is used in many different stages of the exchange, and wonder why. The exchange system assumes Status to be more than simple social prestige, but something the web of invisible connections between Kindred writes down as unspoken law. There is power in recognition, and wherever there is power the Beast hunts to feed upon it.

To be bestowed, and maintain, any measure of power in Kindred society is no small feat, and those with high Status hold a mandate greater than what mortals can understand. Their authority is a pact signed in blood and enforced by the social instincts of all the undead members of the All Night Society. A vampire may disagree with all their superior stands for, but even then, they will know to respect a monster at the top of their game.

## Debate Tactics

Social manipulation is an art the Damned honed into a fine razor over the centuries. Threats, bribery, and emotional appeals are all tools they wield to get what they're after. They know when subtlety is required, and they know when to get loud. The Covenants' approach to rhetoric is as varied as the Covenants themselves. A Firebrand rails against injustice while a member of the First Estate speaks volumes by what she leaves unsaid. Each has their own tactics – when they might go on the attack, what they're willing to sacrifice, and the things they'll never compromise.

### *Carthian Movement*

The Revolution is accustomed to being the underdog. They have few tools at their disposal except their ideas, but the Movement turns them into their greatest weapons. They use their ideas to expose the difference between the Firebrands and the powers that be. When they engage in Lingua Bellum, it's always in a public setting. They need other Kindred to see what fools the Prince and his lackeys truly are, or just how terrible their rivals' plans for the city.

Their goal is to humiliate their opponents, deny them the respect they cherish from the city's Damned. If the Firebrands can accomplish this, they are more than happy to suffer through a little egg on their faces in the process. Like a guerilla fighter, though, they choose their battles carefully. They'll demure and deflect if they don't think they have a reasonable chance of coming out on top of an exchange. While they don't mind suffering mild humiliation themselves in service to their greater goals, their ideas are too precious. Since they always prefer a public venue, one misstep could sour their ideas to most of the city's Damned, and if the local Kindred reject their ideas, the Revolution has no chance of succeeding.

Given a common enemy, the Firebrands unite in common cause. In isolation, however, the Firebrands chafe against each other. Rebellion is in their blood. They're as willing to employ their rhetorical style against the self-righteous asshole who stands atop the Revolution as they are against the powers that be.

### *Circle of the Crone*

Change is the heart of the Mother's Army. They speak truth to power, or at least the versions of the truth they wish to see

placed in power. Their voices convert mortals to their cults, change the minds of the local Kindred, and transform the thoughts of their fellow Acolytes. If their words fail to effect their desired changes, an overwhelming application of violence ensures they get their results.

The Mother's Army is willing to fight their verbal battles anywhere and at any time. They'll take on an entire room full of skeptics just as readily as they'll spar with individuals. They won't dive blindly into a debate, though. Their entire covenant founded itself on a tactical decision for survival. When rhetoric fails, fighting inevitably begins, and the Acolytes prize survival. If they aren't sure they'll come out on top when civility descends into savagery, they'll avoid stirring things up for the time being. The Acolytes regroup and try to orchestrate a more favorable position for the next time. They don't mind losing the occasional battle, but they won't sow the seeds of their own destruction.

The Circle of the Crone is an alliance of survival, not a unified ideology. Of all the covenants, they are the most prone to infighting. Unless their existence is threatened, they'll readily quarrel with each other. They're less likely to hold back their criticisms of their fellow Acolytes than they are about other Kindred.

### *Invictus*

The First Estate wields power as effortlessly as the living breathe. Whether their power comes from truth, blackmail, or lies repeated so often they become accepted truths doesn't matter to them. They're equally adept at breaking down their opponents into submission using whatever leverage they have at hand. If their words alone won't cow their adversaries, a judicious application of blood finishes the job.

Presentation is key to the psychological effects of power. The Establishment chooses their venue carefully before entering into a debate. Any place with strict rules and protocols of behavior favors the Conspiracy, from the halls of Elysium to any Invictus-controlled territory. Members of the First Estate are masters of exploiting the law in their favor. Even if it has nothing to do with the topic at hand, it serves to separate the masters from the rabble and ensure everyone involved knows their place. If a Kindred tries to draw them into a debate where the Conspiracy doesn't hold sway, they'll attempt to shut down the discussion as quickly as possible through changing the subject, threats, or some combination of the two. Keeping at least a mask of power is paramount for the First Estate. If they find themselves cornered, they'll offer up compromises and concessions in order to appear magnanimous. Even if they experience a setback, as long as they're able to save face, their power over their opponents remains intact, and the Ownership can always crush them later in a more favorable venue.

The Invictus rarely argue among themselves in public. They save their internal power plays for their private places out of earshot from the rest of the Kindred. The First Estate's authority comes from their unified front. Any member who fractures the covenant's facade is severely punished, if not outright destroyed.

### *Lancea et Sanctum*

The Second Estate never commands, they simply recommend the correct course of action. It's not their fault when things go poorly for the Kindred who failed to heed their warnings. Overt displays of control are anathema to the Sanctified. Temporal power belongs to secular institutions outside the church. The proper place of the Church Eternal is an advising role — the power behind the throne — since their primary concerns should be spiritual instead of physical.

The Sanctified prefer to inspire others to righteous action from the position of their pulpit. Sermons are the church's preferred debate venue since the audience so rarely argues back. When the Church Eternal is threatened by heretics or agents of chaos, the Sanctified won't hesitate to step in with a shameful rebuke. If their own words fail, the Second Estate appeals to secular vampires for action. If third parties fail, the Sanctified

are willing to debase themselves if it means preserving the status quo. They're willing to endure humiliation and insults as long as order is maintained. They can't stomach heathens and go to any lengths to convert them or drive them out of the city.

While direct debate outside of the Church Eternal is not their preferred method, the Sanctified have an active debate tradition within the church. They don't dare speak against accepted dogma, but the finer points of theology and God's will are often discussed. Overt jockeying for power, even within the covenant, is frowned upon. The Sanctified must always remain subtle in their machinations.

### *Ordo Dracul*

The Order is not interested in temporal power. Unlike the Sanctified, the Dragons aren't even interested in being the power behind those who rule in name. If they could, the Defiant would focus all of their attention on their explorations of the vampiric condition. Unfortunately, other Kindred often stand between them and their objectives. Other Kindred often have priorities the Dragons don't share. While those vampires think certain acts of contrition are vitally important, members of the Order just don't care. They offer up useless platitudes if it means being able to operate in peace.

When roused to debate, the Dragons are fearsome creatures. Where other Kindred fear to tread, the Defiant courageously venture. Where vampires of other traditions see submission as the wisest option, the Order loudly argues its points. The Dragons are busy unlocking the secrets of existence itself; they don't have time for niceties. No subject is taboo to the Order, nor is any rhetorical method off limits. They'll browbeat and cajole to get what they want. Truth is their ultimate prize. With it, they may achieve heights greater than mortals or the dead dare dream.

Dragons take a subtler approach with their test subjects. If vampires discover they are being evaluated, they usually rebel, and the Order can't have that — the results won't be accurate. Young neonates from within the Order are the most common Kindred duped. They're the ones who show the most potential. Elder Dragons need to be sure they're worthy of taking the next steps or if the experiment is simply another failure.

# Merits

For each of the new settings from Chapter One, this section provides a variety of updated, alternate, and new Merits for use in any chronicle. In addition to Merits for new settings, this section includes supporting Merits for utilizing the Lingua Bellum system including new Rhetorical Style Merits for each covenant.

## Crown Games

### BENEATH NOTICE (•••)

**Effect:** Whether by birth or disguise, the character is (or appears) lowly born. Her place in society is that of servitude, and therefore she passes among the powerful without notice. She does not need to make any Stealth rolls when infiltrating as a servant and enjoys +3 bonus dice to all Wits + Composure rolls to eavesdrop on her social betters.

### BLOOD STATION (• TO •••)

**Effect:** The quality of a vampire's mortal blood determines her standing even in the All Night Society. The more potent her blood, the greater pull she has over her peers and lessers. Each dot of Blood Station adds its rating in dice to Ego rolls during Lingua Bellum.

### DIVINE SCION (• OR •••)

**Effect:** The character was born among the elite, and the true divinity of her bloodline shines through, adding +1 die to all Social rolls involving interactions with those beneath her. At three dots the character is a bastard or a lost heir who was raised (and possibly Embraced) outside the hierarchies of the Crown. In addition to the dice benefits, she may use her hidden divine blood to gain access to elite places, treating it as though she had its equivalent dots in Status once per story.

### THE SUPERIOR BEAST (•)

**Effect:** In a social encounter, the Beast lurking beneath a vampire's skin snarls and bares its fangs, demonstrating the

superiority of its bloodline. Characters with this Merit may add their Blood Potency rating in bonus dice to any Maneuver roll once per scene.

**Drawback:** After taking advantage of the superior Beast, she must test for frenzy at the end of the social encounter.

## The End of the World

### ADAPTED FEEDING (•••)

**Effect:** Lest it starve, the Beast has adapted to scarcity. At all Blood Potency dots below six, animals sustain her need for Vitae. Above six dots, she need only spend one Willpower for each two points of Vitae she wishes to consume.

### CULT (• TO ••••)

**Effect:** The character has fashioned herself a leader among the doomsday cults of the wasteland. Whatever she preaches, her fervent followers practice. Each dot represents the size and devotion of her cult. One dot represents up to 20 cult members; three dots ranges up to 50; and five dots indicates a group up to 100. She may make a demand of her cult a number of times per story equal to its dot rating, which the cult will do everything in its power to achieve. This can be as simple as allowing the vampire to feed on them, as mundane as sending them to raid for supplies, or as debasing as forcing them to drink her bathwater in order to gain "enlightenment." She may push the limits of her control and make additional demands by rolling Manipulation + Intimidation or Persuasion + Cult. If successful, the cult meets the demand. Whether it succeeds or fails, the character loses a dot of Cult which returns at the end of the chapter. On a dramatic failure, the cult turns on its leader, often violently.

**Drawback:** A cult requires its leader to maintain a powerful grip over them. Once per story, the character must maintain her value as supreme leader, or the cult will turn on her as noted above.

### HIDDEN CACHE (• TO •••)

**Effect:** In her travels, the character has stashed away essential supplies in hidden places. Once per chapter, the player may

declare that the character is accessing her hidden supplies, granting her its Resources equivalent in medicine, weapons, trading goods, etc.

## STRAIN RESISTANT (••)

**Effect:** When feeding on humans, the character has less to worry than others about contracting an illness from tainted blood. She ignores her first failure when checking to see if she will be affected by blood (see **Blood is Poison**, p. 137) and takes one fewer level of lethal damage on a dramatic failure.

## UNASSUMING GUISE (•)

**Effect:** Having learned to blend in, the character wanders unseen. She fades into the background wherever she goes. The character applies +3 bonus dice to Social rolls to present as unassuming or to pass as merely human.

### *Rain Falls*

## DEN OF VICE (••)

**Effect:** In a world designed to grind people to dust, vice offers a much-needed escape. The character has found a preferred haunt where she can find pleasure, even if temporarily. Once per chapter she may visit her favorite house of sin and recover all spent willpower.

**Drawback:** Whenever she takes advantage of her Vice in order to replenish willpower, she must make a Stamina + Composure roll. On a failure, she gains the Addicted (Persistent) condition (**Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition** p. 302).

## FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES (• TO ••••)

**Effect:** An alternate version of Status (**Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition** p. 123) – the character is connected to the dregs of society: the downtrodden or the oppressed, or anyone not in control of the world. This does not reflect authority but rather informal respect. Friends in Low Places have little material wealth and cannot give access to resources or funding, but offer safe havens, vices, information, and services. It supplies the same amount of pull as any other Status, allowing her to block another character's Merit usage, as all lowlifes are in the business of obstruction.

**Drawback:** Friends in Low Places don't demand dues or particular duties, though may ask for return favors, for secrets to be kept, or for lies to be slipped to corrupt authorities to keep those ground beneath the mob's boot safe.

## HIDING PLACE (•••)

**Effect:** Far from the prying eyes of society, the character has secured a safe haven to call her own. The hiding place is small – usually no bigger than an apartment – and often hidden in plain sight. No matter who her enemies are, the character's hiding place is always secure. If found out, she is able to create a new safe space at the start of the next chapter. This is a personal Merit, separate from a group stronghold reflected by Safe Place (**Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition** p. 123).

## MOBSTER (•)

**Effect:** Whether by choice or circumstance, the character has become entangled with organized crime. Choose whichever criminal organization controls her (or looks on her favorably). This Merit allows the character access to the organization's areas of influence – strongholds, storehouses, etc.

**Drawback:** However, being so closely associated with organized crime also marks her as a target; enemies of her crime family are her enemies as well, and if she travels onto the wrong turf, it can mean trouble.

## MOONLIGHTING (••)

**Effect:** Everyone in a world of rain signs their lives away, submitting to their daily grind. Even then, ends don't always meet. The character has found a way to make a little scratch on the side – often illegally. Once per story, she gains two dots of Resources from her side hustle.

### *Bleeding Edge*

## AUGMENTED RETAINERS (• TO ••••)

**Effect:** An alternate version of Retainers. The mortals and ghouls who serve you have attained some degree of cybernetic augmentation. Treat these empowered Retainers as Ghoul Retainers (**Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition** p. 101). See Cybernetic Augmentation (p. 137).

## FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES (• TO ••••)

**Effect:** Similar to the version of this Merit for the Rain Falls setting, the character is connected to those who live in the world's seedy underbelly.

### Nauseated

Your character's head spins and the room swims, turning her stomach and offsetting her balance. She suffers a -1 dice penalty to Physical actions and cannot move faster than a walk, including taking actions like Charging and Jumping.

Possible Sources: Certain Devotions or Fighting Styles, motion sickness, etc.

Resolution: An instant action and Stamina + Composure roll. The penalty and movement restrictions are negated for a number of turns equal to the successes on this roll. Otherwise it persists until the scene is over.

Beat: n/a

## FEARED AMONG THE MIGHTY (••)

**Prerequisite:** Presence •••, Intimidation ••

**Effect:** Whether deserved or simply bluster, the character has made an impact among the Ascendancy as something to be feared. Perhaps she tore apart the synthetic body of one of their elite bodyguards, or perhaps she threatened to do so in very believable words. Regardless, the Ascendancy gives her a wide berth, refusing to interfere with her affairs unless she wantonly commits heinous crimes to provoke them.

## SYNTHETIC FEAST (•••)

**Effect:** Rising above the constraint of flesh and blood, the Beast finds sustenance in synthesized bodies. The vampire may spend a point of Willpower to feed upon a victim with a cybernetic or synthetic body as if they were a natural human.

### *Night Without End*

## CELEBRITY (• TO •••)

**Effect:** As undisputed masters of the Dominion, the Masquerade vanishes. This is an alternate version of Fame (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 120). The scale is adjusted for a space opera. One dot is relative obscurity, only popular on the character's home world or station. Two extends to a regional part of a system, including the home world and other cultures in contact with it. Three reflects a character well-known through the whole of the Dominion, her face on every communication and news feed.

**Drawback:** As with the original Fame Merit, the character cannot have the Anonymity Merit. At two and three dots, the character is recognized automatically by anyone who may have heard her name or seen her face.

## IMPATIENT BLOOD (•• OR ••••)

**Effect:** The vampire's blood yearns to spread its power. It thrashes with impulsive eagerness within dead veins. Serum made from impatient blood takes nine years minus the sire's Blood Potency to take hold at two dots, or seven years minus the sire's Blood Potency at four dots.

**Drawback:** The serum process means that new vampires are vetted and carefully groomed. Impatient blood cares little for this, and characters with this Merit feel compelled to procreate, regardless of with whom they may be sharing their gifts.

## MONEY TALKS (•)

**Prerequisite:** Wealth Immeasurable •

**Effect:** In a battle of wits held before a ravenous audience of one's peers, it's best to come with a full arsenal. A vampire with access to the wealth of worlds uses this Merit to leverage her economic might over her opponent. Once per scene while engaging in Lingua Bellum the vampire may add her dots of Wealth Immeasurable in dice to any Maneuver roll.

## NETWORK (•)

**Effect:** Though communication across the vastness of the Dominion is lightning swift, messages can still get lost, vanishing into an electronic nothing. The character has a reliable personal network for delivering missives and critical information. She rests assured knowing that her important messages reach their targets uninterrupted.

## WEALTH IMMEASURABLE (• TO •••••)

**Effect:** An alternate version of the Resources Merit. The Kindred of the Dominion have the wealth of planets at their disposal as the undisputed masters of space. This expands the



scope of the Resources Merit to a planetary scale. One dot is the collective wealth of a nation, while three dots affords the wealth of a confederation of nations and five dots commands the economic power of the Dominion itself — a sum beyond quantification. The items purchasable with Availability at this scale extend from spacefaring vessels, to colonies, to weapons of mass destruction, and so on.

## ZERO-GRAVITY FIGHTING (• TO •••)

**Effect:** Grown accustomed to the weightlessness of space, the character has studied to fight in low-to-zero gravity where limitations of movement cease to apply.

**Spiraling Dodge (•):** Spinning away from an attack, the character uses weightlessness to bolster her ability to avoid harm. When she makes a Dodge action, she rolls her Defense pool plus the number of dots she has in Zero-Gravity Fighting twice, and takes the better result.

**Effortless Leap (••):** The character knows how to best control her body to maximize the distance she moves. When she makes a Jump action (*Chronicles of Darkness*, p. 71), she leaps a number of yards or meters equal to the number of successes rolled.

**Dizzying Strike (•••):** With a furious kick or punch, the character knows just how to strike her opponent with enough force to send them away, turning end over end. Without friction the victim spins endlessly, dizzying and disorienting them. After she successfully attacks her target, she may choose to inflict the Nauseated Condition instead of inflicting damage.

## War Drums

### BEATING THE DRUM (•••)

**Effect:** Dredging up the glorious fury of past victories, the vampire stokes the Beast within her to bolster the might of her social attacks. Once per chapter, before she enters Lingua Bellum, she may apply this Merit to gain the effects of the Danse Macabre or The Edge Conditions (pp. 119-120) until the end of the social clash.

**Drawback:** After gaining the benefits of Beating the Drum, the vampire must test for frenzy at the end of the scene.

## NIGHT GUARDIAN (• TO ••)

**Effect:** A community has claimed the vampire as their personal monster, the terrifying Night Guardian. Once per story she may use her dots of this Merit as its equivalent in dots of Contacts, Resources, or Status with the community that supports and fears her. The type of community that supports her depends on the number of dots she has in this Merit. At one dot, the community is poor or rural, doing their best to avoid angering their fearful weapon, and at two dots the community is slightly better off, but not full royalty. At three dots, the vampire is kept by a noble court or other powerful community.

### General Merits

## FLAWLESS TIMING (••)

**Effect:** Blessed with wit without compare, the character leaps into Lingua Bellum with a flawlessly timed statement, barb, or retort. Once per chapter, the character may set her Timing to one above the highest rolled value. If two characters use this Merit, they roll off as normal.

## TUTELAGE (•••)

**Effect:** Once per story, if the character with this Merit is the student, she may call upon her teacher to gain 1 Experience towards purchasing the subject of the lesson (usually Devotions or Disciplines in the case of vampires). If the character is the teacher, once per story after meeting with her student, she receives a reduction on her next Experience purchase by 1, to a minimum of 1.

**Drawback:** When the character takes advantage of the Experience benefit, if the character is the student, her mentor calls in a favor that cannot be ignored. If the character is the teacher, the student fails to leave well enough alone, and entangles the character into some kind of social trouble.

## WICKED JAWS (••)

**Effect:** When the vampire unsheathes her fangs, it is not limited to her canines. All her teeth extend into a monstrous, gaping maw. When she feeds violently, her bite becomes a 2L attack. If she has any other special abilities that would increase the damage of her bite attack, this adds a cumulative +1L damage instead.

## WORK THE CROWD (••)

**Prerequisite:** Presence ••

**Effect:** Using the force of her personality, the vampire riles up those gathered to witness her social sparring. Once per Lingua Bellum exchange, roll Presence + Socialize. Add the successes on this to artificially increase the Intensity of the Audience Condition for the duration of one action. If the Audience is already at maximum Intensity, this instead adds dice equal to the number of successes rolled to the next Maneuver.

**Drawback:** On a dramatic failure, the crowd ultimately turns against her, and – win or lose – the character loses a dot of appropriate Status at the conclusion of the exchange.

### Coterie Merits

The following Merits are meant for group purchase, or to support the efforts of the player's characters as a collective whole. How they apply is indicated under each individual Merit.

## COMMON ENMITY (• TO ••)

**Effect:** Nothing binds a group quite like having someone to hate. The coterie has a shared enemy – an individual who has wronged them, a rival coterie they particularly hate, or an entire clan they've managed to piss off. Multiple characters can contribute to the Common Enmity Merit, to a maximum of three dots. Each member of the coterie must purchase at least one dot, with the highest rating equal to the threat of the enemy. The more dots invested, the greater the group hatred, but also the greater the threat. One dot might be a single ancilla who has it out for the coterie, while two dots might be an entire mortal organization such as their city's police, and three dots represents other Kindred of power and status such as a Prince. Once per scene, a member of the coterie may apply their Common Enmity dots to any applicable roll to harm, block, or otherwise inconvenience their enemy.

## GOAL (•• TO ••••)

**Effect:** In uncommon style for most vampires, the coterie has a firm, agreed-upon goal. This may be drafted into a contract or sealed with blood oaths, but whatever it is, it brings the group together. Multiple characters must contribute to the group's Goal. The rating indicates the strength and scope of what drives the coterie. Two-dot Goals are small, achievable in a handful of chapters, while five-dot Goals are long term, requiring the duration of a story or more. Whenever a Goal is completed, all characters who invested in the Merit lose the Merit and instead

gain its value in Experiences. Once per chapter, characters invested in the Merit who took actions toward accomplishing the Goal may recover a point of Willpower or may use the Goal's rating in bonus dice to any applicable roll. Additionally, once per chapter, any characters sharing the Goal Merit who take teamwork actions toward accomplishing it all take a Beat.

## HISTORY (• TO ••••)

**Effect:** Forged in the fires of adversity, the coterie developed a strong bond through shared experience. Multiple characters must contribute to the group's History. The greater the History score, the more powerful the bond (and more adverse the trials) the coterie experienced. All characters invested in the Merit may, once per chapter, add its rating in bonus dice to teamwork rolls. They add the Merit's rating to all Blood Sympathy rolls, even if they are not blood related. Additionally once per chapter, for good or ill, the invested characters may apply its rating to use any Discipline or Devotion on another coterie member with the consent of the character's player.

**Drawback:** Their close relationship also makes resisting blood bond that much more difficult. She doubles the cumulative die penalty to resist blood bond with any other character who has invested in group History.

## HOWLING SUPPORT (••)

**Effect:** When a member of the coterie is engaged in Lingua Bellum, the character with this Merit may turn up to support her — snarling and jeering to undermine the enemy's confidence or employing subtler, cutting tactics, whichever best suits his personality. He uses this Merit to count as a Small Indifferent Audience alone. If multiple members of the coterie have this Merit, add an additional Size up to Massive if all members of the coterie have this Merit and are present in the scene.

**Drawback:** A loss for one is a loss for all, so if the sparring character loses the duel, the loss of Status applies to all coterie members present in the encounter who applied the benefits of this Merit.

## Rhetorical Styles

Each covenant has its own unique Rhetorical Style Merits that members of the covenant may learn. Learning the first dot of a Style grants access to one of the covenant-specific Maneuvers. Gaining additional dots in the Rhetorical Style Merit grants access to additional Maneuvers. The Maneuvers may be learned in any order.

### Sound and Fury (Carthian Movement, • to ••••)

**Effect:** The Revolution's style is not formally taught. It doesn't even truly have a name. Sound and Fury is merely a

disparaging term coined by their enemies. Firebrands pick it up from watching more experienced members. The Movement models it after the debate style of modern-day political pundits and revolutionaries, but refined specifically for use on Kindred. Sound and Fury practitioners aggravate their opponents, goading and needling their Beasts until they snap. The public frenzy is mark of weakness and humiliation designed to discredit the opponent no matter how strong the argument is otherwise.

Sound and Fury is an inherently dangerous style. It can put the Firebrand right in the path of a frenzied vampire. Wise Kindred plan ahead and make sure they have sufficient backup in the audience before employing this style. Sound and Fury's greatest weakness is an opponent who can keep her cool and not take the bait. Opponents who rely on facts and logic are less susceptible to this style's taunts. Sound and Fury relies on impressing the audience more than convincing an opponent of anything. If the opponent doesn't put on a show, the audience won't become invested.

## ALTERNATIVE FACTS (PRESENCE OR MANIPULATION + EXPRESSION)

Winning is more important for the practitioners of Sound and Fury than being correct. They make up new facts or events on the spot that bolster their argument with no regard to the truth. They treat their new information with the utmost sincerity as though it has actual weight on the issue. Their opponents have no way to respond effectively, often even second guessing themselves, wondering if they and not the Carthian is the one in the wrong. Instead of damaging her opponent's Dominance, she may add her Expression to her Guile until the end of her next turn.

## BREAKDOWN (PRESENCE OR MANIPULATION + SOCIAZIE)

The Firebrand seizes the opportunity when it presents itself to push her opponent completely over the edge. Even if she doesn't end up with exactly what she was going for in the exchange, she considers destroying her opponent a satisfying victory. If Breakdown is the Maneuver that defeats her opponent, the character may forgo gaining The Edge Condition to inflict the Tempted Condition on the loser.

## GISH GALLUP (MANIPULATION + SOCIAZIE)

Firebrands use Gish Gallup to overwhelm their opponents. They pepper their opposition with an avalanche of unrelated questions — What about what the Prince did last night? What

about Lancea et Sanctum's territory on the south side? What about the sheriff's indiscretions? Each point is minor and often only tangentially related but worded as though they carry grave importance. They're so rapid fire and so numerous the target has no hope to answer them all sufficiently in a timely manner, making him sound like a fool to the audience. Success gives the character the Crowd Darling Condition.

## KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE (PRESENCE OR MANIPULATION + PERSUASION)

For a practitioner of Sound and Fury, nothing is more important than having the audience on his side. Sometimes it pays more to play to the crowd than his adversary. The Firebrand makes an argument that may be meaningless to his opponent but causes the crowd to go wild. They love him and are clearly on his side. In turn their cheers give the Revolutionary strength, and he finds renewed vigor in his debate. Instead of reducing a target's Dominance, success either increases the audience's Size or Intensity by one step as the character gets more Kindred invested in the exchange.

## THE LOUDEST WINS (PRESENCE OR MANIPULATION + EXPRESSION)

Some points are too dangerous. If allowed to air, they would completely undermine the Carthian's entire argument. The Revolutionary's only defense is to shout down her opponent, talking over one another so that neither can be heard. The yelling comes fast and furious from both parties; neither can get a word in edgewise. It suits the Firebrand just fine. Her opponent's point is completely drowned out.

This Maneuver may be used reflexively as a defense to another Maneuver used against her. If successful, it player nullifies the effects of her opponent's maneuver instead of damaging her opponent's Dominance. However, her own Guile is also reduced by -2 as she loses her focus in the scramble.

### *Hecate's Tongue* (Circle of the Crone, • to ••••)

**Effect:** Like the Mother's Army itself, Hecate's Tongue draws on a mishmash of traditions, weaving their incongruent parts into a single whole. Acolytes who use the style jump from one tactic to the next, always keeping their opponents mentally off balance. This keeps their opponents from realizing exactly where the argument is leading. The climax of Hecate's Tongue is almost always a bombshell reveal that destroys their adversary's argument up until that point. The surprise is met by stammering excuses and insincere-sounding justifications. Hecate's Tongue doesn't rely completely on audience reactions like Sound and

Fury, but it does destroy the credibility of its opponent in the eyes of those watching the exchange.

Complete mastery over the subject is the best defense against Hecate's Tongue. Experts can always fall back on their knowledge as support for their arguments when the rules of the debate seemingly change at random around them. Those intimately familiar with the subject already know anything that could be used for an attempt at shock. They also know all the reasons it's irrelevant. True experts are unfazed and take control of the situation when their devoted subject is involved. It's an armor Acolytes find impossible to pierce.

## APPLY PRESSURE (MANIPULATION + SOCALIZE)

The best defense is a strong offense. Hecate's Tongue takes this to heart. The practitioner hammers her opponent over a single point, grilling him on it over and over from different angles. She pauses only briefly between points, never giving him an opportunity to truly respond. The Acolyte gains two advantages from this Maneuver — she pisses off her opponent, making it more likely he'll make a mistake, and she can plan her next move while he's backed into a corner. If successful, the target may only make defensive Maneuvers on his next action.

## CHEAP SHOT (MANIPULATION + INTIMIDATION OR SOCALIZE)

Sometimes an opponent has a blind spot, leaving him open to an attack that, while not a game changer in the argument, is personally devastating. Hecate's Tongue practitioners train themselves to look for these openings and prey upon them ruthlessly. Other Kindred may call such acts dishonorable, but the Mother's Army knows all is fair in war. It plays to their overall strategy of keeping their opponent off balance and on the defensive in preparation for the final attack. Success inflicts a -2 penalty on the opponent's Guile for two turns.

## DRAMATIC REVELATION (PRESENCE + SOCALIZE)

This is the moment the Acolyte was building toward — her carefully crafted plan finally comes to fruition. At just the right the time, when neither her opponent nor their audience expects it, she pulls off her coup de grâce. With her dramatic revelation, her adversary is left stunned, unable to muster a meaningful response. With her opponent's argument clearly dealt a mortal blow, the crowd turns on him. Her victory is complete. If this Maneuver defeats her opponent, she may inflict the Distracted Condition on him instead of gaining The Edge Condition for herself.

## KEEP 'EM GUESSING (MANIPULATION OR PRESENCE + SUBTERFUGE)

Hecate's Tongue teaches its practitioners to obscure their own motives, never betraying a hint of their true plan until the end. The Acolyte hammers her opponent about everything related to the matter at hand except for where she's really going with it. Her opponent becomes overwhelmed, desperately trying to guess where the next line of attack will come from. If she chooses her points correctly, she ensures her adversary draws all the wrong conclusions. Instead of damaging the opponent's Dominance, add the character's Subterfuge to her Guile until the end of the exchange.

**Drawback:** This blatant obfuscation of intent and motive often riles up audiences. The use of this Maneuver grants the user's opponent the Crowd Darling Condition.

## SWITCH IT UP (MANIPULATION + INTIMIDATION OR SOCIALIZE)

The key to Hecate's Tongue is to never allow the opponent to become comfortable or feel as though she is on solid footing during the exchange. A favorite tactic to accomplish this is to let the opponent briefly assume a false sense of complacency at the beginning of the argument. The Acolyte reliably uses one approach just long enough for her opponent to think he knows how the rest of the exchange will play out, and then she abruptly switches to a completely different angle of attack. Her opponent is forced to abandon all his carefully crafted plans. Success ensures the player acts first next turn regardless of her opponent's Timing roll.

### *Verbum Imperii* (*Invictus*, • to ••••)

**Effect:** The First Estate has a strong oratory tradition hailing back to the debate halls of Rome. Rhetoricians of the Conspiracy study the ancient masters such as Aristotle, Cicero, and Demosthenes. The most important of the great orators, however, is Quintilian. Students of Verbum Imperii are expected to read all 12 volumes of his Institutes of Oratory. "We should be impossible to be misunderstood" and "liars should have a long memory" are the twin cornerstones of Verbum Imperii. The Establishment speaks clearly and precisely. The logic of their arguments is clear, as are the consequences of ignoring any of their threats. Likewise, they maintain a meticulous internal consistency to the lies that keep them in power.

Verbum Imperii's carefully crafted arguments and perfectly thought-out logic falls apart when it collides with Kindred who

just don't give a fuck. The Ownership has a lofty estimate of its own importance. Being ignored is unfathomable to them, so they redouble their efforts. They can argue and threaten all they want, but it has no effect if their opponent refuses to engage. Their exquisite lies mean nothing if their adversary doesn't believe a word out of their mouths anyway.

## ACKNOWLEDGE THE MASTER (MANIPULATION + SOCIALIZE)

The strong lead, and the weak follow. That is the natural order of the world. Every exchange is a fight for dominance. Through her argument, she shows who is worthy to command and who is only fit to obey. Her clear superiority is overwhelming, leaving her opponent with no choice but to submit to her will. If he's lucky, she'll only take what she originally wanted, but the spoils are hers to claim as she pleases. If this maneuver defeats the opponent, inflict the Humbled Condition on him instead of gaining The Edge Condition for herself.

## DEMAND RESPECT (PRESENCE OR COMPOSURE + SOCIALIZE)

The Invictus is built upon hierarchy, and Verbum Imperii reinforces it. Higher station means higher authority in all areas, including the matter at hand. He states his impressive list of accomplishments and the status he earned through them. As befits one of his station, his voice is powerful and his demeanor unshakable. His opponent has no choice but to suitably humble herself. Authority demands respect, and the First Estate will have it. If successful, he adds half his Status as temporary Dominance for the rest of the exchange, instead of damaging his opponent's Dominance.

## FORM OVER FUNCTION (COMPOSURE + SUBTERFUGE)

Occasionally the opposing argument is just too good, leaving the Kindred with no effective retort. A student of Verbum Imperii never lets himself appear phased, though. In those moments, he gathers himself — adjusts his suit, straightens his posture, and gives the most eloquent speech possible. It doesn't matter that he's effectively saying nothing. What matters is that he floors the crowd and stuns his opponent enough that they don't notice him changing the subject.

This Maneuver may be used reflexively as a defense. If successful, any Dominance damage the character takes this turn is negated, but the character's Guile is reduced by -2. This Maneuver may not be used if the character's Guile is already at 0.

## IMPECCABLE LOGIC (COMPOSURE + PERSUASION OR SOCALIZE)

Verbum Imperii teaches its practitioners to think like a chess master. It's not enough to have a good argument. He must be able to predict how the exchange will play out from the opening remarks. From the very beginning, choice is merely an illusion for the opponent. Her responses are inevitable given the arguments he chooses. His logic must be flawless, mercilessly funneling her to an inescapable defeat. Success grants the character the Rising Star Condition instead of damaging his opponent's Dominance.

## VEILED THREAT (MANIPULATION + INTIMIDATION)

Verbum Imperii has threats and intimidation down to an art. Power is maintained through force, so those in power must be comfortable wielding it. Of course, outright use of force is considered uncouth in polite society. Kindred of the Establishment learn subtlety in their application of violence. They never state exactly what may happen to their opponents or those they care about. They just let their adversaries know they're vulnerable. It would be a shame if anything happened to them. This Maneuver may only be used once per exchange. If successful, the opponent suffers a -2 penalty to her Guile for the rest of the exchange.

### *Verbum Dei* (*Lancea et Sanctum*, • to ••••)

**Effect:** Unlike the other covenants, the Church Eternal does not coerce or intimidate their opponents into action. Verbum Dei, the Word of God, is the infallible truth. Immaculate truth speaks for itself, even if that truth must be manufactured occasionally. Pious fraud is virtuous after all. Like the Second Estate that perfected the tradition, a practitioner of Verbum Dei does not attempt to exert direct control over his opponents. Instead, the Sanctified plants doubt in his opponent or offers polite suggestions, letting the Kindred feel she reaches the correct conclusion on her own. Failing that, guilt provides effective leverage. All Damned have regrets. Exploiting those feelings is simply a way to get wayward Kindred on the correct path.

Verbum Dei is less effective when trying to convince the introspective and the resolute. They are either already aware of their own shortcomings or are too determined to let such a trivial inconvenience derail their plans. Skeptics likewise pose a threat to the Sanctified. They dissect every argument and every shred of evidence. If it is pure emotional manipulation, they see right through the attempt. While the Second Estate sees

the morality of sometimes creating supporting evidence out of whole cloth, it's a tactic they must use carefully. Should the lie be exposed, they may lose all credibility with their opponent and audience.

## FOR YOUR OWN GOOD (MANIPULATION + PERSUASION OR SUBTERFUGE)

Verbum Dei gives her the means to express how she doesn't benefit at all from what she's proposing. It's her opponent who actually stands to gain. It may be painful in the short term, but given time, everything really is better this way. Her opponent will thank her later. Of course, it doesn't matter if it's true or not. What's important is that her opponent believes her. Instead of damaging the opponent's Dominance, add the character's Empathy to her Guile until the end of her next turn.

## GLAD YOU THOUGHT OF IT (MANIPULATION + PERSUASION)

Verbum Dei is an insidious style. By the time the Sanctified is finished with her opponent, he is doing her bidding and thanking her for the opportunity. Her argument is so persuasive he is completely taken in by it. He thinks the way she wants him to think. Her goals become his. The conclusion she wanted him to draw becomes obvious for him. He even believes he's the one who thought of it.

If this Maneuver defeats the opponent, implant a suggestion on the losing character instead of gaining The Edge Condition. The defeated character gains the Dominated Condition and doesn't know the suggestion came from the Sanctified.

## GUILT TRIP (MANIPULATION + INTIMIDATION OR SOCALIZE)

All Kindred have skeletons in their closets. The Damned don't last long without doing something they regret. Verbum Dei exploits this to the Second Estate's favor. As long as the Sanctified knows a little of her opponent's past, she can find the sins that gnaw away at him. She wields his guilt like a weapon, breaking down all of his defenses until he wants to tell her everything. Confession is good for the soul after all, even Damned ones. This Maneuver may only be used once per exchange. Success deals 2 additional damage to the opponent's Dominance.

## INSPIRING SPEECH (PRESENCE + EXPRESSION OR SOCIALE)

Members of the Church Eternal are well versed in sermons. They know the words that move the dead hearts of the Kindred. Verbum Dei takes full advantage of this fact. The Sanctified gives an impassioned speech imploring his opponent to give in to his argument. His cause is framed as that of a higher calling, and his opponent the only one able to answer it. Who can resist being a part of something so much greater than themselves? Success increases the Audience's Intensity rating by 1.

## LEADING QUESTIONS (PRESENCE OR MANIPULATION + SOCIALIZE)

The Second Estate often takes on a teaching role in Kindred society. Verbum Dei leverages the Sanctified's ability as a teacher. She asks questions, getting her opponent to see the truth of the matter for himself. Her questions are carefully worded so that the only possible conclusion is the one she has preordained. Kindred are always more compliant when given at least the illusion of free will, and her opponents are putty in her hands. Instead of successes inflicting damage on the opponent's Dominance, they reduce her Timing by successes as the character confuses them.

### Dragon's Fire (Ordo Dracul, • to ••••)

**Effect:** The Defiant hone every aspect of their being into becoming more refined monsters. Their methods of persuasion are no exception. The Order practices a style called Dragon's Fire. It channels the practitioner's Beast into her words to cow, intimidate, and unnerve her opponents. Arguing with a Dragon is less of a debate and more of a hunt — with her opponent as prey. Learning Dragon's Fire requires years of dedication and practice. Those who commit themselves to learning the style constantly experiment with it, evolving the Maneuvers into something new.

The counter to the Beast is, of course, the Man. Only the Man can subdue the Beast and keep it corralled. Opponents with a particularly strong will who refuse to be intimidated can stop Dragon's Fire from consuming them. With the style's focus on offense, a practitioner is left with few options if she finds herself on the defensive. The hunter might find herself becoming the hunted. Still, the Beast refuses to stay subdued for long. If the Dragon finds her efforts completely shut down, she runs the risk of frenzy as her Beast seeks to reassert control.

## BROWBEAT (PRESENCE OR MANIPULATION + INTIMIDATION)

Dragon's Fire isn't always subtle, but the Defiant don't have to be. All they care about are results. Woe to anyone who stands between the Dragon and what he desires. He explodes at his opponent, unleashing his full fury. The power disparity between the two becomes clear. He lays out exactly what will happen and how painful it will be if he doesn't get his way. Few Kindred are able to stay resolute in the path of such an onslaught. Instead of damaging the target's Dominance, she inflicts a -3 penalty to her opponent's Ego for two turns.

## CHANNEL THE BEAST (COMPOSURE + INTIMIDATION OR SOCIALIZE)

Members of the Order are more comfortable with their Beasts than other Kindred. Dragon's Fire teaches them how to let it get closer to the surface than any other vampire dares. The Dragon gives the leash attached to her Beast a little slack. Her opponent gets a glimpse of it in her arguments. She becomes a monster on the edge tearing apart her adversary. While her Beast guides her in the conflict, she still remains its master. This Maneuver may only be used once per exchange. If the player is successful, she may add +2 to her Ego for the rest of the exchange.

## CONSUMED BY HORROR (MANIPULATION + INTIMIDATION)

Dragon's Fire burns, destroying all who are foolish enough to stand in its path. The Defiant's argument is so forceful, so all-encompassing her opponent becomes consumed by horror. He sees the Dragon as the embodiment of everything he fears. Instinct takes over, driving him to flee at all costs. She never has to worry about a challenge from him again. If Consumed by Horror defeats her opponent, the character may inflict the Frightened Condition on the loser instead of receiving The Edge Condition herself.

## GIVE CHASE (PRESENCE OR MANIPULATION + SOCIALIZE)

The Defiant are the ultimate hunters, whether stalking prey through the city streets or the halls of Elysium. When he has his target in sight, nothing can keep him from it. If he has a point to make, he hammers it home. He won't let it go no matter how much his opponents try to evade or change the subject. He relentlessly wears down his adversaries' defenses, exposing the opposing arguments for how hollow they truly are. Until the end of the next turn, Maneuvers that deal damage to the opponent's Dominance deal an extra damage.

## INEXPLICABLE DREAD (MANIPULATION OR COMPOSURE + INTIMIDATION)

Dragon's Fire teaches the practitioner how to wield fear as a weapon. Through practice and introspection about the nature of fear, she masters the creation of an inaudible growl. The growl is actually in the ultrasound range. While her opponent can't consciously hear the sound, it gets under his skin. While he uses his best tactics, the Dragon just stares at him, unresponsive. Animals in the area try to flee, and he finds himself inexplicably wanting to run as fast and as far as he can. Instead of damaging the target's Dominance, the character lowers her opponent's Timing by her Blood Potency for two turns.

# Devotions

As with Merits, the following Devotions supplement play in any of the alternate settings or example chronicles. Several new Devotions utilize the alternate social encounters system.

## Crown Games

### BLOOD SCENTING (AUSPEX • • )

Just the presence of divine blood in a human's veins is enough to attract the attention of vampires. Kindred who learn to distinguish its particular scent can pick out royal scions from a group of humans, no matter how they may be disguised. This also picks out lost children and bastards, and readily identifies those who may be lying about their heritage.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Composure + Auspex

**Action:** Reflexive

The vampire scents the air near a mortal (or one of the Kindred) she wishes to identify and makes the listed roll.

## Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The vampire leaps to whatever conclusion would be most socially inconvenient.

**Failure:** Scenting the target's blood identifies them as kindred and common or noble, but provides no additional information, leaving the user of this Devotion to take her target at his word.

**Success:** She instantly identifies if her target's blood is divine.

**Exceptional Success:** In addition to the benefits of the success, she also pinpoints from exactly which bloodline he has descended.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

## The End of the World

### AERIAL COCOON (PROTEAN • )

Where there is no dirt or soil, a vampire finds other ways to bury herself to rest unharmed. In the mortal residences suspended above the earth, she wedges herself between the walls as concrete and metal liquefy to surround her, hardening into a protective cocoon moments later.

**Cost:** None

**Requirement:** The vampire's hiding spot must be the same size as her.

**Dice Pool:** None

**Action:** Instant

An alternate Unmarked Grave (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 139), for vampires adapted to living in the high rises of Singapore. This Devotion does not cost additional Vitae for the character to submerge herself into concrete or steel.

This Devotion costs 1 Experience to learn.

## BETWEEN THE WALLS (PROTEAN • • • , RESILIENCE • )

Twisting her limbs into unnatural positions with bone-popping sounds, the vampire unfolds her body and slips it into spaces a person of human size should not be able to fit. She reassembles in an instant to ambush her prey. In places where space is at a premium, this Devotion is indispensable.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** None

**Action:** Reflexive

This Devotion allows a vampire to ooze into spaces as small as Size 2 and move through these cramped quarters at her normal Speed. When hunting, add her Protean dots in bonus dice to any ambushes made from tiny, hidden spaces. Otherwise this allows her to use Aerial Cocoon (p. 133) in any space into which she can fit.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

## Bleeding Edge

### CYBERNETIC MIMIC (PROTEAN • • , VIGOR • • )

The jealous Beast sees a threat in the technological creations of humankind. Witnessing their mechanical marvels, it reshapes the vampire's body to mimic human-made abilities. Flesh and bone become grotesque mockeries of cybernetic augmentations.

**Cost:** 1, 2, or 3 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** None

**Action:** Reflexive

The character must spend a scene observing a cybernetically augmented individual. Afterwards, she uses this Devotion to shape her own body into a copy of its abilities. For 1 Vitae, she can copy any individual's *common* cybernetics; for 2 Vitae, this extends to any *quality* cybernetics, and for 3 she can mimic any *superb* cybernetics. See Cybernetic Augmentation (p. 137).

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

## MEMETIC MENACE (MAJESTY • • , NIGHTMARE • • )

Before the ever-watchful eye of constant surveillance, the Beast poses. A vampire with this Devotion who has been caught

on film uses the power of her blood to alter the image to her desires, terrifying or entralling onlookers.

**Cost:** 2 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Expression + Nightmare or Majesty vs. Resolve + Blood Potency

**Action:** Contested; resistance is Reflexive

## Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** Onlookers see the vampire for what she is, a monster lurking in the night. Rather than be inspired to love or fear her, they are driven to hunt her down.

**Failure:** The camera captures her image and nothing else.

**Success:** Fear or desire wells up within the onlooker's mind. He gains either the Swooning Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 306) or the Frightened Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 304).

**Exceptional Success:** The target cannot get the vampire out of his head, exchanging whichever Condition he would have gained for Distracted instead, which lasts for a number of days equal to the vampire's Blood Potency.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

## Night Without End

### BEND SPACE (AUSPEX • • , CELERITY • • • • )

The vampire twists the darkness of space around her and springs forward, racing across an immeasurable distance in a matter of seconds. Matter bubbles and bends before her as she makes her appearance, popping suddenly into reality.

**Cost:** 2 Vitae or 2 Vitae, 1 Willpower

**Requirement:** She must arrive in a space equal to or greater than her Size.

**Dice Pool:** None

**Action:** Instant

Using this Devotion allows the Kindred to cross vast distances in an instant. For 2 Vitae, she vanishes from her current location and appears in any point she can see with unaided sight. A point on the horizon would qualify, but a remote location viewed through her data-tablet would not. For 2 Vitae and a point of Willpower, she may cross to any location she has previously visited, or has seen before. This transportation happens in scant seconds, allowing the masters of the Dominion to cross from station to station in heartbeats.

This Devotion costs 5 Experiences to learn.

### Agonized

Your character suffers extreme pain, making it impossible to think clearly or take physical actions. Suffer a -3 penalty to all rolls until the Condition is resolved.

Possible Sources: Certain Devotions or Fighting Styles, especially grievous wounds.

Resolution: An instant action and Resolve + Composure roll. The penalty is negated for a number of turns equal to the successes on this roll. Otherwise the penalty persists until the scene is over or until your character is incapacitated.

Beat: n/a

## DISTANT CONTROL (DOMINATE • • • , VIGOR • • )

Space is vast and the Kindred are few. Despite this, they lord their power over mortals and lesser vampires. Part of the secret to their iron grip is the power of elder vampires to issue commands over infinite distances without needing to be present.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Requirement: The vampire must be aware of her target's location.

Dice Pool: None

Action: Reflexive

With this Devotion, the vampire no longer needs to be physically present to issue a command or engage in social encounters. She speaks into the minds of her targets, and makes all social engagement rolls as if she were present. This ability persists until the end of a social encounter and does not cost 2 Vitae per action.

This Devotion costs 3 Experiences to learn.

## WRACK THE MIND (DOMINATE • • • , MAJESTY • • )

Vampires did not come to rule the Dominion by kindness or peace-loving ways. Their rule, though shadowy, is iron, and they are not to be questioned. Those who step out of line are harshly punished as an example to others.

Cost: 1 Vitae

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Intimidation + Dominate vs. Resolve + Blood Potency

Action: Contested; resistance is Reflexive

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The target shrugs off the vampire's control, either fleeing the scene or becoming aggressive.

**Failure:** The vampire's power fails to take hold.

**Success:** The target gains the Agonized Condition (above).

**Exceptional Success:** In addition to taking the condition, the target also suffers the vampire's Blood Potency in bashing damage.

This Devotion costs 3 Experiences to learn.

## Rain Falls

## BEST SERVED COLD (VIGOR • • • )

In a world of villains, only a fool forgives and forgets. Those who survive these unforgiving streets exact swift and brutal revenge. When the vampire is harmed by her enemies, the snarling Beast within her remembers and holds a seething grudge.

Cost: 2 Vitae

Dice Pool: Stamina + Athletics + Vigor

Action: Reflexive

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The fury of the Beast overwhelms the vampire and she enters frenzy.

**Failure:** The Beast accepts the pain and moves on.

**Success:** Fury rises within the vampire, empowering her actions against her enemy. She adds three additional dice to attack and damage against the enemy who harmed her. She may only enact her vengeful rage against one opponent at a time. This effect ends when the enemy is killed or defeated, or until the end of the chapter, whichever comes first.

**Exceptional Success:** As a success, and the vampire also regains a point of Willpower.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

## General Devotions

### BETWEEN THE WALLS (OBFUSCATE • • •, RESILIENCE • )

As a general Devotion, this allows the character to submerge herself in a patch of dirt or soil rather than hiding within walls.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** None

**Action:** Reflexive

This Devotion allows a vampire to ooze into spaces as small as Size 2 and move through these cramped quarters at her normal Speed. When hunting, add her Obfuscate dots in bonus dice to any ambushes made from tiny, hidden spaces. Otherwise this allows her to use Unmarked Grave (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 139) in any space into which she can fit.

This Devotion costs 2 Experience to learn.

### BLOOD SCENTING (AUSPEX • • •)

An alternate version of the Crown Games Devotion intended for default Vampire play. Instead of sniffing out divine heritage, the alternate Blood Scenting allows a vampire to recognize the qualities of her enemies.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Composure + Auspex

**Action:** Reflexive

The vampire scents the air near one of the Kindred and makes the listed roll.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The vampire leaps to whatever conclusion would be most socially inconvenient.

**Failure:** Scenting the target's blood identifies them as one of the Kindred, revealing their clan at Storyteller discretion, but nothing more.

**Success:** She identifies her target's clan, Blood Potency, and any Disciplines she may know.

**Exceptional Success:** In addition to the benefits of the success, she also identifies any blood bonds the target may have, and any hidden Disciplines or Devotions she may currently be utilizing.

This Devotion costs 4 Experiences to learn.

### FLUSH OUT (DOMINATE • , NIGHTMARE • • • )

Where prey hide, the vampire projects a miasma of dread and terror. Her victims then bolt from their safe places, panicked, out into the open where they are prime targets for the hunt.

**Cost:** 2 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Subterfuge + Nightmare vs Composure + Blood Potency

**Action:** Contested, resistance is Reflexive

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** Instead of a flight reflex, the prey instead is driven to fight, reaching for common banes — fashioning swift torches and wooden stakes.

**Failure:** The prey resists the influence and stays hunkered down in their hiding place.

**Success:** The target gains the Frightened Condition and flees their hiding place to a location of the vampire's choosing. If there are multiple targets the vampire wishes to terrify, roll against the highest Composure + Blood Potency of the assembled targets.

**Exceptional Success:** As a success and also the victims suffer -2 dice to all attack actions against the vampire.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

### VILE BLOOD (PROTEAN • • •, RESILIENCE • • )

With a moment's concentration, the vampire transforms the Vitae in her dead veins into a caustic, toxic substance, repelling those who'd dare feed on her, or poisoning those who would do her harm.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Stamina + Medicine + Protean

**Action:** Reflexive

If being fed on by another vampire, the Kindred using this Devotion pays the cost and instead transforms her blood into acidic poison. Her target takes a lethal level of damage for every point of Vitae he would have consumed. In combat, after she has taken any levels of damage she may use this Devotion to force festering blood from her wounds, allowing her to inflict the Poisoned Tilt (*Chronicles of Darkness*, p. 286) with any of her attacks.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

## WHIP-SHARP TONGUE

(MAJESTY •, Celerity • •)

Biding her time until the perfect moment, the vampire snaps back with a keen verbal repost, disdainful look, or swift one-liner.

**Cost:** 2 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** None

**Action:** Reflexive

During Lingua Bellum, after all characters have made their Maneuvers, but before the next turn of Timing, spend 2 Vitae to make an additional Maneuver. This Maneuver must be different from any of the others the character may have taken this turn.

This Devotion costs 2 Experiences to learn.

# Additional Systems

### *Supping on the Divine*

In Crown Games, divine right is real. Royalty do, truly, have a hint of the blood of God coursing through them. While this does not bestow any special abilities upon the mortals who possess it, the Kindred who feed upon it (or royals who become Embraced) experience its particular benefits. For the purposes of feeding, the blood of divine scions provides two points of Vitae instead of the usual one, and is always a valid feeding target, even for Kindred above six dots of Blood Potency. Daeva who feed on royal mortals lose a die on their Humanity rolls to resist becoming dependent. Vampires created from royal stock treat their Blood Potency as one higher for the purposes of maximum Vitae per turn, and what constitutes a viable target for feeding.

### *Blood is Poison*

Humanity tainted its own blood. Those who survived resisted the disease, but it's still there, lingering in the bloodstream. When a vampire tastes a survivor's blood there's an all-too-common chance that the disease will spread – this time to the Kindred. Every time she feeds she must roll Blood Potency. On the first failure, she gains the Lethargic Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 305). On the second failure, she suffers the Sick Tilt at the grave illness level (*Chronicles of Darkness*, p. 286). After the third failure, or after any dramatic failure, the vampire takes lethal damage equal to the amount of Vitae consumed.

### *The Endless Struggle*

Where humanity has fled above the ground in Coteries of the Sky, scarcity gnaws at the needs of the Kindred. Humans are limited, and space even more so. During character creation and throughout the course of a campaign, a character's dots of Feeding Ground and Herd cannot exceed the group's dots of

Haven. Whenever a character feeds, she risks the chance that her food supply will dwindle dangerously. After feeding, she rolls her Herd rating. On a failure, reduce it by one until the end of the next chapter. These reductions are cumulative. On a dramatic failure, reduce it permanently by one.

### *Cybernetic Augmentation*

Though vampires in Bleeding Edge cannot benefit from transhuman technology, their subordinate ghouls can. The same goes for elite humans and their well-paid enforcers who pose a serious threat to the Kindred. Augmentation is either common, quality, or superb. Common cybernetics grant up to three dots of appropriate Merits. Augmented arms might grant the Demolisher Merit (*Chronicles of Darkness*, p. 47) or biomechanically engineered neurons bestow Fast Reflexes (*Chronicles of Darkness*, p. 44). Quality cybernetics allow for up to five dots of appropriate Merits: special sensors implanted in the brain might grant Aura Reading and Danger Sense, for example. Superb cybernetics allow up to seven dots of appropriate Merits, including Merits that might indicate a full body change such as Giant or Ambidextrous. Rename Merits as appropriate to create the kind of cyber body a character may have. At the Storyteller's discretion, quality and superb cybernetics may also allow supernatural Merits to be taken.

Feeding on humans modified by technology is an exercise in frustration. Without the Synthetic Feast Merit (p. 135), a vampire draws no sustenance from a human with cybernetic augmentation.

### *Blood Bond and Social Encounters*

As two vampires duel before their peers, a savvy attacker knows to sink her fangs into the places where her victim is most vulnerable. Engaging in a social encounter with a target to whom a character carries a blood bond is a daunting task.

The regnant holds a considerable upper hand and, being one of the Kindred, has little qualms about using it. Use the following mechanical adjustments for using blood bond in the Lingua Bellum system:

**First Stage:** Her thrall's Guile counts as one less against all Maneuvers made by the regnant. As per the default rules, (*Vampire: The Requiem*, p. 100) the bonus dice to Social actions and Disciplines still apply.

**Second Stage:** As per the first stage, but her Guile is reduced by another -1. She also struggles against her growing infatuation, losing one die to make social Maneuvers against her regnant.

**Third Stage:** Reduce Guile by another -1, and the thrall loses two dice to social Maneuvers against her regnant. At this stage she cannot bear to harm her regnant, even with words, and reduces the total of her Timing roll by 2.

### *Leveraging the Bond*

If the dueling characters do not have a blood bond, but one of them carries a bond to another, this can also be leveraged to his advantage — provided the attacker is aware that such a vulnerability exists. Nothing is quite so fearsome as a prepared Kindred in a social situation.

For leveraging the blood bond against a social target, use the following Maneuver:

### *Pulling on the Bond*

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation or Presence + Empathy

If this Maneuver is successful, rather than damage the victim's Dominance, it instead creates an advantage to further defeat her social opponent.

**First Stage:** Whether regnant or thrall, the blood bond creates emotional vulnerability. When making the Charm or Intimidate Maneuvers against a target with a blood bond at the first stage, the attacker adds one die to the next Social roll against the target.

**Second Stage:** The pull of blood is strong and unavoidable. The bonus applies to the same rolls, but increases to two dice. She also adds +1 to Timing on any turn after leveraging the bond. She may also always choose the Leveraged (*Chronicles of Darkness*, p. 289) Condition as an outcome.

**Third Stage:** At the highest stage of bond, leveraging it can be debilitating. Increase the bonus dice to three and +2 to Timing on any turn after leveraging the bond. She additionally may choose any other emotional Condition to apply, such as Guilty, Humbled, or Shaken.





The eyes of the  
Ascendancy see everything.  
Well, everything we  
want them to see anyway.  
The more power they have,  
the less we have to  
worry about them  
trying to take ours.

— Una Adeyemi

This book includes:

- An introduction to Vampire: The Requiem that aids new players and old alike.
- A look at how to run Vampire in different settings and genres as well as several optional setting options.
- A look at how to design games around specific clans or covenants, and how to play to their unique strengths and weaknesses.
- A detailed look at creating and using coteries in a Vampire game.
- Information for creating and running chronicles based on the options presented throughout the book, as well as guidance on how to design a chronicle from start to finish.
- An all-new social conflict resolution system called, Lingua Bellum along with new mechanics to support optional settings and genres presented throughout the book.

**Vampire**  
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