

# Half-Damned



*A Sourcebook for  
Vampire: The Requiem*



Good servants frequently make good masters.  
– Jupiter Hammon

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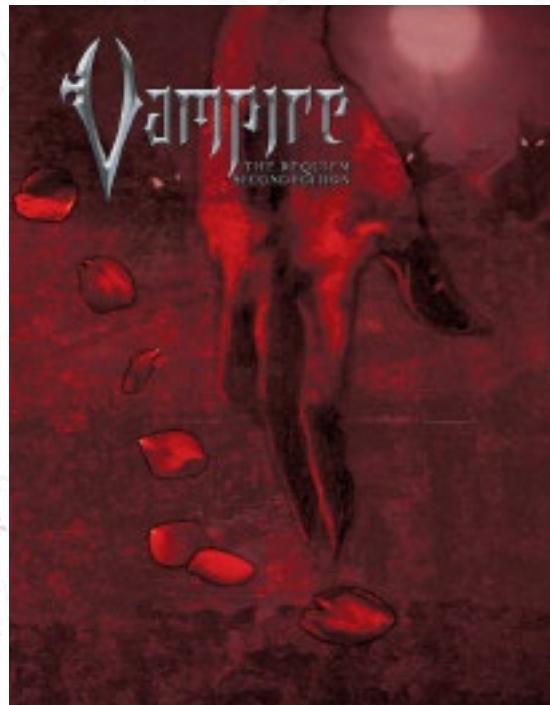
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*Requires the Use of  
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# INTRODUCTION

**Vampire: The Requiem** is a game about personal horror, and the choices one makes which lead to that horror. Sometimes the story is about the vampire, but all too often the story is about those the vampire leaves in her wake. Sometimes it's the people she takes Vitae from just to survive another night, and sometimes it's the people she bends to her will, making them her servants. Other times, it's just those who end up on the wrong end of her selfish nature. She touches people's lives — using them, making them fall in love with her, riling up their passions and then leaving them in the dust. What remains are the after-effects of her presence. The ghoul whose day-to-day

life she never considers. The woman she killed while feeding, who came back as a revenant. The young boy she gave birth to in an unholy ritual as a pinnacle of her expression of love.

These are the Half-Damned. The people created by a vampire — either by design or by accident — who now navigate the edges of the All Night Society, not human, but not fully vampire. Some of them find solace in others; some of them seek retribution for their lots in life. Their relationships with vampires are complicated, messy, and ripe for excruciatingly beautiful roleplay.

## *What is Half-Damned?*

**Half-Damned** explores how a vampire's choices affect the lives of others, and the stories told by those who sit on the fringes of Kindred society. It might be the story of a ghoul, who accepted the blood of her regnant in a lust-fueled haze the night before, and is now bound to him in duty and addiction. Or maybe the story of a revenant, one night a party boy, the next a hungry creature seeking blood at any cost. Or possibly the story of a dhampir suddenly awakened to her powers, unaware that her

long-lost mother is one of the living dead.

**Half-Damned** is devoted to those creatures who live on the edges of vampire society, not quite vampires, but not mortal any longer. Sometimes they are created by design, and sometimes by accident, but either way, they exist and want attention. These are their stories, trials, successes and failures, and the choices that they make.

## *What's Inside?*

This book contains information for use with **Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition** to allow players to take on the roles of these vampire-adjacent characters. It includes rules for playing these as characters as well as using them as antagonists in your **Vampire** chronicle.

### *Dhampir*

The first chapter in this book explores what it means to be the human child of a Kindred parent. No matter why he made her, or what he did once he couldn't take it back, she's not like other people and she never will be. She's here against all odds, an impossibility with the gift of dire prophecy and enough baggage to fill a lifetime. Maybe she can't choose her family, but she sure as hell can choose a side. Or she can walk the edge of a razor no one else sees, claiming both day and night for herself and leaving bloody footprints behind. The only thing she can't choose to be is unremarkable.

### *Themes*

Playing dhampir is about family. It's about reconciling what you are and where you came from with your own Integrity and the realities of living in the All Night Society's shadow as a human being who's neither a slave nor food. It's about the intersection of love and hate, and it's about learning how to forgive — or how to stop being so forgiving. It's about the secrets you keep for family's sake, and the power you wield over your parents with what you know. It's about the endless conflict between human and vampire, heartbreak dogging dysfunctional relationships, and looking past the face of the monster. Maybe you love what you find there. Maybe you want to send it to hell so you'll forget it's a part of you.

Being dhampir is also about rebellion, and being an outsider everywhere you go. Growing up with humans, you rebel against the petty little life they plan for you, yearning for the things you see in your nightmares and knowing you're meant for something more. Growing up with vampires, you rebel against

all the violence and intrigue, seeing the promise of freedom in tea leaves and sheep guts. You belong nowhere, so you piss on everything and claim it all as your territory. You buck expectations no matter what you do or who you try to please. Pleasing yourself sounds better every day.

Finally, a dhampir's life is all about omens. You lead a charmed life, but you pass all the misfortune that spares you onto everyone who strays into your path. It's hard to tell where your will ends and coincidence begins. Did that cell of hunters find your dad's coterie by chance, or because you happened to pay him a visit last night? You'll never know, and it haunts you. On the other hand, when everything's coming up you all the time, it's hard to complain too much.

## Revenants

Chapter Two covers what it means to be a revenant, a creature whose Embrace was unintentional and incomplete. She has a vampire sire out there somewhere, and she likely hates him for what he did to her. On top of that, she is hungry. Not just for Vitae, but also for the affection and attention that comes from belonging. She is on the outside of both worlds, no longer able to walk in the daylight, but shunned by those who walk in the night. She seeks community, power, and above all, inclusion. She will do whatever it takes to get what she wants.

## Themes

Playing a revenant is about *longing*. You long to belong, you yearn for a release from your problems, and you seek companionship. You want to be full vampire, you want to be human again, or maybe you just want the pain to stop. You are always hungry; even when you are full, you're thinking about where your next night's meal is coming from. You live in a constant state of stress, always trying to think one step ahead of yourself so that you can control your urges. You want to fit in, but you know you can't and so you dream of a better life.

Playing a revenant is also about *anger*. You are angry at your condition, and your vampire maker is responsible. You fight against your inner Beast, but it tries to control you. You contemplate taking revenge against the one who wronged you, just as you fantasize about being just like her. It's easy to get caught up in ideals of revenge and let your anger consume you, and so you fight it to find a semblance of normalcy.

Finally, being a revenant is about *community*. Being a revenant is lonely. You can't keep your human friends because you're

afraid you'll eat them in a hunger-fueled rage. You can't make vampire friends because they look down on you for being what you are. You hope to join them one day, to impress a vampire enough to grant you a full Embrace, and you do the most demeaning things in pursuit of this goal.

## Ghouls

Finally, Chapter Three explores what it means to be a servant within the All Night Society. The vampire created the ghoul with a specific purpose in mind, but forgets that he still has a life to live. He does everything he can to please her, all in the service of feeding his addiction. Maybe he's won free of a regnant and on his own, but he's still in need of a reliable source of Vitae. He makes good with whichever vampire will feed him, stealing when he has to, but more often than not performing tasks for his pay in blood.

## Themes

Ghouls live in a constant state of *service*. Be it to a vampire or her family, the ghoul's life is task-oriented. You perform on command either in service to those who maintain your Vitae source, or in service to the greater needs of your community. You juggle the tasks put before you with leading a normal life, and often fail at the latter because the former is vastly more important to you. You hold power over those who need your service, but you are powerless against them.

To play a ghoul you must understand *lust*. And not just lust in the romantic sense, but in the way an addict lusts for his fix. The ghoul is addicted to Vitae, and lusts after it. It is the reward at the end of a long day, the cool drink on a hot day, and the fire that burns inside your soul. You lust after your regnant — even if it isn't love, you feel attracted to her through the blood. You would do anything for her, and you find yourself jealous when she shows the slightest amount of attention to others.

Finally, playing a ghoul is about *survival*. You are a part of something bigger than you. Even if you have left your regnant, you still need Vitae, and you can never leave the All Night Society behind. You will do what it takes to survive, and maybe even end up on top. You seek the ultimate reward of Embrace, and you will survive until it is granted. Your family will survive, despite whatever odds it faces. You are willing to throw anyone under the bus if it ensures your own safety and place in the world.

## Inspirational Material

The inspirational material listed below is provided with the goal of helping you to discover the roleplaying potential in these characters who might otherwise be afterthoughts in a vampire's story. Of course, the best stories sometimes slink out of the most unexpected places.

### Dhampir

Plenty of fiction and media portray dhampir as those who seek to destroy vampires. Even in our list of inspiration we cannot get away from those famous dhampir who hunt their parents, or those like their parents.

**Vampire Hunter D** by Hideyuki Kikuchi – This series follows a dhampir who relentlessly hunts down vampires.

“Vampire in Brooklyn” (1995) – Rita Veder is the only known dhampir in North America, attracting Maximillian to her side.

“Blade” (1998) – Blade is a dhampir who wants to avenge the death of his human mother.

“Angel” – While Connor is the child of two vampires, he fills the dhampir status nicely.

**Night World Series** by L. J. Smith – Jezebel Redfern is raised as a vampire, but is a half-vampire.

**The Saga of the Noble Dead** by Barb and J.C. Hendee – Magiere is a dhampir created through a necromantic ritual. (Spoilers!)

**Lost Souls** by Poppy Z. Brite – The vampires in Brite's novels are not humans turned vampire, but instead a separate race of people. Nothing is a vampire raised among humans, and his journey is of finding family and searching for acceptance between two worlds.

### Revenants

In most fiction, revenants are simply intelligent zombies. But we do have some examples of vampire-specific revenants in a few places. Of course, any story about someone coming back from the dead with intelligence and purpose can work.

**The House of Night Series** by P.C. and Kristin Cast – Stevie Rae Johnson is the first of a new group of vampires who die and

are raised from the dead with insatiable hunger.

**Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter Series** by Laurell K. Hamilton – Hamilton's revenants are vampires who are taken over with complete blood lust, though unfortunate killing machines in her universe.

**The Crow** by James O'Barr – While Eric doesn't follow our vampire definition of revenant, his rebirth after a tragic death is a good inspiration for any **Vampire** game.

### Ghouls

We have so many examples of ghouls, from the most famous Renfield to more obscure media representations. We do not lack for examples of the eternal servants of the vampire.

**Dracula** by Bram Stoker – Renfield does not necessarily enjoy his lot in life, but he is addicted to Dracula and follows him loyally.

**Salem's Lot** by Steven King – Richard Straker serves Barlow and runs his businesses for him, working as the human face of the vampire's operation.

**The Strain** by Chuck Hogan and Guillermo del Toro – Eldritch Palmer performs daytime tasks for his master in hopes that he will one day learn the secret to immortality.

“Let the Right One In” (2008) – Eli's guardian is a mortal who keeps her safe. Their relationship is one of master and devoted ghoul.

“Only Lovers Left Alive” (2013) – Ian obtains musical instruments for Adam. Though he is mostly unaware of Adam's vampire status, he is enamored with his musician's lifestyle.

### Other Chronicles of Darkness Books

**Ghouls** – As the name implies, this **Vampire: The Requiem** supplement details ghouls, ghoul families, and ghouls as antagonists.

**Night Horrors: Wicked Dead** – The dhampir make their first appearance in **Vampire: The Requiem first edition** in this book as antagonists. While **Half-Damned** updates them into playable characters, some of their prophetic nature from this supplement still applies.



"I'd say, 'you don't want to fuck with me,' but we both know how that song and dance ends."

"Are you seriously pointing a gun at me, freak?"

I am pointing a gun at him. He's trespassing, after all. "Nah," I tell him.

"Go ahead, shoot me. What exactly are you trying to prove?"

"Nothing much. I just really like to piss you off."

Before I decide whether or not to fire, he's right up on me, staring into my eyes with the barrel of the pistol pressed up against his cold, dead heart. "Do it, you entitled little shit. You think Karima's impressed with your juvenile games?" I say nothing. He says nothing, until he grabs my wrist and leans toward me. The gun digs into his chest. "Do it."

My world shrinks into a bubble the size of his gaze and I want to pull the trigger. Instead, I count to three inside my head, then to five, then to ten. The bubble bursts, and the only thing I feel compelled to do then is take some fucking aspirin. "She's not your actual mother," I snap, trying to pull my hand back, but he holds my wrist like he's going to yank it clean off. "Quit acting like she is. And get your clammy hands off me."

His nose wrinkles with contempt. Or at the rotten stench of his own arrogance, either one.

Frankly, I think he only has three facial expressions total. "It doesn't matter anyway," he says, letting go. "In a few short years you'll die off like the rest of your insignificant kind and she'll forget you ever existed."

"Y'know, I would have thought a hundred years would be enough time for you to grow up."

He lunges at me, and now I pull the trigger. "You - ow, you actually fucking shot me!" I laugh in his face, watching him sulk over his ruined shirt and laboriously pull the bullet out with sticky fingers. "Watch it, mongrel," he growls at me, gesturing with the bullet. "I may not be allowed to kill you, but I get these cravings, see. For her. And I bet you taste just like her."

"You're so full of shit." I toss the gun onto the couch and plop myself down beside it. "You'll never lay a fang on me and you know it. I'm her daughter. You're just her bitch."

At this point, I think twice about this half-assed plan, because now he's standing over me, he's got me pinned against the couch and he's yanking my hair back to expose my throat. Can't reach the gun. "Let's test that theory," he hisses into my ear, and then I blurt out an ugly cry because he's sinking his teeth in and it fucking hurts.

It feels like whole days pass, struggling pointlessly there, getting dizzy. By the time he pulls out of my neck I'm ready to pass out, but I'm conscious enough to feel his tongue run across my skin and I shove at him. "Gross, get off me."

He backs off pronto and it sure isn't my pitiful strength that does it. "Sorry, I was just closing the -"

There it is. The freeze frame. Facial expression number two. I grin at him, giddy and lightheaded. "Told you you didn't want to fuck with me."

"What the... what the hell did you do to me?"

"Same thing you do to everybody else, you pompous asshole, only you brought it on yourself." And there's number three: blind rage. Before he opens his mouth again I stagger to my feet, leaning on the arm of the couch to keep from falling. "Shut up and get out of my house. If you behave, I won't tell Karima her own spawn tried to eat me."

Seeing the big bad vampire slink out with his tail between his legs is gratifying, but in the howl of the wind I hear a discordant note. I barely need the ominous warning to know it won't be long before I'll need another half-assed plan.

# CHAPTER ONE

# DHAMPIR

*Never forget what you are, for surely the world will not. Make it your strength. Then it can never be your weakness. Armor yourself in it, and it will never be used to hurt you.*

— George R. R. Martin, *A Game of Thrones*

If vampires are a study in stark black and white, a dhampir is the gray in the middle. Born like a human, made by a monster. A warm body suckling at a dead teat. Saying she's "half-vampire" doesn't cut it. A dhampir doesn't split the difference, living in the cracks of dusk and dawn, the product of watering down an abomination until it becomes bearable. She crushes

expectations beneath her heel and demands her own place at the table. She tells you where you can shove all your reasons and excuses. She's not your failing Humanity's redeemer, though she may save you. She's not your weapon against the darkness, though she may fight. She's whatever she says she is, and fuck you for thinking you know better.

## *Family Planning for the Hungry Dead*

Kindred deliberately conceive and bear dhampir for a purpose. Even before his birth, a dhampir child's life is formed by stifling expectations and terrible intent, a pawn in the hands of a monster that can only deceive himself that he cares about anyone but himself. Death and damnation are part of the child, and the fabric of his life is forever shaped by the domineering weight of the creature in the tapestry's center. But exactly how this inescapable pattern plays out depends on the circumstances of his conception.

Two things are needed to create a dhampir: means and motivation. Both shape the infant's future.

### *The Motivation*

Reasons for creating a dhampir are as numerous as the dhampir themselves. Some are terrible, some simply misguided, but one thing they all have in common: They are selfish. But while there are many reasons, a few common themes run through many of them. Among these are jealousy, a desire for redemption, and the simple wish for a useful servant.

Of these, redemption is perhaps the most misguided. When one of the Kindred desperately wants to feel alive again, to reclaim some of his lost soul, he might decide that becoming a father could rekindle his lost humanity, even if only a little. And it sometimes works... a little. These are the most tragic cases, a blood-thirsty monster desperately pretending at family against a child who knows that daddy is wrong, *should not be, should not be*, but still can't help but love him.

Another common reason is jealousy. To love a vampire is never healthy or pleasant, bringing a lot of pain, danger, and

the feeling of being trapped. If the relationship does not draw upon the Vinculum, then the mortal lover occasionally wants a life without his beloved domineering corpse. And Kindred are not dumb — he will notice. If a mortal spouse wants to leave, then what better way to keep the two together than to impose a blood bond? Some try that, but they find that the relationship is gone, replaced with artificial adoration and emptiness. The very mortal way remains, though — having a child together, then, can bind a stray sweetheart in place through chains that don't dull his heart.

Another common reason to create a dhampir is as a pawn, whether to achieve a specific goal or simply to have some muscle at one's beck and call. While the Embrace is easier and more convenient, it is also the subject of much politicking among the Kindred. Where the Embrace is sometimes forbidden, creating a dhampir rarely is, and ghouls have their own family backgrounds — to raise a servant from childhood can lead to some uncomfortable questions and unwelcome curiosity when the child belongs to someone else. However, a mother raising her own daughter is both accepted and expected, rarely leading to uncomfortable attention from mortal authorities the way kidnapping does. And if she is grooming her child to be the perfect slave instead of a citizen, well, being an abusive parent hardly breaches the masquerade.

And some Kindred simply want experimental subjects or bargaining chips. The genesis labs of the Ordo Dracul are always thirsty for fresh blood, to shape and torture and draw new discoveries from. If no dhampir are available for experimentation, the devoted Dragon scientist can always create one.

## Mommy and the Beast: The Attachment Roll

There is always a chance that having a child will affect a vampire's Humanity, whether they want it to or not. If the vampire wants to care about the child, he immediately gains the kid as a Touchstone. But any Kindred who wants a henchman to use and abuse still runs the risk of finding something deeper in the resonant chords of blood and Vitae, and might end up with an attachment as unhealthy as any redemption-seeking wannabe-mortal.

**Action:** Reflexive

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Empathy

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** In the closest Kindred relative to post-partum depression, you see the squirming little creature and feel something despite yourself. The useless, squalling, little lump of flesh and blood becomes a mirror of lost humanity, and the Beast recoils. The child inconveniently becomes a Touchstone. This does not prevent future abuse, but does make repeated breaking points highly likely.

**Failure:** Parental feelings squirm, but are suppressed. You face a Breaking Point, and future abuse will still incur the normal consequences.

**Success:** Whether there was anything there or not doesn't matter. You may do whatever you please with the child, with no additional effects beyond the normal repercussions of cruelty to mortals.

**Exceptional Success:** Your heart is dead and cold. You face an immediate Breaking Point, but after that, it is over. You can do whatever you wish to the child, and your Humanity will suffer no further.

## *The Means*

Dhampir are older than the arts and sciences of modern blood sorcery. In some way, they are part of the Kindred's curse, and they exist in the Blood as potential. Ways to create dhampir have existed as far back as any vampire can reliably remember, and some of the oldest are still practiced to this night.

In the oldest and still most common way of creating a dhampir, a mortal and a vampire have sex and a child is conceived. It's rare, but it can happen, especially when the vampire approaches intercourse with the intention of having a child.

Sometimes, though, the child comes first, and then the Blood. When a pregnant woman is Embraced, her child might survive, tainted by the dead blood of his mother, if it happens late enough. Traditionally, a woman must be Embraced after the ninth day of the ninth month of her pregnancy to give birth to a dhampir, though this is just a piece of superstition. However, survival rates of the child do climb rapidly the more developed it is, so the further overdue the birth is, the more likely the child will be a dhampir and not just dead.

Not to be outdone, the father's Embrace can also create a dhampir. If a man has fathered an unborn child, and he becomes a vampire, there is a slim chance the child will become a dhampir, and that chance is higher the closer to the conception his Embrace happens. Even with perfect timing on the sire's part, though, the chance remains minute indeed. But it can be increased by feeding the mother her newly vampiric baby father's Vitae, and even more dramatically

by injecting the blood directly into the fetus. As with the mother's Embrace, though, chances of survival for the child are greater the more advanced the pregnancy is.

In the mortal imagination, the mysterious hooded figure who enters a young woman's bedchamber at night is perhaps the archetypical image of a dhampir's conception. In Serbian myths, vampires have often been lustful beings, ravishing young ladies all across the countryside and leaving behind widely-scattered progeny. Called lampijerovi, vampiri, svetocher, or many other things, these children would then often go from town to town hunting their father's kin under names like Vampiresa, Dhampir, or Dhampiraj. This myth is misleading, as a vampire's seduction (or horrific lack thereof), no matter how erotically charged, remains impotent in regard to procreation. If one of the Kindred wishes to create a dhampir in this way, he must employ other means in addition to the simple act itself.

The traditional techniques were unreliable at best, not good enough by far for ambitious Kindred with a plan in mind, and so new ways of creating a dhampir infant were invented. The weightiest of these is sorcery. While the sorcerous means are comparatively new, they have still existed in various forms for centuries at least, perhaps even millennia. And it is sorcery that has seen the most use in those conceptions that follow the folkloric archetype – a ritual must be performed over the hopefully-willing young man or woman in the vampire's clutches, and only then can the dhampir be conceived. Crúac performs the role most easily, where the ritual can be brought into the bedchamber, while the Theban Sorcery equivalent requires the act of seduction be brought into the ritual sanctuary.

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## Quicken the Withered Womb (Crúac Ritual ••••)

**Target Number of Successes:** 8

The ritualist calls upon the dualistic power of life and death, infusing his loins with unholy fertility. For the rest of the night, any sex acts the ritualist takes part in which could lead to the conception of a child, will. For both female and male Acolytes, this can be used to conceive multiple children in the same night, whether in one womb or several.

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## Baptism of Damnation (Theban Sorcery Ritual •••)

**Target Number of Successes:** 6

**Contested by:** Resolve + Blood Potency

**Sacrament:** A baptismal font made from or coated in silver, filled with consecrated water and standing in place of the normal baptismal font. The font itself may be reused.

The ritualist sanctifies the union between a vampire and a living mortal, and calls upon Saint Gerard Majella to intercede before the Lord to ensure a proper conception. If the ritual is successful and both parties can have children and consent, a dhampir child is conceived. The child will be born hale and healthy, with no defects or illnesses and no medical conditions marring the pregnancy. This cannot protect against supernatural influence.

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## Dhampir Among Us

Among covenants, the dhampir's status flows first and foremost from the Kindred parent's membership, and secondarily from the dhampir's actions. If a dhampir is raised by his vampire parent, then he is considered to be associated with her mother's covenant unless there is specific reason to decide otherwise; and some covenants, such as the Invictus, even have authority over the child when the mother has expressed no particular decision. If the dhampir is independent, then they will need a Kindred sponsor who acts as an adoptive mother or father to be permitted into most covenants — or at least, having such a sponsor lets the dhampir rise faster and further at the cost of freedom.

That said, it is possible for a dhampir to gain some degree of status for himself among the covenants, save the Invictus. Even the Ordo Dracul, more interested in a dhampir's experimental potential, occasionally permits a prodigy to rise into the ranks of Dragons proper. In the Invictus, though, power from behind the throne is the best a dhampir can hope for.

## Carthians

A comrade in need is a comrade indeed. The Carthian Movement is nothing if not pragmatic, unless it is idealistic. In either case, dhampir are welcome. To call them equals among the Firebrands is not quite true, but if they are a breed apart, then they are at least a respected one. They are not quite Kindred, not quite as good as, not quite full Firebrands, but they are also not too far behind. It all boils down to usefulness, really — a single dhampir brings quite a lot of variety to a Carthian chapter, new abilities and strengths that the Revolution can use.

More than one devoted Carthian has deliberately become a mother so that she could donate her daughter to the cause. It is, though, more common to induct a child into the Movement as an afterthought — I have a child, that child is useful, therefore I might as well make her part of the covenant. It also happens that a Carthian mother intentionally keeps her daughter out of the Movement for her own reasons; and while this is frowned upon, there is only so much the Revolution can do without alienating its members.

Within the Movement itself, there is disagreement about the proper status of dhampir. While the majority of Firebrands welcome dhampir in, the exact degree of that welcome varies from group to group. The most fanatical Kindred members preach the superiority of the dhampir — they are downtrodden compared to other members of the Movement, so they must be treated with great respect and care by vampire Firebrands. They are not subject to the uglier sides, the weaknesses and excesses, of vampirism, and so some see dhampir as a superior, more desirable state to be envied. Of course, to dhampir, this position looks naïve, a product of the Kindred in question failing to understand just how difficult a dhampir's life is.

These vampires consider dhampir more level-headed and clear-sighted without the Beast to confuse and distract them, more able to make objective judgments and not let their treatment of mortals be tainted by the ever-present hunger. Therefore, this faction of the Revolution believes that dhampir make natural ideologues and oarsmen for the greater membership, the perfect leaders for creatures otherwise mired in their own baser natures.

Conversely, the reputation of the dhampir as vampire hunters

leads some Carthians to consider them a threat. Despite most dhampir never pursuing the hunter's path, there are some Kindred who cannot look past this reputation. The Kindred, they argue, can never taste true freedom with the threat of murder over their heads. Dhampir are a threat that not only should, but must be eliminated before the Revolution can create the inevitable future utopia. Not only do these Firebrands hunt down and kill dhampir, often in secret, but they also occasionally capture Kindred who have dhampir children and put them on trial for their crime against the All Night Society. Most of these trials are kangaroo courts and show trials at best, but there are a few stalwartly honest members of this secretive group who make sure that any trials they hold are as fair and unbiased as possible. The odds for the Kindred parent are still not good, however.

Most Carthians fall somewhere in between the two ideological extremes, though, seeing dhampir as useful and threatening both. To look at a dhampir is uncomfortable to them, but she brings new capabilities to the Movement that cannot be ignored.

### *Circle of the Crone*

A dhampir given to an Acolyte is the Mother's gift to her loyal follower. He is a blessing, rare and valuable, for his father to do with as he pleases. The dhampir must recognize this, and submit to his father's will and wishes, for the father can call in his covenant to punish a wayward child. That said, if the

father wants the dhampir to be treated as a full Acolyte, then the Mother's Army do just that.

This balancing act is the core of an Acolyte dhampir's life: So long as he pleases his father, he can do whatever he wishes. He can rise to high positions in the Mother's Army, pursue mortal concerns, or even join a different covenant altogether. But the moment his father grows displeased, or jealous of his son's accomplishment, that is it — the covenant grants him permission to do what he pleases to his son, with no restriction save only one: He may not kill the blessing the Mother bestowed upon him.

The rites and rituals of fertility are sacrosanct among the Acolytes, sacred secrets to keep from the members of all other clans. While gaining the privilege of learning these rites is not easy, a few select Acolytes earn induction into the sacred mysteries behind them. These are called midwives, and are often selected from the ranks of medical professionals and specialists in various child-related fields, such as child psychologists and elementary school teachers. This small group knows how to cast the augurs to find out when to carry out an auspicious conception, and they teach that the Kindred ability to have children is incontrovertible proof that the vampiric state is not a curse at all, but a blessing.

Some among the midwives have their own children, and many of these dhampir are trained to become sacred priests and priestesses within the Circle of the Crone, leading their own covens with their mothers' blessings. In this way, motherhood can extend an elder Acolyte's personal power, by placing covens



under her control via her child. It is also from the ranks of these dhampir that the sacred tongueless eunuch servants favored by some especially paranoid elders of the Mother's Army are recruited. Their training includes a great deal of psychological torment aimed to break them, and they are used as a threat towards unruly Acolyte dhampir – be nice or become a eunuch.

As the rites of fertility themselves are sacred, they can be an end unto themselves. Sometimes, Acolytes have dhampir children they don't even want just to celebrate their sacred rituals, and these children can be foisted off onto relatives or sent into foster care to grow up entirely without knowing the truth about their heritage. Such dhampir make prize catches for the Carthian Movement or Ordo Dracul, and often fall for the lure of investigating the occult when their abilities make themselves known. Of course, their Acolyte parents still have supreme power over these children, even if the child is disowned, so such a dhampir might find himself with a powerful Kindred visitor who demands that he obey her every whim. Such are the pitfalls of succeeding as a dhampir orphan.

Conversely, some Acolyte covens welcome stray dhampir into their ranks, seeing their very existence as auspicious signs of the Crone's favor. These so-called motherless dhampir are exempted from the strict parental control favored by the covenant, as their parentage is unknown. Only the Kindred parent has power over a dhampir, and so without one known, these dhampir are essentially free. Some orphaned dhampir end up finding themselves in the same fortunate position, though many also find themselves simply becoming the sacred wards and puppets of the Mother's Army itself. Either way, a mistreated dhampir servant still has ample reason to commit matricide.

## *Invictus*

A dhampir may belong to the Invictus, but she is never a member. The First Estate owns the dhampir, and may use its property however it wishes. The Conspiracy believes they are not Kindred, and they do not belong in the All Night Society. Among the Invictus, dhampir carry the status of a sort of exotic ghoul, and a certain stigma attaches to any vampire who creates one. If the vampire in question is strong, however, and the son distinguishes himself, then that stigma is easily worth it. After all, nothing quite washes away the stain of impropriety like success. One main exception exists, however, to this stigma, and that is the vampire who creates a dhampir to strengthen her Mask. Few things defuse a vampire hunt in progress quite like the suspect becoming pregnant and giving birth, and few things keep suspicious eyes away like a happy family. This reasoning the Conspiracy respects.

To be an Invictus dhampir is a terrible life. The unfortunate dhampir can expect to be treated as a valued ghoul at best, and more likely as a slave to a mother who considers him inherently inferior. He must prove himself or suffer, and he will never be good enough. His one saving grace is that his mother had a reason for having him, and that reason makes him at least somewhat valuable to her; so as long as he fulfills

that purpose, he can be reasonably sure his usefulness is not about to come to an end.

Of course, such a harsh view of dhampir cannot exist without disagreement. Even within the covenant itself, there are some who argue that the dhampir's usefulness in upholding the Masquerade should outweigh the vague sense of distaste any respectable vampire surely must feel about animal reproduction, as opposed to the proper and traditional Embrace.

More than that, though, persistent rumors have kept arising in recent years of an individual called the Half-Blood Director, someone who holds several high-ranking members of the Conspiracy in their power and thereby exercises quite a lot of power within the Invictus. Supposedly, this Director does her or his best to direct dhampir away from harm and punish those who abuse his or her kin – she or he might even be recruiting dhampir into some sort of spy network. While it remains just a tall tale for the moment, the rumors have created an atmosphere of unease, with no Invictus parent quite sure whether her child represents a potential security breach.

## *Lancea et Sanctum*

In Sanctified iconography, the dhampir occupy a position of esteem. The dhampir, the Lancea et Sanctum teaches, are sacred scourges of the Kindred, the shepherds who cull the wolfen flock and keep it in line. For one of the Sanctified to become a mother is a sacred trust and a great responsibility. The child must, in addition to whatever his mother wanted for him in the first place, also be trained in weaponry and investigative tactics, and learn the intricacies of Kindred society. It is given to them to punish and hunt their half-kin, so that the Masquerade might be upheld and other, less sacred hunters staved off.

The fact that this is essentially a codification of the vampire hunter of dhampir myth into Kindred society is not lost on the vampires themselves. Hence, the dhampir is never popular, even among the Sanctified. He is a punisher, a great and terrible scourge freed from the many limitations the All Night Society places on its full-blooded members. As such, his life expectancy is rather short. And despite it all, the Lancea et Sanctum still tries to place limitations on these sacred scourges, and are quick to punish those who go too far. After all, the protection of sanctity goes only so far before the Sanctified congregation gets disgruntled, and then all bets are off.

A recent development in the station of Sanctified dhampir are lay preachers. The Lancea et Sanctum considers it improper for the Damned to accept ministry from any who are not themselves Damned, so dhampir have historically been relegated to holding services for ghouls, dhampir, and other mortal appendages of the All Night Society. However, in modern nights, a new breed of unsanctioned dhampir preachers has emerged, screaming fire and damnation from the pulpit at the ecstatic vampire congregation below.

It is intoxicating for self-loathing Kindred to bathe in misery, to truly explore their own wretchedness, and these

often-wandering dhampir firebrands are all too happy to apply their flaming brands to the audience. Some even implement genuine trials by fire, forcing their congregations to face open flame as part of their services. These ministers tell vampires to repent and face the Final Death, and some accept, leaving the charismatic preacher with the duty of performing final rites and administering the event itself.

To call these traveling ministers controversial among the Sanctified is perhaps an understatement. Some factions among the Lancea et Sanctum consider them to be little more than cult leaders, wandering murderers looking to get their jollies however they can manage. Others see the spark of the holy in their burning eyes, and can't help but worry that the message of damnation and redemption-through-fire rings true.

## *Ordo Dracul*

Among the Ordo Dracul's sanctums and hidden lairs are manifold laboratories with many different purposes, and some of these are the so-called genesis labs. In these, the Dragons experiment with life itself, breeding and cross-breeding and experimenting upon their results, hoping to reach startling new revelations and perhaps find some clue to developing new Coils of the Dragon — genesis experiments. Of those dhampir unfortunate enough to be born of a Dragon, many spend their childhood in a genesis lab, strapped to some table while their fathers experiment on them.

## *The Attitudes of the Clans*

The blood runs thick, and even in dhampir veins, the parent's clan rings true. The effects are subtle, but present, expressed mostly in quirks of personality and preferences. It is difficult to truly divorce upbringing from Blood, of course, but even dhampir raised by members of other clans, or by mortals entirely, show some psychological bent towards their parent clans.

The greatest effect a clan has on a dhampir's life, though, comes from the parent's behavior and mindset. The five clans lend themselves to distinctly different attitudes towards their children, and this is where the lifelong scars on fragile young psyches spring from more than anywhere else.

Each clan has its own associated Affliction (see p. 43), a Condition that applies to dhampir children of that clan's members. This Affliction is an extreme form of a psychological bent common to that clan's dhampir, which manifests itself in times of stress. Each dhampir individually falls within the spectrum of expected human psychology, both healthy and pathological, but the bell curve is skewed — the average dhampir, if such a thing can even exist, is decidedly not a normal human being.

The descriptions given in this section for individual clans places emphasis on their unique traits; that does not mean they need to be dominated by the various clans' predilections.

Not all dhampir children of Ordo Dracul members are guinea pigs, of course. Some are created for reasons completely unconnected to their fathers' covenant. But this is little consolation for a dhampir child earmarked for werewolf breeding experiments. Occasionally, one of these experimental subjects ends up in some way enhanced by his ordeals — and in these cases, father dearest had better watch out, because chances are junior has little to no concept of family loyalty and does not care for his progenitor at all.

The Dragons are nothing if not willing to accept unorthodoxy in the pursuit of knowledge, however — for the ambitious Defiant dhampir, it is possible to break into the covenant proper and become a full-fledged member. These dhampir researchers are every bit as ruthless and clever as their full-blooded rivals, not least because their positions remain precarious until they have truly proven themselves — and when they have succeeded, old habits die hard.

The inability to learn the Coils of the Dragon remains the dhampir's greatest obstacle to becoming truly prominent and respected. Many have spent their lifetimes trying to solve the secret to learning the Coils as a dhampir, but little progress has been made. Others have dedicated their research to developing entirely new "pseudo-Coils" for dhampir to learn, hoping that these will rise to become accepted as true Coils in and of themselves. However, success has been elusive, and the most promising results are still little more than parlor tricks of the Blood.

Playing against type is not discouraged, although even a dhampir who is the polar opposite of her clan's "average" dhampir must occasionally contend with these issues.

## *Daeva*

Do the Daeva love their children? Ultimately, it doesn't matter. They pamper them and dress them up, give them fine things and make sure they look good and behave properly. What does love have to do with it? They need to make their fathers look good. What is inside — emotional matters, affection, and family — are minor things.

Perhaps the Daeva tries to tend to this garden, too, in his own clumsy and brutal ways. Using the tools of manipulation, clique-building, dominance, and seduction upon his own children, he tries to have a proper family, with the emphasis squarely on "proper." But the Serpents are venomous creatures and poorly suited to truthful and tender things — it is in their natures to bite. So make them pretty, make this family thing look good, look like it's working, and maybe it'll actually work. Who knows? Most don't care. They just want their kids to look good.

What haunts Serpentspawn most of all is their sense of alienation and disconnection. They inherit the twisted social graces of their parents, the superficial relationships and the

## The Daeva Dhampir and the Rest of the Group

The Daeva dhampir Affliction, Malcontent, can be disruptive if handled without care. This is something Storytellers and troupes should keep an eye out for. If a player honestly can't play the cycle of alienation and re-association in a way that is acceptable to him and everyone else, the Storyteller should consider talking to that player about changing characters.

In a situation where the Daeva Affliction becomes disruptive in play, the Storyteller might also consider simply dropping it and letting the character's player resolve the sense of alienation and numbness it represents without using the mechanics to back it up. She can also simply permit the player to downplay the problem, or even ignore it altogether. It is all up to what works best for the individual group. Be aware that some players might consider simply waiving a mechanical drawback to be cheating, however — in that case, it is appropriate to represent the Daeva dhampir's alienation as a simple dice penalty when the Affliction should otherwise apply. As always, good communication between players is important. The Storyteller should encourage her players to be open about things that make the chronicle less enjoyable.

flitting from one girlfriend to the next. A Daeva's daughter, like her father, finds it hard to really get to know people. She can understand them, but connection, that social bond, is hard to establish for her. Ironically, despite being naturally sociable, and socially graceful, most Daeva dhampir are lonely creatures.

This is not helped by the outbursts of cruelty they experience every so often, a sort of bursting dam of frustrations and feigned interest that leads to the dhampir deliberately destroying friendships and working relationships in a sort of spontaneous wave of honesty and despair. Through this social selfharm, the Serpent's daughter can feel a sense of genuine social connection, even if that connection is painful and hostile. Better than just being numb.

## Gangrel

The child of a Gangrel faces a single question: Are you strong enough? If the kid can impress mama, then she is likely to face an escalating series of trials, with some kind of acceptance in between. In a way, the Gangrel parent is a blessing, because the dhampir can expect to be left alone, more so than the daughter of any other clan. The Savages do not generally meddle like other clans do — with them, things are more straightforward: Either you measure up or you don't.

Naturally, for a child who fails to impress mother dearest, things are quite different. A disappointed Gangrel parent is

unpredictable and violent, and quick to sacrifice her little embarrassment. Of course, if she cared about the twerp, she then regrets it, but such is the Requiem.

Restlessness is the curse of the half-Gangrel. While she can live a perfectly normal life, there is always a nagging feeling, that itch in the back of her skull, telling her that she's been standing still too long, and it's time for a change. What interested her grows less and less appealing as familiarity grows, and a wanderlust sets in — she wants to change, to explore the different permutations of herself. She wants to challenge her mind and body, craves novelty, despises routine, and most of all, she can't stand people who get in her way. The depth of her violent rage terrifies her when some well-meaning nobody keeps her in one place, spinning her wheels.

A Gangrel dhampir whose life has stagnated is a miserable creature, crying herself to sleep without quite knowing what is wrong. She can seem flaky and irresponsible to others, failing to hold down a job long-term and abandoning commitments because it just all seems so unbearably dull. Only the most exciting and varied professions hold her interest, leading many to throw themselves into extreme sports or fanatical travel around the globe, all to throw off that demon of boredom and depression.

When truly nailed down in one place, the Gangrel dhampir grows dangerous. Her violent side grows stronger, and she loses patience for niceties and obligations. Her Kindred mother's blood rears itself in vampire-like rage and callousness. More than just a willingness to resort to violence, it becomes eagerness, a desire for blood and mayhem and pain from which she draws glee and satisfaction. When her mind clears, of course, she is left truly feeling like a monster. In those moments, the half-dead feels the weight of her mother's damnation in full.

## Mekhet

Deception and secrets are not just useful to the Shadows — they are enjoyable in their own right. While the dhampir child of a Mekhet likely inherits some of that love for mysteries and the forbidden, that love is probably not quite enough to make his Kindred mother bearable. Secrets are kept for secrets' sake, the child from the vampire and the vampire from the child. What the son can find out is his, everything else is undeserved. Want food? Figure out mommy's credit card PIN and order some, or find someone who will provide it. Where is the aspirin? It's a mystery! Try looking everywhere.

It goes beyond mind games and puzzles to gaslighting — there are two of mommy now, which one is real and which one is just a ghoul in disguise? Was my birthday in August, or was it always in May, like mommy says now? Fun and games with family has an entirely different meaning to a Mekhet dhampir, and what the Kindred parent even wants from him is a puzzle to solve. Or at least, he has to find out which of the three options she provided is the truth — or suffer the consequences. And why won't she ever admit to being a mother when anyone but him is around?

Of course, the Mekhet's own feelings are conflicted on this – she wants her child to learn intelligence, critical thinking, and how to ferret out the truth from secrets. At the same time, keeping secrets is also a punishment for failing to live up to whatever mommy dearest wanted her son to be. A Shadow expects family to be close enough that the kid can just figure out what his mother expects from him. Even if she knows rationally how stupid that is, she can't quite help it. And that is if the mother actually cares.

The Shadow dhampir never feels safe. He is always looking over his shoulder, worried that his enemies will get him, that he has made enemies he is not even aware of, or that he might become the victim of some random crime. He hides his strengths and his weaknesses, and most importantly of all, he gathers information. Knowledge is power, and by creating a rat's nest of intelligence that only he may know, the Mekhet dhampir silences the timid, ever-worried little rodent in his mind.

Most of all, he loves to dig up dirt. Nothing quiets his doubts quite like having something to hold over the head of anyone who might threaten him. The Mekhet blood makes spying a thrill, keeping secrets exciting, and being caught out unawares terrifying. At his worst, he becomes obsessed with the secrets and signs all around him. The thrill of illicit information, of knowing the deepest, darkest secrets of his best friends and random public figures, is compelling. He might even get off on watching his respectable lawyer cousin get drunk and have puke-sex all over her parents' bedroom.

It's the violation, the breach of privacy that gets him – he knows how angry and upset they would be, and that is why he hates the wonderful feeling of power it gives him. He almost can't help himself – at times, it becomes like an addiction, a craving deep in his soul. At times, it's the only way he can sleep at night. He can deny it, go years in a stretch without installing a single camera in a public restroom, but eventually he'll come crawling back to his old faithful safety blanket, violating someone's privacy to feel better.

## *Nosferatu*

The Haunt's kid is a strange creature, afflicted with only the merest hint of the Nosferatu curse for his own part, but taking the full brunt of daddy's little problem in the face. He ends up a bit of an oddball, the sort of creepy loner that nobody ever suspected anything from, honest, ma'am. To be raised by a cursed monster is always going to lead to skewed priorities, but when that monster is oozing a thin layer of uncanny and unhealthy feelings all over the kid's upbringing, it becomes worse. Try as he might, a Nosferatu never raises a healthy child – his son has inherited a little bit of his father's unpleasant vibes, and a lot of skewed ideas that have been twisted in the delivery, by the clan curse if not by the fucked-up Kindred mind itself.

Despite that, though, Nosferatu are the most likely to be devoted parents. They, more than other Kindred, have seen the monster in the mirror, and more than anyone else, they see the contrast between their own damned and ruined selves

and the healthy, vibrant youths sitting in their laps. To see the horror and damnation wiped from one's own eyes when those eyes are set in the skull of something precious and relatively innocent has a startling effect on the Haunt father. It is easy to see why he might want to make sure this weird little life is made as good as possible. For that reason, many Nosferatu also abandon their children out of love.

The dhampir children of the Nosferatu never fit in. They have inherited too much of their parents' poisoned Vitae, but in the dhampir, that curse becomes something internal and internalized, a pervasive feeling of self-loathing and inferiority that can be suppressed, but never entirely abandoned. The Haunt's son never finds acceptance because he can never accept himself, and in turn, he acts the part. His inferiority complex usually leads to social problems, which pushes others away from him, thus reinforcing his sense of inferiority. Some rise above this cycle, but even they are haunted by dark thoughts of self-loathing and despair in the silent moments when nobody is watching.

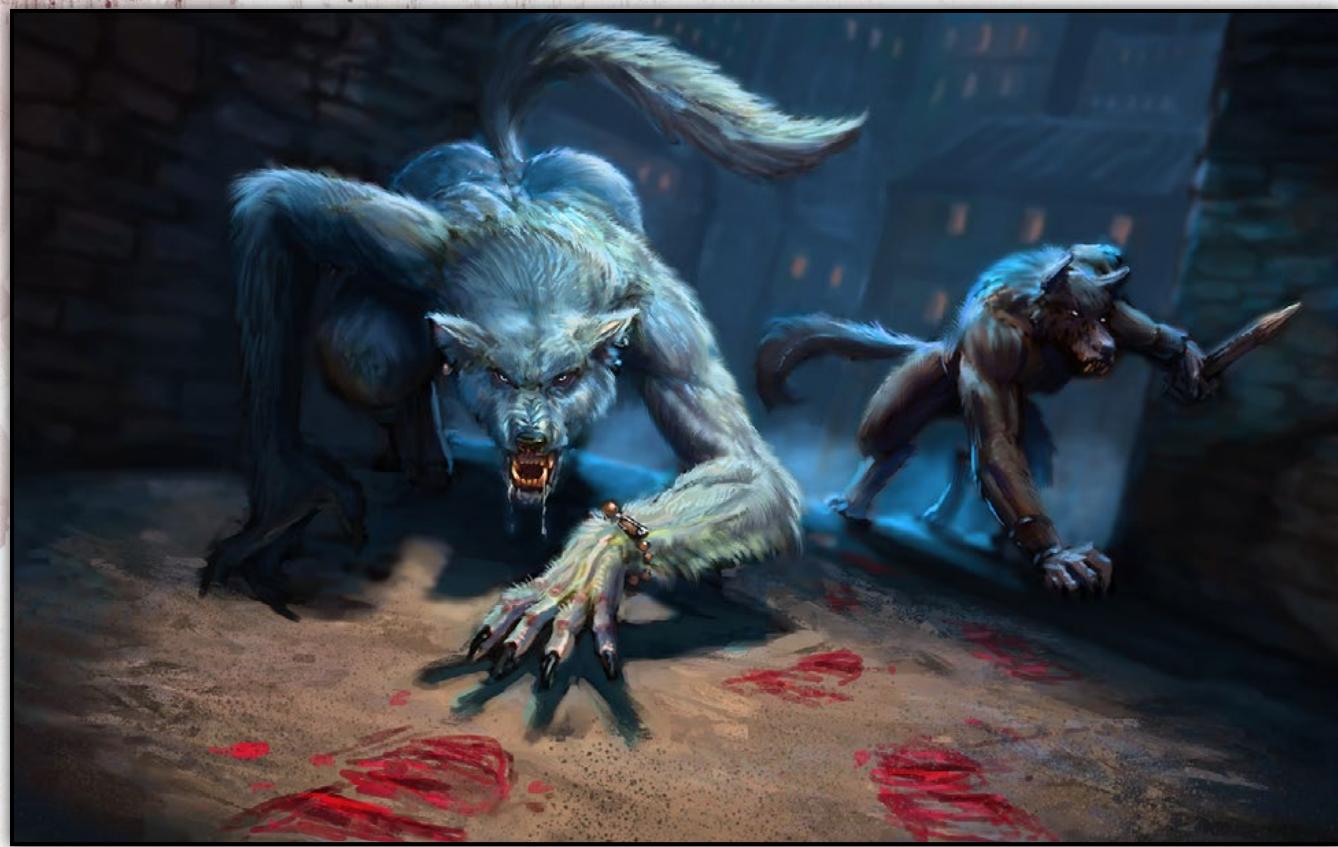
Eventually, each Nosferatu dhampir reaches a time when his despair closes in on him and he lashes out against his friends, family, and society in general, with angry words and burning cold dispassion. These breaks come back to sabotage even the most well-functioning dhampir of Haunt stock, reinforcing their instinctual sense of themselves as broken and monstrous.

These breakdowns lead those who aren't aware of their past into questioning their mental states on top of the instinctive self-revulsion they already feel. An endless cycle of therapy and medication followed by yet another episode eventually pushes all but the most stubborn into looking for answers, perhaps in their medical histories or perhaps among the people who share their world views. The step into the shadows where the Kindred stay is short from there.

## *Venture*

Family. To a Lord, this rings very differently from how it rings to most. Family, to the Venture, is a term charged with power and expectations. It is to be tended like a fine garden, pruned, weeded and set in order so it can provide the most precious yields. Family exists to be placed in important positions, and to exchange favors with when needed. It exists as a last line of defense, the one unbreakable alliance that may be strained in peacetime, but when war comes, it holds. Family bound by Vitae is one thing, but many Venture also try to cultivate their mortal families in the same way. And when one has a childe, one might perhaps also wish a child, that they may fill separate roles.

More than any other clan, Venture create dhampir with purposes in mind. It is an exquisitely ornate thing to arrange, and such extravagance must have its reasons. Those reasons dominate the lives of Venture dhampir. Their purpose for living is hammered home, through education, expectation, and structured free time. Perhaps daddy wants his little girl to become a bank director – if so, she will bloody well study



economics whether she wants to or not, and she *will* go on play dates with the son of the Goldman-Sachs clerk, even if he is an insufferable little brat. Little room in her life is left for the dhampir herself — she exists to be her father's designer baby, not to be a person in her own right. It is, then, with such a stifling and disciplined childhood, little wonder that Ventre dhampir are overrepresented among hunters.

A young Ventre dhampir faces a frustrating situation. The world chafes a little more on a Lord's daughter than on most. Whatever her desires, they are always just a little too far out of reach, a little too annoying to attain. Her goals might be selfish or altruistic, but they are always a little harder to reach than for anyone else, it seems. Her will was created to be done, but she lacks the tools the Blood gave her father. It's not supposed to be like this — things are supposed to fall into place, not fight her every step of the way. Something is broken, the world does not recognize her wishes as it should. Hell, maybe the world ought to be more pliable for everyone, period.

Whatever the case, she has to live with this sense of thwarted destiny, that the world does not fit together quite right, that some force is fighting her natural, rightful authority. Her ideals should be self-evident and reinforced by the world around her and not something she has to fight for. But she does. What's worse, if she is reasonably well-adjusted, she might realize just how fucked up her natural sense of entitlement is, but she still can't get rid of it. It's in her blood, even if she hates it with every fiber of her being, and it makes her accomplishments seem so petty compared to what things should be like. Of course, for some, this is all the more reason to fight.

### *The Others*

Other things than vampires go bump in the night, and dhampir have something to do with almost all of them. Few beings are found in quite so many places as dhampir, owing in part to being less odious than many beings more strongly touched by the unnatural, and in part to having a knack for finding allies. They have a sense for the strange, and an uncanny knack for figuring out when someone is not quite what she seems.

That said, the dhampir is still a rare creature, contaminated by the Kindred curse, which means they can carve out a niche in most places, but are never entirely welcome. They always bring with them the risk of drawing vampires along in their wake, but they make up for that by also providing information on the Kindred to their new comrades. Also, when trying to ingratiate themselves with other denizens of the World of Darkness, destiny usually plays in the dhampir's favor, with lucky breaks and fortunate timing working out to help them gain acceptance.

### *Werewolves*

Dhampir are alive. While they have a little bit of vampirism inside them, they are not inherently evil. The Uratha understand the difference more keenly than most, but they also see the way the worlds bend and twist around the half-damned. They move in unpleasant ways, and can sometimes do harm to the werewolves' charges.

Many dhampir have died by Uratha tooth and Uratha blade, but they keep on coming, and many among the tribes of the moon have moral qualms about simply killing them. Therefore, the dhampir come and go, controversial and in danger of attack but mostly unmolested. They mingle with the human families of wolves, and ingratiate themselves with some of the friendlier Uratha. And sometimes, just sometimes, they prove themselves, and earn some honor.

A select few dhampir go a step beyond even that, proving themselves not just worthy of respect, but as worthy allies. They help keep things the way they are supposed to be, and run with wolves, though they are never allowed to forget that they are, after all, outsiders, and tainted. When a dhampir is permitted to walk alongside an Uratha pack, though, that dhampir has friends for life — and so do the werewolves.

## *Mages*

Among the Awakened, dhampir can often find themselves fitting in just fine. Their powers, while not extremely effective in comparison, have certain similarities to some of the Arcana, notably Fate and Life; and mages are often cosmopolitan sorts, used to meeting strange beings and treating with them. To mages, a dhampir is a potential threat, but no more so than other things they deal with every day.

A dhampir is an oddity, and potentially an interesting one. Many mages want to study them, in manners both more and less friendly, particularly Mystagogues. The Guardians of the Veil have also been known to hire dhampir as agents or catss-paws, deploying them in their eternal struggle to contain the Abyss. Their uncanny luck and affinity for destiny make dhampir excellent foot soldiers to deploy against the servants of the Abyss.

Dhampir are rarely fully trusted, but it's not unheard-of for one to join a cabal and involve himself in Awakened affairs on a day-to-day basis. This annoys some mages, but dhampir are good at keeping allies, and Awakened allies are no exception for those inclined in that direction.

For those half-damned who want to eschew Kindred society, but also don't see a mortal life as being truly feasible, the Awakened community makes for one of the more pleasant alternatives — provided they can find it.

Moros and dhampir especially get along famously, while those descended from Daeva make natural foils to the Thrysus, for good and bad. Moros see in the half-damned a fellow traveler, someone touched by the sacred power of death in a way both foreign and comfortingly familiar. Thrysus, on their part, often find dhampir slightly distasteful, as if they were diseased or similar — but the Daeva dhampir's outgoing nature makes him a hell of a lot of fun at parties, even if he is a little shallow. Lively yet deathly — hard for a shaman to know whether to like them or not.

## *Changelings*

Changelings run. Dhampir often do the same. Both are tainted, twisted, pursued by forces both mighty and cruel, and denied a normal existence. Their bodies and souls have been molded into shapes pleasing to their owners, shapes that they simply have to live with. In short, dhampir and changelings have a great deal in common. No wonder, then, that they get along so easily.

Mostly, though, dhampir fit right into a changeling motley. Why not? There are stranger things in there already. Their friends might not trust them entirely, and some might grumble about bringing the blood of endings into the house. When confronted, the half-damned truthfully and quickly reminds a challenger that it's not like she's squeaky-clean, either. Changelings contain corruption of their own sort, after all.

## *Demons*

As a rule, the Unchained are uncomfortable around dhampir. There is something about the half-damned, something intangible and elusive, that reminds the fallen angels of the God-Machine too much about themselves. Maybe it is the way that dhampir come to be, so similar to their own children; maybe it is the way they are made, with a specific purpose in mind, much like the demons themselves. Or it might be the way dhampir's Breaks mess with reality much like Embeds do, but on a more instinctual and less conscious level.

To look at a dhampir is like an uncanny valley effect, almost but not quite Unchained, and so very wrong. Demonic instincts misfire and misjudge them, subconsciously assessing them like fellow Unchained, leading inexperienced demons to feel out of control. Unsafe. And if there's one thing they hate, it's feeling unsafe — off-balance and vulnerable. Some mistake their own reactions for a deliberate attack, and counter aggressively. And while they can get used to an individual dhampir, the effect kicks in all over again for every new one they meet, meaning that dhampir as a whole are trouble to the Unchained.

On their part, dhampir generally find Unchained ideas of Hell and the God-Machine rather far-fetched. Those who have peered deep enough behind the curtain to find demons there have usually seen many other things, and most of those things don't really imply a mechanized reality.

Despite these differences, though, the half-damned and Unchained can get used to each other with a little experience, and then they often find common ground in the escape from a controlling master. When the initial shock has passed and the demon is no longer off-balance, the two can sometimes make excellent allies.

# *Growing Up Dhampir*

*Who am I?*

*What is my place in the world?*

*Where did I come from?*

*Who should I become?*

*Why do I exist?*

Ask these questions as a human child and wrestle with uncertainty. Ask them as a dhampir child and wish you'd never heard the answers.

A child imitates his parents. He learns to navigate the treacherous waters of human interaction by watching them and reading between the lines. The formative experiences his family provides write what he thinks of as "normal" into his assumptions. When his family is infested with walking corpses, those assumptions don't match up so well with the ones the other kids learn. At the same time, feeling unwanted because of an absentee mother or learning that lying is okay from a manipulative father is nothing an ordinary mortal upbringing couldn't evoke. For a dhampir, the stakes are just higher. The lessons are more horrific, the secrets stranger. He peeks into the shadows behind the curtain and discovers himself there alongside the monsters.

So few dhampir walk the world that patterns among them are hard to find. The only real constants are the tragedy and conflict that characterize their lives. A cutthroat vampiric underworld and the bestial drives of its denizens encourage destructive relationships with any human they touch, so for those who straddle the line, peace and contentment are pipe dreams. Even dhampir who grow up never knowing their Kindred parents deal with targets painted on their backs and their own disturbing abilities, destroying their chances at carefree childhoods.

## *Nature, Nurture, and the Unnatural*

No dhampir is an accident. A vampire must deliberately commit an act of monstrous occult significance to even try to conceive a human child. A damned immortal parent's expectations don't just demand college degrees and grandchildren; her child represents something specific to her, whether it's power, redemption, hope, or sadistic curiosity. Whatever purpose a dhampir was made for hangs over his head, forcing him to decide between fulfilling it and defying it. The uncanny hand of fate that seems to favor him and doom his enemies doesn't go unnoticed for long, adding an ominous question mark to his life that he obsesses over until he learns the truth or dies trying.

Dhampir feel like outsiders even if everyone they know worships the ground they walk on. By nature, a dhampir is more or less human, and that's the problem – the Curse he inherits wasn't meant for him, but it pulses through his veins regardless, and he has to deal with it as best he can. His powers manifest whether he wants them or not, setting him apart from his peers, and the self-destructive instincts that accompany them

color his image of himself as much as they do his relationships with others. It's not like a dhampir can separate which parts of his personality come from his wicked blood and which don't. They're all just part of him. If he pushes away those closest to him in an endless cycle of intimacy and malaise, his Daeva parent recognizes her clan's influence on him but can't exactly offer a cure. These dark urges and patterns of ruinous behavior lead him to grow up too fast, and wonder why he seems so different from the other kids. Few dhampir ever experience true childhood.

Even if a dhampir doesn't see his inheritance as a curse, he inevitably finds both mortals and Kindred who do. Humans see a pariah with frightening, unnatural talents who doesn't fit in anywhere, relegated to the category of "other" in a world where people comfort themselves with conformity to defend against what scares them. Vampires see a creature lesser than themselves, plagued by human frailties and a mayfly life but brimming with potential, who represents some sick desire that his Kindred parent once acted on in a fit of loneliness or cruelty. Dealing with resentment, fear, pity, anger, and fascination from both sides only serves to further complicate a dhampir's life.

Many dhampir fear what happens if they have children of their own. Would they pass on their dread blood, or would their offspring be completely mundane? Which do they want? Some refuse to have kids, unwilling to subject another generation to what they've gone through. Others deliberately try to produce more dhampir, either at their vampire families' behest or just to have someone else in the world like them. Whether or not it works is something each dhampir must learn on his own.

## *Taking Charge*

Though a young dhampir's life is tumultuous, it's also freeing in a way other people can't imagine. His choices may be bloody and morally questionable but they're his, and his options are wide open. He can rule the school if he wants. He can pull the wool over his human mother's eyes and make her dance to his tune, take whatever he desires and leave the rest for weaker kids to fight over. He can take revenge against the bullies who push him around because he's different, easy as pie. All it takes is a willingness to inflict his dread birthright on the people he may or may not decide are his equals.

Once he dips a toe into the pool of vampire society, he becomes a valuable piece on the city's chess board. If he gets past the indignation of powerful, dead things lusting after him for his novelty and trying to use him, he can wrap the

## When Dhampir Families Go Right

Not all vampires end up being horrible to their children. Being a dhampir is always a burden, as is having a Kindred mother; but some of the Damned have the self-control, the sense of perspective, to end up being bearable parents. To call such families happy is an exaggeration, but they are not always intolerably miserable either. The wise vampire can use mortals as sounding boards, fumbling his way towards treating his family decently by relying on the judgment of others.

A visit from Santa Claus is never quite as terrifying for a poor little child as when it is his Nosferatu father behind the mask, so Kindred parents with some wisdom still exercise restraint. Even the best-functioning family still must cope with the realities of daddy being dead and little Billy having some twisted ideas about proper treatment of animals.

Kindred around his little finger with the promise of alliance or the threat of retribution. The eerie way he benefits from others' misfortune and waxes oracular without trying is a potent weapon in a dhampir's arsenal, allowing him to direct the other pieces on the board from his own square and giving him a certain untouchable confidence. Spilling his own blood to force his destructive will upon the world might spook him, but it also affords him a rush of power that's worth all the ostracism and paranoia.

## *Unliving Arrangements*

An undead parasite holds a perfectly healthy human infant in his arms, a miracle baby, and it's his. What does he do with it? Does it fascinate him or scare him? Tempt or disgust him? Maybe all of the above. Does he think he loves it? Could it teach him how? Or is it just a project, a statement he's made? Go on, he tells himself, get rid of it. Give it to your ghouls, sell it to the Ordo Dracul, drop it off on the orphanage's doorstep and walk away. Or keep it. Raise it yourself and make the both of you miserable. It'll all be worth it in the end.

No two dhampir have the same baggage. Whatever decisions their parents made when they were born shape their whole lives — like anyone else, but the average person doesn't have to worry that if she cuts ties with her father he'll murder his way through town until she comes back to him. Playing a dhampir character means considering how she grew up, how she discovered what she is, and how she got her first taste of the All Night Society.

## *Absentee Vampires*

*Dad doesn't get it. He says it's all in my head, just hormones and stress, PMS or something. I know the damn difference between my period and a nightmare so real it literally comes true. Nobody believes me about the guy I saw lurking around school, either. They think I'm lying to get attention. Or high. Like I'd touch pot with a maniac stalking me, come on! Plus, ever since I first told Dad about the dreams he's been acting weird. He stares at his phone when he thinks I'm not looking, like he's expecting a call that never comes. Last time I asked him about who my mom was he locked himself in the bathroom for like an hour. It's all connected, I bet. Screw homework, I need to find out what's going on.*

Vampires who create dhampir children don't always stick around to raise them. The dhampir who grows up with her human parent has a rocky road ahead of her, filled with inexplicable coincidences and horrors lingering at the edges of her life, waiting for her to shine a light on them. Her parent might raise her alone, or might try to fill the hole the vampire left in his life with other partners. Even if he had no idea his lover was a vampire, that hole won't ever fill completely. The dhampir has to learn how to deal with dad's quiet longing that never goes away, or anger issues he didn't have when he was younger, or desperate search for the vampire who came into his life like a thunderstorm and then just disappeared. Human parents who still labor under the effects of the vampire's influence years later end up catching the dhampir up in the aftermath — sudden outbursts of transferred emotion, a trail of confused therapists helpless in the face of deeply-rooted blood bonds and suppressed memories, and a history of uncontrollable fascination with the occult or places that remind him of those mesmerizing eyes pushing aside broken promises.

The dhampir who tries to find her missing vampire parent and fails feels abandoned and resentful. The dhampir who succeeds finds a world of death and terror she never asked for. Every stone she overturns leads her further down a rabbit hole she'll never climb out of again. With her emerging ability to manipulate people and fate, her investigative prowess usually takes the vampire by surprise. It's hard to stay behind the curtain once a dhampir starts tugging at it. Eventually, she'll tear it down and barge into Elysium demanding answers, and that's when the real shitstorm begins.

Sometimes, the vampire *doesn't* just disappear. Maybe he drops by for every birthday, bringing gifts and bullshit stories everybody but the dhampir believes. Maybe the kid stays with him for a weekend every few months and wonders why his bedroom always looks so untouched. Maybe she constantly begs him to let her live with him, or to come home and be part of the family, and he constantly disappoints her without giving any satisfactory explanation.

Maybe he is part of her life, and she's blissfully ignorant. He watches her every day from the shadows, observing and playing guardian devil. He sneaks into the house when everyone's

asleep and feeds from the whole family. He keeps a close eye on them to make sure the Masquerade stays intact. Maybe someday he'll call her up and offer her a place beside him — a job, or a long-overdue reconciliation, or just a weak excuse to get her embroiled in Kindred intrigues once she's old enough. If she stumbles across the truth too soon, he might have to do something unfortunate to keep her from ruining everything. Or he might just welcome her with open arms, consequences be damned.

The dhampir's relationships with her other family members inevitably get more complex the older she gets, too. As her powers appear, she becomes the weirdo — the screw-up who keeps getting into fights or can't make friends, while her fully human half-siblings look like angels by comparison. Alternatively, she's much closer to her human parent than her siblings are because she shares something with him that no one else understands, and jealousy runs thick. Big family gatherings are exercises in smiling politely and enduring veiled questions about the torrid affair that produced her, or her father's troubled ex that nobody ever talks about. She hears "you're just like your mother" and can't help feeling it's not a compliment, though they'd never say as much — or it is a compliment, but it comes with creepy undertones of envy and hushed-up feuds. Once the dhampir's abilities fully develop, she must either hide them from her loved ones or try to confess them and, in the process, crack open a can of worms that puts herself and everyone she knows in danger from barely-understood supernatural threats.

If the vampire gave his kid up for adoption or put her through the foster system, her childhood starts out less disturbing but ends up even more restless. At least a dhampir's own human parent might have some inkling about what's going on with her when the night comes knocking. Foster families, adoptive families, and orphanages are wholly unprepared for the clusterfuck that descends upon them when the dhampir's heritage rears its head. These half-damned are often the loneliest of their kind, desperately seeking someone who understands them or giving up the effort in favor of flagrant iconoclasm that draws the attention of the supernatural like light draws moths.

### *The Truth Revealed*

Inevitably, the dhampir discovers her origins, and why she's so different. She finds her vampire parent, or delves into the occult far enough to find out what a dhampir is. She runs afoul of other vampires who give her the low-down, or realizes her foster mother was a vampire hunter all along. Jarring as the news is, it tends to provoke one of three strong reactions: obsession with this alluring new world, overwhelming fear of everything that goes bump in the night, or a vow to eradicate the thing that made her from the Earth. In any case, her life is irrevocably changed.

A dhampir who can't handle the idea that her father's a monster and she's a tainted creature born of twisted undead passions tries to run away from it and pretend she never learned

anything. Maybe she turns to religion to save her soul, or drugs and alcohol to make herself forget. Maybe she flees halfway across the world, trusting distance to help her start over. Too bad she can't escape her fate. Sooner or later, the hidden world finds her again. Danger forces her to use her powers, or the local prince hears about a dhampir in the area and stops at nothing to find her. Perhaps in trying to keep herself safe from the Kindred — and herself — she ends up tangled up in the affairs of some other supernatural being. She made a deal with a demon to stay off the radar, or trusted a witch with the wrong information, and now she can't extract herself without running back into the arms of the undead.

The dhampir who comes to crave all that's hypnotizing and unsightly about the vampiric underworld usually gets in over her head in a hurry. It's all too easy for some enterprising ancilla to ensnare her in his plots and show her only what he wants her to see. She takes Kindred lovers, delves deeply into the secrets of blood magic, and addicts herself to the Kiss on purpose. She submits to the Vinculum with a smile on her face. She wants to know everything, do everything, and be everything she was born to be. Maybe she even wants to die and rise again. Being just like Daddy doesn't sound so bad — after all, Daddy's immortal. She's entitled to her inheritance, right?

At the other extreme is the dhampir who sees the monster in the mirror and wants it dead and buried. She devotes herself to hunting down the vampire that spawned her, and after that? The rest of them need to go, too. Burn it all down, salt the earth. She hates the parts of herself that came from dead blood, but she needs them, too. Her power and her fate are what she'll use to fuck over any corpse that dares to get up and walk. Maybe if she destroys enough of them, she'll figure out how to purge her own soul of this rotten curse. Then she can be like everybody else and have a normal life. Please God, let that be true.

### *Playing House*

*I had to lie to the police again this morning. No, officer, my dad's been overseas for months. He definitely didn't attack some innocent homeless person because he just couldn't help himself. Yes, officer, I've got the paperwork right here. My birth certificate is totally legit, I promise. No, officer, please for the love of everything holy do not assign me a social worker, she'll be lunchmeat within the week. Ugh, this is getting old. The ghouls are no help, they all hate me. They'd ship me off to state custody in a heartbeat if they thought he wouldn't eat them alive for it. And apparently, I'm supposed to feel guilty for spending so little time with him? Like I can stay up all day and night. The worst part is, he's right. I do feel guilty. Fuck me.*

Vampires who do take an active hand in raising their dhampir children perpetuate cycles of lies and trouble — and that's when they're really trying to be parents. Others might keep a dhampir child around as an experimental subject, a ritual component, or a potent agent in their schemes. Sometimes, the vampire can't or won't act as a primary



caretaker, leaving the hard work to his ghouls or childer. Kindred parents inevitably bring their stormy undead drama home. The dhampir ends up caught in the middle of her father's plays for power and is constantly covering up for his bloody indiscretions. His banes and uncontrollable urges make her feel like the real adult in the room half the time. His callous behavior and violent lifestyle teach her to either disregard human life just as much or value it highly, forcing her to think about mortality at far too young an age. Her father is a Beast in human guise, and she loves him anyway. Who's going to advise her on dealing with this shit?

A dhampir whose Kindred parent raises her grows up far too quickly. His dependence on blood and inability to function during the day force her to lie, cheat, and steal, leading a double life just to get by. If she goes to school and keeps daylight hours like her peers, her father's never around for more than a few hours each evening. If not, she grows up surrounded by adults and rarely sees the sun, home-schooled by ghouls or the vampire himself and preparing for a life of midnight intrigue. All her role models see people more or less like her as food and servants; what does she take away from that? The Kindred view her powers as simultaneously lesser than their own, and poorly understood threats to beware of, and thus she earns their wary scorn through no fault of her own. Her vampire father can't possibly keep his nature from her forever, if he's inclined to try — her natural prophetic abilities reveal it soon enough, and then she must decide what to do with the knowledge. His Masquerade becomes

her burden and her weapon. Does she keep his secrets, or expose him? Does she fight to preserve his Humanity and insist he never kill, or does she fully accept what he is — what they are together?

The vampire struggles to process parental feelings and responsibilities through the hideous character of his Beast. He overcompensates with smothering codependent affections, alienates his son with his cold and distant demeanor, or enforces discipline as the tyrannical patriarch with the iron claw. He takes his despair out on his daughter, blaming her for his failure to regain his Humanity or rediscover real love through her birth. He's jealous that she can walk in the sunshine and truly live, but shows contempt for her mortal weaknesses. He frenzies at the wrong time and can't adequately explain his violent outburst to the 12-year-old looking on. He tells her she's going to the doctor for a checkup, but her classmates listen in horror to what went on at the "doctor's" office afterward. She watches him with his thralls and concludes that all human relationships boil down to obsession and dominance. A hunter swears vengeance against him and he drags his kid from haven to haven to stay a step ahead, upending her social circles and progress at school every time.

If a vampire doesn't raise his child alone, she navigates an extra helping of bewildering family interactions. She might develop sibling relationships with his Kindred childer, making rivalry potentially deadly for them all. Her human parent and half-siblings might be ghouls, teaching her that lopsided power dynamics between loved ones are normal. On the other hand,

they might be co-conspirators, smuggling her out of the house or running away with her to find help. She may gain a unique appreciation for her family's long legacy, with a parent that's already outlived generations of relatives, who tells personal stories that date back centuries. If she lives long enough to be older than her own father seems, their relationship only gets stranger.

### *Fitting In*

Still, beneath all the drama and the lies, the dhampir has to admit that the vampire is still her own flesh and blood. "Mixed feelings" is an understatement. Unlike those who grow up ignorant and have to pursue the truth on their own, dhampir raised in the All Night Society are used to the occult and tend to have less extreme reactions to it. Instead, the contrast between what they've always known and what they see of other people's everyday lives is stark and confusing. Some grow up to be champions and protectors, standing between their vampire families and the flamethrowers, or facile manipulators and active contenders in the endless games vampires play. Some know full well what the Kindred are capable of and mistrust them all, choosing as human a life as they can manage, but can't bring themselves to raise a stake against their own family. Some have too much hatred and resentment, becoming vampire hunters in their own right *because* they know exactly what they are. Maybe the dhampir acts as a lone avenger, or maybe she hooks up with other hunters and conceals her heritage from her comrades. Any way she slices it, the final confrontation with her parent ends up messy.

A dhampir who grows up as part of a covenant rather than with her own Kindred parents faces different kinds of choices. The Circle of the Crone often raises a dhampir collectively, using her for powerful rites and treating her like an idol or cultist. The Ordo Dracul keeps a dhampir as a long-term experimental subject, raising her as a prisoner in their laboratories or as a valuable curiosity they parade around to show off their mystical studies. The Lancea et Sanctum varies wildly between extremes in their view of the dhampir they raise, either condemning her as a blasphemous orphan of sin who must spend her life atoning for what she is, or revering her as a miracle that God's hand delivered to the covenant directly. The Carthians value a dhampir as a bridge between Kindred and kine, conditioning her to rebel against the things they want to tear apart. The few dhampir the Invictus deign to raise are trained as secret police and errand-boys, taught unconditional discipline and given a decidedly subordinate place. In each case, the dhampir must form her own opinion of what she was

born to do and what loyalties she holds — or doesn't — to the organization that raised her. Does she work to gain status and influence among them, wielding her heritage as ammunition and trying to one-up her vampire rivals? Or does she seek escape and retribution, sabotaging their plans and spying on them for allies she makes when they're not looking? A dhampir working from the inside to bring down the local covenant infrastructure is more dangerous than anything the Kindred planned for. A dhampir who tries to leave that life behind and start a new one among mortals has no idea where to begin and drags trouble along in her wake.

### *Backgrounds in Play*

Players should choose their dhampir characters' backgrounds based on how they want their origins to come back and haunt them during the chronicle.

Choose an upbringing in human society if you want to prioritize:

- Discovering what you are and where you came from
- Protecting your human family from your vampire parent and from yourself
- Exploring how your Kindred heritage intrudes upon your human values
- Being an outsider among your own kind
- Fighting to keep a mortal life you treasure
- Being pursued by supernatural threats you barely understand
- Rebell ing by pursuing the darkness
- Choose an upbringing in the All Night Society if you want to prioritize:
  - Being an expert on the occult and the hidden world
  - Protecting your vampire family from hunters and other supernatural threats
  - Exploring a life steeped in the macabre from the get-go
  - Being a Touchstone for your vampire parent
  - Fighting to figure out how to live among mortals
  - Being a prized yet dangerous commodity and using that to your advantage
  - Rebell ing by pursuing mortal relationships or hunting monsters

See [p. 29](#) for more information on creating dhampir characters.

### *Half-Lives and Deaths*

The position of the dhampir in Kindred society is always strange and uncertain. They are not ghouls, and certainly not vampires, nor truly mortal either. They are half-damned, and all the rules Kindred make can't hide a sense of unease. The

power they hold over their full-blooded half-kind can only be hand-waved away so far.

As a rule, dhampir make Kindred uncomfortable. While a dhampir is rare enough to be a curiosity most nights, he

represents an unknown factor, and those are all too common and all too distasteful to vampires. The night is already dangerous without adding this strange creature with unfamiliar abilities, many of whom hunt their parent's kind as well.

In general, Kindred want dhampir to know their place, and stay in it. They make rules to minimize and control dhampir, but they also create dhampir to break those rules and be a threat to others. Some vampires treat dhampir as equals, hoping to create useful allies and deflect potential half-damned wrath onto others, while some want nothing more than to make sure the dhampir remain safely controlled by their betters.

When a dhampir enters the room, a distinct sense of unease falls over the Kindred. They are put off-balance ever so slightly, distracted by their imaginations. Many vampire parents deliberately cultivate this, using their children for this psychological effect by bringing them to social gatherings or having them act as servants to visitors. It's difficult for a vampire to dispel the image of the dhampir vampire hunter from her mind when faced with these sorts of games.

Dhampir themselves also find power in this. They can hold it over other vampires, or even their own parents. They usually know they are useful, and when asked on an errand, they can twist it to their own ends. Most vampires, even those who truly want to be good parents, place leashes on their children, even if they don't intend to. Some dhampir slip their leashes and become independent.

An independent dhampir is in a precarious position. The social power they hold is a double-edged sword, the worries they inspire are as likely to lead to violence as attempts to avoid angering them. A dhampir skilled at brinkmanship can get quite a lot of mileage out of careful threats and maneuvering, but one night, his luck will run out; and when that happens, he finds that many of the Kindred he moved against in the past come together to bring him down. Few things unify Kindred like a common foe.

To dhampir, Kindred are a persistent minefield, a thorn in their sides they can never remove, no matter how much they try. Their heritage is a curse, setting them apart, aside, taking them out of the mortal world and placing them somewhere in between, not mortal and not vampire. It's a maddening cacophony of thoughts and emotions, and the dhampir is born to suffer it.

Few dhampir can truly say they see vampires as equals. They are superiors, or inferiors, and if they are superior, then the dhampir is inferior because of what she is not... and if vampires are inferior, then that inferiority stains the dhampir's soul as well. It is a part of her, a dark and shameful thing which she can never leave behind. When a dhampir looks in the mirror, she sees her vampire father reflected, and through him, Kindred-kind. It is little wonder that the dhampir view of vampires is so neurotic, then.

## *Dhampir in Kindred Politics*

Dhampir are not always content in the All Night Society. Sometimes, they just want to burn it all to the ground. The ever-present threat of a rogue dhampir becomes a reality when one gets disgruntled enough and leaves. More than one angry dhampir has sought out hunter groups and spilled the beans on his father's social circles, and some have even attempted to go public.

More than just Kindred in general, though, dhampir often hold specific grudges. The Ordo Dracul and the Invictus in particular make a point, a habit, of mistreating dhampir, and hurting them makes a delectable treat for dhampir who want to do something, but aren't quite sure what. Kindred with a reputation of abusing dhampir find themselves with targets on their backs, as other vampires exploit that reputation to gain dhampir patsies and footpads for strikes against their cruel rivals.

Enemies of the Kindred as a whole find similar traction among abused dhampir. A hunter cell or werewolf pack looking for take a bite out of a troublesome vampire presence can find a willing ally in a jilted dhampir, if they can hold their noses and ignore her undesirable heritage and quirks.

A savvy dhampir servant sometimes tries to deliberately place himself in the position of a gatekeeper, able to admit or turn away visitors who wish to talk to his vampire mother. By doing this, he can not only manipulate her through weeding out undesirable contact with the outside world, but he can also demand payment or favors in return for letting someone in.

A non-servant dhampir can often find employment, whether permanently or on a case-by-case basis, as a lieutenant or bodyguard to some established vampire who wants to show fangs. Such positions can pay handsomely, especially when a traditionalist elder wants some appropriate muscle of a slightly more refined class than a ghoul. These positions also provide opportunities for assassination or spying upon the employer. This fact is lost on almost none of them, so such a dhampir can expect discreet surveillance. However, a dhampir bodyguard is still more prestigious than a ghoul – in fact, creating such bodyguards and hand servants is a popular reason to have dhampir children – and that prestige can be everything for a vain vampire.

A valued dhampir subordinate makes a good target for reprisals or blackmail against his mother, as well. It takes a long time to replace a dhampir – in fact, 20 years, more or less – so even when the loss is not exceptionally emotionally resonant, he is still hard to replace, much more so than a ghoul or hireling. A particularly sneaky dhampir can even create false assassination or blackmail attempts to try to secretly extort his mother.

## *Nights Amongst Monsters*

A typical day in the life of a dhampir will look very different for a dhampir deeply immersed in the All Night Society, compared to one who instead spends her nights hunting

monsters. And for those who know nothing of their heritage and nature, things are different yet again.

## *Dhampir in the Dark*

Dhampir have carved out their own place in the nocturnal world, though they always stand apart from — and the covenants often place them beneath — Kindred. Most statuses Kindred can achieve are also achievable for dhampir, with the notable exceptions of joining the Invictus, along with a few specific roles in the Circle of the Crone and among the Sanctified.

That said, dhampir face their own problems, chief of which is their reputation as murderers and renegades. Relatively few dhampir hunt vampires (though proportionally more often than mortals, their low numbers mean dhampir hunters are still few and far between), but these few, along with their depictions in myths and pop culture, have earned the dhampir some measure of wary respect from their wholly damned family. A dhampir among vampires has a threat profile higher than it should justifiably be, and that means he must watch his back constantly, or someone might just stick a knife there.

That said, a large portion of these dhampir have a patron in the form of their Kindred parent, affording them some measure of protection. So long as they stay on daddy's good side, any strike against the dhampir is an attack on the vampire, which discourages excessive adventurism. Of course, this protection comes at the cost of independence, as these dhampir mostly have their whole lives regimented by their parents, who after all had them for a reason; at the very least, they must run errands fairly frequently.

Parentless dhampir have more freedom, but pay for it in danger. They have given up a bit of safety for a great deal of liberty, but that safety is vital for survival in such a dangerous environment. For this reason, independent Society dhampir usually cultivate strong friends, often trying to find a coterie to fit into or enough minor vampires to lean on to secure their places.

Dhampir also prize mundane resources — money and secular power can buy a lot of conventional security, and are also tempting for Kindred. And being able to provide things some vampires want or need, such as rare films or drugs at a reasonable price, can buy some measure of loyalty from vampires who don't want to see their valued supplier run dry of goods because they ran dry of blood.

## *Dhampir at Dusk*

Though those dhampir who hunt their full-blooded kind are a minority by far, the dhampir vampire killer is a frightening prospect. To the Kindred, it recalls the stories of the 70s California Eagle Killer who left behind a feather with every headless Kindred body, and Pyre Jack, who burnt his vampire cousins on the stake throughout Birmingham's 1910s — or even the legendary Blood-Stained Cavalier who menaced newly-

founded St. Petersburg's nocturnal population, mortal and vampire alike, in the 1700s.

Some dhampir hunt like normal humans do, fighting with a group of like-minded sorts, while some hunt solo, relying on their own cunning as well as Breaks and Malisons to provide the needed edge over their Kindred quarry. Whatever the case, dhampir hunters draw upon their tainted blood often and early, either from natural inclination, or from having learned the hard way how close a thing their chosen path often is. They stand with one leg in the daylit world and one leg in damnation, trying to turn their monstrous side into a weapon while also fighting against its influence.

Known dhampir hunters not only face the fear and hatred of the Kindred, but are viewed askance by fully human hunters as well. To have vampire blood in one's veins is to be part of the darkness that hunters are trying to put out, to be impure and potentially dangerous — in short, to be a monster. And perhaps that monster is useful, and perhaps that's enough to make it a compatriot in the struggle. But then again, is it worth the risk? Most hunters consider fellow hunter groups containing dhampir to be inherently compromised "cancer cells" because of their presence, and not many dhampir can honestly say they feel safe in the presence of their comrades-in-arms.

Some dhampir have formed a group called the Boogeymen, focused on hunting vampires using their innate corrupt gifts. The name comes from the fearsome reputation a dhampir hunter can enjoy among vampires, and is symbolic of the irreverent, sometimes reckless, tactics they use. To be a Boogeyman leads to a short life expectancy, keeping the group's numbers low. Each city generally has at most one cell, and its members can usually be counted on one hand, with the total number of cells probably numbering roughly a dozen. The group operates in a "honeycomb" structure, with independent cells which keep in touch via highly secure online channels, forming more of a movement than a true organization. This allows the Boogeymen as a whole to survive despite the elimination of a cell by their Kindred enemies being a fairly frequent occasion.

The Boogeymen's lack of respect for their trade and their enemies is mirrored by their lack of respect for themselves. Redemption is a common theme in Boogeyman ideology: vampirism is the ultimate sin and evil, and being tainted by Kindred blood makes them into monsters and inferior beings. They accept mortal members as well, but in a distinctly secondary and somewhat patronizing role — mortal lives are fragile and precious, to be protected and placed on a pedestal.

The Boogeymen also willingly provide help and support for independent dhampir hunters, though association with other hunter groups is often enough to make them cut the connection.

They are loud, proud, and rowdy, and not too concerned with making absolutely sure they have the right target. To them, hunting is basically an extreme sport bound up with psychological issues surrounding redemption and inferiority, and that redemption can only be found in dying for the right cause. No Boogeymen parties are quite as raucous as their wakes.

## Dhampir in Daylight

The mortal lives of dhampir can seem quite similar to their fully mortal relatives and friends, but the taint of darkness has a way of making its presence felt. Even a life entirely untouched by anything else still takes on a decidedly vampiric shade, as dhampir are troubled people at the best of times.

It all begins in the teenage years. Already difficult enough for most kids, the dhampir finds herself developing strange powers and dark moods that just don't fit with what her peers are going through. The powers might seem neat at first, but eventually, she begins to realize that her conscious control over them is limited.

When her mother dies in a car accident, the young dhampir can feel it deep in her blood. She knew it before it happened, she knows it before she is told, and that argument she had with her mother last night? The one where the kid said she wished she'd never been born and she wished that her mother was dead? She knows things occasionally just happen around her when she wants them to — did she kill her mother?

Ominous events surround a dhampir even when fully adult. Things don't turn out quite right, she gets what she wants but not how she wants it. Sometimes, she can feel something deep and dark inside her stirring, something monstrous — to a dhampir, the idea that everyone has a dark side is much more direct and immediate, and that dark side is terrifying.

Dhampir tend to end relationships and lose jobs. Even the

best-adjusted dhampir every so often snaps and does something stupid, and afterwards, for the life of her, she can't remember *why*. It was pointless, out of character maybe, and she didn't want to act that way before or after. It's like possession, lashing out for no reason and every reason because something else took over for a bit.

Adult dhampir with no idea of their heritage tend to suspect something. They're not quite normal, but they have no idea why. Their "symptoms" only vaguely match certain conditions, but if they try to get treatment, it's entirely worthless. Therapy can help, but when the therapist has no idea what's going on with his patient, it only goes so far.

Dhampir who know of, but reject, their ancestry fare slightly better. They at least know what's wrong with them, even though they can't do much about it. A few resources exist for dhampir to cope with their rare state, online and in the form of dhampir therapists who help others of their kind through the rough spots, but these are hard to find and by necessity hidden and obscure. A dhampir needs to be clever and resourceful, or be in touch with other unusual sorts, to find these things. Most never do.

The dhampir blood does not breed true, and creating a family can sometimes be difficult both in terms of keeping partnerships and raising children. Often dhampir choose to be child-free for fear of messing someone else up as much as they are. Sometimes two dhampir will try to make a family together, but the rarity of two being in the same place at the same time makes this unlikely in the extreme.

## Dhampir Character Creation

To play a dhampir is a question of choice. Dhampir are always faced with choices — Cover up my mother's crimes, or expose them? Fight the vampires, or embrace them? And these decisions shape who they are. The most compelling dhampir stories are the ones where the dhampir in question is pulled between both sides of his nature, and has to learn how to cope with both, and maybe even draw strength from both.

The dhampir vampire hunter is a natural archetype, with examples stretching from modern pop culture all the way to the emergence of half-vampires in Balkans folklore. It is an idea that presents itself easily to a player who wants to play a character who hunts monsters despite not being quite human himself — and it is a way to give a hunter a natural and unseverable connection to the Kindred.

A coterie of *Vampire: The Requiem* Kindred can easily contain a dhampir, whether as an equal or in a more servile position. This character is likely to face conflict and opposition, with the vampire members having a distinct edge of discomfort around her, but it will rarely escalate to hostility. Dhampir cannot be Embraced, nor commit diablerie.

Dhampir also fit in excellently in games of *Hunter: The Vigil* as comrades-in-arms, whether they use their powers openly or keep them hidden. The question of trust is a major theme of this concept — does the dhampir trust his companions with his

true nature? When they discover the truth, do they trust him not to betray them to his mother?

Moreover, dhampir are natural centers of attention in mixed groups. They can bring the Kindred into any chronicle without focusing the story on vampires. They also serve as excellent glue, keeping Kindred together with other characters, and the vampire connection is far less threatening to other beings with their own inhuman abilities with which to defend themselves. They also make good protagonists in their own right, and can interact with many different parts of the *Chronicles of Darkness* without feeling shoehorned in.

## The Concept

With all that in mind, dhampir concepts are varied and many. Ask yourself if your character being a dhampir is core to her concept, or simply adds some more flavor and depth to a character who could have been something else instead. The latter is a perfectly acceptable way of creating a dhampir character — everyone works differently. You might have a character who lacks a certain something to connect the *Chronicles of Darkness* around her more solidly, and in that case, playing a dhampir gives many such hooks without being too mechanically or conceptually imposing.

## The Execution

Dhampir were created for a reason. When making your dhampir character, you must choose that reason. Was she made to be a political pawn or showpiece, to put her father's enemies off-balance in negotiations? Was she intended to be a vampire hunter all along, created by a repentant father who wanted to free the world of his kind? Did her father want a servant, or a mask of mortal life to hide behind? Or was she created to be dissected in a laboratory, or cross-bred with sleepwalkers and stigmatics?

Then, you must decide how the character relates to that role. Whether she still fulfills it or not, her intended purpose somehow marked her life and upbringing. Even a dhampir infant stolen away in the night by a scared mother to raise far away from her frightful father must still deal with the knowledge that her father had a purpose in mind for her, and that he might return to try to impose it upon his prodigal daughter. And if she was raised in a situation where she had contact with the Kindred parent, then she will likely have been groomed in some way for her future.

Consider her upbringing and purpose of creation when choosing Abilities and Specialties in particular. Some of these are likely to have been imposed from without, to prepare her for her role. An angry, antisocial vampire killer might still have dots in Socialize from when her father tried to turn her into the perfect spy; conversely, a computer security expert whose great passion is restoring obscure old silent movies might still have a couple of dots in Brawl and a Specialty in Looming Silently under Intimidate from her father's efforts to turn her into a leg breaker for his gun running operation.

Also, take a moment to think about her night-to-night (or even day-to-day) life. She might have a formal profession within mortal society, or she might exist on its periphery, but in either case, certain Abilities are likely to present themselves. The Kindred concepts of Mask and Dirge do not apply to dhampir, but it can still be useful to think along those lines when creating dhampir characters who lead double lives.

## Destinies

Dhampir are touched by fate, haunted by strange good fortune and surrounded by uncanny mishaps that never seem to strike themselves. Fate twists itself around them, speeding them along and tripping them up as it sees fit, but they are not slaves to destiny. Indeed, the relationship is much more mutual than that, with each mutilating the other's plans back and forth in an endless stubborn waltz.

To some extent, a dhampir's destiny is set for her, but she can also influence it herself and draw strength from it when she needs to. This is represented by her Destiny, a third trait that helps in recovering Willpower, accompanying Virtue and Vice. Unlike Virtues and Vices, though, Willpower can be recovered equally by following or denying that Destiny, and when Willpower is regained in this way, the character also takes a Beat.

In order to recover Willpower from her Destiny, a dhampir must choose a course of action that directly leads towards fulfilling that goal, or directly away from it. Simply choosing not to follow her Destiny is not enough.

For instance, if Daniel's Destiny is Kinslayer, then he will earn a point of Willpower and take a Beat for convincing a group of vampire hunters to accompany him to his mother's haven, or he would earn one for handing her a list of ways someone could breach that haven. He would earn nothing for simply not killing his mother — that places the goal no closer or further away.

Only one point of Willpower and one Beat may be earned this way per session. If the Destiny is ever fulfilled or rendered impossible, the dhampir recovers all Willpower and takes a Beat. At the start of the next story, the player then chooses a new Destiny for her character. If Daniel either slays his mother, or his mother meets her Final Death without his help, he regains all his Willpower and takes a Beat in this way. When the next story begins, Daniel's player chooses the Vengeance for My Mother Destiny instead.

Destinies should never be easy to achieve ("Eat a Hamburger") or near-impossible ("Destroy New York City"). A Destiny represents the dhampir's struggle with his own nature, and a give-and-take between doing what he is meant to do and denying it. The Destiny system is deliberately designed to make working both towards achieving and preventing the Destiny at the same time a worthwhile approach, symbolizing a dhampir's conflicted relationship with his fate. The one Willpower per session limit is intended to avoid having Destiny overwhelm the game. Dhampir characters' Destinies should generally be chosen by the players and Storyteller both, in such a way as to fit into the chronicle's themes and background. A dhampir is more or less aware of his Destiny.

Some example Destinies are:

- **Kinslayer** — kill your vampire parent; make killing the parent as close to impossible as can be done.
- **Vengeance** — find and punish someone who committed a specific wrong; permanently abandon the vendetta.
- **Authority** — achieve a particular position within the All Night Society, probably in a covenant; ensure that position will never be achievable.
- **Powerful Friend** — make a specific, particularly influential group or Storyteller character into your ally; make them into an enemy instead.
- **Find the Relic** — obtain a legendary object, such as the Spear of St. Longinus; destroy that object instead, or determine it never existed.
- **Fame and Fortune** — become a celebrity in mortal society; become notorious instead.
- **Dark and Glorious Power** — achieve for yourself abilities outside of those a dhampir normally wields; destroy a potential source of such power.

- **Selling Your Soul**—become the eternal minion, by Vinculum or other means, of a specific dark power; destroy that power instead.

In addition to this, all dhampir gain the Omen Sensitivity and Thief of Fate Merits for free; see the Merits section on pp. 44–45.

## The Chronicle

In general, most dhampir characters fit within one of a few categories. These are **servants to Kindred**, who usually serve their vampiric parents as expected; **independents among vampires**, who carve out their own places in the All Night Society; the **lone vampire hunters**, who stalk their prey without a cell or coterie; **blessedly ignorant citizens**, whose ancestry is all but guaranteed to come back and haunt them; and the **dhampir who reject their heritage** and live among mortals, in full knowledge of what they are. Each of these represents a potential chronicle, or particular characters within chronicles following different themes.

- **Servants to Kindred** fit in well in a vampire-focused chronicle, whether as a lackey of another player character or a coterie member fighting to regain his independence without pissing off mom too much.

- **Independents among vampires** function similarly to Kindred characters, and fit into the same sorts of chronicles. They usually have to stay in the good graces of some Kindred, *any* Kindred, to remain safe unless they have some significant resource at their disposal. If neither

is true, the character is at risk from personal enemies or vampires who simply hate dhampir, and the Storyteller should draw upon this for inspiration.

- **Lone vampire hunters** function well as the focus of a solo chronicle, or as a character for a player who can only attend the game at a session-by-session basis. Otherwise, care must be taken to integrate her into the chronicle without disrupting everyone else's character concepts. These dhampir live up to the most threatening stereotypes of their kind, and will face added danger because of this, so reasonable grounds for such a character joining a coterie might involve a particular threat from a powerful enemy Kindred or faction.
- **A blessedly ignorant citizen** is quite similar to most mortals in the *Chronicles of Darkness*, unaware of what is happening around him and keeping his head down. These characters fit in well alongside mortal characters in a chronicle involving their exposure to the supernatural. They are especially well suited as a player option in chronicles involving minor templates such as psychics, stigmatics, or sorcerers. This is a versatile option suitable for many games dealing with the discovery of the supernatural.
- The **dhampir who reject their heritage** are also good potential fits for many chronicles. In a chronicle featuring Kindred heavily, whether as protagonists or Storyteller characters, the story of their being pulled back into the nocturnal world is a natural development. Their abilities also make them well suited as player characters in other chronicles, including **Beast: The Primordial** and particularly **Changeling: The Lost**. They are also a natural fit for chronicles which cross over various *Chronicles of Darkness* game lines.

## Children of the Damned — Dhampir Creation Quick Reference

For full rules, please refer to p. 79–80 of *Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition* and use steps one through four. Furthermore, the section on creating ghoul characters on pp. 297–298 of *Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition* also provides a useful reference.

**Step One:** Concept. Choose a concept and three Aspirations.

**Step Two:** Attributes. Assign Attribute dots: 5/4/3

**Steps Three & Four:** Skills and Skill Specialties. Assign Skill dots: 11/7/4. Then assign three Specialties.

**Step Five:** Dhampir Traits. Gain Blood Sense (p. 33), as well as the Omen Sensitivity and Thief of Fate Merits (p. 45). Choose a Destiny. Note the character's parent clan, and that clan's associated Doom (p. 32) and Affliction (p. 43).

**Step Six:** Merits. Select 10 dots of Merits. Remember the new dhampir-specific Merits introduced in this chapter on pp. 44–45. Unseen Sense is not available to dhampir characters. You may spend Merit dots to buy Malisons, at a cost of 3 dots per Malison.

**Step Seven:** Powers: Gain 3 free Twist dots and the parent clan unique Twist, and 1 dot in each of his parent's clan themes:

- **Daeva:** Attention, Desire, Submission
- **Gangrel:** Adaptation, Release, Subsistence
- **Mekhet:** Identity, Paranoia, Secrets
- **Nosferatu:** Grotesquerie, Solitude, Terror
- **Venture:** Birthright, Control, Victory

**Step Eight:** Advantages. Willpower is Resolve + Composure. Integrity is 7. Size is 5. Health is Size + Stamina. Speed is Size + Strength + Dexterity. Defense is Athletics plus the lower of Dexterity or Wits. Initiative Modifier is Dexterity + Composure.

## Diamonds and Rust

Dhampir have some advantages Kindred do not enjoy. While they have no true Beast, they still have parts of the Beast's psychology baked into their minds. Their parents' Beasts are also their parents, in a sense, and they inherit from that side of the Kindred as well. To a dhampir, the vestigial Beast's attitudes and abilities are a part of her, inherently, and not something that can be separated out and named like the Beast. Most importantly, they can sense vampires, but they cannot themselves be sensed in return. This ability makes dhampir excellent blood hounds and hunters, whether working with others or on their own. It can also be used by unscrupulous dhampir to get rid of completely innocent people because "He's a vampire, honest, I can sense it!"

One major advantage dhampir enjoy over their vampiric relatives is that they are comparatively innocuous. The reputation dhampir have, justified or not, as vampire hunters means that dhampir who are aware of their heritage must get good at making allies, or at least at setting up contingency plans. An ability to make allies plus a less odious nature means that they can manage to worm their way into many different communities throughout the hidden world. The fact that dhampir have a sixth sense for the stranger creatures of the world gives them a way to escape into other societies than that of the Kindred, if they are skilled and diplomatic enough.

Dhampir fit in, though somewhat poorly, most places. They can run with werewolves or brush shoulders with mages with

some effort, and being a dhampir alone rarely gets someone killed. This gives them a versatility and freedom of movement that few other beings can hope to match. If someone truly wants to see as much of the World of Darkness as possible, being a dhampir is one of the best skeleton keys they can have. The well-traveled dhampir can also call on more varied resources than almost anyone else – if anyone can assemble a rag-tag team of vampires, demons, and Prometheans at all, then it is probably him. This ability to bring outside-context solutions to occult problems makes dhampir dangerously unpredictable adversaries.

## Doom

When a vampire tastes a dhampir's blood, she suffers a Doom based on the dhampir's parent clan. Destiny protects its wards, and dhampir blood still contains a trace of the power of the blood bond, though twisted and warped. Each dhampir lineage is protected by a specific Doom, a cracked mirror of the clan's curse that gives the dhampir power over those who partake of her semi-Vitae.

A Doom may be invoked when a vampire tastes the blood of a dhampir. The dhampir in question may then reflexively spend a Willpower point to place the assailant under the effect of his Doom, inflicting something akin to but different from



the Vinculum upon her. The repercussion the vampire suffers depends on the dhampir's lineage:

**Daeva:** The blood is powerful and seductive. The dhampir becomes someone the vampire wants to know, badly. Some Daeva deliberately arrange to have themselves placed under this Doom for the sheer thrill of it. The character who drank the blood gains the Swooning Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 306) for the dhampir.

**Gangrel:** The Beast is invigorated and intoxicated, rearing up and ready to pounce. It will suffer no submission and accept nothing but complete dominance. The character who drank his blood gains the Competitive Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 302), with an effective Blood Potency equal to the dhampir's Stamina.

**Mekhet:** Hidden mysteries whisper in the vampire's mind, but are then snuffed out like a candle. Shadowy cobwebs infiltrate her memories, and make them secret to her. The character who drank the blood gains the Confused Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 301).

**Nosferatu:** The vampire's Beast sees its kin in the dhampir's subconscious, horribly malformed and partially merged with his mind, and it feels a cold, queasy dread. The character who drank the blood gains the Shaken Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 305) and can only resolve it on a roll pertaining to the dhampir.

**Venture:** The dhampir becomes the master of the vampire's subconscious mind. The blood binds her to him, and she feels the telltale strains of the Vinculum begin to play, but weak and soft, as if from a great distance. The character who drank the blood gains the Mesmerized Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 305) regarding the dhampir, but does not suffer memory loss after the Condition resolves or fades.

## Blood Sense

Dhampir can sense monsters, and especially Kindred. How this sense manifests is personal, and partially based on parent clan. Daeva-descended dhampir find unusual beings to be fascinating and strange, sensing that there is something beneath the surface. Those of Gangrel blood can smell that something is off, setting their hair on end. Dhampir with Mekhet parentage see it in the monster's eyes and body language, and Nosferatu dhampir feel a fearful chill and thrill run down their spine. The children of Venture feel a sense of inferiority and an urge to assert authority over the creature in question. The Blood Sense follows the same mechanics as the Unseen Sense Merit from *Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 124, and as a result, dhampir may not purchase that Merit – they already enjoy the benefits of every permutation of it.

When a vampire is nearby, a dhampir can sense it more keenly. They feel that part of their mind that descends from the Beast stir and shift. In addition to the benefits the Unseen Sense Merit would provide, the player of a dhampir who encounters

a being suspected to be supernatural is entitled to a roll to determine whether or not that creature is a vampire. At the Storyteller's discretion, she may roll the dice in secret and simply tell the player what his character finds out, whether true or false. The results of the roll apply to every individual character in a scene, but can only be used against single characters – if faced by a crowd, the dhampir can only sense whether there are vampires in it or not, and does not know which members they are.

**Action:** Reflexive or Instant

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Empathy

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** You misinterpret the stirrings of your subconscious, whether as hunger, lust, or just boredom. You see vampires where there are none, and nothing where vampires stand.

**Failure:** You sense nothing conclusive, one way or the other. You have no answers, and you know it.

**Success:** You draw the right conclusion, seeing mortals as mortals and vampires for what they truly are.

**Exceptional Success:** Not only do you sense whether or not a person is a vampire, you can tell what their clan is. If this ability targets a crowd, then you can sense approximately how large a proportion of the group are vampires, but you can still not pinpoint individuals.

## Blood Lust

Hunger is a vampire's companion, and their children inherit it, though not in full. Though dhampir are no more capable of stomaching raw blood than regular people are – blood, being an irritant, comes back up if consumed in significant amounts – they still feel the craving. Once ignited, it kicks in and stays. They jones for it, they want it bad, they can never shake it completely again, but they can't really drink much... unless it's Kindred blood. Dhampir cannot become ghouls, but they can be blood bonded like anyone else, and they become addicted to Kindred Vitae just like vampires do.

Vampire blood sits well in a dhampir's belly, and it is a tempting target. Part of the reason why dhampir have a reputation for hunting vampires is this craving that only their undead kin can satisfy, and that is also part of why so many dhampir remain in their parents' servitude. Serving a vampire can provide that delicious Vitae, but there are dhampir who prefer to retain their independence no matter the cost.

Of course, some dhampir get by with bloody steaks and blood-based foods, especially those who have no idea what they truly are, but those are still not enough to really scratch that itch. Dhampir are also often found in the BDSM subculture, especially those parts involving blood and blood play. It's a natural progression for dhampir to start getting the wires mixed up for their hunger and the joy of consuming blood with their sexual side, in a way that simply isn't as compelling to Kindred (who are, after all, dead).

## Supernatural Tolerance and Clash of Wills

Dhampir don't normally have a Supernatural Tolerance trait. Twists can temporarily provide one, but otherwise they count as ordinary mortals for the purpose of contesting supernatural powers. If a Twist opposes another supernatural power directly and provokes a Clash of Wills, the dhampir rolls her dot rating in the Twist's theme + her Resolve; Malisons that provoke Clashes use her Resolve + current number of Health boxes filled with lethal or aggravated damage instead.

## Blood Sympathy

Dhampir also suffer blood sympathy to their parents. A dhampir is as close in the Blood as a childe, and is subject to tracking or targeted blood sorcery just like Kindred blood relations are. However, unlike Kindred, dhampir have no way to turn it around in their favor – they lack the tools to take advantage of it, and have no knowledge of their blood sympathy unless told. It can come as a nasty surprise.

## Marks of Damnation: Twists, Malisons, and Afflictions

Most kids inherit traits like brown eyes and freckles from their parents. Dhampir kids inherit cursed powers instead, the uncanny abilities that mark them as freakish outsiders among humans, and dangerous but valuable tools among vampires. Dhampir command two types of supernatural abilities: Twists and Malisons. Some Twists cost Willpower to use, and all Malisons require self-inflicted blood sacrifice to activate.

Dhampir manifest their first powers when they undergo puberty or another life-changing experience. Some show signs of bending fate to their will at even younger ages, prompted by nothing apparent. Times of great stress, emotion, or need can provoke an increase in power, often by accident. Exposure to vampiric Disciplines, Vitae, or predatory auras is a fairly reliable way to trigger new abilities, especially if the dhampir reacts strongly, and the Ordo Dracul has a long history of experimenting with this phenomenon to see what monstrous curiosities it can squeeze out of living blood.

## Turns of Fate

The Kindred and their half-damned children call the dhampir's subtler powers *Twists* – more unnatural instinct than natural talent, they're strokes of fortune and assertions of her heritage expressed through the Curse of her vampiric parent's clan. Twists don't align directly with Disciplines, filtered as they

## Insomnia

The dhampir are children of twilight, day and night existing together in an uneasy combination. Sometimes, curses and tainted blood shows itself in subtle and sinister ways, or in flashy and destructive ways. But sometimes, it just gives you something tedious and mundane to struggle against, something you could possibly have had anyway but now there's no chance you won't. That's the case with dhampir and sleep.

Very few dhampir manage to sleep soundly. Most have insomnia, or the opposite problem, sleeping far too long. Day and night affects them strangely – their sleep cycle is detached from the world around them, independent and in motion. The innate human sleep clock is individual, ranging from somewhere just short of 24 hours up to 26 at the extreme. It's kept in check by the natural cycle of night and day, the morning light and evening darkness.

This natural cycle does nothing to dhampir, at all. They are disconnected from it, their bodies setting their own paces, and if that pace does not roughly match the day-night cycle, then they are not going to match it, either. As a result, dhampir can have trouble keeping down a nine-to-five job, always miserably tired and sleepy throughout their days. They can have trouble setting schedules, knowing that there is no way to know when they will be awake. Conversely, many have trouble getting to sleep at all, feeling naturally wakeful in day and at night equally.

are through living flesh and fate. The trace amounts of Vitae in her system aren't enough to simulate the terrible depth of power a vampire's Beast provides. Twists manifest instead in broad strokes, running along the general themes of her parent's clan.

Each clan grants its dhampir access to three Twist themes, as follows:

- **Daeva:** Attention, Desire, Submission
- **Gangrel:** Adaptation, Release, Subsistence
- **Mekhet:** Identity, Paranoia, Secrets
- **Nosferatu:** Grotesquerie, Solitude, Terror
- **Venture:** Birthright, Control, Victory

## Learning Twists

Like their undead parents, dhampir gain these powers instinctively and, left to their own devices, can only use them within the themes that come from their parent's clan. Children descended from a Kindred bloodline inherit Twist themes from that bloodline's originating clan.

Twists and Themes both have dot values ranging from one to three. A player purchases Twists as one off abilities, with higher rated abilities inherently having more power. She can then use these Twists within any Theme in which she invests at

least one dot. The more dots she has in her Theme, the more powerful some of her Twists become. A player can purchase dots in another clan's Theme only if his dhampir first has significant exposure to a vampire of that clan — for instance, if the vampire inflicts her Disciplines upon him or he drinks the vampire's Vitae.

Most Twists are available to all dhampir, but each clan also grants a unique Twist that only dhampir descended from that clan can use. Clan Twists only function with the clan's Themes.

Twists cost 1 Experience per dot. A dhampir character begins the game with three free Twist dots to distribute however the player likes, as well as his innate clan Twist, and one free dot in each of his parent's clan Themes. Additional Theme dots from his parent's clan cost 1 Experience each, while out-of-clan Theme dots cost 2 Experiences each.

## Using Twists

Dhampir use their subtler powers instinctively. They can practice improving their facility as with any other skill, and employ them whenever they like, but even those who try not to use their tainted gifts can do so without meaning to. Intent fuels them — the dhampir wants something, and fate or her curse makes it happen, though not always in the way she planned. Twists are subtle enough that she may not even know she's doing anything unnatural until someone proves it to her. Of course, regardless of whether the *character* uses her powers deliberately, the *player* always has full control over them. The Storyteller may offer the player a Beat in exchange for letting her character use a Twist unintentionally in a way that complicates her life.

Some Twists have effects based on other supernatural abilities that fall within a Theme. The specific effects of an ability, rather than its nature or source, determine whether it falls under the Theme; for instance, powers of the Nightmare Discipline always qualify for Terror because they all impose fear, but would only qualify for Solitude if the particular fear the vampire chose to inflict called upon being alone.

Unless otherwise specified, using a Twist is a reflexive action and has no cost.

## Daeva Themes

See me. Want me. Take me.

### Daeva Twist: *Me, Me, Me*

Spend a Willpower point when the Storyteller makes a Social roll or uses a Social supernatural ability against anyone in the scene that aligns with one of the Daeva Themes. The dhampir forcibly replaces the original target with himself.

### Attention

Any attention is better than none at all. He needs an audience and doesn't care where it comes from. He wants to be the center

of the universe. He takes every opportunity to show off, and distract eyes away from anything that isn't him. His Twists work toward this end, keeping him from fading into the background and giving him insight into fates that involve him or that would make someone else more important.

### Desire

He's an irresistible master of seduction and a peerless heartbreaker. He knows what you want and what he wants, and he's in full control of both. He's your best friend, even if you know he's also your greatest enemy, and every deal with him is a deal with the devil. His Twists pull people toward him like a magnet, governing lust and infatuation, and ensure that his desires are always his own. His prophecies speak of unrequited love and how hard you'll fall for him.

### Submission

When you win, he wins too. In letting you have whatever you want, he condemns you. He gives and gives, and everything you receive draws you inevitably closer to him. He knows your secret urges and he'll fulfill them gladly — you don't even have to ask. Just prepare to regret it later. His Twists reward him for surrendering to others and succumbing to his own doom. The omens he sees promise that whatever sacrifice he makes, others will make it tenfold.

## Gangrel Themes

I'm whatever I want to be. I don't hold anything back. I'll be here long after you're dead and buried.

### Gangrel Twist: Flexibility

Old folklore about dhampir claims they have no bones; this Twist is the origin of that tale. Spend a Willpower point to give the dhampir's bones an elastic consistency. For the rest of the scene, she can contort herself into impossible poses and squeeze into incredibly narrow spaces, even those only a few inches wide. She has effective armor equal to her highest-rated Gangrel Theme against bashing damage, but attacks that deal lethal damage gain the 9-again quality against her.

### Adaptation

Whatever happens, she's ready for it. She can be anything or anyone, fit in anywhere. She doesn't need elaborate plans and setbacks don't bother her. She changes on a dime, much more comfortable altering herself to match the situation than trying to alter others to match her. Her Twists support her in this, working to give her whatever she needs to roll with the punches. Fate gives her insight into evading doom and changing the status quo.

## Release

She does what she likes, takes what she wants, and doesn't give a rat's ass who minds. She's wild and free. She runs roughshod over limitations and inhibitions, lets her basest urges drive her. If she loses herself in the process, who cares? Her Twists reward her for speaking her mind, being selfish, and letting go. They protect her from oppression and captivity. Her prophecies presage forces of nature, events spiraling out of control, and ways to unshackle others, whether they want that or not.

## Subsistence

No matter what you do, she just won't stay down. The closer she comes to death, the more rabidly she fights to stay alive. She refuses to break, refuses to succumb to weakness, and is always the last one standing. She has patience and resilience to outlast you ten times over, and when need be she's the scavenger who scrapes by when the choosy drop dead. Her Twists keep her alive and protect her physical form. She can see how others will fall before her and who she needs to prey upon to sustain herself.

## Mekhet Themes

*You can't trust anyone. You can't keep anything from me. You don't even know who I am.*

### Mekhet Twist: Inside Job

The dhampir creates and discards relationships like changing clothes. By acting like a friend, rival, brother, or other obvious relation to a mortal present, he automatically convinces her and all mortal onlookers that the relationship is real until anyone has a reason to roll Wits + Empathy, contested by the dhampir's Manipulation + (highest-rated Mekhet Theme), to realize otherwise. Out of character behavior or not knowing a particular fact can trigger such rolls. This effect lasts until the dhampir is out of sight or fails a contested roll as above.

## Identity

He's no one and everyone. He makes you question who you are at every turn. He exists only in the cracks between. Masks trade hands on every beat of the dance and once he forces one onto your face, you can't take it off again. You've never met him before but you know him intimately. His Twists cause identity crises, aid him in disguising himself and playing pretend, and play with people's memories. His auguries foretell transformations and give him insight into who others really are.

## Paranoia

Someone's always watching. Maybe it's him, maybe it isn't, but it's definitely *someone*. Innocuous acts hide malicious intent.

He's always ready for the concealed blade, and he makes you fear it too. He knows too much and he says too little, and you can't handle it. He's wearing a mask and he makes you realize you are, too. Everyone is. And those masks could be hiding anything. His Twists make him a skillful fear monger and prepare him for every eventuality, no matter how farfetched. The doom he speaks is all-encompassing and insidious, calling on subtle terrors and creating disaster out of nothing.

## Secrets

He sees through you like you were made of glass. Nothing is sacred. He craves knowledge, the more mysterious the better. If he doesn't know everything yet, he soon will. He's the Venus flytrap that takes in secrets but never lets them out. He's a master of disassociation, misdirection, and confusion. His Twists help him learn everything others don't want him to know, and keep from giving anything away. Fate reveals lost prophecies and puzzles to him, and lets him doom others to obscurity.

## Nosferatu Themes

*You fear what you don't understand. You fear you'll end up like me. You fear everything.*

### Nosferatu Twist: Kneejerk Reaction

Whenever the dhampir takes lethal or aggravated damage in one of her three rightmost Health boxes, or suffers a Physical Tilt, she may spend a Willpower point to prompt an involuntary reflex in an onlooker. The wound seems much more disgusting and extreme than it should be, fascinates the victim in ways it shouldn't, or scares him off from further violence. The victim suffers from an appropriate Tilt, such as Insensate (*Chronicles of Darkness*, p. 285) or Stunned. The dhampir can trigger this Twist with self-inflicted wounds.

## Grotesquerie

She lives in the uncanny valley. You feel sick just talking to her. She delights in things that make your skin crawl and laughs at your discomfort. She's infectious. She shows you what's behind the curtain and you wish you'd never opened your eyes. Her Twists support the old dhampir legend that says they're recognizable by their uncouth appearances, making some aspect of her body or features seem gross and unnatural, and inflicting the same fate on others. She speaks dooms eerie and unsettling, and sees what people are most ashamed of about themselves.

## Solitude

Her presence makes you feel more detached, bringing up walls between you and everyone you know. You feel sorry for her, watching her stand on the outside looking in. She blends into her surroundings like a movie extra while the

world passes her by. Her Twists inflict isolation and longing upon her victims, and let her move unseen and unnoticed. Her dire warnings predict betrayal and loss, and grants insight into pariahs and loners.

### Terror

She comes from a deep, dark place and she belongs there. She brings fear to others and welcomes it like a lover in herself. She's a master of nightmares and intimidation, inflicting fever dreams with her stare. Her Twists protect her mental fortitude and make her victims lose their minds. Her proclamations make people fear what's to come and build worst-case scenarios for themselves without her needing to fill in the blanks.

### Venture Themes

*My actions are justified. My wish is your command. My game is flawless.*

### Venture Twist: Entitlement

The dhampir convinces people that he belongs among the elite, even if he's a stranger. He may add dice equal to his highest-rated Venture Theme to any Social roll that banks on lineage, status, superiority in skill, or an official position — even if he doesn't have any of those — as long as someone's around who recognizes his name-dropping or could reasonably vouch for him. He can requisition resources from the group to which he claims to belong as long as they're available within the same scene. At the end of any scene in which he uses this Twist, he gains the Leveraged Condition (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 289). He must perform a task or service for the group, or risk transforming it without resolution into the Notoriety Condition instead when they discover his deception.

### Birthright

He gets what he deserves, and he deserves only the best. He's got vampire blood running through his veins, and that gives him the right to do whatever he wants. He's the keeper of tradition and he commands loyalty; bought but never paid for. As far as he's concerned, everything belongs to him. If you disagree, he'll just take it. His Twists support his narcissism and take advantage of any privilege he can remotely claim. The dooms he speaks put him on top of the food chain and his prophecies deal in matters of ancestry, blood relations, and inheritance of all kinds.

### Control

His is the iron fist of pure tyranny. He craves power for its own sake and mastery over everyone — himself above all. He wants your body, mind, and soul all for himself. He's authority without love, your boss but never your friend. He's not only judge, jury, and executioner, but he made all the rules to begin

with. His Twists make him a master of self-discipline and let him discipline others with the same fervor. Prophecy gives him the power to write his own wishes into fate, and the insight to know the price he must pay to buy his victims' complete surrender.

### Victory

Challenge makes him feel alive, and winning makes him feel unstoppable. The worst part is, he's usually right. He'll do anything to come out on top, fair or otherwise. He's an unholy merger of peerless skill and stubborn pride. His Twists work to eliminate the competition and make it look easy. His dire warnings are more like taunts that tear down his rivals' will to go on, and fate gives him glimpses of the best path to emerge triumphant.

### Twists

Below are the Twists available to all dhampir. The Storyteller is always the final arbiter of what actions and circumstances express a given Theme.

#### One Dot

### DISSENT

The character gains a Supernatural Tolerance trait equal to his dots in the Theme which he uses to contest supernatural abilities that fall under the Theme's purview. Whether he succeeds or fails, he's aware of his opponent's attempt.

### BESTIAL ECHO

The dhampir gains a predatory aura like a vampire's. Kindred characters perceive him as something vampire-like when he uses it, but they know he isn't one of them. He can lash out with his aura, but only to emulate the one type of Beast that best reflects the Theme. Substitute the dhampir's dots in the Theme for Blood Potency.

### KARMA

Once per scene, the dhampir may regain a Willpower point whenever she suffers a significant drawback or failure under circumstances that resonate with the Theme.

### FOREBODING

Spend a Willpower point to declare that some dreadful and momentous event that falls under the Theme is about to occur.

The dhampir feels it in his blood like someone walking over his grave. He may turn a number of normal failures during the current scene into dramatic ones equal to his dots in the Theme, rolled by anyone present, as long as the action relates to the doom he foretold. These dramatic failures grant no Beats.

## BLOOD'S CALL

The dhampir can sense his kinship with another dhampir from the Theme's clan on sight. He may not know what it means unless he's already familiar with his own nature, but he knows that something about her makes them the same. This Twist also automatically provokes a Clash of Wills against powers that would conceal a vampire of the Theme's clan from his Blood Sense (p. 33).

## DRAUGHT OF SECRETS

For every two points of a vampire's Vitae the dhampir drinks, as long as he possesses at least one dot in a Theme belonging to her clan, he learns one of the following about her: her clan, dot ratings in one category of Attributes, Mask, Dirge, one Aspiration, Humanity rating, one Condition currently affecting her, identity of one Touchstone.

*Two Dots*

## FATE'S CALL

The dhampir can sense the use of Disciplines, Devotions, and Twists in her presence that fall under the Theme's purview. She doesn't know who used the power or any details about its effects or victims, but she can feel it happen like a dire prophecy coming to pass.

## DRAUGHT OF POWER

For every two points of a vampire's Vitae the dhampir drinks, she chooses one Theme she knows from that vampire's clan. She gains one temporary dot of an Attribute for the scene; which Attribute depends on the Theme, as follows: Attention – Presence; Desire – Manipulation; Submission – Resolve; Adaptation – Wits; Release – Strength; Subsistence – Stamina; Identity – Composure; Paranoia – Wits; Secrets – Intelligence; Grotesquerie – Composure; Solitude – Resolve; Terror – Manipulation; Birthright – Presence; Control – Strength; Victory – Dexterity. The dhampir can't increase any Attribute above five dots.

## DEFIANCE

Spend a Willpower point to immediately provoke a Clash of Wills against any Discipline, Devotion, or Twist currently affecting the dhampir that falls under the Theme's purview.

## SIBYL'S CURSE

The dhampir is always aware when anyone present in the scene suffers a breaking point that aligns with the Theme. She may spend a Willpower point to intuit the results of the roll and choose another character present in the scene upon whom to inflict the Guilty Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 304), verbally cursing him for playing a role in the fateful event. She may do so even when she herself suffers an appropriate breaking point.

## PORTENT

Whenever the dhampir sleeps, she may forgo the Willpower point she would have regained to choose one of her Themes and glean insight into upcoming events through prophetic dreams. Once during the next chapter, she achieves exceptional success on three successes instead of five when taking an action that resonates with the Theme, applied after seeing the roll's result. She can only experience prophetic dreams through one Theme at a time.

## FORTTUITY

Gain the 8-again quality on a number of rolls per chapter that resonate with the Theme equal to the dhampir's dot rating in the Theme.

*Three Dots*

## INTUITION'S CALL

The dhampir can sense the use of *any* supernatural power in his presence that falls under the Theme's purview, as the two-dot Twist above; a player who has already purchased the two-dot version may upgrade it to this Twist for just 1 Experience. The dhampir can tell the difference between vampiric or dhampir powers and those of other beings, but he otherwise can't tell them apart.

## INSURGENCE

Spend a Willpower point to immediately provoke a Clash of Wills against any supernatural power currently affecting the dhampir that falls under the Theme's purview; a player who has already purchased the two-dot version above may upgrade it to this Twist for just 1 Experience.

## DOUBLING DOWN

Activate this Twist when another character resolves a mundane Condition that pertains to the dhampir in his presence, such as Swooned, Shaken, Spooked, Obsession, or Leveraged. With a grand show of intimidation, an electric moment of intimacy, or another reaction that aligns with the Theme, the dhampir raises the stakes. His player rolls as follows:

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + (Theme dots) vs. Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance

**Action:** Instant and contested; resistance is reflexive

### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The dhampir seals his own fate instead of his victim's as his blood turns the tables on him. For the next full chapter, he suffers from one vampiric bane the Storyteller chooses. It could be a general bane like sunlight or fire, or a Humanity-based one. Use the dhampir's Integrity in place of Humanity in all cases.

**Failure:** The dhampir fails to call fate's attention to the event.

**Success:** The dhampir makes the event more dire than it should be, inflicting upon his victim a supernatural or Persistent Condition that ups the ante on the Condition she resolved in a way that expresses the Theme. For instance, Swooned might upgrade to Charmed, Shaken to Frightened, Obsession to Addicted, or Leveraged to Mesmerized. Substitute the dhampir's dots in the Theme for Blood Potency and Discipline ratings where appropriate.

**Exceptional Success:** The supernatural Condition doesn't lapse on its own, requiring proper resolution.

## HEIR'S DRAUGHT

For every two points of a vampire's Vitae the dhampir drinks, she chooses one Theme she knows from that vampire's clan. Treat her dot rating in the Theme as one higher for purposes of scaling effects and rolls, to a maximum of six dots. This lasts for the scene.

**Perdition:** Whenever the dhampir opens a vampire's last Door with a social maneuvering roll that aligns with the Theme, she may spend a Willpower point to force a roll to resist frenzy with a dice penalty equal to her Theme rating. At the Storyteller's discretion, this may work on other supernatural

beings as well, forcing rolls to resist innate weaknesses such as Torment for Prometheans or Death Rage for werewolves.

**Doom's Behest:** Spend a Willpower after the dhampir successfully meditates (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 164) to speak a dire prophecy that supports the Theme, choosing an appropriate goal or topic. It affects all characters who hear it other than the dhampir herself. Everyone affected gains the Obsession Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 305) related to the prophecy, and can only resolve it by suffering a breaking point in pursuit of the obsession.

## Dhampir Blood Magic

The murky origins of the sinister rituals that create dhampir lie beyond knowing in long-festering history, but evidence points to their inception in the blood magic that eventually evolved into Crúac. One powerful piece of this evidence is the dhampir ability to perform *Malisons* — dire curses and reversals of fortune fueled by blood sacrifice. Acolytes believe the first dhampir were born in attempts to infect living beings with the power of the Curse in a way that empowered them rather than making slaves of them, and that it worked because the Blood was eager to spread itself beyond dead veins. *Malisons* are living proof, they say.

### Learning *Malisons*

Dhampir usually learn *Malisons* either through trial and error or spontaneously through self-injury. The hypothesis that a dhampir could teach such powers to another is rarely tested, and what few reports exist are inconclusive — sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Scholars of dhampir lore think it may depend on whether the half-damned in question share the same kind of fate, but they're so few and far between that real evidence would require centuries-long social experiments to gather. Some dhampir assume the covenants are doing just that, and try to infiltrate or rise through the ranks to gain access to the data.

*Malisons* are stand-alone powers and a dhampir can learn any of them at any time, without prerequisite. Each *Malison* costs 3 Experiences.

### Using *Malisons*

To perform a *Malison*, the dhampir must shed her own blood and make the proper pronouncement or signs. Occultists disagree on why only the dhampir's own blood makes her *Malisons* take hold, though the most popular theory is that she must make a meaningful sacrifice to prove to the Blood she's worthy of using it to enact her will, since she isn't and can never be a true blood sorcerer. Others think it's because a dhampir's blood is an agent of fate in a way that Vitae and mortal blood are not. Savvy dhampir don't miss the implication that they might

be able to use *another* dhampir's blood to fuel their curses, but so rarely are two dhampir in the same place at the same time, that the results of trying it aren't well known or documented.

Each Malison costs a certain number of lethal damage points in personal blood sacrifice and a certain amount of time to perform, specified in the text of each one. Malison dice pools always use a Power Attribute + a Resistance Attribute, and if they're contested, the victim may choose to waive his opposition. Even if it takes more than an instant action for the effects to manifest, the dhampir's player only ever rolls once; Malisons are not extended actions. Usually, the dhampir must injure herself with the express intention of powering a Malison — accidents don't count. Other self-inflicted injuries can allow learning and enacting a new Malison on the spot at the Storyteller's discretion, particularly when breaking points, Conditions, or general trauma are involved.

### *Malisons*

Below is a list of Malisons available to all dhampir.

## BLOOD OATH

The dhampir binds another's fate to her own. She must touch the wound she inflicts upon herself to someone else's fresh injury, which must have caused lethal or aggravated damage, sealing the deal in blood. If the victim is unwilling, she may need

to roll to touch him first using Dexterity + Brawl – Defense. Then she must speak an oath aloud, making her intentions to forge the connection clear.

**Cost:** 2 lethal damage

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Resolve vs. Composure + Supernatural Tolerance

**Time:** Instant action

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The dhampir binds herself to her victim, but the effects aren't mutual; only the dhampir gains the Blood Siblings Condition (below).

**Failure:** Fate ignores the dhampir's oath.

**Success:** The dhampir and her victim both gain the Blood Siblings Condition.

**Exceptional Success:** As success, and the victim's Blood Siblings Condition doesn't lapse on its own. It must be resolved normally.

## HARUSPICY

The dhampir examines the entrails of a living being — animal or human — to read fate's omens and predict the future. He must mingle his spilled blood with the innards of the animal and spend time divining the messages laid out therein.

**Cost:** 1 lethal damage



**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Stamina

**Time:** Five minutes

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The Storyteller provides false or misleading information that ties the dhampir's own doom to that of his subject.

**Failure:** The dhampir sees nothing in the entrails but rotting bodily fluids.

**Success:** The dhampir focuses on a single subject, such as a person, an organization, or a town, and learns one piece of information about the subject's doom per success his player achieves on the activation roll. The Storyteller is the final arbiter of what constitutes "doom," but it could include death, capture, betrayal, hostile takeover, destruction, corruption, torpor, etc. Information the Storyteller provides could include roughly the time left before the doom comes to pass, a cryptic clue as to who will be responsible (directly or indirectly), a vague idea of the motivation behind or cause of it, etc.

**Exceptional Success:** The dhampir receives additional pieces of information, as above.

## KATABASIS

Through meditation, the dhampir's blood sacrifice acts as a signpost to lead others away from doom. She must mingle her blood with her subject's own and then drink the mixture, embarking on a journey into his subconscious.

**Cost:** 2 lethal damage

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Resolve vs. Composure + Supernatural Tolerance

**Time:** One hour for normal Conditions, or three hours for Persistent ones

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The dhampir still takes her journey and encounters the embodiment of the Condition she seeks to banish, but once her quest is complete, she gains the Condition instead.

**Failure:** The subject's subconscious rejects the dhampir's interference.

**Success:** The dhampir enters a meditative state and journeys inside her subject's subconscious mind. The Storyteller should preside over a scene in which the dhampir must locate the metaphorical source of a single Condition the subject suffers that was inflicted supernaturally, such as Enthralled or Charmed, and excise it. This always involves some kind of dangerous encounter with the subject himself or some other representation of the Condition, though it needn't be a violent one. The Storyteller is encouraged to involve the other players in this scene as characters the subject knows, acting alongside the dhampir in her quest. Once the encounter resolves in some fashion, the dhampir ends her meditation and the subject's

Condition resolves, granting a Beat as normal. If the dhampir is jarred out of her meditation, such as by suffering an attack or other intense stimulus, or by "dying" on her travels, her journey ends and her quest fails.

**Exceptional Success:** The dhampir may replace the excised Condition with another instance of the same, focused on herself instead of the original inflictor. If the Condition had no such focus, she may instead make the subject Swooned (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 306) for her.

## NEMESIS

The dhampir declares a deadly rivalry with another character present in the scene, setting his fate and hers in opposition, and spills blood to give it weight.

**Cost:** 1 lethal damage

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Resolve vs. Composure + Supernatural Tolerance

**Time:** Instant action

**Duration:** One scene

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The dhampir paints a target on himself but gains no benefit from it. His rival gains the Inspired Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 304) pertaining to opposing him.

**Failure:** The dhampir's foe overcomes the fate he tries to force upon her.

**Success:** The dhampir's pronouncement takes root as a gnawing doubt in his rival's heart. For the duration, the victim cannot spend Willpower on any action that directly opposes him, and he achieves exceptional success on three successes instead of five on any action that directly opposes her.

**Exceptional Success:** The dhampir regains a Willpower point if he defeats his rival during the Malison's duration.

## PALLOR OF DEATH

By performing a short funerary ceremony for herself and shedding her own blood, the dhampir temporarily convinces fate that she's already dead. She may light candles and speak her own eulogy, give herself Last Rites, ritually bathe and shroud herself, or make any other appropriate sign of death.

**Cost:** 2 lethal damage

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Composure

**Time:** Five minutes

**Duration:** One scene

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The ceremony only serves to confuse fate. The dhampir gains the Insensate Tilt (*Chronicles of Darkness*, p. 285).

**Failure:** The dhampir remains hale and healthy-looking.

**Success:** For all intents and purposes, the dhampir seems like a corpse. She has no pulse, is cool to the touch, appears pale and bloodless, and doesn't need to breathe. She can't eat properly and her bodily functions don't work — physically, she can pass as a vampire. Dhampir use this to infiltrate the All Night Society, fake their own deaths, blend in among cadavers, or play asinine pranks.

**Exceptional Success:** The dhampir gains a two-die bonus to any Subterfuge roll she makes to be a convincing vampire or inanimate corpse for the duration.

## SHADOW PLAY

This Malison gave rise to legends that claim a lack of shadow betrays a dhampir's nature. The dhampir splits her fate in two, separating herself from her shadow and letting it roam around to act on its own. She must spill her blood onto her shadow where it lies on the ground and perform a short ceremony of cutting or detaching something. She could slice a sandwich in half with a knife or tear pages out of a book, for example. If she has no shadow, either because she's in complete darkness or fully illuminated from every side, this Malison doesn't work.

**Cost:** 2 lethal damage

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Composure

**Time:** One minute

**Duration:** Special (see below)

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** In trying to split her fate, the dhampir disconnects herself from it entirely. She loses the benefits of her Destiny (p. 30) and her Omen Sensitivity and Thief of Fate Merits for the rest of the scene.

**Failure:** Her shadow remains fully affixed.

**Success:** The dhampir detaches her shadow and it can act on its own. It always follows her will and she can take an instant action to share its senses for as long as she likes, losing her Defense while she does. If the shadow stands in darkness or dim light, it's indistinguishable from real shadows, but if it ventures into bright light, witnesses who succeed at a Perception (Wits + Composure) roll can tell it's not just a person in dark clothes. The same roll can alert onlookers that the dhampir herself has no shadow. The shadow uses the dhampir's traits if it needs to roll, but can't speak and takes a two-die penalty to all Physical actions that require touch. These effects last until the dhampir takes an instant action to re-attach her shadow, which requires touching it, or until she next sleeps or falls unconscious.

**Exceptional Success:** The dhampir's shadow looks more or less like a real person, appearing with full color and detail, although it seems washed out like an old photograph. Witnesses take a two-die penalty to Perception rolls to see that something is odd about it.

## WRACK AND RUIN

The dhampir hastens an inanimate object's destruction. By touching his blood to a mundane object with a proclamation of doom, he curses it to rust, rot, melt, or shatter, as its makeup dictates.

**Cost:** 1 lethal damage

**Dice Pool:** Strength + Stamina

**Time:** Instant action

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The object borrows a measure of the dhampir's supernatural resilience, adding 1 to its Durability trait.

**Failure:** The dhampir's curse is impotent and the object remains intact.

**Success:** Treat the dhampir's touch like a successful attack against the object that bypasses Durability, and can damage parts he can't currently reach as long as they're contiguous — for instance, all the windows in a wall might shatter at once. Add his current Willpower as a weapon damage bonus to the attack. Any object larger than Size 15 only takes damage in a single Size 15 area.

**Exceptional Success:** The dhampir can fully destroy objects of up to Size 25 instead.

## UNMASKING

Beware, all those who would take advantage of a dhampir's mortality.

To use this Malison, the character must call out the perpetrator of a supernatural ability that currently affects him. By doing so, he reveals her nature as something *else*, something wicked.

**Cost:** 1 lethal damage

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Resolve vs. Composure + Supernatural Tolerance

**Time:** Instant action

**Duration:** One scene

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The dhampir throws stones at his own glass house, casting suspicion on himself instead of his assailant. He takes a two-die penalty to all Social rolls except those made to intimidate others, for the scene.

**Failure:** The dhampir's adversary successfully hides what she is.

**Success:** The dhampir reveals his assailant's nature to everyone present, although they may not understand what they're seeing. This manifests as some perceptible clue based on the character's nature. For instance, a Promethean's disfigurements become

visible, or a mage's Nimbus. Alternatively, some connection between what the dhampir suffers and who inflicted it becomes obvious, such as a ghostly chain linking him to the vampire who Mesmerized him.

**Exceptional Success:** The dhampir may also immediately roll a Clash of Wills to try to throw off the effects of the power. If he does, this defiance is also obvious to onlookers.

## Conditions

### BLOOD SIBLINGS

You're bound to another by blood, and your fates are intertwined. You have an obligation to her and your blood makes sure you abide by it whether you want to or not. For the duration, as long as she can directly perceive you, she may spend your Willpower points as though they were her own. Regardless of distance, she can sense you as though you share a thrice-removed blood sympathy relationship. You can communicate to her through that sympathy, rolling Resolve in place of Blood Potency if you don't possess that trait. This Condition lapses on its own after one full story has passed.

**Resolution:** Perform a meaningful act of self-sacrifice on behalf of your Blood Sibling, such as taking a hit for her in a fight or passing on a position of authority to her.

**Beat:** n/a

## Afflictions

Dhampir abilities are ugly scars marring an otherwise human being, the twisted blood magic of the dead filtered through warm flesh and a beating heart. Some young dhampir see their inheritance as amazing superpowers, but that impression never lasts long; it's only a matter of time before the infection that festers inside them rears its self-destructive head and reminds them that their parents aren't gods, but monsters. The dhampir may be a living, breathing person, but she was born from a dead and rotten thing, and her Affliction drives it home whenever she exhausts herself doing something inhuman, something *wrong*.

In game terms, whenever the dhampir spends her last Willpower point to fuel a Twist, or takes damage in one of her three rightmost health boxes to activate a Malison, she gains an Affliction Condition unique to her parent's clan that drags her closer to the Kindred experience. She resolves these Conditions by reaffirming her humanity.

These Afflictions give characters additional Vices, but you can still only regain Willpower from a Vice once per scene.

### DAEVA: MALCONTENT (PERSISTENT)

You were best friends yesterday, but today you just can't bring yourself to give a shit. You resent the way she still talks like you should care, and you resent the way you *don't*. You lash out at her because it's the only thing that feels good. Or feels like anything at all. You get off on ruining your relationships, gaining "Malcontent" as an additional Vice. You regain Willpower from that Vice whenever you deliberately hurt or betray someone who trusts you.

**Beat:** Break off a relationship in a way that hurts the other person somehow.

**Resolution:** Successfully rekindle a broken relationship with a dramatic gesture – and without supernatural influence.

### GANGREL: FERAL (PERSISTENT)

Look at all these pathetic whiners, asking "mother may I?" and apologizing for every little thing. Fuck that. You want something, you take it. Someone hurts you, you hurt them back worse. You feel threatened, you get rid of the threat. You don't care about right or wrong. It's you or them, and you'll make sure it's always you. You start fights whenever you can and never end them voluntarily, gaining "Feral" as an additional Vice. You regain Willpower from that Vice whenever you resort to unnecessary violence.

**Beat:** Make a situation more dangerous for yourself or your allies with violent escalation.

**Resolution:** Refuse to fight when it would be the most expedient or sure solution in the face of a serious threat.

### MEKHET: VOYEURISTIC (PERSISTENT)

You can't help it – you love to watch. You can't pass up the chance to spy on your friends, your enemies, and total strangers. You like it when they're oblivious. You especially like to watch them doing things they shouldn't, or things they're ashamed of. Take a picture, it lasts longer? Maybe you will. You can't stop your sick surveillance, gaining "Voyeuristic" as an additional Vice. You regain Willpower from that Vice whenever you snoop on someone unseen for no good reason.

**Beat:** Get yourself or someone you care about into a dangerous or complicated situation through your spying.

**Resolution:** Deliberately make yourself vulnerable to others by revealing an important secret or weakness, confessing a crime, leaving your safety in someone else's hands, or letting someone else watch you in a compromising or damning situation.

## NOSFERATU: ALIENATED (PERSISTENT)

They don't like you. They don't need you. You pretend you don't care, and tell yourself you never needed them anyway. Your resentment burrows deep and blossoms like a cancer in your heart. It gives you perverse pleasure to push the world away and lurk on its outskirts, a sick indulgence that makes you hate yourself as much as you profess to hate the ones who shunned you. You deliberately make yourself a pariah, gaining "Alienated" as an additional Vice. You regain Willpower from that Vice whenever you push someone away for no good reason or act on resentment.

**Beat:** Cut ties from an organization or community, or suffer harm or serious consequences for your outsider status.

**Resolution:** Make a serious commitment to either an organization or community you already quit, or a new one after causing or getting into trouble associated with it. They must also accept you in turn.

## VENTRUE: DOMINEERING (PERSISTENT)

Other people were put on this Earth to please you. You know it, they know it, and if they don't act like it they're just in denial. You're better in every way. How could they do anything but bend over for you and beg for more? It's your right — hell, your responsibility — to be in charge, and you do it so well you can't see why anyone would defy you. You give orders constantly and expect others to follow them, gaining "Domineering" as an additional Vice. You regain Willpower from that Vice whenever you impose your will on other people without any legitimate claim to authority or for no good reason.

**Beat:** You or your allies get hurt or end up in deep shit because someone obeyed your orders.

**Resolution:** Permanently give up a leadership position, willingly let someone else push you around and humiliate you in front of others, or refuse to take charge in a dire situation when you would be the best suited for it.

### Dhampir Merits

Dhampir can possess any Merits available to mortal characters, and have access to a few Kindred Merits as well. These include: Altar, Cacophony Savvy, Dynasty Membership, Honey Trap, and Kindred Status (up to three dots), as found starting on p. 109 of *Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*.

The following Merits are only available to dhampir characters.

## BELOVED STRANGER (••)

**Effect:** A human family raised your character safely on the daylight side of the Masquerade, but she's always kept secrets. Her journey to self-discovery was made alone, or with just one or two close and trusted companions — a sister, perhaps, or a best friend. She's learned to be self-reliant, nosy, brave, and foolish. Your Mental and Social rolls to poke your nose where it doesn't belong, learn more about the hidden world, and convince uninitiated mortals that nothing is strange when things decidedly *are* achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five. Gain a two-die bonus on breaking point rolls that result from anything supernatural in nature.

**Drawback:** A character with Beloved Stranger cannot have the Night's Child Merit.

## BLOOD DISSONANCE (• TO ••••)

**Effect:** The ritual that created your character didn't work quite as intended, and his tainted blood wars with his beating heart. The two sides of his nature separate like oil and water. Unlike most dhampir, he can pretend for a time that he's just another mortal. Any attempt to identify him as a supernatural being or glean clues to his nature or blood relations with powers prompts an automatic Clash of Wills; roll your character's dots in this Merit plus his Resolve as your dice pool.

Once per story, your character may avoid suffering his Affliction Condition when he otherwise would. If he does, for the next full chapter he takes a penalty to any breaking point rolls prompted by his own actions, the influence of fate, or vampire-related triggers equal to his dots in this Merit.

## HAND OF DOOM (•••)

**Effect:** More than most dhampir, your character is sensitive to the whims of changing fortunes and acts as a catalyst for disastrous prophecies coming to pass. If you succeed at a Wits + Occult roll in the presence of another dhampir, or another character who has a particular destiny of any kind, your character knows the basic details of that destiny. The target may reflexively contest this ability with Composure + Supernatural Tolerance.

Once your character knows about someone else's Destiny, she may regain a point of Willpower and take a Beat as though that Destiny were her own if she takes an action that would help advance (but not defy) it. She may still only benefit from one Destiny — whether her own or someone else's — per chapter.

## MOTHER'S ARMY RECRUIT (• OR ••)

**Prerequisites:** Circle of the Crone Status •

**Effect:** At the one-dot level, this Merit allows your character to participate in Crúac rites that use teamwork as though she were a vampire, though she is incapable of learning the Discipline itself. Her blood counts as Vitae for purposes of Crúac blood sacrifice, and she can sense blood sorcery used on her as the Kindred do. At the three-dot level, this Merit grants all of the above benefits, plus the ability to purchase dots in the Crúac Discipline at a cost of 5 Experiences per dot and blood sorcery rituals at a cost of 3 Experiences each. Replace Humanity with Integrity where appropriate. If you dramatically fail a roll to activate a Crúac rite, your character gains the Scarred Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 305) instead of Tempted.

## NIGHT'S CHILD (••)

**Effect:** Your character was raised within the All Night Society, and acts as a liaison between the dead and the living. She knows who's who in the city, which elders are the easiest to accidentally piss off, and which blood banks are easy marks. She's got a reputation for practical solutions to unnatural problems and an uncanny knack for covering up vampire messes with the daylight crowd. When interacting with uninitiated mortals, other dhampir, and non-Kindred supernatural characters, your Mental and Social rolls pertaining to or made on behalf of vampires achieve exceptional success on three successes instead of five. Your character can talk vampires she knows personally down from frenzy, as though she were a Touchstone.

**Drawback:** A character with Night's Child cannot have the Beloved Stranger Merit.

## OMEN SENSITIVITY (•••)

**Prerequisites:** Wits •••

**Effect:** Your character sees signs and patterns in everything. From the way the leaves fall, to the splatter of blood when he cuts himself, to the ratios of circumference on the shell he picked up on the sidewalk, everything has meaning. With some consideration, he can interpret these meanings. This would be better if he could turn it off. Everything is important. Everything could mean the end of the world, the deaths of his friends and family, or tragedy. If he misses an omen, it might be the wrong one.

Once per game session, you can make a Wits + Occult roll for your character to interpret an omen in his surroundings. For every success, ask the Storyteller a yes or no question about your character's life, his surroundings, a task at hand, or the world at large. The Storyteller must answer these questions truthfully.

**Drawback:** His ability becomes an obsession. Each time he reads a portent, he gains the Obsession or Spooked Condition.

## REQUIEM COUNTERPOINT (•)

**Effect:** Your character is a vampire's Touchstone, and her unique place between worlds makes her a particularly effective one. The vampire could be a player character or a Storyteller character. Whenever the vampire risks detachment in your character's presence, he gains an extra bonus die. If he succeeds, regain a Willpower point; if he rolls an exceptional success, regain all of your Willpower points. If he fails, gain the Guilty Condition (*Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 304); if he dramatically fails, gain the Spooked Condition instead.

## THIEF OF FATE (•••)

**Drawback:** Your character is a magnet for fortune and fate. When she's close to someone, she unintentionally steals their good fortune. If she touches someone, this Merit takes effect unless she spends a point of Willpower to curb the effect for a scene. In the same day, any failures the subject makes are considered dramatic failures. If she's used this Merit at any time in a given day, she gains four dice any time she spends Willpower to increase a dice pool.

**Drawback:** Once a victim of this Merit suffers a dramatic failure, he hears your character's name in the back of his mind. This may inspire scrutiny.

## VAMPIRE HUNTER (• TO ••••)

**Prerequisites:** Wits •••

**Effect:** Your character has fine-tuned his senses, letting his blood reach out to like blood. For each dot in this Merit, he benefits from a single enhanced Kindred sense: sight, hearing, smell, or the ability to glean insight from tasting blood. Substitute dots in this Merit for Blood Potency where appropriate. You enjoy a dice bonus equal to dots in this Merit on all Perception rolls pertaining to vampires, regardless of the sense used.

## Dhampir as Storyteller Characters

No shortage of enmities and rivalries fester between dhampir and their Kindred relatives, and although the vampires assume they have the upper hand, going up against their living children is always messy and unpredictable. Introducing dhampir as Storyteller characters, especially antagonists, in a *Vampire* chronicle allows players to explore the themes of family, rebellion, and omens from the other side. Engaging with dhampir as a vampire is fraught with the same emotional roller coaster, with the added complication of being the establishment. Vampires have little contact with fate as an influence on their unives, so dhampir represent a terrifying and fascinating puzzle to solve or eliminate. The vampire character has the opportunity to delve into the mysteries surrounding a dhampir's life as the spider in the center of her own web rather than the fly learning to fight back, and each twist of fate she uncovers brings her closer to uncomfortable truths and an untimely Final Demise if she isn't careful. On the other hand, if she succeeds, the dhampir becomes her most prized puppet – as long as she can keep hold of the strings.

### Who Are Dhampir Antagonists?

Even when a dhampir doesn't start out as an enemy, it's not hard to slide down that slippery slope. Eventually the vampire gives in to her hunger at the wrong time, in the wrong company. The dhampir hooks up with the wrong coterie and winds up opposite his Kindred folks in an elaborate conspiracy. Maybe the vampire just presses the wrong button one too many times in her struggle to tame the Beast and be a parent, or the dhampir attends one too many disastrous family reunions. Dhampir as antagonists are perfect for complex motivations and sloppy feelings, colliding in a train wreck of story hooks.

### Established Entanglements

The most obvious kind of dhampir to introduce to a *Vampire* chronicle is the child of one of the player characters. If a player decides that her character has created a dhampir and wants him to be part of her story, use Climbing the Ladder, Aspirations, Touchstones, Social Merits, and general guidance from the player to figure out what their lives have been like since the dhampir was born. Only use this kind of dhampir as a straight-up antagonist up front if the player agrees. Otherwise, allow their relationship to develop over the course of the story as it will. If they become enemies this way, so be it – and conflict of some kind is inevitable – but it should be a mutual roleplaying decision rather than the dictates of the plot. Always keep the vampire character's reasons for creating her child in the first place in mind as you decide whether the dhampir accepts his purpose and parent or rejects them. Either way, those original reasons should serve as a prime source of drama, whether the dhampir fights them kicking and screaming the whole way, or

throws himself into them headfirst only to find that the vampire changes her mind about what she wants down the line. Players who want dhampir children as story hooks should be aware that, with a core theme like "rebellion," they're in for a wild ride.

Dhampir antagonists may have more indirect relationships to the player characters that come with their own complications. A dhampir could be the child of a player character's sire or mortal relative, bringing the story back around to familial angst without the direct parental tie. He could be the son of the coterie's deadliest rival, doing his parent's dirty work, or the prince's spoiled son who abuses his position of privilege and provokes Kindred jealousy throughout the domain. The dhampir could be the child or relative of one of the player characters' Touchstones, sparking contention every time the Touchstone comes into play. Is the Touchstone's child jealous of all the time and emotional energy his parent gives to the vampire? Does he think the vampire is a bad influence and try to kill her to save his parent's soul? Or is he sweet on the vampire just like his parent, stuck in a twisted love triangle over the ageless beauty of an immortal paramour who doesn't return the feelings?

The covenants all come with tangled webs of potential dhampir antagonism, especially if the player characters have some Status within the dhampir's parent covenant and thus plenty of ways to have complexities threaten that Status, or yank their strings of obligation. Maybe the local covenant raised a dhampir who begs the player characters to help him escape and turns violent when they refuse. Maybe the Ordo Dracul's experiment finally bore fruit, but the newly made, fully grown dhampir won't be the quiet test subject they wanted and the Order assigns the coterie's Dragon to teach him some manners. On the other hand, maybe the dhampir is the perfect Dragon and wants to study the coterie under a microscope for his own edification, regardless of what they want. What if a high-ranking Sanctified priest blackmailed the coterie into keeping his dhampir child a secret, but the child acts out in ways that threaten both the Masquerade and the deal both?

### Unforeseen Encounters

A dhampir antagonist needn't have any pre-established relationship to the player characters at all to be compelling. Dhampir who show up unexpectedly in a story don't have to advertise their true natures, and whole stories can be devoted to trying to figure out why this Storyteller character is so different from the other kine (and causes the coterie so much trouble). Dhampir make excellent vampire hunters and, as previously mentioned in "Growing Up Dhampir" (p. 22), may not be choosy about which vampires they hunt once they've dealt with their own parents, for any number of reasons. If the dhampir runs with a cell of mortal hunters, the Kindred characters can fend them off by trying to expose his nature to his all-too-human companions once they realize what he really is, and watch the deadly team burn itself down... or learn to

their chagrin that hunters can forgive a lot if it means taking down a bunch of monsters.

Vengeance isn't solely the purview of vampire hunters, of course, and the Damned are at each other's throats all the time. It's easy to find families, mortal and Kindred both, that a vampire's bloody, selfish work tore apart. Dhampir who lose something in the scuffle are primed to take something in return, with guns blazing. The dhampir might even be one of the player character's victims; an ordinary feeding on a normal night leads to confusion and terror as the Vitae bites back, and the vampire obsesses over the mystery of the victim who punished her somehow for her wickedness. If this is the dhampir's first introduction to his own nature, the coterie can get caught up in the drama that ensues. Complete coincidence crossing the player characters' paths with a dhampir on a quest of his own is also totally acceptable, given the influence of fate on these half-damned's lives. Of course, what appears to be a coincidence might turn out not to be one at all when enough stones are overturned.

Dhampir aren't alone in their status as rare creatures flitting around the outskirts of the supernatural world. Those who step outside the All Night Society find a teeming garden of misfits and pariahs ripe for joining forces. Even the most hard-hearted dhampir can have a soft spot for outsiders like himself, and some have strong compassionate streaks they use to form friendships with others caught between worlds, yearning to live lives untainted by darkness. A dhampir is in the perfect position to understand a changeling's desperate escape from her captors or a Promethean's acute longing to fit in. He finds common ground with others who feel like they exist only at the behest of uncaring masters, like Proximi and werewolf Kinfolk, and those at the mercy of forces they don't understand, such as stigmatics. They often have similar upbringings to those the Begotten suffer through, and Kinship isn't hard to accept. With their strong fates, powerful Social abilities, and penchant for kicking down the doors of expectation, dhampir make compelling hubs for oddball groups of allies, finding community among their fellow outsiders more readily than they find it with humans or vampires. Any one of these outcasts could have reasons for conflict with the Kindred, and where one angry misfit lurks, a whole pack of them usually follows.

### *The Ale*

Dhampir who show up with claims of prophecies that led them to the coterie's doorstep with missions of ruination or redemption are relatively common — at least, as common as dhampir can be — and lore keepers wonder whether whatever fate leads dhampir around by the nose has a particular hard-on for dooming Kindred. In truth, they're not far off, at least in some cases. A dhampir can take the doom that hangs overhead to a black and tempestuous extreme,

becoming what the Kindred call an *ala*, named after a type of legendary storm demon. These *ale* display terrifying powers of condemnation and calamity far beyond what normal dhampir can do, but their fates have consumed them utterly. They barely show any signs of self-determination, having given themselves over instead to the will of some dark and malevolent force. Few vampires have encountered one and survived to write down their observations, as the *ale* seem to gravitate toward murdering Kindred with single-minded focus, so what the All Night Society knows about them is sparse indeed. Some among the Lancea et Sanctum preach that an *ala* is a dhampir chosen as an angel of death, come to bring final punishment to the sinners that birthed him, but these claims have wrought deep schisms in the Church. More widely worrying theories link the *ale* to the Strix as relentless harbingers of doom, which raises disturbing questions about where the dhampir get their fates in the first place. Storytellers can use the rules for building Horrors from the **Chronicles of Darkness** core rulebook (p. 140) to create *ale* for their games.

### *Other Dhampir Storyteller Characters*

Storytellers can introduce dhampir to their **Vampire** chronicles as less antagonistic characters, too. These half-damned make great Touchstones in and of themselves, reminding a vampire of her Humanity by embodying her struggle with naked candor. They make good characters to hang Merits on, as well — Attachés, Retainers, and even Mentors can take on an extra dimension as dhampir. They're outstanding allies when it comes to vampire-on-vampire intrigue, and plenty of dhampir with grudges go mercenary in the supernatural underworld, hiring out their services as augurs, trackers, private detectives, spies, and killers. A coterie with the right resources to offer could benefit greatly.

As with the more antagonistic breed, a dhampir represents a pile of potential mysteries for a coterie to investigate. If the player agrees, you can introduce a dhampir child for a Kindred character who didn't realize she had one. Making a dhampir is a deliberate act, but what if the character was still mortal back when the child was conceived and didn't realize her Kindred partner could get pregnant that way? What if a vampire stole her blood to use in a dhampir birth ritual without her knowledge? An unrelated dhampir might come to the coterie's well-known scholar to ask for help determining her own origins or studying her prophetic powers to discover their source. She might show up at a player character's front door seeking asylum from the vampire's enemies, or from human hunters, or anything else the hidden world throws at a walking omen, with little to no experience behind the curtain of darkness.



A rat, surrounded by its kin - hundreds, maybe thousands, trapped, fighting for pieces of corn. And then, suddenly, air. Open space.

It is lifted and travels through the air, and then falls, landing roughly among two of its fellows.

She closes the lid, and turns the dial.

The metal knives spin, and the blender

fills with puréed rat. Humming, she

turns the blender off, and pours

it into a press, and squeezes the

juices out. She pours the thick, deep

red smoothie into a cup, stirs with

a spoon, and taps the rim twice. Then,

she scrapes the press off into a bowl, and

places it on the floor. The dog is grateful.

She lifts the glass up, pours it in her mouth.

Terrible flavor, but oh so delicious regardless.

...

Lights strobe. There is always a party, and she is always there. An hour past sunset, the music beats like a million hearts, and she moves with it, pounds out her horrors and rage on the floor. She moves through them, and they hardly notice her. She spots her prey, so naive and vulnerable, so very alone, and she pounces. There is a sick, cold pit in her gut, and she hates herself and she hates him and she loves it. All too briefly, she is lifted into life. And then it ends. And she is still hungry. But when is she not? A conscience, tattered and rattled, joins with pragmatism - this will do for tonight.

...

The night is two hours young, and she walks into her place. It sells coffee and sometimes more, and the owner is eccentric and shy, only showing up at this hour. She walks in the door, past the counter, into the back room. Gets her name tag. "Manager, proprietor." A good place for a good girl, but it will have to make do. She takes her place behind the counter, looks around. It's not the same. Darker, more somber, decaying around the corners and the small, cozy place of her own is a sunlit pond locked away behind iron gates and bars. She reaches through, sees the people on the other side, all happy, all free, and she is locked in here, and the place is going to shit.

...

The night is at its darkest, and the keys rattle as they slip into her purse. She walks. Hours pass, two or maybe three, and then she sees it. A lifetime ago, she might have ignored it - graffiti, nasty crude, splattered on crumbling plaster - but here was a vision, a meaning she could never have understood before, something meant for dead eyes only. Is there someone out there...?

# CHAPTER TWO

# REVENANTS

And he said to me: "This miserable way  
is taken by the sorry souls of those  
who lived without disgrace and without praise.  
They now commingle with the coward angels,  
the company of those who were not rebels  
nor faithful to their God, but stood apart.  
The heavens, that their beauty not be lessened,  
have cast them out, nor will deep Hell receive them –  
even the wicked cannot glory in them."

— Dante Alighieri, "Inferno"

The Blood is not predictable or sane. It goes where it wants, and it has its own diseases and syndromes. Where medicine crosses with the gibbering blasphemies of vampirism, things live — or rather, exist. Many Kindred take it on faith that the Embrace is necessary to create unlife. After all, if vampirism was infectious like you see in the movies, if it could be transmitted in a bite, the world would be flooded by Kindred quickly — exponential growth, and all that. It's not supposed to happen, but it does. Sometimes, the corpse of a vampire's victim simply comes back, thirsty for human blood. Sometimes, rarely, almost mythically, the victim didn't even die first.

These creatures are called revenants, and the Kindred make up elaborate conspiracy theories and superstitions about them. They only appear if the unwitting sire — or progenitor — failed to lick the bite, or never from deliberate killings, or only when a ghoul dies, or when a droplet of Vitae lands on the victim during the feeding. It's frightening to acknowledge the truth: There is no pattern. Revenants arise from feedings both careful

and careless, from dead ghouls or the Embrace of long-lost clans whose blood runs as thin as water.

Whatever the beliefs, revenants fit only awkwardly into the All Night Society, half comrades and rivals, and half reminders of the curse that truly runs in the Vitae. They are wretched creatures, considered inferior by most Kindred, free of the banes of the five clans but afflicted with a truly horrific symptom: They awaken bloodless, with the Beast baying and the hunger churning their entrails like a blender.

Is it any wonder that they find comfort in company, then? More so than Kindred, revenants fit together, easily making coteries among themselves and with true vampires alike. They dig communal havens and keep vermin as livestock, and curse the sun together. They are debased, half-damned, lowlier than the lowliest Kindred, but they are debased together. When a coterie of revenants comes crawling out of their burrows and slinks towards their prey, it's a foolish vampire who tries to steal it from them.

## *The Scum of the Damned*

The legend goes that an ancient king, seeking to keep his youth and virile beauty, spent decades looking for the source of eternal youth. As he grew older, he grew more desperate, and more cruel. He bathed in blood and ate the beating hearts of infants, and he gave away all the kingdom's grain to pay for sorcerors and charlatans. Yet nothing helped.

Then, one night, he saw a young boy, and recognized in the child something ancient and monstrous. As the child left, he slipped out and followed, and witnessed the boy biting into the neck of a servant girl. But the ancient was lost in rapture; and the king snuck up on him, and drawing his dagger, he struck. The blade inflicted a bleeding wound upon the boy's neck, and

the king leaned in and drank as he had seen the child do. But the child, with unholy might, drew free, and struck the king dead. As the youngster flew into the night, a priestess whose libations had failed the king stepped out of the shadows and approached the corpse.

"Know, o king, that Anu has thee judged. Ereshkigal foreswears thee. But not all hope is lost, o gentle lord, for thou art claimed by Tiamat, and in thy breast shall dwell her blessing." So having spoken, she traced three circles on his brow and stepped once more into the shadows, a smile upon her cruel lips. As the king awakened, hunger and rage consumed him, and he slew the people of his kingdom and feasted upon their

blood, yet never was it enough. Thus was born the first revenant. And ever since then, echoes of the king's curse have seeped into those dead touched by the corruption of the Kindred's Blood.

That's what revenants tell each other, the closest thing to a creation myth that gets spread around. Perhaps it's only natural to want to find a reason for suffering, that it was not just random chance, that it had some sort of dark and ancient meaning. Childer of Tiamat is a common nickname for revenants in poetry and lyricism, the Bite of the Serpent for the revenant's counterpart to the Embrace. Though vampires in their own right, a revenant is rarely dignified with that title without qualification. They represent a failure state of Vitae, and they can become Kindred through the Embrace — called the Uplifting for revenants — just as a mortal can.

To be a revenant is to be separate, apart, lesser than a "true" vampire, yet it also means being free from the expectation of taking part in Kindred politics and pageantry. The prince demands, and the revenant obeys, but aside from that, the eddies and currents of might, not expectations and slights, dictate her nights. A vampire who feeds in another's territory faces serious consequences, but a revenant, if caught, is likely to just get away with a severe beating. After all, a revenant is not a real threat, is he? So long as he keeps himself in control and does not leave a trail of bodies, retaliating too aggressively against a revenant, to admit that he is a threat, is a sign of insecurity — weakness. Those Kindred who do defend their territory aggressively against revenants have a reputation among the city's revenant society — they do tend to stick together. In numbers, revenants are far fewer than Kindred, and word travels fast.

While second-class vampires, revenants can still attain some measure of respect among the Kindred. They are lesser than Kindred but greater than ghouls, and they are certainly a step above mortals in dead eyes. Still, they are not Kindred, and the ambitious revenant quickly finds himself straining against a stained-glass ceiling.

In their nights, they are more focused on feeding and blood than even the Kindred. They have to be, because every night is hunting night. A Mekhet or Nosferatu can afford to hunt only every other night, or even more rarely, with some care and luck, but a revenant must hunt or face very real, physical, pain. Blood is their meth, their heroin, a habit forced on them by others, and they have to obey no matter how resentful they might be. To go a night without feeding is a truly heroic act of will.

## *A Revenant's Requiem*

*Yesterday, she died in an alley, and today she woke up hungry and dead. Thing is, she knows the guy who did it — he's some rich Wall Street type — and she's gonna get revenge. She knows her kind can eat his kind's soul, and when she catches up to him, he'll pay his dues.*

By the time a revenant's night really starts, it's almost over. Feeding is not optional — her stomach aches like rusty iron jaws are chewing at her insides, her head is full of fog and harsh lights, and any hint of blood, real or imagined or just something someone said which reminds her of it makes her start and stare

intensely. There's nothing she can get done in this state, nothing useful she can wrap her head around, nothing to get out of it except masochism and asceticism. The revenant has to feed before she's useful, like the caffeine addict's first cup of coffee times a hundred except it takes hours to boil up.

Some sort of eat-at-home supply of blood is all but necessary, whether human or animal, or her own, drained the night before by opening up her arm from elbow to shoulder. But even then, she has to hunt. If she doesn't give a shit about killing, just one victim is enough, but one human life per night means that she'll have to spend a lot of her time just setting it up, cleaning up after herself, getting rid of the corpse, and destroying evidence. Making murder your routine means it gets harder and harder to hide it.

*What do you do when you're on the run? He was just a regular joe, working at the Audi garage, and then last night he got so hungry he couldn't help himself, and he kinda went nuts in the mall and some people died. So now he's on the run, trying to get as far away as possible — and the problem is, it's more than just the cops; there's this old bitch in real old-timey clothes, and she wants him to drink her blood... Yeah, it's tough being dead — but damn it, he's gonna make it!*

If she does care about leaving her victims alive, then she probably needs to bite at least two people, maybe three. To get combat ready, she might have to bite four or even five, in anticipation of a fight that night. And once again, repetition gets easier and easier to spot, so she has to be more careful than her Kindred counterparts. This is one major reason why revenants usually want to become Kindred.

The experienced revenant can be done with the whole rigamarole by midnight. The inexperienced one is lucky to have a couple of hours left, and has to choose between hunger and free time. Almost every single revenant has killed someone by accident. Most have killed someone they knew, and all too commonly someone they loved.

*There's no such thing as ghosts. That's what she told her little sister just a month ago. Now, she's standing in a circle with a bunch of dead people, chanting. She's part of something, something she hates, something criminal, something evil, and she can't escape, cause even if she leaves, she can't stop being part of it. But now they want her sister, and that is NOT going to happen!*

The Beast sings a siren song. It is the revenant's lover and abuser, locking her in its home and torturing her, and then showering her with kindness, and then torturing her again, over and over with no end in sight. The only way to escape the Beast is to lose herself in the moment, do something to draw her attention from her predicament, keep her occupied. Hunting can fill that role. So can other hobbies. Whatever interests the revenant, she pours her attention into it with eagerness born of desperation, love born of fear.

Revenants have to take so many risks to maintain their Requiems. Naturally, sometimes they roll snake eyes. Revenants get captured, enslaved, killed, staked, arrested, sentenced, or meet the sun on their own accord because they just can't take it any more. Some go and confess all their sins, or decide to go out in a blaze of glory.

A hole in the ground may not be flashy, but it turns out it can be home. When he died, he found some like-minded people to hang with. And they're a bunch of miserable fuckers, but they're miserable together. However, of late, these people have started hanging out near the burrow. They've got shades, and they've got guns, and they've got religion, and Kathy found out they're the ones who got to the Old Harbor crew a couple of months ago....

It's simply a fact of their existence that revenants lose other revenants. Coterie members, associates, allies, mentors, or chess buddies draw the short end of the straw, and then get it shoved through their eyes into their brain tissue and lit on fire. The revenant Requiem cracks and peels like old paint, shedding the things that cover up the rotting old cement underneath.

There is an old legend often repeated as a warning to younger Kindred who want to spread the Embrace, and that legend speaks of the fall of the Mikhaili.

*Smile. Bow. Look pretty, and never let them see how much you know. Being the servant sucks. Being on top...? That might be pretty nice. One of these nights, she's gonna break the right legs, bring in the right guy, and then, she's gonna get a promotion.*

The constant, churning, beating, burning hunger alone is enough to make becoming Kindred an appealing prospect, and while not all revenants choose to make it their goal, enough do. A would-be sire can string along a coterie of young revenants for quite a while before it becomes time to put up or shut up. A wise sire-to-be remembers that diablerie is a second option for their indentured servants, though, and gives them what they have earned — one way or another — before they decide to press the matter.

A revenant earns the Uplifting by performing some great service for one of the Kindred, perhaps destroying a hated rival or retrieving some long-lost object of his fancy, or saving him from the Final Death. She can also impress him enough that he chooses to make the revenant his childe. This prospect can be enticing, as transforming a demi-vampire, a lesser vampire, into true Kindred is essentially exploiting a loophole in the Second Tradition — the sin is done, so the Uplift is value-neutral or even charitable. The new Kindred is considered to have been

Once, the Mikhaili were the undisputed rulers of Siberia's nights, preying upon its people from the shadows. Their numbers were never high, but their blood ran strong, and they had many mighty elders among them. Then, one night, the Gangrel arrived from the south and east. Their numbers were many, and they overwhelmed and displaced the Winter Kings.

The Mikhaili, desperate, began to Embrace en masse, hoping to match numbers to numbers. And so the mighty Winter Kings spread their blood thin and wide, and only too late did they realize how their power had weakened. They tried to wipe out their new progeny to regain their blood, but the eldest had squandered their blood and grown weak, and Mikhaili blood had grown so thin that diablerie itself brought them nothing.

And so, the Gangrel slaughtered the Winter Kings down to the last one, and that one fled and started a new clan, debased and powerless though it was. But occasionally, when a Gangrel whose blood ancestors partook in Mikhaili souls gives rise to a revenant, that blood still resurfaces, and the shadows of that old power stir once more.

## *The Uplifting*

posthumously Embraced, with all the stigma attached, but the sire faces less condemnation than "normal." To bring a corpse into damnation is still an atrocity, but when that corpse is already hungry and damned, only truly zealous traditionalists find it in themselves to condemn it.

And of course, the Uplifting can be given, not earned. Pity is a thing even dead hearts can feel, and especially the Lancea et Sanctum is known to Uplift revenants as "Childe of the Church," essentially absolving the surrogate sire of responsibility. This does not happen without devotion on the subject's part, of course, and individual vampires may choose to "pity-Uplift" a revenant on their own. Sometimes, they regret it; sometimes, they only offer it on the provision that the new Kindred not make any claims to being their childe, essentially pre-planned and mutual disowning. And some may choose to use their act of charity as a tool for leverage, and make their new childe repay the debt.

## *Perverse Triangles*

As a rule, revenants hate their progenitors more than anyone else.

As a rule, revenants need their progenitors more than anyone else.

They are unwanted, accidental, damned without rhyme or reason and made to suffer. And if the rumors are to be believed, this is all because some vampire was sloppy in feeding. Is it any wonder they're pissed?

Most revenants do not awaken on the first night with a progenitor to call their own. Instead, they wake in an alley,

covered in their own blood, and possessed by a terrible hunger which they can't understand. After the accidental Embrace, the corpse seems normal. The secret metastasizing within is hidden — the Kindred leaves a corpse, not a vampire. And when the corpse moves, that progenitor is long gone. This is the archetypical revenant's Embrace, the Blood stolen from an unwilling host, or imposed on some unfortunate soul for no good reason, depending on who tells the tale.

When it comes to progenitors, the ones who arise from ghouls are arguably the lucky ones among revenants. They

## The Mikhaili — The Ones Who Ate Their Children

At their height, the Mikhaili would have looked as follows:

**Nickname:** Winter Kings

**Clan Bane (The Sun Curse):** The glare of arctic nights has crystallized in Mikhaili blood, and the summer is as anathema as day itself even south of the polar circle.

Every spring equinox, you fall into a deep state of torpor from which nothing can rouse you. Every fall equinox, you rise once more, starved for blood.

In modern nights, if any Mikhaili were to survive or the clan was to be resurrected for one last hurrah, this alternate clan curse is also appropriate, whether alone or in tandem with the Sun Curse:

**Clan Bane (The Barren Curse):** The blood of the Mikhaili has been debased. If you Embrace, your childe will be revenants.

**Favored Attributes:** Stamina, Manipulation

**Disciplines:** Animalism, Fortitude, Bereschligost (see the sidebar on p. 78)

know who created them, and have a long-standing working relationship with their new Kindred ancestor. Their demi-sire can't reasonably disavow them, and they have a clear path towards earning the Uplifting — after all, they are already vampires and under their progenitor's thrall, so making them into vampires who are more potent simply provides a more powerful, less resentful servant.

Of course, many Kindred treat their ghouls poorly, and after the ghoul becomes sunlight intolerant, they are still likely to be treated like a ghoul by their ex-regnant. The rest of Kindred society might also treat them as such, if they don't leave their progenitors and strike out on their own — but then they lose their shortcut to true vampirism.

## *The Dynasties of the Debased*

Fallen clans and risen coteries make up the revenant dynasties. Small and secretive, each usually numbering less than a dozen, these are the royalty of the lowly. Here, a revenant can be expected to be treated as a member of a clan or family, recruited based on merit through a planned Embrace. In many ways, this is as close to a normal Requiem as a revenant can get, and the new Childe of Tiamat's sire acts somewhat like a Kindred sire, teaching Disciplines and feeding and expecting obedience in return.

They wake up alone, frightened, confused, and abominable — a lone monster in a world of people. With no guidance, no mentor, and no link to the hidden society festering all around, they might even believe themselves the only one of their kind. How many such stray wolves there are is hard to say, though the revenant community believes that they find and invite most of them. The problem with that belief is that no one knows how many they don't find. If nine out of ten revenants met the Final

Death without ever meeting another of their kind, who would know? That said, revenant coteries usually spend at least some time investigating potential revenant sightings, so many stray wolves are inducted into the pack — sometimes even without the rescuers demanding repayment from the rescued.

To hate a progenitor, one must first know one has one. This happens when mommy's little accident meets others of his own kind for the first time. When that happens, some decide to search out their progenitors, and some do not. When a revenant meets his progenitor, that's when things get interesting.

For one of the Kindred to suddenly have a bastard childe at her door is quite a shock. Some such meetings simply end in frenzy and a fine revenant slurry. Since creating a revenant is a blow to anyone's reputation, hiding the evidence can be a good idea, so most revenants with any sense make sure their disappearances have consequences.

Many progenitors never forgive their misbegotten spawn for bringing them shame by existing, and disown them at the very least. A revenant can be useful, though, so some progenitors decide to take responsibility for their mistakes and train their spawn in the vampiric ways. The Uplifting makes an excellent chunk of raw meat to dangle in front of their loyal wolfhounds, to make them dance to their master's harpsichord — and if granted, it can buy a lot of loyalty.

Of course, many revenants simply seek out their progenitors to kill them — and in that case, most try to keep their progenitors from finding out that they have spawn at all. To hunt a vampire is hazardous, so any revenant with sense in his skull will bring a coterie for such a task. In that case, of course, he must first have a coterie, so if he does not, his first priority is finding one. If he does not have good sense, he is likely to end up little more than a few items on a dry-cleaning bill.



Having a revenant in the family reflects poorly on childe as well as sire. Few Kindred blood siblings treat their new broodmate with anything but naked hostility, unless it's veiled contempt. Occasionally, one decides to do away with the new defective hypotenuse in her sick little family love triangle to restore her sense of honor. That the Kindred tend to praise such audacious killings in private while glossing over or condemning them in public does little to soothe the revenant community's grudges.

With all this hanging over their heads, it is natural that some revenants instead focus on making their progenitors' Requiems miserable instead. They smear their progenitors' reputations, hunt their herds, and otherwise make themselves into pests, often without ever revealing themselves. If they can plant evidence pointing to a rival vampire, or leave clues for mortal would-be hunters leading to the progenitor, so much the better.

### *Life After Death*

The cold seeped in from all sides. At least, that's what she thought at first. The memories were fuzzy, but she knew her senses had failed one by one. Sight left first, sound shortly after. Touch lingered, the body pressed to her own growing warmer as she grew weaker and colder. The pain, little white-hot pinpricks, soon became the last bits of warmth she felt.

The taste lingered in her mouth, something sour and metallic, and the scent stuck in her nose, iron and salt and fear. When they finally faded, the sensation that occurred to her was one of sinking gently under water. Above her, she imagined it rippling gently after her disturbance, smoothing out again after the momentary intrusion. Cold, dark liquid dragged her further and further down, muting her senses more with each fathom. The dark water filled her mouth, then her lungs, until eventually she didn't feel it anymore. What was there to feel, when even the cold and the wet faded?

And why did it feel even colder when she broke back through the surface?

The experience of her death forever remains with a revenant. Unlike a posthumous Embrace, which intentionally creates a full-fledged Kindred, the rising of a revenant is an accidental or coincidental event without explanation. Thus, they are re-introduced to the world fundamentally changed, without even the most uncaring of sires to guide them through any of the experiences new Kindred are exposed to. Their death hangs heavy about them, often leaving behind the scars of the event, both physical as well as mental. Revenants drained by Kindred bear visible scars of the wounds that did them in, and while they may be easily concealed, they throb with a dull pain, especially when the revenant wakes without any blood in her system.

## *Ideal Candidates*

While they may not know the extent of the community of the undead, all revenants have made at least fleeting contact with Kindred society. For many, the extent of this contact might not be much more than a drunken hookup, half-remembered in the morning and drowned out by a wicked hangover. For others, their life has been one long chase, the all-important pursuit of a fickle master or mistress that on rare and rapturous occasions offers nothing short of ecstasy. Between them is the one that knows the elation without addiction, eager to accept it again without it ruling over his life.

Feeding leaves traces of Vitae in the prey's system, a catalyst that may or may not spark when their body expires. Whether a one-time meal, a member of an established herd, or a blood-bound companion or ghoul, any human who has been exposed to even a drop of Vitae carries the potential to wake as a revenant after their death. Logically, those with greater exposure to Vitae — those who have consumed it or been fed upon repeatedly — would stand a greater chance of rising as revenants, as it has had more opportunity to work within their systems and prime them for the spontaneous Embrace. Yet in practice, the degree of exposure to Vitae has little bearing on the probability of the deceased rising again. Even ghouls, temporarily infused with a limited amount of vampiric power, stand no more or less of a chance of rising than the victim of a singular feeding. Some speculate that the chances of a revenant rising are higher if the subject is killed directly by a vampire's bite, especially a quick and brutal exsanguination, but the theory is just that — speculation.

Humans from all walks of life find themselves drawn into the webs Kindred weave. As revenants are created without the conscience effort of an Embrace, they are not carefully trained and chosen in the way a sire grooms his childe. A number of revenants are thus "sub-par" candidates for eternal life amongst the Kindred, doing little to help their status as lesser than the traditionally Embraced. This outsider, "unworthy" status also drives Kindred's willingness to disown revenants when they become problematic. The definition of problematic varies widely, and revenants are often at the mercy of the clan they associate with, or the policies of the prince. Revenants with less-than-sound minds are often quickly put down for the risk they pose to the Masquerade, but even a perfectly sane individual can find herself ousted for accidental slights or etiquette breaches. Without her own status, or a protector with enough status to defend her, a revenant's Requiem can be ended on terms she never knew she had agreed to.

## *The Unanticipated Requiem*

Mortal life often ends quickly and violently for revenants. Whether or not they are aware of the Requiem before their passing, it comes for them in the end. A revenant wakens again after her death, finding herself the same, and yet different, and — most disturbingly — acutely aware of her death. She

recalls the events leading up to her end the same as any other experience, and all the gruesome details of her body failing her and shutting down. Upon rising for the first time, she finds that her body no longer functions as it used to at all, lacking a heartbeat and feeling icy cold.

When she wakes, she thirsts for blood, desperately so, without entirely understanding why. Overshadowed only by the confusion and questions of her sudden reanimation, the need to find blood is what drives her. The process is easier for ghouls, who at least have some knowledge of the Requiem and its trappings. Mortals with no previous knowledge of the world that runs in the dark and the shadows are left attempting to piece together what happened, often without any help. The lucky ones are found quickly by those who understand, while others are left to wander through their second life without understanding until they meet another, more permanent, end.

Though everyone experiences death differently, revenants often wake the same way each night, gasping back to life in a moment of shock. Many feel as if they are clawing their way from the bottom of a pit or pool, tormented by the memory of dying and the uncertain forces that brought them back. The first night after a revenant feeds brings with it a second horror, as she wakes in a pool of stolen blood and just as hungry as the night before.

For the unfortunate revenant unceremoniously thrown into the Requiem, life is a confusing whirlwind of bright new colors, amazing new sounds, and above all, the overwhelming and intoxicating scent of blood. It calls from everywhere, flowing through everybody who passes by, drawing her out from whatever hidden corner she laid in after death. No matter how passive her personality in life, she now finds herself drawn inexplicably to violence. She has a single concern, fixated and fantasizing about warm flesh under her lips, hot blood flooding her mouth. Visions that would have sickened her before are now tantalizing, and when she finally indulges, she learns the taste of ambrosia. Feeding takes the edge off the desperate, gnawing edge of a revenant's existence, but it doesn't take long to learn that the sensation is one that she will experience every day without fail.

As revenants rise accidentally and after a relatively short amount of time, many attempt to resume their mortal lives, seeking out friends and family in an effort to reconstruct what they knew previously. Though loved ones are often relieved to reconnect with the one they've been worried over, it also becomes apparent almost immediately that some form of horrific change has taken place. Even if they attempt to shake off that knowledge, the revenant herself may distance herself from those she once knew. As she discovers more about her own transformation and new needs and desires, those around her feel more distant than ever. Her thirst for blood, and its nightly intensity, makes it difficult for her to maintain her old relationships without considering using them to slake her unending thirst. By necessity, she becomes more secretive, especially needing to hide the blood that leaves her body every night and explain away her new habits. When it's clear this

## When Things Go Wrong

Though rare, revenants can occasionally be created when an Embrace doesn't "take" — the blood is too dilute, or sire too weak, and where there should be a full Kindred, a revenant rises. For the unfortunate soul condemned by such a botched Embrace, life becomes a cold mockery. The gifts promised to her in exchange for her ordeal arrive only half-cocked, yet her unholly thirst is stronger than she could have ever anticipated. Her own blood is sterile and too weak to be useful in any of the ways promised, unable to support ghouls, childe of her own, or form bonds with other Kindred — not even with kine. Arguably the most dangerous of revenants is this would-be childe, armed with the knowledge of what has slipped through her fingers, leaving behind a pale imitation of what she was to be. No matter how hard he tries — if he does at all — her intended sire can do nothing to improve her condition. She leaves a stain on his reputation as well.

The relationship between the half-damned and her sire is often tense in these situations, if it exists at all. Many sires abandon their inferior childe, writing them off as failures and forcing them to fend for themselves. In extreme cases, they may even attempt to kill their unfortunate progeny; claiming a revenant as a willfully made childe reveals more about the vampire than the revenant, after all. In these cases, to overpower her sire and fight her way free, the revenant is forced to engage him to the death. For some, this is merely an introduction to the literal cutthroat nature of Kindred politics. To others, those who go to any lengths to come out on top, it is their first taste of the forbidden practice of diablerie. Unfortunately, if her sire's blood is too weak to properly complete her Embrace, it is equally as unlikely to Uplift her.

is impossible, or that her family is truly repulsed by whatever she's become, some revenants will simply flee; others, either accidentally or after careful deliberation, will turn to those

who once loved to slake their maddening, unending thirst, and suffer the consequences later.

## Finding A Way

*It doesn't take long to realize she will never quite belong in human society again. She moves through her life alone, driven by her thirst, isolated from those she once knew. All around her thrums the essence of life, everywhere but within herself.*

*Finding others who are cold becomes the most fascinating thing in her world.*

*He isn't at all like her. He moves with purpose. He knows what he's doing. He knows how to survive.*

*Does her sense her, too?*

*Her eyes track him as he walks. She's frozen to the spot, staring, longing for that purpose. Longing for somewhere to go, instead of just following cracks in the sidewalk to see where they stop.*

*He reaches the corner across from her, and his eyes flick over just briefly.*

*The hand in his pocket draws out, and as he checks his watch, his finger twitches, the tiniest gesture to follow. He has noticed.*

*She goes with him. He has to have some kind of answer.*

Whether a victim who learned on their own how to get by, someone who put the pieces together, or revenant risen from a ghoul with some familiarity with the way things go when death doesn't take, one who has managed to scrape together a new life looks out for those who haven't managed yet. An established revenant who finds one newly risen knows the struggle of starting out, trying to maintain old ties with a thousand new secrets or starting anew in utter isolation. If the Kindred in the city write off their unintended childe and refuse to acknowledge them, revenants band together to find their own

way. If they have no knowledge of the Masquerade, they learn quickly that there are rules, and there are those who enforce them with extreme prejudice. The smart ones learn also just how useful it is to keep their heads down if they want to survive.

## Community Benefits

Humans and vampires alike are social creatures at heart, and revenants are no different. They seek each other out, eager for company just as strange as themselves. The shared experience is a strong bonding point for those left without answers, and they cling to each other for support and to make sense of the inexplicable occurrences that brought them together. Gathering together allows not only a safe place to stay and hide from the sun, but a way to share information and spread warnings should something threaten the community. The Laws of the Masquerade are taught first and foremost, less as decorum and societal trappings than as ways to avoid attention and stay alive. Revenants who have contacts within Kindred society sometimes share knowledge of the Disciplines the vampires command, or the location of unclaimed territories where revenants can hunt without persecution. Groups of revenants vary widely, some as little more than loose bands of cursed beings who gather in their own parody of Elysium, while others are tight-knit groups, surrogate families living together as they learn to survive.

- He knows how the Kindred work, all the laws he's expected to obey. He was going to be one of them, once, but something went wrong, and now he exists like this. No one knows why he only exists halfway between Kindred and kine, and his once-helpful sire has vanished. He knows he could find the bastard, if he really wanted to look, but he prefers helping others like him. There are more than he ever imagined.
- She woke up screaming in the morgue, when her erstwhile coworkers had made the first incision for her autopsy. They had screamed too, but not for long. She leaves the two bodies behind. Let the others puzzle it out from there. Something calls to her, a muted beacon crying out from within every one of her veins. She finds him in the sewers, just as surprised as she is. She is still beautiful, at least. He is a twisted wreck, but she accepts him all the same.
- They began to recognize each other, standing outside the building and watching the others file in. What they do, the group can't fathom, but the ones who make it past the bouncer just seem... more. They avoid the bouncer at all costs, remembering the boy who had tried to make it in with the

other cold ones. His ashes had been scattered in front of the door the next night. If this group can have their special club, they reason, why not make one of their own?

Revenants living among Kindred often find it difficult to discover common ground or find a group they feel they are truly a part of. The most notable exception to this rule comes in the form of those who have endured the experience most similar to that of the revenant, the Kindred woken through the posthumous Embrace. While she may have had more time to prepare for her life amongst the Damned, and generally has a sire present to guide her, she understands better than any other the harrowing experience of waking up from death. She knows the experience of clawing her way up through the layers of her own altered consciousness, and while the experience may not haunt her the way a revenant's does, it is something she never truly forgets. Empathy, sadly, does not always breed sympathy. While some Kindred Embraced posthumously offer solace and company to revenants, others turn away from the vile reminders that they themselves may have been just steps away from a similar fate.

## *The Communities Revenants Build*

Revenants are a fractious lot, terrible monsters who grate on each other sorely, much like Kindred. But unlike Kindred, revenants spend every night under the Damocles sword of hunger and frenzy, and at risk from angry progenitors or opportunistic would-be taskmasters. Needs must, and so they band together, each getting more out of their alliances than they put in.

What a Childe of Tiamat needs more than anything is comrades who hold them down through frenzy, hunting companions, and muscle to defend themselves from full-blooded Kindred on the prowl. Kindred think of revenants as the lower class of vampires, or semi-vampires. They certainly don't consider them to be prey, or at least no more than a predator sees all those weaker than itself as prey. From the revenant side, the story looks different – while Kindred as a rule don't gun for revenants without a solid reason, there are fewer revenants than Kindred, and many solid reasons. When any revenant will do, every revenant is at risk.

Revenants, being somewhat weaker than Kindred and without even the meager protection the All Night Society offers its full-fledged members, seem to be easily dominated. In terms of raw might, they are a step or two above ghouls, and many a powerful elder of a lordly bent has a revenant lieutenant or two in their employ, perhaps as overseers to their ghouls. There is status to be found in having revenant servants, even for a neonate. While not as impressive as holding another Kindred in thrall, a revenant servant never hurts a vampire's status, and the fact that revenants are somewhat rare enhances this. If a demi-vampire looks vulnerable, there are many opportunistic Kindred who are quick to seize the opportunity.

A large part of why so few revenants meet this fate is their compatriots. Revenants run in packs, banding together with friends or associates for mutual protection. These coteries create communal havens where they can set up common defenses, and fight together against intruders. The coteries in turn come together in groups called coveys, which in turn make up the larger revenant community, which is simply called "the community" or "our community."

A covey is more of a loose social circle than anything else, made up of those coteries that happen to be in touch with each other. Often, a covey is made up of two or three coteries, and rarely more than five. They are generally arranged haphazardly by shared problems or territory, or because they like to throw parties together. Borders between coveys are fuzzy and ever-changing. Coveys are usually the largest groups of revenants that gather in person. Beyond this, the community is bound by lines of communication and the revenants' own private sub-Cacophony. Useful information spreads from covey to covey quickly through gossip and private conversation.

Actual aid is provided to the revenant by his coterie, who support each other in any way they can, though not without some conflict and bargaining. Coteries can call in other coteries from their covey in a crisis, but never for free. While individual revenants rarely trade in boons or favors, revenant coteries do. If one calls for aid, it will have to pay up later, or be taught a lesson in community spirit by the other coteries of its covey. If a whole covey is in trouble, the other coveys will usually busy themselves with ensuring their own survival, because whatever is going on is probably a threat to them too.

## Revenants' Associates

Revenants are nothing if not sociable. They associate with Kindred, mortals, and most of all, other revenants. There's something about revenants that seems to make them more suited to having company, some quirks that turn them into more natural pack hunters than the Kindred are.

### Kindred

Their "older cousins" are powerful, dangerous, and, yes, alluring to revenants. No one else has the potential to Uplift them, and no one else can understand how bad a revenant can hurt. Having a vampire around is useful, cause even if he is not an actual ally, he'll still fight to defend himself if mortal hunters come around. And of course, having a Kindred ally is a good way to secure a shaky position in the All Night Society.

Revenant coteries are easier to roll up than their Kindred counterparts, but with a Kindred ally, there's suddenly the possibility of a whole coterie of full-fledged vampires showing up to help out their buddy's associates. That helps patch up a lot of vulnerabilities. And just having Kindred backing alone is a sign of legitimacy in nocturnal circles.

### Revenants

Revenants like each other. Oh, they're still monsters and competitive and all, and they still hurt each other, abuse each other, and kill each other. But where the Kindred are more like lone wolves who work together out of necessity, revenants keep more of their human social needs. Though more solitary than mortals, revenants still have a need for company, and the company of other revenants is best of all.

So, revenants hang out. They create coteries almost naturally, and while they fight within the coteries, they often present a united front to the world. Bob and Gillian may be complete assholes who get on your nerves, after all, but they're your comrades. Only you are allowed to cut their ears off while they sleep and feed them to the ant farm, or threaten to kill Bob's kid.

Revenant parties are wild and dangerous affairs, to the degree that they often have to post lookouts to make sure the party isn't crashed by anyone who might object to the amount of blood floating about.

## Preparing for the Inevitable

He's there when she wakes up this time, sitting in a dark corner. He hasn't been waiting long; his hair still glistens with the blood he drank the night before, lost as he slept. She licks her lips at the sight of it, even though she knows it won't do anything for her.

At his feet, a girl swoons in the after effects of the Kiss – that was what he'd called it last night. Eyes glazed over, she lounges, clumsy hands

## Ghoul & Dhampir

Ghouls, dhampir, and revenants – that's what they say. And way too often by revenant tastes. Revenants don't like to be lumped in with dhampir, lucky bastards that they are, and they definitely don't want to be lumped in with ghouls.

While revenants can't keep ghouls, they generally are only marginally kinder to them than Kindred are. Ghouls are servants, thralls, goofy little gofers who'd be funny if they weren't so pathetic. They're addicts. They're pets! Ghouls who try to hook up with the revenant community can expect to be tested, again and again. But if the ghoul passes those tests, then by God, he's one of us, an honorary revenant. And if we talk crap about ghouls when he's around, well, it's just because we don't really consider him to be one.

Dhampir face resentment from revenants. As far as revenants are concerned, they and dhampir are two sides of the same coin, except the dhampir are the heads and they themselves the tails. They're the unlucky kids who got all the downsides, while dhampir get all the upsides. They even get powers – without being dead!

The revenant attitude towards dhampir can really be summed up in one term: sibling rivalry. And as far as revenants are concerned, the dhampir are the favorites, and they are the red-headed step-children. Still, though, when a dhampir deigns to hold her nose and treat revenants fairly, the resentment fades fast enough, and she can join the community full-time. Provided she helps bringing in the blood, of course.

### Mortals

Mortals are the sea revenants swim in, and mortal blood is the ocean they drown in. Few revenants can look at mortals without guilt and resentment, because few revenants have gotten through their early nights without lives on their consciences. While revenants associate with mortals, there is a distinct sense of superiority and inferiority, all at once, which makes a barrier between them.

Revenants are the most likely vampires to simply come clean about their state to friends and family. Before they find a coterie, before the community finds them, most are alone and adrift, with no reason to believe that there is a Masquerade to uphold. Of course, when they do find out, that's another dirty little secret to keep; and when a revenant finds out a loved one has become a hunter to avenge his sister's death because she told him what happened, that's not going to be a nice night.

## the Inevitable

fumbling under her skirt. He apologizes softly for the lewd display, even as the writhing girl blinks and comes back to herself a bit more, regaining her composure by degrees.

The scene would have startled her before, repulsive to wake up to without warning, but the hunger is too great, and she can smell the blood. She almost breaks the arm attached to the hand that lights on her

shoulder, batting it away and leaping to her feet, paranoid and on edge so soon after waking. She doesn't so much dream of her death while she sleeps as relives waking up every time, with all the shock and fear of that first dreadful night. The man who had been beside her also apologizes, sinking onto the bloodstained mattress between them and sitting back on his knees. His pose is careful and deliberate, neck and both wrists on inviting display. She glances uncertainly at her companion, the offer obvious but somehow taboo.

When he nods, she meets her meal on the bed. Part of her wants to take in the details of her offering, but she only gets as far as brushing his sandy hair off his forehead before her desire is too strong. The handful of hair becomes a guide as she pulls him closer, head to one side to let her reach her prize. They writhe together in ecstasy, and for the first time, her night begins pleasantly.

Just as Kindred gather herds to provide a consistent group to feed upon, so do revenants gather devoted followers willing to give themselves over on a regular basis. Revenants have an even greater need for herds than standard Kindred, as they don't retain blood night to night and always wake starving. Blood dolls who find revenants often remain more loyal to the half-damned than fully fledged Kindred; while the revenant can't force loyalty through blood bonding, their nightly condition means they feed more consistently, and offer dolls greater opportunities to regularly get their high.

Not all revenants are fond of feeding on dolls. Those who met their end at the hands of Kindred have an especially hard time reconciling the desperation and addiction with the echoing memories of their own demises, even if they themselves were once so drawn to the high of the Kiss. Others view dolls as necessary burdens. Without the ability to create ghouls or blood bonds, a devoted doll is the next best thing to a revenant, someone who remains loyal and helps with day-to-day dealings in exchange for the high they so strongly desire.

Whether or not the herd holds such addicted members, the revenant often goes out of his way to make sure a good number of his devotees are in close proximity to his haven. While he won't fly into a frenzy the moment he wakes, the Beast rides closer to the surface before he first feeds for the night, threatening to revolt if he dallies. If more than one revenant occupies the same haven and shares a herd, the most common practice is to let the youngest and most inexperienced have the first meal, if only until she is accustomed to dealing with the hunger. While she may be given the first meal, she does not necessarily get first pick, instead finding one of the herd appointed to her.

## *Life on the Outside*

Due to the unexpected nature of a revenant's rise, the half-damned often have little to no idea of the All Night Society or the others who inhabit the space between the living and the dead. When she brushes against the edge of that society, it sends ripples all throughout. Who made her? Why? Why leave her abandoned and wandering — surely you didn't just forget an Embrace. And what will the prince say about siring without his permission?

### Revenant Secession

In a number of cities, word has traveled through Kindred circles of revenants who buck the traditions of the All Night Society and reject the influence of Kindred on their nightly lives. Tight-knit groups of knowledgeable revenants have banded together and staked their own claims, carving out slices of territory for themselves and defending their borders with ardent ferocity. The herds they maintain are just as fiercely protected, as are any havens kept within their borders. To better protect them, and to reduce any incidents at sundown, these groups often share one mass haven and house trusted blood dolls or herd members with them or nearby.

These groups generally seek little more than life on their own terms and the chance to thrive, instead of merely surviving. They gather to share their own experiences and help each other live more easily, be it sharing tips on how best to move around the city without attracting the attention of the Kindred, how to feed without killing kine, or offering support to newly awakened revenants who have no other resources.

With the rise of such factions across multiple locations, the Kindred who come into (often brief and brutal) contact with revenant groups can't be sure if there is a larger purpose to their organization and collective secession from Kindred society. Though most aren't aggressive without first being threatened, merely the fact that the groups exist at all and so emphatically reject the All Night Society — and possibly the rules of the Masquerade — is more than enough to set any paranoid prince on edge.

Revenants upset the order of the Society, flying in the face of the careful rules that keep it hidden. In some cities, the sireless childer are put to Final Death as soon as they're discovered. In other cities, vampires may keep them around on an individual basis out of amusement, purely to see if they are useful, only to turn viciously against them if they prove they are not. Depending on the attitude of the prince, they may be openly accepted at Elysium, or expected to be seen and not heard. No vampire will say a revenant is truly one of their own, and in giving them their own classification, they can keep revenants at an arm's length from Kindred society. Some revenants can spend their entire existences without coming back into contact with the forces that sealed their fate, but these lives are often short and tragic. Even if she learns to navigate on her own without help from the Kindred, it often isn't long before she catches the attention of the local undead, for better or for worse.

In cities where revenants don't receive much support from their supernatural parents, the half-damned learn to orbit the world they stand on the fringes of, eking out as meaningful an existence as they can. By necessity, they tend toward neutral areas and aim not to draw attention. As any one group learns about their city, they keep record of the movement of

the Kindred, sketching out the vague borders of territories, carefully marking who hunts them like dogs and who turns a blind eye. Vampiric territory lines often uproot revenants, as residing within hostile territory is a quick death sentence, and most unsupported revenants learn quickly that putting down roots is a heavy risk. Many prefer not to get attached to any

Kindred can establish blood bonds, sire childer, maintain ghouls, strengthen their Vitae, and retain blood from night to night. A revenant cannot.

The revenant's Embrace is a strange and twisted thing, far from its comparatively predictable Kindred counterpart. Most attempted Embraces by revenants fail – the ones that succeed create more revenants. For the attempt to have any chance of success, the revenant-to-be must be thoroughly saturated with the sire's Vitae before death, continually drained and then fed until nearly all the victim's blood has been replaced.

This takes a matter of weeks if not months, and leaves an unwilling spawn intensely resentful unless the sire can muster the power of the Daeva or Ventrue in her aid. If she can draw upon the Ventrue power of memory sculpting in particular, she can ensure her spawn's loyalty, though a Ventrue charges dearly for his services if the sire does not possess knowledge of the Discipline herself.

Even if the procedure is followed to perfection, it fails nearly every time. Only the rare revenant whose Vitae can lend itself to a "normal" Embrace can hope to see any measure of consistent survival in her childer, though even then the chance of mishap is far greater than Kindred can expect.

## *Revenant Dynasties*

Outside of this fast-and-loose structure stand many revenants Embraced by other revenants (see the *Fertile Vitae Merit* found on p. 81). The ability to Embrace is a rare gift among revenants, and many of those blessed with that gift use it to form their own little power blocs. Not all revenant dynasties are blood relations, though – some are simply extended and entrenched coteries, adopting fresh blood whenever it becomes convenient. When such a coterie decides to start recruiting and formalizing its membership, teaching Disciplines and seeking to spread its influence, or when a long-lost clan resurfaces, a revenant dynasty is born. They are small, secretive, and they recruit new revenants actively by the Embrace. These dynasties are highly varied and individual – four examples are provided below.

## *The Ceceya*

The Ceceya once stalked the nations of Mesoamerica, following the Aztec conquests and establishing themselves as the rightful rulers of the night. Inducting only those of pure Mexica stock, they fought bitter midnight wars against the Kindred of other clans, seeing themselves as the only legitimate rulers of

one place, keeping minimal collections of personal effects that can easily be carried on their persons. In the end, not having much makes it much easier to pick up and leave when the tide turns. This uncertainty makes the revenant's Danse Macabre a carefully improvised thing, moving around and between in order to avoid stepping on toes or taking the wrong partner.

## *Dying in Style*

the Empire's nights. They were opposed by other clans, which crossed boundaries where the Ceceya enforced them. All the world belonged to the Ceceya, and their endless struggle was to oust the lesser Kindred from the Empire and all those nations the Aztecs took.

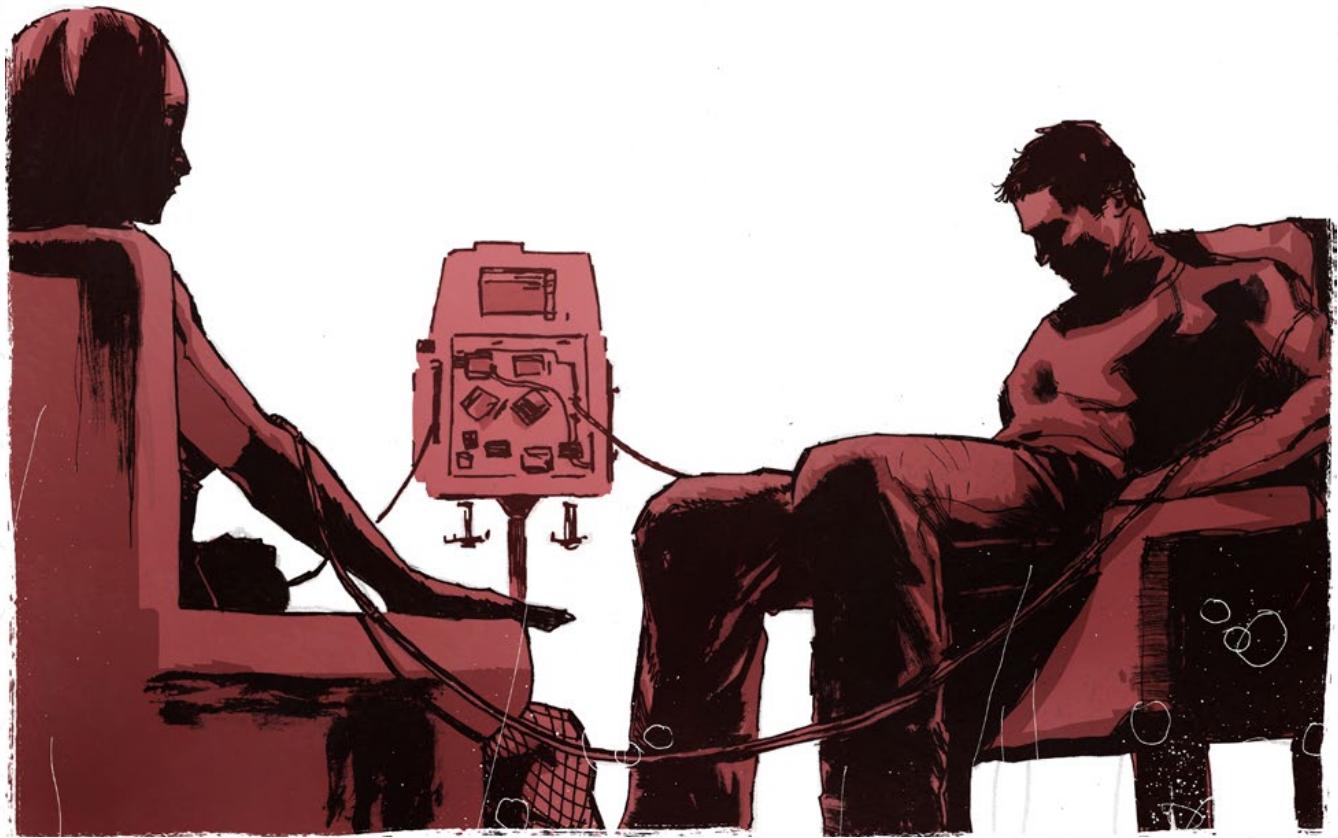
In the end, their grand war saw its doom when strange ships were sighted in the east. When the other Mesoamerican nations joined forces with the conquistadores against the bloody-handed tyranny of their Aztec conquerors, the Ceceya found themselves targeted by new and strange vampires fighting alongside all their old nemeses. The clan was shattered and defeated, the few remnants fleeing or becoming the slaves of those they had once called lesser. The other native clans, in turn, saw their newfound allies from across the seas become betrayers and oppressors, and the Aztec Empire saw its deeds echoed in the Empire of Spain.

It was sorcery that brought the Ceceya back. Though all the clan's vampires had been hunted down, a few descendants of the dhampir children of the clan still existed. And so, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, one such descendant performed an unholy ritual to awaken once more the blood of the Ceceya within himself. Dhampir no more, he arose a revenant, the first of a new line.

Tonight, the Ceceya are a minor presence, with a few dozen revenants spread across northern Mexico and the southern United States, operating alone or in pairs of sire and childe. They are a secretive lot, working to unlock the blood sorcery of their forebears and reconcile it with Catholicism. The old Aztec gods have become saints and angels – the fall of the Empire came because of its failure to convert to the one true faith when the Spaniards brought it to their shores. If they can atone, the Ceceya believe they will be restored to their rightful place among the true clans. For the time being, they Embrace childer of the right mindset and preserve the bloodline, acting as much like a full-blooded Kindred clan as they can.

## *The Lodge of Saint Coloman*

The Lodge of Saint Coloman, named after a martyr saint, is a secret society devoted to seizing control over the health care sector. They want to control hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, and medical research as a means to power. By granting or withholding care and breakthroughs, they want to become the true arbiters of life and death, imposing their will on the world around them. They know that they will never truly achieve their goal, but it is something to strive for, and any amount of power is worth seizing.



Most lodge members are mortal, and the existence of a revenant inner circle is known only to the elite mortal members of the lodge. The revenant members hold that the vampiric state is the ultimate secret of healing, and use it as a reward to spur the elite members on to ever-greater feats in service of the lodge. Most Embraces come from within the ranks of already-existing members, who are mostly recruited from the medical, business, and administrative branches of the health care industry. Currently, the lodge holds a few minor patents and controls health care in a few counties in the Midwest of the United States, with branches throughout North America and Europe. It has a few hundred members, maybe two dozen of whom are revenants, with most chapters consisting of a dozen or so mortals.

### *The Prophets of Hell*

The Prophets of Hell know the world is ending. Nuclear war is once again likely, the environment is dying and nobody's doing anything about it, mortals are afflicted with the emotional fever of apocalypse — how else do you explain everything that's been happening on the world stage? — and finally, there are vampires. There were no vampires before — they arose in the 1940s from Nazi sorcery, and only spread outside of Jerusalem in the 80s. All the pretense at vampire history, all the myths and legends of Kindred and revenants, are lies. These stories were invented by the servants of Ialdabaoth, the one and only true God and

Devil, who created the world and humanity out of sadistic glee, to suffer for his pleasures. The world is ending — the Creator is losing his grip on his creations, the religions and governments and corporations he set down are shaking themselves apart, and his plaything will soon be outside his grasp. The world will end, and all souls will be free. And if it doesn't end on its own account, then it just has to be given a little push — all for the common good, right?

The sacred oracle and divinely inspired leader of the Prophets is Pastor-Reverend Fisher Jurin, a revenant who is often found in a hallucinogenic haze, and whose Vitae is fertile. Hallucinations are not simply contained within the head, he teaches, but flow from a flaw in the fabric of the world which allows actors knowledge of the greater whole that is not supposed to be granted to them. It is one of only a handful of paths to true knowledge, and he will show his followers the way. All it takes is a blood tithe each night, and a willingness to do as he says. Dissent is of Ialdabaoth, and cannot be tolerated. He is charismatic and selfish, abusing his followers as he wishes, and they love him for it.

The Prophets number somewhere under a dozen, and operate from an abandoned warehouse converted into a temple — Spartan and ascetic for the members, grand and luxurious for Pastor-Reverend Jurin. After all, he is already enlightened. He has a right-hand revenant, his own childe, and likes to dangle the promise of Embrace in front of his other followers, who are mortal. Though the members spend a lot of time in the

temple, the Pastor-Reverend sends them out to enact “Strikes Against the Devil” — acts intended to weaken the fabric of order, performing various petty crimes, acts of vandalism and kidnapping. True terrorism is still outside of their scope, but it is slowly approaching that point.

## *The Red Eagles*

The Red Eagles were a coterie once, about three decades ago. Vanessa van den Graaf, a founding member, had made her fortune on tech startups in the 70s and 80s. With her bankroll, the coterie purchased an estate and the best security money could buy, ensconcing themselves safely behind cast iron fences. They got involved in human trafficking to stock their wine cellar with fine specimens so they would never have to go hungry, and eventually started Embracing and recruiting more members into their little gang.

These nights, they are around a dozen revenants strong, with as many hired security guards at their estate. They also maintain a network of informants and suppliers, many of whom the Red Eagles have addicted to a rare drug, Ariadne, as a way of control.

The drug is produced at the Red Eagle estate in a basement lab, and offered to loyal subjects at very favorable prices. They also make a tidy profit in various other fields, running an online casino and keeping up the human trafficking. The group avoids producing or selling drugs other than Ariadne to avoid notice from the authorities or other crime groups, preferring not to jeopardize its trump card in any way.

The Eagles’ long-term plan, under van den Graaf’s leadership, is to establish a permanent and secure presence in the city, and secure its member’s future existences through money and mundane power. Revenants can last as long as Kindred, and the Red Eagles have no desire to lose that advantage. Van den Graaf’s personal goal is to win the Uplifting from a Ventru, preferably as prestigious as possible, by presenting herself as already essentially being a successful Lord. She has a particular sire in mind, a Ventru elder named Simon Bale, who rumor holds was the head of a mercenary band in life — though she is willing to settle for less. This ambition is her little secret, and she does not plan to share the Uplifting with her comrades. Instead, she will replace them, maybe allowing those who accept the Blood Oath to remain and potentially win the Uplifting.

## *Life Amongst the Damned*

*The room is dazzling. Velvet curtains hang along every wall, some left open to reveal smaller, private rooms off the main chamber. Soft music plays, a jazzy tune with a deliciously sleazy brass band spinning the melody. The light is soft and red, and the entire room reeks of decadence and overindulgence. Around her flit the most beautiful and horrific creatures she’s ever seen, all whispers and fleeting, knowing, judging glances.*

*All cold.*

*She tugs self-consciously at the hemline of her dress, tighter and shorter than anything she’d ever worn when she was alive, and wobbles on heels that glitter and add another halffoot to her height. The person she is meeting, the Prince, is something called a Daeva. Her quiet companion had offered the information as he presented her with the outfit, saying only that the Prince would like her better wrapped up in a pretty package. She stands quietly next to him, trying to pick out the other groups he had mentioned. The names are all exotic and unfamiliar, save for Nosferatu, which had told her plenty on its own, and confirmed a number of her suspicions.*

*The hush falls all at once, without any cue she can determine. The focus of the room shifts subtly but instantly to the lavish chair in the corner, on a raised dais, just high enough for its occupant to survey the entire room with unimpeded ease. Two men file out first, standing to either side, one with cold authority that demands respect, the other with flippant ease and comfort afforded only by invulnerability. He has told her about these two, as well. They are the sheriff, then, and the Prince’s childe.*

*Maybe it’s the title that misleads her, but she isn’t expecting the last person to enter the room to be a woman. She moves with impossible grace, a satisfied smile on her face, all wanton energy and electric desire, absolutely unattainable as she drapes herself over the chair.*

*The Prince.*

Each and every Kindred in a given city comes before the

prince, and must prove his worth before he is accepted and protected from the whims of established citizens or other forces outside the prince’s jurisdiction. Those without any standing in the city are left to find their way until they are of enough note and merit to be of use. Childer who are as of yet unremarkable in the prince’s eyes have whatever protections their sires can offer.

Revenants, those who do not know their sires — and whose sires are completely unaware of their unintended childe — are left to the wolves.

The careful regulation of creating new childe is in place not only to prevent the reckless Embracing of those who are ill-fitted to life among the Damned, but to preserve the delicate balance of supply and demand. Blood is a distressingly finite resource, and too many Kindred occupying the same area can condemn even the most populous city to a slow and painful death. A rash of spontaneous Embraces can completely throw the balance of a city out of equilibrium, particularly if it already dances near the tipping point. For this reason, revenants are considered by some to be a plague, collapsing established cities with their misunderstood bloodlust and drawing back the curtain of the Masquerade to reveal the truth that hides from the light of day.

Revenants that crop up within cities are best suited trying to find a proper Kindred mentor, one to teach them the ways of the night and help them acclimate to their new lives. If a revenant can secure the favor of an influential member of society, she finds more doors open to her than she could have ever imagined. Not only does she have protection from the other Kindred in the city, she now has a teacher to help her navigate all the myriad rules and subtleties of the world she has been so unceremoniously thrown into. If she has pursued her lineage, her protector may be the vampire who unwittingly donated

his Vitae, but anyone among the Kindred can stand in defense of a revenant. Without clan ties to dictate where the revenant would "belong" in the All Night Society, they are open game for any willing to stretch their neck out for an unprepared initiate.

A revenant found by a member of the All Night Society has at best a few nights of instructions to sit through, and at worst a quick and dirty crash course in the rules of the Masquerade before she is presented to the rest of the society at large. Not every vampire who stumbles upon a revenant (or a nest of them) is willing to give the unfortunate creatures that benefit of the doubt, but those who do offer it in a variety of ways. Though it's the rare and unusual vampire who adopts a revenant purely from the goodness of his heart, many are not fool enough to arrange purely exploitative relationships.

- He gives them shelter from the sun and access to his herd, provided they can control themselves enough not to kill too often. The apartments he houses them in aren't in the best part of town, but he doesn't charge any real rent, and his security is top-notch. He only asks that they act as his bloodhounds whenever he needs. Well, he doesn't ask, really, but no one ever says no.
- She offers her knowledge to anyone she deems worthy, but only to one at a time. When her charge has learned to truly go unnoticed, she offers one final test. She always needs

information, and if he can get her answers, she'll give him anything he wants.

- The rest of the Dragons have no idea that they aren't full-blooded. It's only two; he knows he couldn't sustain more. His research and experiments are progressing just as he wishes, and while it causes them suffering, he has promised they'll never need to fear anything as long as they keep his secrets. The transfusions are dangerous and messy, but he's closer than he's ever been before to Uplifting one of them without any of his own blood.

While they have no innate knowledge of the Disciplines the Kindred receive when Embraced, all revenants have the potential to learn. Without a clan's natural inclinations, the process is long and taxing, but a patient mentor willing to invest her time can lead the revenant through any Disciplines she knows (save for anything specific to her Bloodline, if she has one.) She may, of course, withhold any knowledge, as well. While most are willing to teach the more generalized and accessible Disciplines, those specific to clans are often meted out judiciously, and only once the revenant has proven worthy of the art. For revenants hoping to be fully Embraced by their guardians, learning the specialty of her potential sire's clan is often the first step toward her goal, and the sharing of that knowledge at all is an indication of trust from her mentor.

## *Joining the All Night Society*

*He closes the door behind her. He's hardly said a word the whole way home. She thinks it must have been the question that bothered him. Was he not offered the same choice?*

*She mulls it over in her mind. Does she want to stay the way she is? Starving every night, disregarded by the others, left to fend for what scraps they can scrounge up together?*

*Or does she want to become one of them? Finish this cursed transformation that got her here in the first place, and take the good that would come with it? Powers, a place in their society, and the chance to become something....*

*She sighs, sheds the dress and shoes, and falls onto her borrowed bed. Someone has changed the sheets, she notes idly. Keep what she has now, learn more about the edges of society, stay out of sight and out of mind?*

*Or join them in their glittering, dangerous Requiems, follow the intrigue and the plots hiding in their inscrutable eyes, become a part of them herself?*

*Weariness washes over her. She lays down, staring at the carefully blocked out window. Metal outside, boarded up here, curtains hung for good measure. It worked last night.*

*The cold washes over her again, the feeling of sinking deep under water. She drowns again in stolen blood.*

*She decides as the sun chases her to rest.*

Sometimes a revenant is perfectly happy remaining as she is once she's found a way to establish herself. She learns to mediate her hunger, cultivate her own herd or blood farm, and build a haven or contribute to a shared burrow. She makes her way on the fringes, happy to shrug off the scrutiny the Kindred

labor under. Let them run their little races and play their little games. She wants nothing to do with their poisoned smiles and honeyed lies, the inscrutable layers of meaning in every word and gesture. Her life is as visceral as her nightly thirst, and she has no patience for the pageantry of the Kindred.

Not everyone is so satisfied by life on the outside. While most remain conflicted regarding the obligations and obstacles of Kindred society, a number of revenants aspire to the sordid glamour and nightly reverie that is the All Night Society, seeking a central role in the Danse Macabre instead of being forced to play the wallflower. They endure enough struggles already; why not shed their heavy shackles in favor of a gilded collar?

If he manages to gain the favor of a vampire willing to take him on, a revenant can earn the Embrace, the same as the rest. His surrogate sire is at once his savior and his keeper, the filter through which he learns about the world around him. Most sires willing to Uplift a revenant are either of little social consequence themselves, and fear no real repercussions of committing such a questionable act, or those so secure in their positions that no one would dare question or deride them.

More so than more traditionally Embraced vampires, revenants have the opportunity to pick and choose which clan they would prefer to join. Having even a minimal place on the periphery of Kindred society allows the resourceful revenant to learn about each group and select a potential sire. A revenant seeking to be Uplifted generally spends a considerable amount of time acting as a servant or lackey for the vampire he wishes to sire him. Ingratiating himself to her is a lengthy process, but

necessary to achieve his eventual goal. Kindred rarely Embrace spontaneously, and find subjects who fascinate them to bring into the All Night Society. The cleverest revenants are skilled at manipulating others without such obvious means as Disciplines, never asking to be Uplifted, instead sowing the seeds that eventually inspire the vampire to offer his prize. Of course, this isn't without its own risk. If he's too subtle in his suggestions, it won't cross the vampire's mind; if he's too obvious, the effort becomes transparent and reeks of desperation.

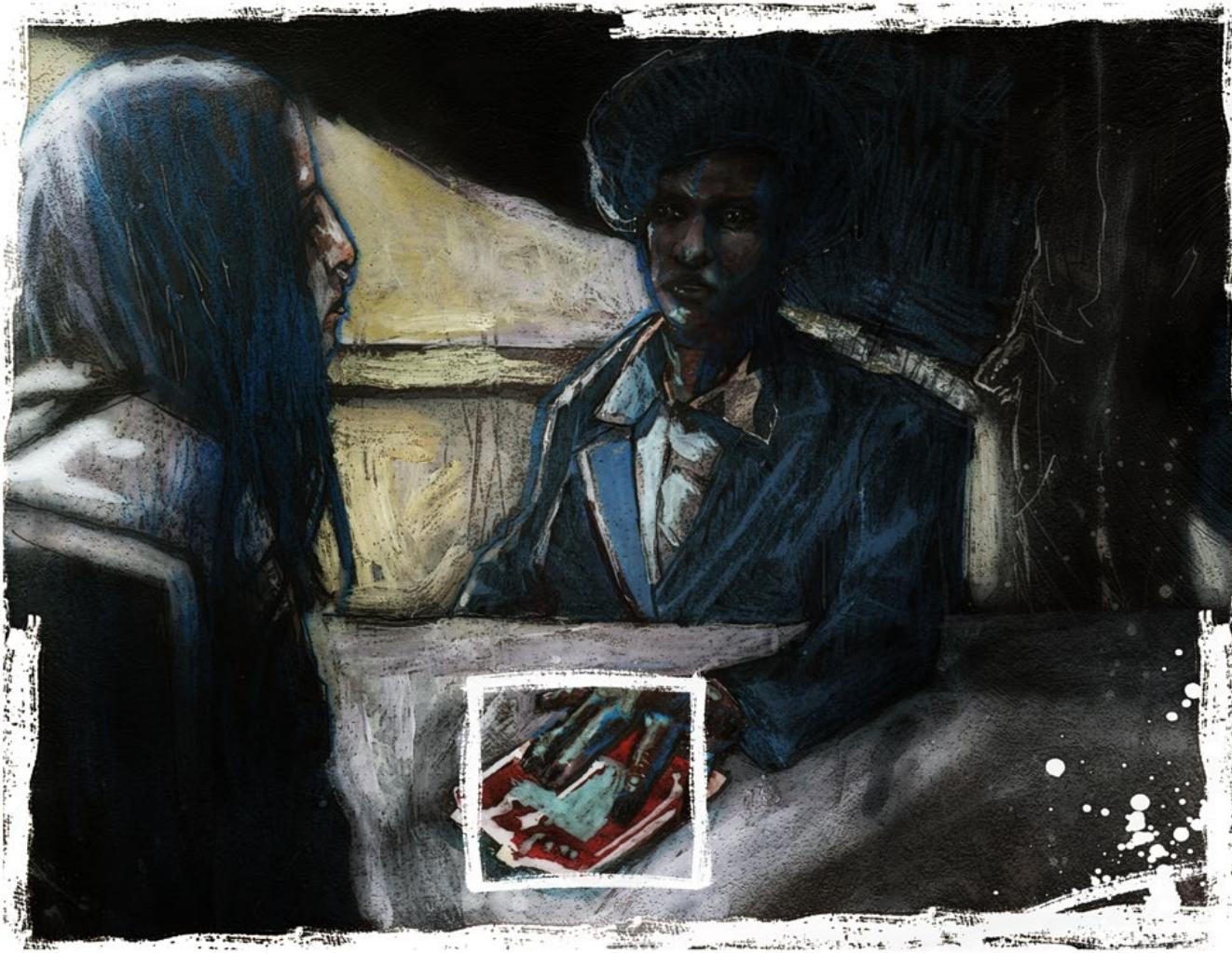
While this subterfuge is most appropriate to Kindred society, there is the rare vampire who offers sponsorships. He hosts a large number of revenants, using them to do whatever tasks he so chooses, and offering the Embrace as a reward for the one he deems most worthy. This environment breeds the most cunning and ruthless of individuals, direct competition inspiring all competitors to be the most cutthroat.

For one unwilling to leave her fate in the hands of another, there is another option to become a true member of the Kindred. For the revenant willing to do anything, there is the forbidden act of diablerie, stealing the soul of one of the Kindred to complete her own transformation. The practice is not without its own risks; aside from the normal effects associated with diablerie (see *Vampire: The Requiem Second*

Edition p. 101), revenants also gain the Jaded Condition. Now that he has everything he wants, he cares little for the life he used to have in favor of the one he has waited so long to lead, and his Beast ripples under his skin after his conquest. The Condition can be resolved as normal.

### *Perception*

With their dubious and largely unknown origins, most vampires are quick to classify revenants as "other" — they aren't ghouls, yet aren't truly Kindred, and are easily misunderstood and written off. Life on the fringes of Kindred society is difficult for those without a benefactor, leading many revenants to band together for their own safety and self-preservation. Those who do have an advocate, mentor, or protector find navigating Kindred society a bit easier with the help of a teacher, but for many, the experience is still very much of one on the outside looking in. Revenants react to interactions with vampires with equal measures of eagerness and suspicion, acutely aware that they may simply be a means to an unknown end. The various clans and covenants of Kindred society all have their own ideas and opinions about these mysterious beings, varying widely from group to group.



## *Clans*

While no clan ever agrees unanimously on anything, the very nature of clan ties dictates their tastes and tendencies and colors their collective perceptions of the world. The lens changes clan to clan, and the details change vampire to vampire – but in any group, certain opinions prevail, and the Kindred are no different.

### *Clan Daeva*

To the Daeva, nothing is more pitiable than a revenant. Finally, there is someone with a worse lot than theirs: a mortal accidentally Embraced (if that's even the word for it), given all the fetters of immortality and yet none of the splendor. The way they cling to their past lives and try to recover a sense of normality is not so unlike the Daeva's desperate pursuit of gratification. Daeva have no particular dislike of revenants and have no problem with including them in their social circles, but don't go out of their way to seek them out or include them.

Revenants who find themselves around this clan live comfortable lives and have easy access to the blood they require. Some chafe at the way the Daeva occasionally treat revenants as pets or pitiable charity cases while the vampire parades them about; others, confused and afraid, fall more easily and comfortably into the role of a favorite lapdog. The exclusive and decadent lifestyle offers them everything they need, in exchange for whatever tasks the vampires deem unsavory enough that they don't want their own hands dirtied.

If a Daeva chooses to Uplift a revenant, her story is usually one of beautiful tragedy, a lost soul who wanders into the inviting glow of the Daeva's splendor. She looks to find herself again and lose herself simultaneously. With one foot in her mortal life and the other in the door of immortality, her halting, uncertain path rings alarmingly true to that of the members of this clan.

### *Clan Gangrel*

Gangrel recognize the potential in the lifestyle of a revenant. Born alone and forced to fend for themselves, the desire and will to continue at any cost fits easily into the mentality of this clan as a whole. The origins of revenants don't trouble Gangrel much, as they see no real need to question it any more than they wonder why there are differences in clans. All that matters to these Kindred is the ability to run in a pack. The easiest way to join a group made up of Gangrel is to simply prove useful.

Gangrel are arguably the most accepting of revenants, and most find homes amongst them simply because they feel most equal. The revenant who finds a pack discovers they don't care if her appearance is rumpled or if her manners aren't perfect, and don't sneer at her nightly need to hunt. While she may not be treated as lesser, it's abundantly clear that she will never be at the top of chain, and her lack of the Gangrel's visceral connection to the Beast makes it hard to argue for more. Many

content themselves with having a middling position in social circles, finding it far preferable to treatment as servants as among many other clans.

Prime candidates for Uplifting among the Gangrel are those who don't shy from their own Beasts. A taste for the thrill of the hunt and desire for strength and prowess are the hallmarks of ideal members of this clan, as well as the ability to adapt and continue no matter the situation.

### *Clan Mekhet*

The existence of revenants is something of a conundrum for the Mekhet. On one hand, they present a fascinating mystery, the threads of which tantalize as much as they torment, and anyone looking for a lifetime quest can easily find it in attempting to unravel the tapestry of such creatures. On the other, they pull back the curtain on the secrets of Kindred society, exposing the cracks and uneven seams in ways the secret keepers would prefer to keep hidden. The Shadows tend to avoid the light, and while they may not mean to, revenants act as a beacon to reveal the truth about much of the darkness – what is most unsettling about it is what *might* be lurking there. Turn on the light, and the fear disappears, taking with it the hope of answers.

A revenant who interacts with the elusive members of this clan finds two behaviors to be the most common: He is either studied like an experiment, pursued by a figure who appears and vanishes on a whim, or relentlessly pressed for what information he holds on others and precisely how he obtained it. Connections and information outside the Mekhet's circle is a powerful bargaining chip for those willing to play in the big leagues.

The ability to remain undetected and gather information is invaluable to the Mekhet, and any revenant who has managed to set himself up and still fly under the radar is a good candidate for Uplifting into this clan. Stealth isn't the only path, and enough curiosity and aptitude for finding answers also draws attention from Shadows. Social connections, strong occult leanings, or a knack for obscure and tedious research are all virtues among this clan. Managing to surprise one is just icing on the horrific cake.

### *Clan Nosferatu*

The Nosferatu are almost as accepting of revenants as the Gangrel. While they don't share the pack connection, they understand well the feeling of being outside. While the revenant mourns the loss of her living status, the Nosferatu revels in it. If she wallows too deeply in her despair, she is likely to lose the attention of the Haunted, but if she commands her position on the outside, she finds close friends in the unsettling members of this clan. The revenant is the perfect protégé for the Nosferatu, easily groomed to command her own fear and uncertainty and hone it into a knife's edge.

Revenants disgusted or terrified by their unexpected transformation find a strong sort of solace amongst the Haunted. The Nosferatu longs for what she once had, but in a different way than the wanton Daeva; she lurks and observes, content in the discomfiting aura she gives off. The second takes don't bother her, or the way strangers cross the street to avoid passing her by. She smiles at their unease, and offers open arms to those who are also willing to unsettle others as they lurk at the edges of society.

The story of a revenant Uplifted into this clan is one of settling on the fringes and looking in from the outside. She slinks around in the shadows of her old life, aware that her family knows she is different and daring them to ask why. She doesn't shy from her condition, allowing it to seep out, challenging the established truths of kine society without ever uttering a word.

### Clan Venttrue

Servants come in many forms, and Venttrue above all enjoy employing revenants for inter-Kindred relations. More disposable than ghouls, revenants offer a variety of services – not the least of which, of course, involve being framed or taking the fall for a Venttrue's transgressions. What better use of those who are and yet aren't the same, unwanted progeny who have no other purpose than to rattle through the night like a shadow?

The revenant who exists within groups of Venttrue knows one lesson above all others: Ears open, mouth shut. Whether spying for a master or trying to dig up dirt for his own purposes, he knows moving around these Kindred is the most careful of dances. Everything is veiled in multiple layers of meaning, except the way he is regarded. They either ignore him completely, or throw brief glances of disgust his way. But he shoulders them all, knowing there is so much more to be learned if they underestimate him.

To catch a Venttrue's attention requires dedication. The Lords do not consider Embracing anyone lightly, and have no heartstrings to tug when it comes to poor, orphaned revenants. Those who are Uplifted into this clan have managed consistently to impress their would-be sire, and have likely spent years in her presence before even daring to ask for the honor. Without impeccable etiquette and a sense of decorum, any hopeful revenant is quickly dismissed and forgotten.

### Covenants

Gatherings of Kindred from all clans and backgrounds, covenants are the easiest way to interact with all manner of vampires. While the culture of any given covenant tends to be tight-knit, they aren't drawn along bloodlines like clans. Revenants fit most easily into covenants for this reason, and often use their covenant ties to further their own agendas.

### The Carthian Movement

*It's a sea of bodies all around her, chanting the same phrase. She enjoys losing herself in the throng. They bear signs, shaking them above their heads; they jeer and boo at the figure who moves swiftly to his car, turning his collar to the sound and keeping his head down. A group of them leaves together, some of them eager to conclude a night of protest with a Kiss. Others have no idea what's coming next, but follow all the same and learn.*

*She stays out as long as she can, simultaneously dreading and anticipating her return home tonight. Her host will disapprove, she knows. That's part of why she went. But he won't be able to do anything, not with the threat of retaliation from the rest of the covenant. No one person, Kindred or kine, is strong enough to stand against them when they rise and join in force. She's counting on this, eager to remind him when he tries to punish her, or to enslave her with his blood like he's tried before. They know she has only the barest appreciation of him, the one who took her before any others could raise a hand. He wants to break her, to groom her, to make her just like him. Somehow she's managed to keep her strength of will and resist his Venttrue mind games.*

*Let him keep to his Invictus ways. Soon they'll have enough leverage, and he won't be able to treat her as his plaything anymore.*

The Carthian movement is the obvious first choice for a revenant. Their ideals and concepts about changing Kindred society offer her a unique opportunity fight for more rights as she stands, without having to aspire to one day being "fully" Embraced. The Firebrands throw themselves at their given causes with unmatched zeal, inviting any and all who are willing to throw in and make the effort to join up. Their contemporary views and incorporation of kine government practices make them most relatable to new revenants, both as a system of rule and landmark in the new terrain of the Damned.

For the most part, the Carthian Movement welcomes revenants. In their ideals to change the way vampire society works, it's easy to justify changing the treatment of revenants, along with ghouls, dolls, and thralls. Within the covenant, revenants aren't regarded as substandard for once, and are treated with the same respect as any of the member of the All Night Society. Prominent members of the Movement are among the most likely to foster revenant groups, both to benefit the disenfranchised outcasts and to further the agenda of adjusting the perception of the half-damned. Highly valued for their abilities, the Movement often uses revenants to track down their sires, potentially rooting out Kindred who abuse their ghouls, feed too roughly or indiscriminately, or otherwise abuse their power. Once the Carthians have located an individual they deem an enemy and in need of punishment, allowing the oft-starving revenants in their party to weaken their quarry gives them a chance to slake their thirst. As the members of the Movement are varied in their methods, the most brutal brawler and poised politicians find members they fit in with, offering unique views to the Movement and helping to steer it in unanticipated directions.

Among the chief complaints from members in the Movement are that revenants pose a significant risk to anyone near them at

sundown. While a revenant can of course learn to mediate her starvation over time — and even learn tricks to stave it off — her inability to retain blood and subsequent feeding habits make it difficult to support her, especially if she doesn't have access to a considerable herd. Others cite that while the group as a whole aims to radically alter the structure of Kindred society, their efforts are disregarded when they feature revenants in any prominent way. Without enough "real" Kindred behind any one motion, it is easily written off by the rest of the All Night Society as a fringe concern outside the care of the current regime, as it doesn't affect Kindred enough for them to bother with the cause.

**Joining the Movement:** Revenants joining the Carthian Movement are unsatisfied with their lots in life and seek change. They feel rejection from Kindred society more keenly than others, and seek a place of equality, rather than one of servitude. Revenants with strict guardians frequently lash out by joining the Movement; those without someone looking after them find the Movement much more accessible than the other covenants. Those who have trouble leaving the mortal world behind use the Movement's association with protest groups and activist parties to maintain their connection to their old world. The fact that it's easy to cultivate a herd from kine zealously devoted and united by a common cause is merely an added bonus.

Carthian revenants seek to enjoy their second chances even while dead, and use the Movement as a way to get their footing now that everything once normal and comfortable is difficult at best, and out of reach at worst. Other Carthians are willing to adopt the revenant and facilitate her adjustment. The Movement's belief that vampires should avoid interfering in the lives of the kine also mean they're the most likely to help revenants find a suitable feeding ground and negotiate the best way to make sure no one herd is overwhelmed by the number of bloodsuckers feeding on its members.

**Fitting In:** A revenant who joins the Carthian Movement first finds which Kindred she wants to support, as the goals and ideals of each individual can vary greatly. She starts with the same legwork as any of them, proving her support for the Movement and her willingness to get into the thick of things. Revenants sponsored by Kindred of other covenants are often appointed as shadows to their ambassadors, the members that sit on the councils of the other covenants. This often appeases a wary or displeased guardian, and is sometimes decided based on the intensity of the reaction to her ward taking up with the Movement.

Within a number of Carthian sects, revenant groups have banded together to lobby for their own rights within Kindred society. Some adopt the name whispered in ancient lore, calling themselves Mikhaili, and petitioning for revenants to be acknowledged as their own sixth clan. Most revenants are eager to take up with this cause, fighting to be considered equal to the rest of the Kindred and offered the same representation. Other Carthians who agree with this do so for the visibility it grants to revenants, and the ease of tracking numbers of the Damned, half or otherwise, in a given location. Few can argue against at least one of their points, as it better preserves the necessary balance between predator and prey when all of the

predators are accounted for. Kindred seeking to squash such talk have a difficult time pinpointing a single figurehead to crush; a number of sects in different locations appear to have come up with idea independently, and work apart from each other.

**On the Embrace:** While the Carthians have no particular qualms about Uplifting revenants, they also see no particular need. When their ideals are reached, there won't be a difference between the Damned and the half-damned, rendering the transformation moot. Thus, if one of their number Embraces a revenant, it's assumed it was something the revenant herself wanted and was granted. If revenants and Kindred are equal, after all, it's a lateral move, not one from an inferior position to a more advantageous one. The ones most likely to resist a revenant receiving the Embrace are, oddly enough, other revenants. The desire to become Kindred is insulting to those who are satisfied with what they are, and some consider it the highest degree of hypocrisy. Why join the Carthian Movement except to strive for equality? Why change, unless a revenant isn't equal?

Others argue that all revenants should be Uplifted, removing the stigma of being "half-formed." They see revenants as standing between kindred and kine; since they can't move back to mortality, they deserve to move forward with all the benefits granted to the other Kindred. However, most counter this argument with the topic of the nature of ghouls. If revenants deserve to be brought into Kindred society, should ghouls be Uplifted as well?

### *The Circle of the Crone*

*She can smell it when she wakes. Iron and salt, surrounding her; the blood she lost in the night. It makes her thirst worse, the aching and burning spreading through every vein, maddening and yet delightful. She rises, studying her red-stained skin, eager for blood that isn't cold and dead.*

*The little shack is abandoned in a section of woods at the edge of the suburb. She stays here to keep an eye on things while the rest of them play nice with the other Kindred. The Society doesn't trust her. The Circle does. They'll bring the followers tonight, like they always do, and she'll have everything set up when they arrive.*

*She lights the candles, rearranges the heavy hangings that keep the sun out of the dilapidated structure, flips to a new page on the old occult book on their little altar. She smears her lost blood into patterns across the stretch of stone she sleeps on — comfort matters little when your sleep is as deep as hers — and adds a knife for decoration. All props, all just setting the scene. Every moment, her hunger rises, and she waits eagerly for things to finally begin. Outside she can hear footsteps, and behind them, felt at the top of her spine more than heard, the whispers of her sisters as they draw close again. They understand her thirst. They worship the thirst, the Beast rising within them all and demanding to be fed. They embrace it, wrap it in the trappings of superstition and present it to the rebellious teens of the nearby community. The children come to feel like they're part of something bigger, and oh, they are.*

*The timid knock on the door tells her things are in place. She opens it, pulls the figure standing there in, slams it shut again. He's terrified, but willing, and she sinks her fangs in deep. The rest will join when the first ritual of the night is complete.*

While their ranks can seem impenetrable, a revenant who joins the Circle of the Crone finds that her status is of no object here. She is a monster like the rest of them, a vampire in her own right, even if the others don't consider her to be Kindred. Some of the Circle regard her as an even purer monster than the rest of them, uncolored by clan ties, the pinnacle of existing solely as the meeting of man and Beast without any other interference. Her nightly hunger is celebrated in ceremonial Hunts and Chases, and her bloodlust embraced as the embodiment of what the Kindred fear to be. The Circle's ranks may seem immutable to the outsider, but they are much more welcoming to someone who joins them.

The Circle of the Crone eyes revenants keenly, but warily. They are eager to teach the one newly risen that she has nothing to fear from her bloodlust, and that she has no need to shy from it. They have no concerns with teaching revenants the secrets of Crúac, especially with the way other Kindred ignore their half-brethren. In a number of groups, revenants are another one of the best-kept secrets of the Crone, and unlike most other Kindred, the soldiers of the Mother's Army eagerly accept their half-damned spawn. Hidden as they are from the rest of the All Night Society, the Circle can amass standing armies of revenants and keep them at the ready should conflict arise in the city. Matriarchs revel in teaching revenants to pursue their lust with reckless abandon, and admonish the teachings of the other covenants that preach control. The nature of a revenant's existence exemplifies the unifying thought of the Mother's Army: We are monsters, and we own our beastly heritage.

The biggest fear the Acolytes have about revenants centers around the likelihood of the half-damned defecting. Whether pulled away by another vampire, drawn to a different covenant, or simply striking out on her own, leaving the Circle of the Crone and taking their secrets with her is a dangerous threat to the notoriously tight-knit and secretive Circle. To this end, the Acolytes rely on blood bonds to keep their flock close and protected from outsiders; any revenant looking to learn the secrets of Crúac is first bound in Vinculum. Forgoing this bond isn't necessarily forbidden, but is generally seen as unwise. Should the vampire's student later leave and begin spreading their knowledge, both are hunted and punished. The Mother's Army does not tolerate its secrets being spread, and is more than willing to reinforce that message amongst its adherents.

**Joining the Circle:** A revenant joining the Circle of the Crone sees her transformation as something that has freed her. She is all too happy to throw off the shackles of society and act as she wishes, uninhibited by expectations and morals and conscience. In her life, she may have been interested in the occult, following the threads of mythology surrounding ancient druids or witch's covens. Her exposure to Vitae may very well have been through the Kiss of one of the Circle, or a blood ritual hosted by the covenant. Those who rise from the herds of the Circle are prime candidates for joining the Circle, simply another step in her initiation. While it's a step rarely reached in such an accidental manner, the Acolytes are erratic enough in choosing their childer that even an unexpected member is not

so out of the ordinary. If the strong are the ones who survive and better themselves, the revenant is no different; she has been granted the gifts of the Mother, and so must deserve them.

While previous interest in all things occult and mystical isn't a prerequisite for joining the Circle, it helps to lead the revenant to the group. When the Cacophony sings to her and the scent of blood is high, following inevitably leads her to the blood-soaked rituals and revelations of the Circle.

**Fitting In:** Without much of an overarching structure, holding any one position in the Circle is highly dependent on the specific sub-group the revenant finds herself a part of. By default the member with the most knowledge often becomes the leader of her coven, circle, or faction. Revenants are revelers along with all the rest, taking part in rituals with lustful abandon and orgiastic enthusiasm. She may become a reference point for new members of the Circle, the one others turn to when questing to embracing the Beast.

In Hunts or Chases, a starving revenant acts as a hound, scenting and flushing quarry so the group may give chase. Her ability to track her sire also leads to ever more entertaining Hunts, particularly if the Kindred in question is found to be an enemy of the Circle. While the Invictus also use revenants as hounds, the Acolytes treat the revenant as a fully functioning member of the covenant, where the Invictus are more likely to treat revenants as if they are merely dogs — and ill-trained ones that require short leashes at that. If a revenant has escaped the oversight of such a mentor, the Mother's Army is all too happy to help her achieve her revenge, even making it part of her initiation. Should she fail to exact proper justice in the eyes of the Circle, she may be turned away from the group; but without having learned any secrets, it's likely to be an amicable parting.

**On the Embrace:** The Circle of the Crone Embraces erratically, seeming to the outsider to swing wildly between considering their choices very little and setting exacting standards for their potential childer. To the Acolytes, a revenant already has a connection with the Beast — while she does not need to join the ranks of the Kindred if she doesn't wish to, the Circle will accept more than condemn most instances of Amaranth. If the revenant can overpower and kill one of the Kindred, she deserves what power it grants her.

Any revenant with even the most basic of knowledge of Crúac has a logical enough answer for that question. With such limited Blood Potency, her rituals lack much of the power of the more potent Kindred. She may also feel that she can only truly connect with her Beast if she has a deeper connection with her brethren by joining a clan, or wish to insinuate herself into Kindred society to target some of the more nuanced and precise rituals.

For many members of the Mother's Army, the Embrace is a reward for devoted members who wish to increase their power. No one gets Uplifted without first proving they deserve the honor and have the ability to control the power that comes with the true Embrace, are skilled enough to keep the secrets of the Circle even under duress, and have the will to resist the effects of such Disciplines as Dominate and Majesty.

Alternatively, as the Circle of the Crone exists by survival of the strongest, a member of the covenant has a second option: Wait for one of the Circle to offer the Embrace, or take it for herself through Amaranth. To go toe-to-toe with another vampire and succeed certainly denotes the strength to join the ranks of the Kindred, but the consequences outside of the covenant still stand. The revenant must weigh her desire to join the Kindred with the likelihood of her transgression being discovered, and how far she thinks her coven will go to defend her.

## *The Invictus*

*The sound of the printer accompanied her as she dressed for the evening, carefully selecting her ensemble and accessories. She'd sent the document before stepping into the shower, rinsing away the lost blood of the night while her meal changed the sheets after recovering himself. By the time she was dressed, made up, and ready, the last pages had settled and dried. She took up the considerable stack, sliding it into a manila envelope labeled with impeccable handwriting, and tucked it into the crook of her arm on her way out of her room.*

He had no idea she'd done the digging, but she was sure he'd be happy with what she'd found. No doubt his enemies hadn't considered that there was someone working under him that could sift through the layers of deception they'd used online; he himself was far too old to have grown up with communication more complex than Morse code and telegraphs, and had no online presence. His advisers, childe, his whole House were ancient, and while not out of touch, not knowledgeable enough to even know to look for what she could dig up.

She knocked gently on his door, waiting for his soft invitation to enter. He appraised her as she entered, arching an eyebrow at her unexpected parcel. Placing it on the desk before him without a word, she crossed to his spacious closet to select a suit for the evening. Stepping out into the main room again, she paused as he lifted his eyes from the pages she'd printed.

"You've been busy."

She smiled, crossing to him and unbuttoning yesterday's shirt as he stood.

"It's an easier skill set to show than tell."

"Clever, you." He studied her for a moment as she continued to dress him for the night. "Why don't you company me to Elysium tonight."

She nodded, allowing herself the slightest of smiles. One step closer.

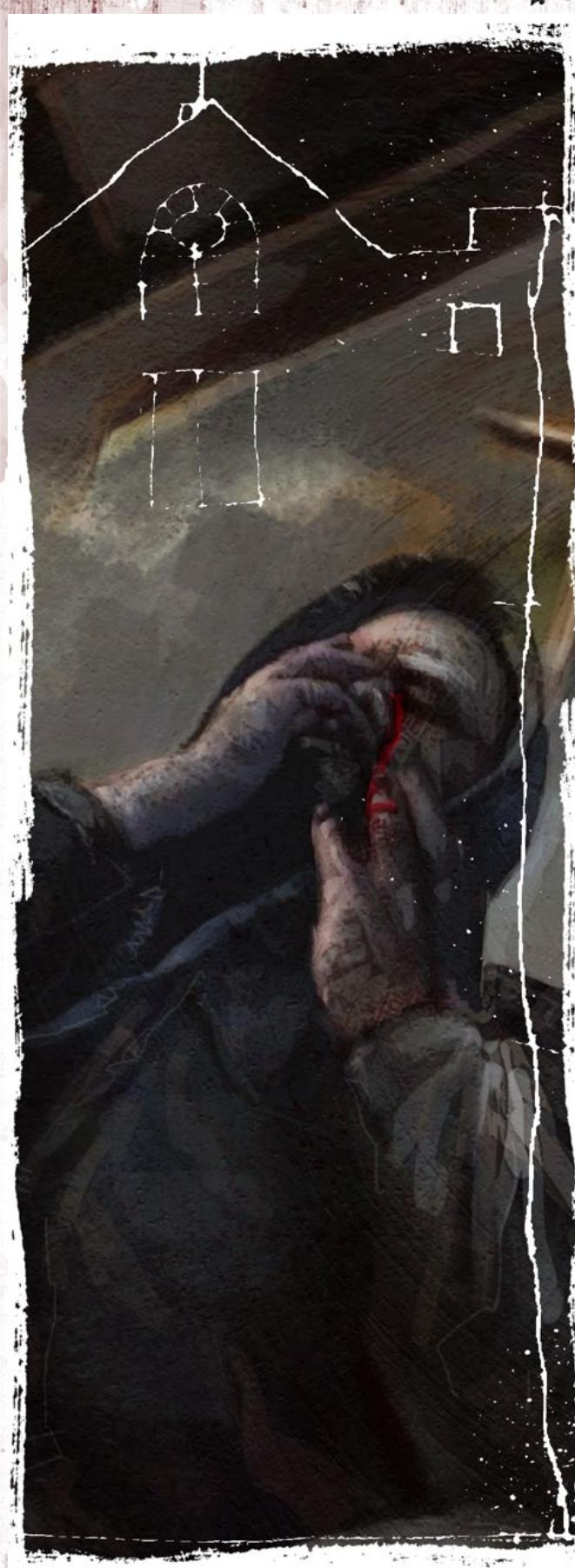
For a revenant, the Invictus is at once the most unforgiving and most rewarding of the covenants. The House has everything to offer the outcasts, and has no qualms about making them work for it. Kindred within the Invictus often stretch indentured servitude for decades and hold promises of power, influence, and even the Embrace above the revenant's head. Yet, the training serves its own purpose, and a revenant eventually Embraced by a member of the Invictus has had time to learn the unspoken rules and etiquettes of the elite society, as well as the knowledge necessary to begin spinning their own complex and far-reaching plots. Revenants risen from ghouls frequently seek to join the Invictus; they already exist in a life of servitude, and understand how far a place in the First Estate will take them.

The Invictus look down on revenants with equal measures of disdain and morbid curiosity. They have the potential utility of Kindred underlings without the investment of childe or the conflict of a sire. While his lack of supporters and status make him an excellent pawn, it also means he has no resources within the All Night Society and carries no weight of his own to enforce the law of his superior. For this reason, revenants often start life as a potential Invictus as a servant, on par with or even below the ghouls in his benefactor's employ. He is always considered lesser, but generally well taken care of, as long as he proves himself useful and continues to be so. An Invictus training his childe often provides him with revenants to begin directing, effectively removing the risk of trying their hand with other Kindred, yet offering the experience of working with creatures more complex and powerful than ghouls.

The most damning issue regarding revenants in the Houses of the Invictus is their standing in the society – or lack thereof. Revenants are aberrations who don't belong, have no power to answer to or to educate them, and pose serious risks to the Masquerade. If they can be apprehended and educated, the smartest among them stand a chance of surviving and offering anything meaningful. Otherwise, they are merely bloodthirsty monsters that only seek to feed and persevere, risking the secrecy the Invictus fight so hard to protect. As their rise can hardly be anticipated, and they are difficult or impossible to apprehend without prior knowledge, the Invictus regard them as dangerous wildcards and prefer to prevent the possibility of revenants ever rising. The Invictus teach their members to mutilate the bodies of ghouls, herd members, and dolls in ways specifically designed to prevent them from rising again for any purpose. Of course, they don't advocate for the frequent killing of their servants and hangers-on, but accidents happen. When they do, the Invictus are expected to handle things in ways meant to maintain the Masquerade. With the way revenants can track their unwitting sires, more than one member of the Invictus has met some degree of disgrace when their unintended childe come to call, following the blood that taints them.

**Joining the First Estate:** A revenant seeking to join the Invictus is patient and willing to put up with nearly anything to get ahead. He knows he is playing the longest game he can by aligning himself with the First Estate, but is willing to pay his dues and earn his place. When he finally joins the ranks of the Kindred and takes his place in the All Night Society, he will already be head and shoulders above the rest, with decades of careful observation and practice behind him as he steps up alongside his sire and looks down on those around him for the first time.

Cunning individuals who have few qualms about manipulating others or living firmly in the moral gray are well-suited to join the Invictus. The willingness to do anything to get ahead and the ability to come out of any situation gleaming, spotless, and blameless are the hallmarks of the First Estate. The members of the Invictus know they always end up on top, and enjoy spending their time sowing seeds for plans that will



not bear fruit for years, whether the desired end is the public disgrace of a hated enemy or a sequence of events that boosts his own status and popularity. Often, his schemes accomplish both, in due time.

**Fitting In:** Revenants supported by the Invictus are housed quietly, making them excellent infiltrators. His benefactor agrees to offer a place to sleep and access to his herd, provided he does not advertise his habits or home. In return, the revenant takes up with one of the other covenants or attempts to attach himself to the sympathy of one of the other Kindred in the city, learning all the secrets he can and passing them along to his silent supporter. As long as his information is useful, he continues receiving support. If he fails to report or cannot unearth anything useful, he finds himself summarily dismissed and left again to fend for himself, with the standing threat of retaliation should his past allegiances come to light.

Alternatively, the Invictus don't shy from keeping stables of revenants as bloodhounds, offering them little respect and treating them as sub-human. Revenants kept in such stables are always near starving, fed just enough to keep them from frenzy. Especially when a large number of revenants are discovered simultaneously, the captive revenants are sent to root out their sires. If more than one revenant ferrets out the same vampire, the unfortunate individual has heavy consequences to pay — either answering to the prince or the keeper of the hounds that discover him.

**On the Embrace:** The Invictus are the most discerning about who they intend to sire. The cream of the crop are the only ones worthy of becoming childe of the First Estate, and revenants already stand at a heavy disadvantage. Despite their status as some form of vampire, the Invictus regard them as even less than ghouls, and some consider them even lower than kine. As such, a revenant kept solely in the care of the First Estate and isolated from the rest of Kindred society may never learn of the Embrace as a possibility. The Invictus prefer to regard revenants as mistakes and anomalies, using revenants and discarding them when they are no longer necessary.

In a more magnanimous setting, revenants scrape and scramble for decades under the yoke of the Invictus, groping desperately for the elusive prize. The lucky ones are treated as servants or exotic pets and are offered some minor luxuries, while the more unfortunate are barely given the necessities to survive. The Invictus wield the Embrace like a whetstone to the blade of the revenant, honing his will, ruthlessness, and ability to manipulate. Stirring the pot now and then, the Invictus sponsor watches the rat race that ensues, letting them scramble over and devour each other in order to make it to the top of the pile, where they hope to make enough of an impression to finally be given the reward they are taught to so desperately seek.

### *The Lancea et Sanctum*

He had never before noticed the man who swept the floors after the last service, though he'd visited the church frequently enough before.

Before what?

He doesn't have an answer for exactly what happened to him. He's huddled in a pew at the back of the building, kneeling, head down, hood up, sweatshirt zipped closed. He hopes it hides the dark stains on his clothes. This is the third night he's woken and felt that terrible thirst. This is the first time he found a person first, not a nest of rats or a stray dog.

The fervent prayers and pleas for forgiveness tumbling from his lips taper off as he notices the janitor nearby, now paused in his motions. They are both frozen for a time, but he stands and tries to bolt when the janitor moves closer.

*In a blur, the other man beats him to the door.*

What—? How—?

*"What sins have you committed, young one?"*

He doesn't have an answer. All he recalls is the car accident, lying broken and bleeding after being struck while walking down a dark, lonely road.

*"You've killed tonight, have you? For the first time?"*

*That he can answer. He nods, terrified. His new friend only smiles.*

*"This isn't the church for you any longer. Come. There's a new congregation to help you find your way."*

The trauma of waking as a revenant is enough to turn even the least faithful man to a higher power. Who else could possibly hold the answers to his dread transformation? Science has yet to discover a way to bring the dead back to life — and he remembers vividly dying. What kind of unholy forces could have brought him back, and to what end? Without a sire, a revenant has only questions. Even a ghoul knows that coming back isn't the natural way of things. To the lost souls wandering the afterlife without a cause, the church promises answers and purpose, in exchange for devotion.

The Lancea et Sanctum are among the most divided concerning revenants. On one hand, revenants need guidance that the Sanctified are all too happy to offer; but on the other, they pose a serious threat to the Masquerade. Revenants make the most devoted followers and yet remain the most unpredictable of any in the flock. What better guide is there to a lost soul who needs direction than God's will? Revenants' desire for answers makes them easy to mold into servants and exemplary followers of Longinus. Any followers of religion in their living days gravitate easily to the Lancea et Sanctum in the afterlife, looking for a parallel to the beliefs that guided them before, and the Sanctified are happy to provide. As revenants are often desperate to fit in with the Kindred around them, they respond quickly and eagerly to the way the Church operates. Revenants who disagree with the Invictus' habit of giving orders respond much more favorably to the way the Sanctified never tell, and merely ask. Though they look down on revenants with no small amount of pity, they welcome the half-damned all the same. As many revenants suddenly cursed with walking death are terrified of what that means for the afterlife, when or if they finally get there, they fly to the open arms of the Lancea et Sanctum, ready and willing to serve.

The same curse that drives revenants to the church is exactly what makes the Sanctified wary. Revenants have questions about everything, and while they are willing to serve, they often

lack resources and try to dig up answers on their own. This, in the church's opinion, is a dangerous practice that might lead to knowledge that the Sanctified would rather keep hidden. Additionally, while the church welcomes those revenants who are willing to devote themselves to the Lancea et Sanctum or attend services as a member of another covenant, they do not tolerate revenants who exist outside of the All Night Society and its watchful eyes. The Invictus and the Lancea et Sanctum both go to great lengths to preserve the Masquerade, and their habit of seeking out and destroying nests of unaffiliated revenants often sits poorly with the half-damned who join their ranks. Any who speak out about it, unfortunately, find themselves shunned and excommunicated at best, left to the mercy of the local Kindred, or wiped out like their less fortunate brethren. While the practice earns no favors amongst revenants, it keeps most of them in line.

**Joining the Sanctified:** Revenants joining the Sanctified seek peace from the turmoil that is their existence. The Lancea et Sanctum offers structure, answers, and purpose to those who are thrown unceremoniously into the world of the Kindred. It offers guidance, shelter — a sense of normalcy in the sudden upheaval of everything the revenant has ever known — and in return, it only asks that you help them as well.

Revenants who had religious beliefs in their mortal lives are quick to join the Sanctified, as are those who fear that their horrifying new state means they are truly Damned. The Sanctified seek to repent, to do the will of God even after they have shuffled off the mortal coil.

To some, their new existence is a second chance. They devote themselves to the church because they believe they have the opportunity now to be a part of something larger than the fleeting and malleable mortal world. The Kindred, the All Night Society, and the church itself, have persisted for so long, moving things behind the scenes and remaining in the face of so much adversity. Cities have risen and fallen and the Lancea et Sanctum still stands. The revenant who joins feels he transcends his old self, his mortal self, and becomes something greater when he serves God's will. The promise of becoming something even greater drives him, and he dutifully does all the church asks of him to one day achieve that goal.

**Fitting In:** While revenants are rarely, if ever, allowed to become priests before they are Uplifted, they are welcomed into the lower ranks of the Lancea et Sanctum as followers. If the Sanctified hold mass in an approximation of most Christian services, the most promising revenants may be present as altar servers, allowing them to take part in the mass and show their devotion to the church without granting them the status of priest. Outside of masses, revenants are a favored group to send out with the purpose of testing the mortal clergy in the area. This serves the purpose of keeping the identities of the covenant's higher-ups anonymous, and in the event the encounter goes sour, no one of real importance is lost. If the individual being tested happens to fail, the revenant gets his meal for the evening, and the church reinforces its doctrine on Kindred and kine alike.

The truly devoted know of the practice of Theban Sorcery, but if revenants are allowed to learn the rituals – another rare occurrence – they are strictly limited to those that cannot physically harm their targets. Upon Embrace, the rest of the rituals are available to him provided his sire or teacher believes he is worthy of that knowledge. While every member of the Sanctified is sworn to secrecy regarding the miracles made possible through Theban Sorcery, the punishment for the revenant who breaks the silence is a heavier sentence. If the standing punishment for Kindred is Final Death, for a revenant, it often involves lengthy torture before the final blow. Merciful sentences, such as excommunication, are likely to see the revenant chased out of the entire community and stripped of any status in the city.

**On the Embrace:** The Sanctified are willing to Uplift those revenants who prove themselves worthy and devoted followers of the church. Indeed, they see it as their solemn duty to reward those who wish to serve a higher purpose, and give them the necessary gifts to do so in the most effective way. While the Sanctified may not force the revenant to serve for decades as the Invictus do, they still require a service period of some months or years before considering the revenant as a candidate for the Embrace. Within the Lancea et Sanctum, members believe firmly that the half-damned must have more reason for wishing to fully join the Sanctified than improving his own standing in society. If he proves himself over time through service, he earns his place, and is all the better for it.

While the Sanctified do not mandate that the revenant's sire be a member of the covenant, she must be someone who regularly attends services and appreciates their views. If the revenant's potential sire is not in the same covenant, she is most often a member of the Invictus, and in this manner the two covenants keep their bond and strengthen each other. While a traditional Embrace is acceptable in the eyes of the Lancea et Sanctum, the preferred method for revenants joining their ranks is through the Rite of Ascending Blood (see p. 78). The miracle is akin to a baptism for the new vampire, who joins the Sanctum purified and strengthened for the experience.

## *The Ordo Dracul*

*He's never been taken here before. Never to meet the others, not yet. But he's learned enough, his teacher says, and if he's willing to do anything to learn more, then the rest will gladly accept him.*

*The basement is less impressive than he expected. It all seems so very conventional. Sterile surfaces, stainless steel, and white lab coats. It says more operation room than it does occult research laboratory – though, he notes as they pass an open door, it does have a medical gallery. Intrigued by the instruments inside, he pauses to look, only to be spurred back in to motion by a sharp word. He scurries down the hall to catch up. They wind their way deeper into the facility. Others begin to appear and walk with them, appraising him as he keeps a few steps behind. They greet his guide; they say nothing to him.*

*Finally they reach their destination, a large chamber where others are already waiting. He follows his teacher to a figure standing in the center of the room. They share a short exchange, too soft for him to hear, and*

*then the other figure meets his eye.*

*The world goes black.*

*When he wakes again, he's in the theater that so fascinated him before. He can really only tell by all the faces looking down at him. When he tries to sit up, he finds he is bound by restraints too strong for even him to break.*

*"Now, now, settle down." It's the voice of his keeper, from across the room. "You did say you'd do anything, didn't you?"*

Ancient secrets hidden for centuries; magical artifacts of unknown power; tombs, lairs, and crypts designed not keep others out, but to keep something in: These are the tools and homes of the Ordo Dracul. The Dragons explore them all, seeking to collect and discover all they can in the pursuit of knowledge. Those who studied any and all manner of the occult and wish to unlock new secrets gravitate toward this elusive covenant. Their numbers are small and finding them is difficult, but anyone with a vested interest and a sharp enough intellect can manage to do so in time.

The Ordo Dracul is possibly the only covenant that actively seeks out revenants. The rest are willing enough to take an individual on or enslave or destroy nests when they are active enough to create a problem, but the Dragons are fascinated by the creatures that break the rules of the Kindred in such a fundamental way. In their desire to understand their own prowess and the power that lives in their blood, many Dragons foster large numbers of revenants and use them for various ends. Sometimes the revenants in question are aware of their roles as guinea pigs; more often than not, they are kept in the dark about the subtler experiments. The more obvious ones have an alarming propensity to be fatal, or at least drive the subject insane. Though considered inferior to Kindred, revenants are quite useful in field work. Scoping out a dangerous location or confronting an unknown specimen for the first time is a difficult, dangerous thing, and no Dragon is willing to risk his own neck when he has a perfectly capable servant who can observe and report back.

When it comes to the Order's experiments, revenants are often considered to be the more ethical subject than other Kindred. They come with all the physical changes and some of the abilities of a vampire, without incurring the necessary investment of time or Vitae. Ghouls and childer are investments, sparking investigations when they go missing, but the revenant seldom has a guardian to come knocking when he doesn't show his face in a week. They lack the potency of the full Kindred, but improving them without a true Embrace lays the groundwork for the Dragons to improve themselves as well.

The Ordo Dracul is singular in that the covenant generally has no dislike of the half-damned. They are curiosities, useful in a hundred ways. They aren't truly Kindred, no, but rather than shun them or kill them outright, The Order offers learning experiences and opportunities. Dragons are less likely to avoid or shun revenants as they are to consider them merely lesser, and treat them accordingly. But they have their purpose the same as anyone else. The intelligent ones make excellent protégés, and the rest are even better test subjects.

**Joining the Order:** A revenant joining the Order seeks answers. Not the answers the Lancea et Sanctum provides — Dragons aren't concerned with damnation or God's will, or the more ephemeral questions concerning why vampires exist and what purpose can drive them. The fact is that the Kindred do exist, and the Order knows their purpose very well. They exist to pursue knowledge, looking to transcend their current condition and combine the best attributes of Kindred and kine to result in something superior to both.

A revenant who joins the order already follows the occult. He believes that things such as vampires, werewolves, and ghosts exist, and seeks to unveil the truth behind these supernatural creatures. When he wakes as a revenant, he receives confirmation of one of his strongest and most mocked beliefs. The supernatural does exist, and he is now a part of the world he has long been fascinated by.

The Order offers a double-edged sword: Answers and resources beyond the scope of anything he's ever known. The price is hefty, but if he can prove himself apt enough, he can aspire to be greater than he's ever been. If he excels within the Order, he can become more than he is now, joining the All Night Society as Kindred, and from there make himself more than anyone can imagine.

**Fitting In:** Revenants who join the Ordo Dracul of their own will have devoted some of their mortal lives to the pursuit of the unknown. The supernatural has long fascinated them, and their own rising was more of a shock than a disturbance. Many happily accept their new lot, making the most of it in any way they can. Those clever enough to discover the All Night Society and the rest of the Kindred on their own are most likely to find themselves on the Order's radar, brought into the fold on the merits of their discovery. If a revenant is brought into the Order against her will, she's often indoctrinated and bound to the Kogaion, and either made to act as the proverbial canary in the coal mine in dangerous, unexplored locations or subject to all manner of gruesome experiments. If she survives, she is forbidden from leaving the Order or sharing their secrets.

While a revenant who is part of the Order can be sworn to serve one of its branches (see the Sworn Merit, **Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition** p. 114), they are forbidden from swearing to the Mysteries. This position can be revised if the revenant is Uplifted. While they can swear to the Dying Light, they are only effective as researchers or subjects of experimentation. The revenant herself cannot create new Coils.

**On the Embrace:** While the Order welcomes revenants into its fold, its members have very selective tastes when it comes to those they choose to Uplift. The most likely candidates are any who survive the experimentation that leads to the discovery of new Scales, or who succeed with flying colors on recovery missions. Like the other covenants, the Dragons believe revenants must pay their dues and prove themselves before they earn the right to be Uplifted. Revenants must be perfect specimens to be considered, sharp-witted and capable of defending themselves. They must prove they are willing to actively participate in the Order's research. A devoted revenant proves herself by researching and spearheading excavations, maintaining laboratories where she conducts her own experiments with a combination of chemistry and occult potion research, or details surgical procedures and posits new techniques to attempt — all under the watchful eye of her master, of course.

Most revenants are blood bound to members of the Order and act as servants and experimental subjects to the Dragons. Though they may aspire to more, it's an uncommon fate in the Order to be Embraced by another member. Of course, the pursuit of new Coils is a separate matter entirely. While no method to Embrace a mortal without a sire's intent has been discovered, a Dragon looking to create such an art may begin with the easier step of taking a revenant and pulling him through into a fully fledged Kindred, and working backward from there to determine the catalyst. As they encourage research and support those who seek better themselves, the Dragons have few qualms about revenants who commit Amaranth. They may not actively encourage the practice, but they certainly don't discourage it.

## Revenant Character Creation

An alley, sometime after 2 A.M. — there's a corpse here, and the corpse is moving. An hour ago, he was a normal guy out on a normal bender after a normal week. Now, he's a corpse, and he's stirring. He opens his eyes, and he loses it. He's so fucking hungry, so PISSED, and he just loses it. Ten minutes later, he gets it back, but now he's covered in blood from the teenager he just killed, spattered all over his nice business suit. He's gotta go to work in the morning, and he's gotta get his kid out of bed and to school, but that's not happening. Daddy's a monster now, and if he comes back home at all, if he doesn't pull himself together enough to know how dangerous he is, he'll no longer be anyone's daddy at all by this time tomorrow. Welcome to Hell.

Most Kindred wake up on the worst night of their lives with someone there to guide them — a sire to show them the ropes. Most revenants don't have that. They weren't chosen to become

monsters. It just happened. And now they're on their own.

A revenant chronicle begins like that, with a prelude that's all about chaos and pain. Revenants are more dangerous to everyone around them than Kindred are because they wake up so much hungrier, and without knowing anything about their condition. With nobody to train them to resist the Beast, they have to figure that out on their own. And that's probably going to take more than one night.

That's the first beat of the story. The second is finding other revenants, and learning to cope. Both are important, because a revenant's story is built on the horror and heartbreak of those first few nights, when she's all alone in the world and nobody is there to help her. Everything else is built on that. A revenant chronicle begins at rock bottom, with nowhere to go but up.

## Great, So Which Do I Pick?

Most revenants fall into one of three rough groupings, three common progenitor-spawn statuses that encompass most of them. These three major categories have different natural focuses, leading to different characters and roleplaying experiences. All fit together in a coterie, and the options allow players to tailor their revenants to their liking.

**Accidents** are the default choice. Most revenants are accidents, and revenant society revolves around them. If you want to play a revenant to the hilt, focusing heavily on their unique condition and interactions with one another, this is the option you want. Similarly, if you want to play an iconic revenant or have trouble making up your mind, this is a good choice.

**Ex-Ghouls** are the natural choice for players who want to focus on their character working towards the Final Embrace, establishing connections and gathering knowledge, perhaps learning Disciplines. An ex-ghoul lends itself well to ambition, and gives a natural opening into the All Night Society proper. If you want to focus on the Kindred, this is a natural choice.

Finally, the **Revenant Dynasties** are basically *Vampire the Requiem*-lite. These characters are more or less like Kindred on a small scale, and the dynasties themselves are secretive and mysterious, which can be appealing to players. If you want a miniature clan of your own which you can customize to your own desires, or you simply want to play a regular vampire in a revenants chronicle, this is a good choice. It also easily lends itself to exploring revenant mythology and dead clans.

It is possible to move between the categories in play — a revenant can be adopted by a domitor, inducted into a dynasty, or abandon their existing ties and become independent.

## *The Concept*

First of all, decide which type of revenant your character will be. She can be an ex-ghoul, a new member of a revenant dynasty, or just some poor schmuck who drew the short end of the stick. Everything else depends on this choice.

When creating a revenant, it might be a good idea to play the prelude before putting any mechanics down on the character sheet, and go from there. The False Embrace changes someone a great deal, more so than the Kindred Embrace — a revenant is not the same character as the mortal they once were, though ex-ghouls fall much closer to Kindred than any other type in this regard. Ex-ghouls and members of revenant dynasties are rare, and significantly different from other revenants — if you are playing one of these, you should consult the character creation section in Chapter Three of *Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, Laws of the Dead (pp. 79–159), and pick something halfway between that and what this section tells you.

A revenant dynasty is probably going to physically lock a new member up until she learns some self-control, and an ex-ghoul's sire also takes drastic measures to prevent his new childe from threatening the Masquerade. An accident, though, has nobody — unless they are found by a coterie immediately.

Consider who your character was, and who they will become. Give a thought to which clan she would aspire to, and which one she would likely end up in — many revenant chronicles build up to the Final Embrace, and then become full-blown Kindred chronicles. It's a natural goal to work towards, and gives focus and direction to a campaign.

A revenant chronicle can be about betrayal — you trusted your Kindred patron, but he double-crossed you, and now, you want to get your own back. It can be about ambition — nobody's as low down the totem pole as a bunch of revenants, but then again, nobody has as much potential to climb. It can be about history and heritage, trying to find out where your weird blood came from and who you used to be back before your people became revenants. It can be about survival, the hard-scrabble horror of trying to feed a Beast that's never satisfied and about the sacrifices a coterie makes just to stay afloat. It can be about scheming and plotting, and trying to the worst, richest bastard you can be. Or it can be about community, about bringing your fellow revenants together in a glorious moment and taking down the other vampires who sneer at you — march, fellow revenants, because the future awaits!

Also give some thought to the five covenants. Few revenants belong to one, but some do. See [pp. 66–73](#) for an overview of the covenants' views on revenants, and which ones accept revenant members.

## *The Execution*

Revenants are survivors, and they are likely to have Attributes and Skills to match. Give especial thought to Craft, Streetwise, Subterfuge, and Survival, all of which are common and useful among revenants. Craft lends itself to building and maintaining a burrow or haven; Streetwise and Subterfuge allow a revenant to pass through Kindred society with greater ease; and Survival is invaluable for hunting and feeding, which happens almost night. Some degree of Resources can help a coterie a great deal,

and the Burrow Merit (p. 80) is worth considering as well.

Remember that **Blood Potency** is restricted to one dot for revenants, both at character creation and later. Also remember that revenants can't create blood bonds or ghouls, and also can't Embrace new revenants without the Fertile Vitae Merit

(p. 81). Keep in mind that you must take at least one dot in Celerity, Resilience, or Vigor, and revenants have a unique Discipline, Chary, which is available at character creation.

## Becoming Kindred

The Amaranth brings knowledge and power, but to a revenant, it brings so much more — Uplifting, ascension to Kindred status. While revenants, too, consider diablerie to be an abomination, it's an abomination with a strong, seductive appeal. Just once, just one soul, just reach out and bite that one Kindred who has his back turned, nobody would ever know, and the hunger would go away....

It's a depraved soul that plots to consume another, but some revenants are desperate enough to bring out the deepest, darkest parts of their psyches, and in some, those are deep and dark enough that Amaranth starts to seem permissible. There are more would-be diablerists among revenants than among Kindred, by a long shot, but they are still very few indeed.

The most common way to achieve the Uplifting is by choice. Few Kindred had the luxury of deciding their own clans, but revenants are in a position to at least influence it. Picking a potential sire of the right clan and trying to impress her in some way, or perform some task or serve her for a time in return for the Uplifting allows revenants to have a say in their own destinies. Naturally, the world is a flawed enough place that a sire of the desired clan doesn't always present herself, and so the revenant has to settle for a less-desired clan.

The accepted way among Kindred to achieve Uplifting is to find one's progenitor and have him complete the process. Most progenitors refuse, though, because they would then have to take responsibility for their new childe, and that childe is just some nobody, not a hand-picked protégée. A revenant, then, may try to impress her half-sire enough to accept her, or try to force his hand by threat or blackmail. And most, of course, never even find out who he is.

**Effect:** First, clean up the character's traits as follows:

When a revenant becomes Kindred, she loses any revenant-specific traits she may have. Chary and any revenant-only Merits are refunded, with the exception of the Sanctioned Tracker Merit, which is replaced with City Status ••. The Crúac ritual Ban of the Spiteful Bastard is replaced with Pangs of Proserpina; if she already knows this ritual, the experience cost is refunded instead. In addition, the player may choose to have the Revenant Status Merit refunded if his character has it. The Clan Impostor Merit is also refunded if the character's new clan matches the one she masqueraded as before; if not, it remains and must be maintained through the new complications her clan now presents.

Then, the following changes are applied to the ex-revenant:

Gain the sire's clan and all its effects. If the character Uplifted herself through the Amaranth, the diablerized Kindred is her new sire in all mechanical and social ways. For each Discipline

in which she already had dots as a revenant, she immediately gains one experience per dot. For ease of bookkeeping, starting Disciplines are not distinguished from those acquired in play. The clan weakness immediately takes effect.

Any blood bonds to which the character may be subject are canceled. Blood addiction is also canceled unless she has committed Amaranth at any time in her past, including against revenants.

## Disciplines

Revenant Vitae is weak and twisted, capable of supporting only the primal powers of the Blood. Devotions are too difficult, too dependent on the specific properties of the Kindred Blood for a revenant to use one. While a revenant can learn a Devotion, it has no effect unless he is Uplifted to the ranks of the Kindred.

## An Accident In The Making — Revenant Creation Quick Reference

For full rules, please refer to pp. 79–83 of *Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*.

**Step One:** Concept. Choose a concept and three Aspirations.

**Step Two:** Attributes. Assign Attribute dots: 5/4/3

**Steps Three & Four:** Skills and Skill Specialties. Assign Skill dots: 11/7/4. Then assign three Specialties.

**Step Five:** Kindred Traits. Gain one dot of Blood Potency. You may not increase Blood Potency by any means. Choose your Dirge, Mask, and Touchstone. Choose three Disciplines. At least one of these must be from a physical Discipline; none may be from any clan's unique Disciplines

**Step Six:** Merits. Select 10 dots of Merits. Remember the new revenant-specific Merits introduced in this chapter on pp. 80–81. The Honey Trap or Clan Status Merits cannot be taken by revenant characters. City Status and Covenant Status are limited to one dot.

**Step Seven:** Advantages. Willpower is Resolve + Composure. Humanity is 7. Size is 5. Health is Stamina + Resilience. Speed is Size + Strength + Dexterity + Vigor. Defense is Athletics plus the lower of Dexterity or Wits. Initiative Modifier is Dexterity + Composure.

But the more primal powers, the Disciplines proper, are within a revenant's grasp. Revenants have even devised a Discipline of their own, Chary, which is too fragile for the more powerful Kindred Vitae.

A revenant can learn the physical Disciplines — Celerity, Resilience, Vigor — fairly easily. In fact, it is a rare revenant who does not have command of one, and most coteries have all three represented, making them easily available to any who want to learn one. Finding teachers who know Animalism and Obfuscate is also a fairly simple task, and Chary is considered property of the community as a whole. Withholding it is only acceptable as a personal matter, and a revenant who has mastered Chary but who refuses to share sees her reputation suffer as a result.

Kindred are another matter entirely — revenants in general are suspicious of Kindred who show too much of an interest in their own little Discipline, and especially if the outsider has ties to the Ordo Dracul.

The other Disciplines, those guarded by the five clans and other Kindred bloodlines, are another matter entirely. Revenants are not axiomatically rejected when they want training, but they are given short shrift indeed. It takes extraordinary effort for any revenant to gain access to such secrets, or else the Kindred in question must be deep in debt to the revenant. These revenants usually swear oaths of secrecy about the tricks, and breaking that oath invites retribution, or at the very least means that other Kindred are unlikely to accept the oathbreaker's word, and possibly demand the Blood Oath.

There are also a few Disciplines safeguarded by revenant dynasties around the globe. Most of these are situationally useful at best, extremely useful to members of that particular dynasty in their nightly experiences but of limited usefulness to revenants who do not share their particular circumstances. These Disciplines are guarded ferociously, much like bloodline Disciplines of the Kindred, but tend to be less directly powerful than those. A few are more broadly useful, and a few are shared with Kindred bloodlines, whether by having spread from one to the other, or because the bloodline and the dynasty are related somehow.

## Chary

A hunger like fire and the raging of an angry Beast is what a revenant wakes up to every night. Half-damned though they be, they feel their damnation like a switchblade, cutting them deeply. Thus, a revenant is more in tune with, more aware of, their unnatural state than even many full-blooded vampires. With frenzy a Damocles sword to their existences, it is perhaps natural that the one Discipline most widely associated with revenants focuses on ameliorating their state.

Chary is a curiosity of the blood, a Discipline unsustainable by Vitae more potent than the half-vampiric slop stagnating in revenant veins. It is a tool kit of survival tricks for the cash-conscious demi-vampire who hunts bargains on blood from

their victims, and who wants to hold on to what they've got, and it is the pride of the revenant community written in blood. This is their turf, the one Discipline only they can use, and they are proud of it.

**Effect:** Any full-blooded Kindred — that is, any with a clan and the potential for Blood Potency above one — cannot learn or use this Discipline. A revenant who becomes Uplifted is refunded the experience cost for each dot she purchased.

Ghouls, dhampir, and other Kindred-adjacent beings, some can learn Chary, and some can't. Many who do learn it find it more expensive, more limited, or otherwise inferior to the Discipline revenants learn. If there's a real pattern to this all, it's hard to see — though the Ordo Dracul is certainly looking. It's a strange old world that has such creatures in it.

## DAILY BREAD •

The blood is the life. The blood, sacrificed, gives strength to the revenant's tricks. To be taken by surprise — unprepared, bloodless — is a revenant's nightmare. Thus, in fear of assault by sunlight, she turns to the balm that so many before her have used.

Right before she goes to sleep, she can sacrifice her own Vitae and place it in a bowl. In this bowl, she soaks a piece of bread, and then places it in her mouth before she falls asleep. Before she awakens, whether by the coming of night or some other means, the bread dissolves in her mouth, and she wakes with a small amount of Vitae in her veins.

**Cost:** 2 Vitae

**Requirement:** Soak a piece of bread in Vitae (included in cost)

**Dice Pool:** None

**Action:** Instant

The revenant infuses a piece of bread with Vitae and places it in her mouth before falling asleep. Immediately after she wakes, she consumes the bread, regaining 1 Vitae. If the piece of bread is removed before she falls asleep, or she falls asleep with no stored Vitae remaining, the power fails.

## EATING FLIES ••

If you don't take what you need, nobody will give it to you. To a revenant, every drop is precious, yet disposable. What better way to feed, then, than on creatures that are just as disposable? The revenant's Beast can learn to draw out every last vestige of life from tiny beings, leaving the creature a mummified husk.

**Cost:** None

**Dice Pool:** None

**Action:** Instant

**Duration:** Permanent

When the revenant kills an animal by feeding, she gains more Vitae than normal. Animals of Size 0 provide the revenant with 1 Vitae per two creatures consumed. Larger animals provide the usual Vitae plus their Size rating. The revenant cannot actually gain Vitae from insects.

## PREDATOR AS PREY •••

Vitae flows from Kindred. They are its source, its well-spring, and it is Kindred Vitae that placed hunger in the revenant's bones. It's only appropriate to hunt those who made you this way. Kindred blood is a balm to the revenant's soul, binding and fixing in place, and helping the hunger for a single night.

Predator As Prey allows the revenant to use Kindred Vitae as a sort of metaphysical rock, tying his own blood to it and letting him keep a bit of it overnight. Hunting Kindred is dangerous, of course, but if a revenant can wake up without being ravaged by hunger, then it might just be worth it.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** None

**Action:** Instant

The revenant activates this discipline while feeding from a vampire. The stolen Vitae stabilizes some of the revenant's own Vitae until the following night. For every 2 Kindred Vitae she steals, she retains 1 stored Vitae upon awakening the following night. There is no chance of blood addiction from this feeding.

She cannot retain more Vitae than her levels in Chary, and she must spend at least 1 Vitae at some point during the sleep to awaken the next evening. However, she can spend this from any excess Vitae she falls asleep with, allowing her to retain all of the stabilized Vitae upon awakening.

The revenant can also use this ability on a ghoul, but she has to drain the ghoul's entire supply of mortal blood before she can access the Kindred Vitae he harbors.

## LESS DAMNEDTONIGHT •••

With dedication, a revenant can learn not only to sustain Kindred Vitae in her veins overnight, but also to draw it from mortal veins. With a Kindred's blood in her body, she can now store it overnight instead of using it to preserve her own Vitae.

**Effect:** The revenant's Predator As Prey ability improves. For every 1 Kindred Vitae she steals, she retains 1 stored Vitae upon awakening the following night. When she feeds on ghouls, she can take the Kindred Vitae without first draining the mortal blood, leaving the ghoul to suffer the consequences of being Vitae-less as if he had been unfed.

## FREETHINKER'S TRICK



Worse perhaps than damnation itself is damnation under the heel of someone who fancies himself your better. Not only did they take your soul, your life, and even your death away from you, but now they want to claim your Requiem as well.

Revenants make popular servants for Kindred who fancy something classier than a ghoul. This arrangement suits vampires well, ghouls poorly, and revenants worst of all. A true student of Chary can defy even the power of the Vinculum itself. Seated at her jealous domitor's right hand, such a revenant is perfectly poised to finally turn on him.

This Discipline is used when a vampire tries to place the revenant under a blood bond.

**Cost:** 2 Vitae and 1 Willpower

**Dice Pool:** Composure + Deception + Chary

**Action:** Instant

Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The Vinculum takes hold, and the revenant is overcome by such guilt that she immediately confesses her attempted sin.

**Failure:** The blood bond affects the revenant as usual.

**Success:** No bond is established, and the would-be master is none the wiser.

**Exceptional Success:** The Vinculum is averted, but a small vestige remains crystallized as part of the revenant's mind. She may consult this impotent fragment at her leisure, allowing her to flawlessly act the part of the fawning servant. She gains a +3 bonus on any Social rolls against the Kindred who attempted to bond her.

## Blood Sorcery

Vitae of a strange and twisted sort opens many new and exciting doors for Kindred sorcerors, but few revenants have the chance to take advantage of it. Only the most highly trusted and respected revenants are accepted fully into the Circle of the Crone or Lancea et Sanctum, but those who do achieve this level of trust have the same access to blood sorcery as Kindred members. There are a scant few rituals only a revenant can perform, and another handful which can only affect one.

Rumors of home-brewed revenant sorceries always circulate. Long-lost clans have been abased, and their Disciplines occasionally recrudesce into the modern nights. In the deepest depths of revenant Vitae, things hide, old and foul and majestic, and those can be brought back with the right knowledge. Many ancient clans had their own forms of sorcery, some of which have merged into the larger streams of modern Crúac and Theban Sorcery; some were weak and inflexible, sorceries put together on flawed principles by those who had nothing better,

### Bereschligost — the Lost Discipline

Kindred history is muddled and vague, yet through it all, some words glimmer. Whether they reflect truths hidden somewhere in the murky depths, or they are simply a mirage created by reflections on the surface is hard to say. Yet names like the Julii, the Camarilla, and the Mikhaili are still upon dead tongues even tonight.

Some say the Mikhaili desperately spread out their Vitae until almost nothing was left. In modern nights, it is well known that the Blood does not dilute itself when the vampire Embraces a childe, but the Mikhaili legends still speak to this fear: that in creating new Kindred, the sire loses part of his power.

Bereschligost itself resurfaced in the modern nights as Chary, though with the vital difference that while Chary cannot be learned by Kindred, Bereschligost can. The lost Discipline focused on survival in harsh arctic conditions where mortals were few and far between, and competition over prey between the Winter Lords was fierce. Modern Kindred who know of Bereschligost and its connection to Chary at all generally do not consider them to be the same, and in fact often question Chary's status as a Discipline at all, since Disciplines are Kindred abilities and Kindred can not use Chary.

In game terms, Bereschligost is a separate Discipline from Chary, and must be learned separately. Unlike Chary, Kindred and revenants alike can learn it, and a revenant with knowledge of this Discipline does not lose his dots in it or have the Experiences refunded if Uplifted.

Bereschligost is a lost Discipline, and cannot be learned outside of exceptional circumstances — a player who wants his character to know it should talk to his Storyteller first and work out a reason for his character to have this knowledge. Otherwise, it uses the same rules as Chary.

and were simply surpassed and discarded. These occasionally resurface, but leave little trace, becoming essentially private variants on the more common forms of blood sorcery.

But there are always rumors of something more. Some revenant, somewhere, called up lost secrets of the ancient Camarilla, or the wisdom of the Lilitu, the clan whose rituals allowed them to turn into smoke and drink the breath of mortals to learn their secrets; someone conjured up the ghost of Belshamin, the legendary Kindred sorceror whose every word became power, and inventor of all blood sorcery that ever was and ever will be. These stories tell of world-shattering magicks commanded by the bastard childer of greatness, and they are enticing to the lowly revenant.

## BAN OF THE SPITEFUL BASTARD (CRÚAC •)

Target Number of Successes: 6

Resisted by: Composure

One of the greatest honors a Circle of the Crone revenant can hope for is to learn Crúac. The Circle only initiates the most trusted of Bonded revenants and the most promising candidates for Uplifting. Even then, if this ritual did not exist, they would accept fewer still.

When performed, this ritual places a mystic ban on the revenant's sire, resonating with the caster's own damnation. The object of spite finds herself afflicted by the revenant's bane, waking every evening with no Vitae left and suffering the same pain and loss of control the revenant endures. It is an act of vengeance, pure and spiteful, with little true reason other than to make the sire *pay*. If the sire's identity is unknown, though, this ritual can help track him down, as one Kindred in the city will suddenly start hunting and potentially falling into frenzy more than usual. A wary caster can thus use this to discover whom her sire might be.

Though rarely acknowledged, there is another, illicit, use for this ritual. Without his Vitae, the sire is vulnerable — a well-prepared childe could potentially catch him by surprise and consume him, thus completing her Embrace.

**Effect:** Can only be cast by a revenant. If the character is Uplifted, this ritual is replaced by Pangs of Proserpina. The caster's sire awakens with zero points of Vitae for a number of evenings equal to the rite's potency.

**Note:** Blood sympathy applies, as per *Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition* p. 152. As this ritual targets the caster's sire, this always provides a +10 dice bonus.

## THE RITE OF ASCENDING BLOOD (THEBAN SORCERY •••)

Target Number of Successes: 7

**Sacrament:** A baptismal font filled with Vitae: the revenant's, and their new sire's

The Lancea et Sanctum teaches that there are three ways for a revenant to ascend. The first is through sin, and the second through apprenticeship. But the third, and most auspicious, is by passing through the crucible of purification, which flenses the revenant's body and soul down to the mortal remains ensconced therein.

The Rite of Ascending Blood is that path, and it is thought to provide the newly-forged Kindred with the best possible new start to their Requiem. It is a harrowing experience involving ritual scourging and a vicious attack by the sire-to-be, leading to the most violent and horrific of Embraces. It is like unto a

second death, but the new vampire arises strengthened and cleansed. With the new childe's revenant Requiem scourged from her bones and her soul, she arises anew as if on the night of her first death and resurrection.

**Effect:** The target becomes a vampire of the new sire's clan. All her Disciplines are refunded, and the resulting Experiences may be spent however her player wants, though he must buy at least two dots from the character's in-clan disciplines. He also may not purchase any of the unique clan Disciplines from any of the other clans unless his character already had dots in those before. Knowledge of the resulting Disciplines simply appears in her mind, requiring no training. He may also immediately spend Experiences to raise her Blood Potency up to a maximum of three.

Humanity increases to 7 at no cost. This represents the newly Uplifted vampire essentially entering the Requiem with a blank slate again, having had her revenant existence scourged away in cleansing fire.

## *Ten Thousand Tricks to Survive a Night*

They are the first vampires to be found by mortal would-be vampire hunters, and soft targets if one of the Kindred decides they have something he wants. Mere existence is a challenge for the revenants. With inventiveness honed by necessity, they've come up with social structures and tricks to help them survive the night.

Revenants share useful information freely. Kindred may hoard scraps of knowledge for personal advantage, but revenants can rarely afford that luxury, so they give away what they discover in return for whatever everyone else finds out. Their coteries stick together through crises and help clean up any messes the members leave behind. Only a consistent fuck-up can expect their comrades to turn on them. They build their burrows and fill them with defensive features, from reinforced doors to fire traps and confusing layouts that provide the inhabitants with an edge against intruders. Keeping animals or even human prisoners for feeding is also common.

Where possible, revenants scrounge up everything they can. Denying themselves food now in order to have some tomorrow is hard to do when hunger drives them up the walls in frenzy, but revenant coteries still do this whenever they can. Hunting just to fill some blood bags is tedious, and the blood only lasts a couple of weeks, but it is still commonly done, especially when a coterie expects to have to lay low for a while. Of course, a fridge full of human blood is one Hell of a compromising sight for any visitors who do not know the coterie's true nature, so it has to be hidden — and a clearly intentionally hidden fridge of human blood is even more damning.

Kindred sometimes mockingly call revenant burrows "farms" because of the collection of animals many coteries keep for their blood. While it's a stereotype that revenants always smell of chicken droppings or rat urine, the truth is that many coteries do keep blood farms in their burrows. It raises far fewer questions than keeping human prisoners, and it provides warm, if foul, blood on a regular basis.

A blood farm can't really keep a whole coterie fed by itself,

but even just a single blended hamster smoothie can really take the edge off in the evenings. It takes a lot of animals to produce enough offspring to keep the farm running, of course, so a blood farm usually takes up a lot of space, and most have animals escaping every now and then. That leaves a trail leading back to the burrow, and the more animals, the more escapes are likely. When the neighbors start complaining, the wise revenant gets worried.

Hidden sleeping chambers are popular, with one common method being alcoves in the ceiling. These alcoves are accessed by climbing a rope or stepladder, and are usually hidden behind panels, with peepholes to make sure the occupant above can see the room beneath. Many coteries place all these hidden sleeping chambers together in the closest thing to a vault they can assemble, so that they are as safe as can be, though scattering them across the burrow in clever spots is also common. This provides the twofold security of being hidden and of being defensible.

Another useful trick is pumping the air out of the burrow, and setting up a small fire — often near the sleeping places — that lacks only air to ignite. That way, if the haven is breached, the air will rush on in and the fire lights up, which is quite likely to wake someone. More affluent coteries can achieve the same effect with electronic security, but that's a lot more expensive and takes more skill to install.

Hunting is a nightly endeavor for a revenant coterie, leading them to using pack tactics. Often, one revenant waits in an alley for someone to pass by, while her friends stand guard and try to distract or scare away passers-by. It's also quite common for one vampire to approach a victim in a threatening manner, thereby chasing him into the arms of a waiting coterie member, who can then play the good cop and feed in secret while "protecting" the victim, or simply grab the panicked target and bite. When practiced routinely, tactics like these can become second nature... and become sloppy, attracting attention. Many coteries simply don't change their feeding spots, since they know them so well, which can leave a faint but tell-tale trail for mortal vampire slayers to follow.

Revenants are used to hunger and the rages of the Beast, more so than most Kindred are. They often have to restrain their comrades when they fall into frenzy, and they get good at doing so fast, working together to great effect. They fear frenzy less than Kindred do, and one thing revenant coteries are experts at is restraining a frenzied member. The psychology, the patterns of behavior, that the Beast favors are less mysterious to them, and that is a weapon they can use against the Kindred. By deliberately provoking frenzy in one of the Kindred, they make their enemy easier to predict and understand, and can apply their hard-earned expertise in pinning down and tying up frenzying vampires to its full effect.

Whether cleaning up gore from a blood farm or getting rid of the mess they've made while in a frenzy, revenants get good at hiding bodies big and small and getting rid of bloodstains quickly — the ones who learn slowly usually never have the chance to learn it at all. Most revenants have a coterie a phone call away who will help clean up any messes with just a bit of grumbling, and they learn how to work together to rapidly get

rid of anything incriminating. A vampire with a body has a problem, though usually one he can solve — a revenant with a corpse just calls her buddies. A coterie without a body disposal routine is a coterie that was formed recently, and a lot of coveys have that one member who keeps a couple of pigs with a taste for the finer things.

## Merits

While Kindred have many advantages revenants can never hope to match, revenants in turn have many tricks of their own, and their weak blood lends itself to some unique quirks.

Revenants face the following restrictions when choosing Merits: Any Kindred Status is limited to one dot. Clan Status and the Honey Trap Merit cannot be chosen.

Unless otherwise specified, these Merits are available to Kindred characters with Storyteller permission. A revenant who becomes Kindred or otherwise no longer qualifies for a Merit loses all dots in the Merit and is refunded his Experiences, following the Sanctity of Merits section in **Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition** on p. 109, except for Sanctioned Tracker, which is replaced with City Status ••.

Some of the following Merits are alternative versions of already-existing ones. Blood Farm is an alternative version of Herd; Burrow of Haven; and Clan Impostor of Alternate Identity. These count as the Merit they are based on for all mechanical purposes — any effect invoking the Herd Merit applies to Blood Farm unless it makes no contextual sense, and so on. If the revenant becomes a Kindred, these Merits revert to their alternative forms.

## BLOOD FARM (• TO ••••)

**Prerequisites:** Resources ••••

A herd is well and good, but waking up starving every night places the vessels in jeopardy. Clever revenants have come up with a different solution: Replace the metaphorical cattle with literal ones. Or, at least, with rats or pigeons or other small beasts. Thus, the unfortunately pseudo-vampire has a supply of fresh blood right at home, and can fill up a little without leaving.

**Effect:** Each week, you can draw on a number of Vitae equal to three times the Merit's dot rating. This requires no roll, only a quick interlude. Taking more than that amount requires normal hunting rolls. This Merit is an alternative form of Herd, and counts as a Herd in regards to any effects targeting one.

**Drawbacks:** You have a lot of animals, and the more you have, the more space and money they cost — you must have dots of Resources equal to half your rank of Blood Farm, rounded up. In addition, you will have the occasional escape, and neighbours will wonder about that strange lady who keeps having rats coming out of her apartment.

At one dot, the farm is small enough for it to be an insignificant matter. At two dots, escapes will happen often enough to grant a +1 bonus on attempts to locate the source. At four dots, this bonus becomes +2 and the character takes a -1 penalty on all social rolls targeting her neighbors. At five dots, these modifiers rise again, to +3 and -2 respectively.

## BURROW (• TO ••••)

**Prerequisites:** Safe Place •, Another coterie member has burrow • or higher

Revenants are weaker than Kindred, and painfully aware of it. For this reason, they often band together and establish a communal haven, called a burrow. A burrow is often underground, in a basement or old bunker or similar; and sometimes, a burrow is literally dug out of the dirt, though aboveground burrows are not uncommon either. Burrows tend to be heavily defended, with traps and barricades and often a pet or two to stand guard. Blood farms are also common, so that the half-dozen cranky revenants can feed quickly before leaving for the night.

Sometimes, burrows are used by other revenants as neutral meeting grounds, a service for which the owners are handsomely rewarded. Larger burrows sometimes host amazing and horrific parties, which helps bolster status in the All Night Society.

**Effect:** When fighting inside the burrow, any characters who do not live there or visit frequently suffer from the Distracted condition for a number of rounds equal to your coterie's Burrow dots. In addition, add your coterie's Burrow dots to your Humanity rolls to notice danger while sleeping, and any Stamina + Resolve rolls to remain awake.

A Burrow must be shared. For the purposes of purchasing this Merit, dots of Burrow purchased simultaneously count mutually towards fulfilling the prerequisite.

This Merit is an alternative form of Haven, and counts as a Haven in regards to any effects targeting one. Both cannot apply to the same Safe Place.

**Drawback:** Burrow is a communal Merit. No one member of a coterie can maintain one alone — at least two must purchase dots in it simultaneously, and if only one member remains with dots in this Merit, it reverts to Haven. All the other Drawbacks of the Haven Merit apply.

## CHAINS FOR HUNGRY FENRIR (••)

**Prerequisites:** Must be a revenant, Resolve •••

**Effect:** All hunger-related penalties on rolls to resist Frenzy are halved, so when the character has 4 or fewer points of Vitae, the penalty is -1, proceeding to -2 when the remaining points of Vitae drop to 2 or less.

## CLAN IMPOSTOR (•)

**Prerequisites:** Manipulation •••, Subterfuge ••

**Effect:** Pick any clan you could reasonably belong to. You are treated as a member of that clan in all social respects, removing any and all penalties a revenant would incur. Most significantly, you may take the Clan Status Merit, and you have relatively easy

access to training in that clan's unique Discipline. You may not disguise yourself as a Nosferatu, as their clan curse is immediately obvious. Any non-revenant vampire may also take this merit, though it is less useful to them.

This Merit is an alternative form of Alternate Identity, and counts as an Alternate Identity in regards to any effects targeting one. An alternative version of this Merit called Revenant Impostor exists, following the same rules as this Merit, for Kindred who wish to disguise themselves as revenants. Nosferatu are too distinctive to successfully emulate other vampires unless they make use of Obfuscate, which provides another facet to the disguise that must be maintained.

**Drawback:** You have to work at maintaining the façade, or risk discovery. If you are caught breaking the clan's curse, then the ruse fails, and at best you are faced with someone holding blackmail material over you. At worst, you die.

## FERTILE VITAE (•••)

**Prerequisites:** Must be a revenant

**Effect:** You may Embrace normally. Any chilfer you create are revenants. You still cannot create ghouls or create and sustain blood bonds.

## REVENANT STATUS (•)

The revenant community does not have much of a hierarchy. It is a loose connection of acquaintances and allies, without any true leaders or positions of responsibility. That said, they do earn and give respect. Coterie leaders, important liaisons, or simply popular and charismatic revenants exist, and are certainly considered a notch above the average citizen. Particularly revenant-friendly Kindred, or even ghouls or mortals, can also come to enjoy not just acceptance, but popularity in the community.

**Effect:** In addition to any other benefits from the Status Merit from *Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition*, p. 123, you have access to training in Chary without any further ado.

**Drawback:** All drawbacks from the Status Merit apply. If a vampire has this sort of standing in the revenant community, that's a small but noteworthy social blemish which can be thrown in her face.

## SANCTIONED TRACKER (••)

**Prerequisites:** Must be a revenant

**Effect:** Revenants are not permitted to have the City Status Merit above one dot, but you count as having two. Should you be Uplifted, this Merit turns into City Status ••. You have sworn to a city to take down a criminal, and until you do so, you are in their good graces. While on your hunt, you cannot be blood hunted, nor can a Kindred do anything to degrade your standing, though your own mess-ups will still earn their ire.

## Hunting in Packs and You — A Revenant's Guide to Ganging Up

Pack hunting is generally good for a revenant's health. It gives you lookouts and bait, and a +1 to +3 bonus on hunting rolls, depending on the number of hunters and their experience in working together.

Revenant coteries quickly become experts in holding down their frenzying comrades. A revenant coterie cooperating to restrain a frenzied vampire enjoys a +3 bonus on all its members' Strength + Brawl rolls, whether the target is Kindred or revenant. With Storyteller permission, this can also extend to attempts to restrain a raging werewolf, though that is likely to lead to its own problems.

**Drawback:** You must hunt your sire down, which takes up time, and when you succeed, that's that. This Merit decays to be worth only one dot of City Status until you are Uplifted. If you do become Uplifted, you replace this Merit with City Status •• as usual.

Sire Sense (•)

**Prerequisites:** Must be a revenant

**Effect:** You can sense your sire's location at any given time. Gain a +2 bonus on rolls to avoid getting lost and add your Blood Sympathy bonus to rolls to locate your sire.

## TWILIGHT WALKER (• OR •••)

**Prerequisites:** Must be a revenant, Humanity 7 or higher

The Blood flows weakly in a revenant's veins, and sometimes, for whatever reason, one of the great banes slips just a little. It is a much-storied fact among vampires that some revenants can stand against the sunlight for short periods of time at dusk and dawn, and a few can walk nearly freely at the borders of night and day.

**Effect:** You can stand against the sunlight for short periods of time at dusk and dawn. At one dot, all damage from direct sunlight is reduced to bashing for the first fifteen minutes after sunrise and the last fifteen minutes before sunset. At three dots, you take no damage from the sun during this time, and all damage from sunlight is reduced to bashing for a further fifteen minutes into daytime.

These times assume it is the equinox, and are close enough for most chronicles. That said, Storytellers who want more detail, or whose games are set in far northern or southern latitudes, may wish to increase and decrease these times as the seasons change.



"Enter."

It took all of Autumn's remaining strength to push open the apartment door.

"Madam?"

"In the study." Her voice, normally soft, sounded like a foghorn through the ringing in Autumn's ears.

She stumbled through the immaculate front hall, kept tidy by the mortal staff Autumn had personally hired. The alarm system Autumn ordered blinked pitifully beside the door, unprimed for intruders. The tasteful rugs Autumn had chosen - gazni wool, hand-woven, imported from Afghanistan - seemed to wind around her feet like snakes. Somehow, she made it to the study, panting like a bloodhound.

Josselin was sitting with her back to the door, gazing down on a pile of what looked like wriggling silk scarves. As Autumn watched, she carefully placed a single drop of blood on them, watching intently.

Autumn could feel herself beginning to drool.

The intended result must not have happened. With a sigh, Autumn's regnant turned to face her, her lovely vampiric face a mask of disappointment. She carelessly swept the bloodstained scarf off the desk.

Autumn shuddered as it fluttered to the floor.

"What are you doing here? I don't remember summoning you."

"You didn't."

"I see." Josselin folded her slender hands delicately on her lap. "Then to what do I owe the pleasure?"

Autumn took a deep breath, and reluctantly lifted her eyes to her regnant's. "Madam, your books are balanced, the car is in the shop, and I'm still searching for a younger, more blond woman to your specifications - though you must understand, demand is high, and the pickings are a bit thin right now -"

"Yes, I know." Josselin's eyes were blank, her expression of disappointment unchanging. "But you can do it, can't you?"

"Of... of course." Autumn's voice sounded high and thin in her ears, a mouse pleading with a hawk for its life. "I need more time -"

"See that you get her by midwinter," her regnant said, waving one of her pale hands dismissively.

"Of course not." Autumn worried at her left hand as she spoke. "I live to serve."

"It's good to see you're learning," Josselin purred, and Autumn felt herself tremble. "Now be a good girl and tell me what you really want."

"The - the new bookshelves will be here by Monday, and I'm already looking for a copy of the *Saducismus Triumphatus*." She tittered breathlessly. "You'd be surprised what you can find on the Internet-."

Josselin flew across the room, her long fingers winding themselves in the ghoul's hair. Autumn's head snapped back, her neck stretched almost to breaking.

"Stop wasting my time, girl." Josselin's soft voice hissed like a sandstorm. "You're not here to tell me of errands. I know you. I *made* you. You want something, and you came to me, groveling like a runt pup for the last bit of food. Ask me, you little shit-eater, or I'll tear your tongue out."

"Blood, madam!" she all but screamed, baring her teeth. "You haven't fed me in three weeks! Please, madam, Josselin, I can't go on like this, this is hell, this is torture..."

"Ah," the Mekhet said, slowly letting go of Autumn's mussed hair. "That's it?"

"Please," Autumn sobbed.

"Oh dear." Josselin's tone returned to its usual smoothness. "We can't have this, can we?"

Slowly, delicately, Josselin raised her hand to her mouth and bit down until the Vitae ran red through her fingers. The sound of it dripping on the wool rugs, the rugs she had chosen, pulled Autumn from her tears.

"Drink," said her regnant, holding out her hand.

# CHAPTER THREE

# GHOUls

If vampires are the masters of the night, then ghouls are its elite servant class. Picked from the herd of mortality, given Vitae and a taste of their regnants' might, ghouls are the unsung powerhouses behind the blood-stained green baize doors of the Danse Macabre. They are butlers, chauffeurs, accountants, arm candy, hunting partners, and more for their regnants. Kindred society is built heavily on this underclass, and might very well collapse without it.

This is not to say that being a necessary part of Kindred society is a *Downton Abbey* daydream. As vampires rely on ghouls for day-to-day tasks and blending into mortal society, ghouls rely on the Kindred for their very existence. All a ghoul's power comes from Vitae — whether from a willing regnant, or an unwilling "donor." Vitae sustains a ghoul's supernatural status and, if drunk regularly, makes the ghoul effectively immortal. Without regular ingestion of Vitae, however, ghouls find themselves withering. In some extreme cases, where the ghoul has extended her life past that of an average, untainted mortal, a lack of Vitae can cause them to crumple to a lifeless pile of bones where they stand. Vitae is an addiction stronger than any other — some ghouls wish they had it as good as the heroin addicts they capture for their regnants' evening meals.

## *Our Masters, Our*

"A ghoul is a vampire's best friend." So says Mary-Belle L'Andana, an Acolyte of Baton Rouge known for her 300-year relationship with the same ghoul. She's not the only vampire to draw the comparison between vampires and ghouls, and mortals and dogs. Where a ghoul slavishly obeys his mistress for a sweet drink of Vitae, a dog obeys its master for a treat, or a good belly rub. A ghoul snatches up kine for his mistress' feeding; a dog rounds up the flock for the shepherd. Where a ghoul watches over his mistress' resting corpse in daytime, a dog sleeps in the same room as its master at night, protecting him from intruders.

The comparisons do not end with positive traits alone. Just as a dog considers itself a valued member of the family, a beloved retainer to its owner, and an indispensable piece of the household furniture; ghouls develop similar complexes, displaying possessiveness and aggressive jealousy around others close to their regnants. Dogs bite the hand that feeds when they're mistreated. Ghouls are not automatons. They *know* when a vampire is misusing them, and while vampires command, the

As a result, many ghouls find themselves enslaved, to some degree, to the whims of their vampire masters. This varies by individual Kindred, though clan and affiliation also play a role. A Daeva ghoul might find herself becoming a living mirror, a collared test subject for her regnant's ventures into the elaborate fashions of some ultramodern subculture; constantly undergoing scarification, piercing, waist-training, or whatever else the vampire is interested in seeing on someone else. A Gangrel ghoul, by contrast, might retain full bodily autonomy and even something like her own schedule, but be on-call 24/7 in case she is needed to explain to suspicious police that what they actually saw was a rabid dog or a homeless man on bath salts. Anything a vampire needs, no matter how humiliating, debasing, or time-consuming, their ghoul provides — all in search of Vitae.

Ghouls have one major advantage over their regnants, though: They're still alive. Even ghouls who have been addicted to Vitae for over 200 years still feel their hearts beat and their blood race. Some Vampires may make a ghoul just to have that maelstrom of mortal emotions and processes close enough that they can almost feel it again.

## *Mothers, Our Lovers*

ghoul is capable of subversive acts to put his mistress in her place. When some dogs slip the leash, they become untamed creatures of ferocity. When some ghouls escape their regnants' sight, their behaviors devolve to the deviant and the psychotic.

Ghouls serve vampires in vital roles. They protect, mediate, advise, and serve as extensions of Kindred whims. Each holds an individual opinion of his master or mistress, however. Loyalty does not imply devotion. Servitude does not imply the loss of aspirations, pride, and willfulness.

## *The Bonds of Tradition*

Dillan blinked in the bright sunlight. He finished his croissant, stood up from the bench, and enjoyed the warmth of the day as he walked across the park to his laundry appointment. The server behind the laundry counter handed him a pile of six outfits in exchange for his ticket stub. "All dry cleaned, as requested." Dillan thanked him and prepared to leave, as the server cleared her throat. "How does your boss get so much blood on his shirts? Mine's so much tidier. I guess I shouldn't complain.

*We're always happy to serve the prince, especially given the amount he pays. Just... Be more careful the next time you drop the suits off. The kine have eyes, and those shirts... They were dripping with blood. I had to close shop to mop it up!*" Dillan laughed as he left his fellow ghoul's place of business. Dillan was the prince's ghoul. Mortal eyes? He had to contend with a disappointed Ventrule on a nightly basis, and he knew which eyes he feared more.

Drinking a vampire's Vitae swiftly forms a bond between mortal and Kindred, and if the Vinculum wasn't enough to guarantee faithful servitude, the Vitae also offers the recipient inhuman powers, constitution, and the possibility of immortality. Vitae's power courses through a ghoul, compelling her to live and die for her regnant. The Blood allows a ghoul to achieve feats impossible to many mortals, and inures her to the degrading acts of kidnapping vessels, dispatching enemies, and servicing her regnant's carnal desires. Just as domestics manage the running of a rich, powerful man's house, a ghoul is indispensable to the Kindred with no time or inclination for such petty concerns.

The traditional role of the ghoul is one of service. They can move around in the day, without fear of the same crises of loyalty that afflict unbound mortals, or the vulnerabilities vampires suffer under the sun. From the mundane — picking up laundry, paying the bills, cashing a check — to the extreme — burning a rival vampire in her haven, corralling a blood source for the upcoming Elysium, exerting the vampire's influence over mortals by proxy — ghouls are capable of running a vampire's life, sometimes to that same vampire's detriment.

Some ghouls find their masters utterly dependent on their actions. Ghouls may act like nurses around an institutionalized patient, the vampire completely unprepared to organize all aspects of existence. Such vampires tend to retreat into themselves, becoming isolated from the All Night Society. The vampire who dwells in a country estate, holding little connection to her nominal covenant, likely keeps ghouls in her thrall. Someone has to communicate messages to the outside world, ensure the building remains in a habitable state, and present an outside face of normality for extremely out-of-touch Kindred. Vampires and ghouls alike refer to these ghouls as "proxies." Ghouls with distant regnants, who work as go-betweens and representatives in Elysium, receive high regard from their betters. Kindred correctly assume that a vampire who employs a proxy must have utter faith in their ghoul.

Through long service or impressive deeds, some ghouls earn a measure of autonomy. The ghoul who rescues her regnant from a burning building and transports him to a safe haven during daylight hours might earn the eternal gratitude of her master, placing her above her peers. Carthian vampires often entrust praised thralls with rallying popular support for societal change initiatives of interest to the Movement, while Acolytes gift these ghouls responsibility to choose the guest list, décor, and entertainments for revels in the communal haven. Such ghouls still act as trusted batmen and butlers, but also serve as counsel, sounding boards, and policymakers for their masters. Despite their status as servants, other ghouls refer to these

favored children as "crowns." Crowns draw an equal level of respect and envy from their peers, though a vampire's protection typically prevents any jealousies from escalating to violence.

The role of ghoul as assassin is not one spoken of loudly in Elysium. The truth that ghouls often receive employment to kill other vampires is unpalatable in polite society. Yet, Kindred look at the thralls in one another's service, and wonder which has the capability to plunge a stake in, and expose a regnant to the dawn. Ghouls come with a guarantee they will at least attempt the orders they're given. Due to the Vinculum, loyalty is assured, though capability is not. Kindred in modern nights often keep their honor guard of enthralled killers in reserve, maintaining a steady routine of Vitae-drinking, brainwashing, and love-bombing in the haven, until the would-be assassin is ready to attempt a hit. It's difficult for ghouls to come back from destroying other lives, just as it is for mortals, though some rationalize their actions as "master's wishes" or, when targeting Kindred, "just putting to death someone long overdue a conclusion."

In Elysium, a ghoul may flaunt her abilities at her regnant's behest. This traditional ghoul role is one many thralls derogatorily refer to as "the mannequin." Ghouls attend at their regnant's side, dressed by master, behaving as master wishes, and performing how master desires. Some mannequins hold their positions in high esteem, as they can demonstrate their worth as one of the regnant's prized pieces. Others go through the paces while enduring utter humiliation. The Daeva are principally fond of plucking talented artists and lovers from obscurity, just to thrust them into a vampire-infested limelight. These vampires show off the ghouls of which they are proud. Whether it's the ghoul's achievements, appearance, or talents that are sublime — they are the perfect party pieces to put on display.

A ghoul's contentment and relationship with her regnant is not so different from the maintenance of a connection between employer and employee. The servant requires regular payment, albeit in Vitae. Most thralls require routine praise to avoid developing feelings of self-loathing, or pronounced mental degradation. A ghoul needs constant challenges, and encouragement to develop in new areas, otherwise risking the festering of skills leading to other, newly created ghouls outpacing her. Importantly, the regnant must realize the ghoul's need for freedom. The ghoul may feel otherwise due to the Vinculum, but a responsible regnant knows her thrall needs to experience the world beyond the All Night Society, and develop relationships with mortals. Just as a detached vampire runs the risk of no longer recognizing the principles of integrity, a ghoul suffers the same possibility of developed sociopathy.

Few vampires work, and yet all expect to maintain havens, which entails paying bills, possibly covering rent, feeding their staff, and paying taxes. A common Invictus saying is "the best hunter this world ever introduced was the taxman." Ghouls must therefore live two lives; one among mortals, earning a salary and keeping their regnant, and one among vampires, servicing the regnant's whims. Such a balance is difficult to maintain, but necessary. If the ghoul forgets to pay the

landlord, and a vampire discovers an eviction notice stapled to her haven door, the ghoul's destiny is going to be an unhappy one. The thrall tasked with the role of "his master's keeper" is highly acclaimed, but terribly overworked. Such individuals must endure shifts during day and night, and many develop complexes and tics as they overburden their minds and bodies with responsibilities. Vampires like their servants to be accessible, and in some cases use their Disciplines or heavy doses of Vitae to induce insomnia. The unhinged behavior from the ghoul recipients of such treatment mitigates the advantages of doing so.

Emerging in Liverpool, a coterie of ghouls naming themselves Kinnock's Boys embraces what they consider their working class role, forming a ghoul union they call "the taxi service." These thralls openly enjoy their servile status. In pubs, the Boys crow to each other about their regnants' largesse, or bemoan the cruelty they endure, finishing any tale with "it could be worse — we could be kine." Superficially braggadocious, Kinnock's Boys act as a support network for other ghouls linked into the taxi service. The union allows servants rare moments of confession, empathy, and assistance in desperate times. The taxi service operates through a mobile app, designed to deliver support to any union member reporting distress. If one of Kinnock's Boys cannot complete his master's task, or is in danger of undue punishment, this blue-collar group travels to the aid of their comrade. They know they're on the bottom rung, and destined to serve, but they believe strongly that a ghoul's best friend is another ghoul.

## *Relationships Founded on Abuse*

*Three of Bryan's fingers hung off his left hand by ligament threads, the pinkie finger completely lost in the waste disposal. It stung at first, as the device mangled his limb, but the off switch wouldn't work and his master had given him the ring he dropped into the sink. Recovering the piece of jewelry was worth the sacrifice. Bryan attempted to flex his hand, but only his thumb retained motion. He stared gleefully at the ruined digits as he slipped the trinket of gold and diamond over the remains of his middle finger. His Worship would be so glad he'd rescued the ring.*

An extended Vinculum paired with a lack of liberties runs the risk of addling a ghoul's mind. Debilitative mental conditions are commonplace among ghouls. Ghouls are still ostensibly mortal, and yet they must drink a vampire's blood to maintain their youth and power. They are supposed to act normally, and yet serve undead creatures who prey on others. They have the chance to witness their families and friends dying, all while blithely sitting in a euphoric, Vitae-induced stupor. Vampires enact these conditions on ghouls. They could release their servants at any point; and if they do so early into a ghoul's existence, it may offer the chance of mental salvation. Few vampires take this option. Their relationships with ghouls are sometimes sadistic, but more often ignorantly abusive. Ghouls suffer, and grow inured to this suffering. Vampires just turn a blind eye to the humiliations their ghouls experience on a regular basis.

Fledglings and neonates are more inclined to treat their ghouls as equals, though such relationships rarely persist. It becomes clear to the vampire — as it does to mortals forming bonds with drug addicts — that the ghoul is her friend, or in her service, only due to the ghoul's desire for their nepenthe. A ghoul may scurry across town on an errand, but always eventually returns to get a fix. When a vampire realizes this, she understands this slave will do anything for a promise of longer life. Many ancillae and elders switch off to the situation's reality, viewing ghouls only as tools to be used, and then put away.

Ghouls offer vampires the chance to experiment. As a robust individual who can heal her wounds with a mouthful of Vitae, a ghoul is perfect fodder for an enterprising Dragon, or simple sadist. Vampires may "gift" their ghouls augmentations, in the form of scarring tattoos to imply ownership, a crash indoctrination course to alter a ghoul into something more willingly subservient, or experimental Discipline powers to increase a servant's arsenal and see whether a ghoul is capable of using Theban Sorcery. These deviant ghouls, as other thralls know them, inevitably snap under the strain of experimentation, either descending into a vegetative state or acting with uncontrollable rage against their former companions and masters.

Some younger Invictus vampires feel the weight of Kindred society crushing them from above, the ladder of the First Estate being a tall one to climb. In their case, ghouls are natural individuals to oppress. Shit rolls downhill in the All Night Society. If a young Ventre receives a reprimand from his sire or prince, he naturally takes it out on his servants. Such punishments swiftly take a turn towards the macabre, as the vampire knows his ghoul can receive a lot of harm, and will never complain or go running to an authority. An abused ghoul takes it, shuts up, and continues serving.

Abused ghouls, just like abused mortals, eventually reach a breaking point. Vampires remain ignorant to the mental health and stability of their servants, and after years, or potentially centuries of abuse, the pressure to pursue vengeance snaps the Vinculum. At that point, a ghoul becomes something for vampires to fear. Unlike Kindred and their frenzies, a broken ghoul may stay silent and carefully plot her regnant's downfall in the most painful, humiliating way possible. Due to recurring instances of this type of relationship breakdown, some vampires deliberately treat their ghouls with a little more care, or even send them to addiction counseling so they have someone to speak with. This façade of nurturing quickly falls away as soon as the vampire needs the ghoul for some other function, or the ghoul requires Vitae. The regnant may realize it's far easier to terminate this ghoul's service and find another. Such abandoned or destroyed ghouls earn the epithet of "shattered," and evoke a blend of shame and fear from their peers. No ghoul wants to be reminded of what the future may hold.

The worst kind of vampire-driven abuse recovery comes from the Invictus "family-building" initiative, popular in West Coast American domains. The Portland and Seattle First Estate believe that when a ghoul nears breaking point, they need

another ghoul for company. As with the much-maligned process of introducing a child to fix a faltering mortal relationship, the treatment for ghouls shows little success. Soon, the vampire has a handful of unhappy ghouls on his hands, potentially triggering violent rivalries between them for the vampire's affection. Worse, some of these family units eventually conspire to go rogue and take down their regnant. The Invictus Kindred who initially proposed the initiative refuses to concede defeat, despite all evidence to the contrary. The ghouls caught in the middle feel the pain, especially those created just to pacify an already deranged, dangerous peer.

## *A Parent's Love*

*Irena sat behind the wheel of her transit van, watching the school empty, on the lookout for a specific child. Her eyes scanned the crowd of chattering kids, the corners of her mouth impulsively turning to a smile as she spotted the one she was after. Hammering the panel behind her head, she heard her passenger slide the side door open a fraction. As the little boy passed by, still engaged in conversation with a new friend, hands seized the child and spun him around. "Daddy!" the child cried excitedly, hugging his father. His dad lifted him into the back of the van and closed the door quickly to keep the heat inside. Irena called back and checked he'd had a good day at school before pulling away. Checking her mirrors, she noticed her son's friend still stood there, projecting a death cold gaze in her direction. Their eyes met. She shivered. His stance, his glower, his frown – they were all so adult. She'd never met his parents. She wasn't sure she wanted to.*

Vampires cannot reproduce, or so goes the popular rumor. Yet, the instinct to act as mother, father, matron, or nanny to something young and helpless does not disappear with the Embrace. Tragically, this desire manifests in the two destructive ways Kindred know – the Embrace, and thralldom. Both allow them to take the role of parent and raise a substitute offspring. Princes don't dole out permission to Embrace without good reason, especially when the targets are children. For the vampire so inclined, creating a ghoul is a viable option. Vampires who enthrall ghouls gain a second chance at proud parenthood, without so much oversight from their peers.

The vampire as parent is a strange, uncomfortable role to someone outside the relationship looking in. In some cases, Kindred enthrall children to make it appear that their offspring are genuinely new and still learning the ropes of existence. In other situations, regnants appear with ghouls much closer to their own apparent ages, or even exceeding it, resulting in relationships that are difficult to justify or explain to any mortals interested in the connection. The All Night Society looks dimly on the Embrace or thralldom of children, but some domains are more relaxed with such matters. A European subsect of the Circle of the Crone states that despite the physical preservation of the body, a ghoul child's mind continues to grow. Therefore, the faction decrees child ghouls eminently worthy to enter honored service as covenant thralls and icons. The Eternal Mothers' membership is small, and

often persecuted. The other covenants are not so liberal. For children turned into ghouls, the experience is wrenching, confusing, and ultimately terrible. If the thralldom persists for over a decade, the ghoul must cope with having an adult's mind in a child's body, along with all the restrictions that entails. Some advocate to their regnants a forced abstinence from Vitae, until their bodies catch up with their maturity. Few vampires allow this. They enthralled the children for a warped reason, and have no interest in parenting young adults.

Kindred do not always consciously seek this path. The parental drive and nesting instinct some vampires possess encourages them to arrange a family of ghouls around them, though they eschew familial titles. Ghouls in such situations live comfortable, if stereotypical lives. Ghouls outside these situations call the thralls in nuclear family setups "dolls" living in "dollhouses." Many Kindred – especially detached elders – unknowingly appoint dolls to stereotypical functions around the haven based on gender, apparent age, and attitude. They often pigeonhole adult males into the traditional father role of earner, odd-job man, and disciplinarian. Adult females take the role of mothers; baking, caring for the children, and keeping the haven tidy. Children win the vampire's patronage. While the Kindred would never admit to the reasons they treat the ghouls in this way, it is often a means to reenact a life lived long ago, or one denied to them by the Embrace. Many ghouls chafe under these stereotypes, but find their regnant prone to frenzy if the family unit shows signs of breaking up. The strangest dolls are those who do not physically resemble their intended household roles. The vampire might treat his matronly 60-year-old ghoul as a child, while a young teen ghoul behaves as marshal to the others. These ghouls receive the nickname "third rocks" with some affection from their peers. They break stereotypical barriers, and many ghouls long for a time where they're not bestowed titles and roles based purely on their profession, sex, or age.

A ghoul as a vampire's child receives benefits, in the form of gifts, loving treatment – in a morbid sense – and certain permissions above what a servile ghoul collects. Child ghouls – even the ones who do not physically resemble children – may receive Vitae in the style that a mother might feed her babies. Vampires treasure child ghouls beyond any other possession they hold dear. The word "possession" is important. The distinction between a healthy parental relationship and the type vampires and ghouls practice, is that the ghoul belongs to the vampire. Little Johnny never grows, can never escape, and is forever mummy's little boy.

Vampires with child ghouls act graspingly over their charges, but the reverse is not necessarily true. As the vampire condones a child ghoul's behaviors, the ghoul increasingly pushes her limits, much akin to a rebellious teenager. A Milwaukee-based ghoul syndicate that names itself the New Era on its online forum encourages its members to deliberately push regnants to the point of frenzy, to see what they can get away with. They despise their sick domitors, and make every attempt to humiliate the vampires holding them hostage.

The relationship occasionally inverts, where a vampire is young, and must depend on an experienced ghoul to navigate her Requiem. A sire may bequeath her long-serving ghoul to a newly Embraced childe in an effort to tutor and support the fledgling in the ways of their covenant and clan. Known among other thralls as "Alfreds," these ghouls care for the new vampire as if he or she were their own progeny. The Alfreds consider it a code of honor to never divulge a master's mistakes or weaknesses. Like loyal butlers and bodyguards, their bonds to regnants are until death. The Vinculum helps enforce this.

The occasional vampire in the physical form of a child creates ghouls to act as surrogate parents, just so he can function through life. Those children cursed with the Embrace forever struggle to enter Elysium, may never drive a car, and find most diplomatic exchanges marred by preconceptions. Ghouls recruited to act as "mom and pop" can alleviate much of this humiliation, acting as diligent servants as they do so. Famously, Budapest's child prince remained hidden for over a century while his proxy mother stood in at Elysium. Not one vampire suspected the prince's identity, until a firebrand Carthian took exception to the prince's ghoul chastising him for behaving in a vulgar manner. He struck the woman, laughing that there would be no repercussions. Within the hour, the prince made his presence known for the first time since claiming power. He ripped the Carthian to pieces while screaming "you hurt my mother."

No vampires have accosted ghouls in Budapest since that time.

## *An Unhealthy Kind of Lust*

Andi unhooked the straps from her shoulders and let her dress slip to the cold floorboards, shifting her feet and placing the toes of her left slightly over her right. She looked down, taking herself in. She looked ill, emaciated, as if suffering an eating disorder. In a sense, she was. There was only one thing she hungered for these nights. Running her hands over her arms to stimulate some warmth, she decided to embrace her nudity, and looked up to the woman shackled to the bed. Her Lady. Andi picked up the sharpened silver teeth and replaced her own dentures. The vampire, sprawled before her and writhing slowly in the dark, spoke in a trembling voice. "Take me. Drink from me. Show me who the real Lady is. Please, just be gentle." Andi made no promises.

Vampires are, in a sense, walking corpses. This does not preclude them from arousal, genuine love, or dangerous, predatory instincts that sometimes manifest in sexual drives. Ghouls likewise experience these feelings in their long lives, whether willingly or not. The dichotomy of death and sex is not lost on most vampires, who struggle to reconcile their lusts. Sometimes they reason that it is better at least to have sex with another vampire than it is to expose one of the living to a bloodsucking monster. Others fall for the middle-man. A ghoul has little choice but to prostitute his body in exchange for Vitae, if that is his regnant's whim; though in some cases the love between vampire and ghoul is real and stronger than any other blood bond. When a vampire engages in a sex act with her ghoul, she feels the touch of affection, human warmth,

and absolute devotion. For some Kindred, it is an addictive pleasure. For many ghouls, it is the height of perversion, and yet, a disturbingly appealing taboo.

When a ghoul houses Vitae in his system, she gains the potential for increased endurance, strength, and energy. Vampires who engage in sexual relations with their ghouls capitalize on these abilities to make the acts more vigorous, more lifelike, and more extreme. Jadedness afflicts both ghouls and vampires after a tiring existence spent consuming blood, so tastes run to unusual practices, sometimes considered perverse by Kindred and ghouls who strongly advocate that "dead means dead." A solid, trusting relationship between ghoul and regnant is vital when pursuing an alternative sexual lifestyle, as the limits the pair push each other to can result in permanent harm to the ghoul, or frenzy for the vampire. Some involve more than two participants, kept in check by a third-party "caretaker" who ensures no abuses of power or dangers to health present themselves. These caretakers may be ghouls or vampires — it differs from relationship to relationship.

A ghoul's lust for her regnant may manifest as a desire for what she considers true immortality. A thrall trips over herself in service to the vampire, in the vain hope she may receive the Embrace as thanks for her good service. She fixates on her regnant, attempting to predict her every want, and habitually begs the vampire to make her eternal at his side. Many ghouls believe that after doing their time and committing good service for their regnant, they will receive the Embrace as a reward. The heady power of Vitae blinds ghouls, but their desperation comes from sources beyond the Blood. Ghouls witness mortals dying while they persist, and see vampires flourishing while they remain stagnant junkies. Their servile position pushes them to demand more.

Some Kindred do attempt to reward loyal service with vampirism, but such measures often require a prince's permission, turning vampires away from such activity. Carthian prefects and Acolyte hierophants are known for more liberal perspectives on the matter, but to the pragmatic Kindred, a good ghoul shouldn't be rewarded with the Embrace, for then they will no longer be able to serve as a good ghoul. Better to dangle the carrot for as long as possible. A popular Lancea et Sanctum tale tells how one of their deacons in Wellington teased a ghoul with the promise of Embrace repeatedly, making her perform increasingly ignominious tasks for his favor. Eventually, his bitter, shamed rival Embraced her, removing her from his service and thrallodom. The moral, the Sanctified say, is that most vampires don't know what they've got until it's gone, and should try harder to value their servants.

Not all ghouls are disposed towards the Embrace, recognizing a vampire's weaknesses. They qualify their own roles as the best of both worlds: They can walk in the daylight, eat, drink, and reproduce naturally; but they also possess supernatural support, power, and potential immortality. These self-satisfied ghouls are rarities. They hold their aspirational peers in heavy disdain, tutting and rolling their eyes at overt displays of debasement from ghouls begging for the Embrace.

A coterie of ghouls exists throughout the world, the members of which use the name “The Half-Damned Gigolos,” both by way of personal introduction and on the fliers they dispatch to vampires of a carnal disposition. The gigolos comprise ghouls of every gender and most age ranges, and commit to delivering the most life-inducing sexual experiences possible to their Kindred clients. These ghouls bear no shame for their actions, and in fact feel they provide a valuable service to their temporary regnants. Several vampires have regained a connection to humanity through the gigolos’ expertise in sensual and sexual experiences. These ghouls receive Vitae as payment, and prefer to not drink from a client more than once. They like to keep their heads clear for the next partner. Occasionally a vampire may take to a gigolo and demand that the ghoul remains as her own. In response, the entire organization’s membership endeavors to liberate their peer. The gigolos do not brook the breaking of their wills, and many Kindred support this point of view.

The way Vitae manifests in a ghoul’s emotions differs between thralls. Some ghouls find their emotions twisted into the loyalty

of a patriot to their nation, or faithful service to an employer. Others find the link more akin to the bond between a mother and child, or belief in a god. The ghouls who feel the familiar stirring of sexual attraction whenever they behold their regnants endure a difficult existence. Ghoul society refers to these thralls as the “lovelorn,” though most ghouls review the position with sympathy over disgust. They know firsthand how the Vitae stimulates unusual feelings in a ghoul’s body and mind, and seek to protect lovelorn from any severe hardship. A scandalous event took place in Nairobi that ghouls worldwide still discuss, in which a lovelorn’s jealousy for his regnant’s coterie exploded in a fit of anger, punctuated by the arson of their communal haven and destruction of all parties but the ghoul. When the domain’s inspector questioned the lovelorn ghoul, he explained the reasons behind his actions: His regnant spent too much time with her friends, and he worried she would leave him. The inspector outwardly regretted the need to destroy the unstable ghoul, but knew that his death would act as a cautionary tale to any other thralls of similar mindset.

## *Ghouls by Clan*

As mentioned above, while an individual vampire’s personality and whims often override any expected treatment of ghouls, one can draw some generalizations based on the traits and ideals of their clan and chosen covenant. As a rule, a Venttrue in the Lancea et Sanctum is going to treat her ghouls very differently from a Carthian Venttrue.

### *Daeva*

If Daeva treat each other as family and lovers, then Daeva ghouls serve as the beloved pets and personal assistants of those families and lovers. Daeva ghouls manifest in as many forms as Daeva do, and all of them are deeply bound to their masters through both the Vinculum and a genuine need to please. Daeva ghouls often have an eye for detail and an interest in perfection bordering on the obsessive.

Ghouls of the Serpents fill different roles depending on the needs of the Daeva holding their bonds. A Daeva in the Lancea et Sanctum might have one ghoul who presses and steams her vestments and assists in the writing of her sermons, while another makes sure the mortal priest turns a blind eye to the vampires using her church for “special services.” Meanwhile, a Carthian Daeva keeps ghouls around as friends and confidantes, drinking buddies whom she can call at any time of night to take her to both the most upscale bars and the grungiest dives. These ghouls are the friends who always know a guy, and the Daeva depends on them for their social acumen. The role of the Daeva ghoul may shift from day to day as well as from master to master, but it always focuses on one thing: perfection.

Perfection is the *raison d'être* of the Daeva ghoul. Whether it is the aesthetic perfection of a necklace well-placed or the timed perfection of a social interaction that leads to a regnant buying

up real estate in an expensive part of the city for a pittance, perfection drives them to ever more frenzied service. A Daeva ghoul who has been under the Vinculum for years or decades may develop an almost psychic ability to determine what her regnant needs and when she needs it. When her regnant picks up the phone in a panic, the ghoul is already speaking to the police chief, reporting a murder 20 miles away from the scene of the Daeva’s accidental frenzy. Perfection or failure: These are the only self-imposed options of a Daeva ghoul. The Daeva herself is unlikely to impose this unreasonable standard, but perfection is the lifeblood of one under a Serpent’s Vinculum.

**Concepts:** stressed-out personal assistant, white knight boyfriend, burnt-out art student, straightlaced preacher’s daughter, sycophant, up-and-coming designer

### *Gangrel*

Gangrel are the survivors and the rough-and-tumble fighters of the Danse Macabre, and their ghouls often reflect this. Savage ghouls come from the ranks of those who survive, be it on death’s doorstep in the emergency room, in a bunker in the wilderness, fleeing from an abusive home life by living on the streets, or simply resisting the grinding depression of a daily minimum-wage job with variable hours and an unreasonable boss. Determination, a fighting spirit, and a willingness to take life by the throat and shake it until it gives in to one’s will are all good traits for a Gangrel ghoul. Imagine the personality of the ideal rat terrier, and you have the perfect Gangrel ghoul.

This is only barely figurative. Gangrel are one of the clans most likely to bond animals. They follow the same conventions as human ghouls: If the animal is built to survive, a Gangrel will bond it. Coyotes, crows, jackals, stray dogs, stray cats, vultures, rats, and raccoons are all within the province of the

Gangrel. Unlike Ventrule, the Savages create animal ghouls to be sidekicks and spies instead of pets. They run with their masters on hunts, ferret out information for them, and participate in every aspect of their regnats' lives.

With human ghouls, it is much the same. However, given their sentience and (arguably) free will, human ghouls are used for things other than hunt, kill, spy. Someone may be bonded for the sole purpose of living the Gangrel's life while they are off doing other things: Eating their food, shitting in their toilet, paying their bills, and dating their partner. If a Savage cannot present as respectable, their body double will do it for them. Gangrel ghouls also manage the herds of their masters, making sure the blood dolls are happy and the unaware vessels are kept unaware. They may be their regnats' face to the outside world even beyond living their lives, or they might be the lone gunman maintaining the wilderness bunker from which the Gangrel headquarters her operations. Whatever ensures the Savage's survival is the purview of the human ghoul.

Gangrel are the least likely of the clans to micromanage their servants. A ghoul who does not live with her regnant may not hear from him for weeks, only to be woken up in the middle of the night by an urgent phone call asking for help hiding a body or 20 kilos of cocaine. Savage regnats figure that if the ghoul has her paws deep in her local mortal life, she's much more useful overall.

**Concepts:** Girl Scout troop leader, wilderness firefighter, gunshot victim, lone survivalist, failed documentary director, international drug mule, cheerful retail wage slave, anarchist on the run

## *Mekhet*

Mekhet ghouls are, perhaps, the luckiest in the Danse Macabre. While they are overworked for what might laughably be called minimal pay, they have something to look forward to in the end. Mekhet create ghouls for one purpose: an eventual Embrace into the clan. Even the ghouls they create for household tasks or companionship have an eventual chance of being turned into a Shadow.

Because of this, the Mekhet are meticulous in their choice of ghouls. A Mekhet may go centuries without sharing their Vitae with a single mortal, even if their haven is a mess and their bills go unpaid. Mekhet ghouls must have a keen eye for the unusual, a good memory for detail, and a near-tireless disposition. They may be asked to do such diverse tasks as gather information in another domain, translate a book in the one language their regnant doesn't speak, or puzzle through problems that would cross an IRS investigator's eyes — often without being told why. Mekhet ghouls learn not to question their tasks. The answer usually reveals itself.

Of course, it's not all dusty tomes and abstract mathematics. Mekhet expect their ghouls to pursue knowledge in all of its forms, including that which is better left unknown. Research into the nature of life and death through dread surgeries

(preferably without anesthetic or consent on the part of the subject), deviant sexual practices in pursuit of emotional knowledge and physiological enlightenment, and detailed sorcerous experiments involving fresh viscera from a mutated child and stranger substances, might all factor into the schedule of a Mekhet ghoul. The servants of the Shadows must present their findings to their regnant in a timely fashion. Ghouls who fail to discover anything useful in their experiments (even if the useful thing is "I couldn't disprove the null hypothesis."), or who do not take the time to present their discoveries in such a way that might convince their regnant of their usefulness, can expect to be quietly disposed of.

However, attempting to tell one's regnant what they want to hear to prevent one's own destruction might simply hasten it. Honesty is paramount in the Mekhet regnant-ghoul relationship. A researcher is worthless if they can't explain their results, and a Mekhet would rather be told that their assumptions are wrong than find out the results they expected don't actually work in a life-or-death situation. One can usually tell how old a ghoul is by how comfortable they are with their regnant; Mekhet ghouls occasionally quietly advise their regnats at court if they are in danger of overlooking some crucial detail. It takes time and training to get to this point, however, whether through scolding, torture, or outright Vitae deprivation. Luckily, the Mekhet are patient. Any ghoul worth having is a ghoul worth teaching.

**Concepts:** streetwise kid, insomniac artist, debutante too smart for her own good, burnt-out private investigator, student of dead languages, repressed housewife

## *Nosferatu*

The servants of the Nosferatu live in the antechambers of hell. Ghouls to mysterious and dread regnats, these poor souls are constantly on their toes, trying to figure out how best to avoid the ire of their horrific masters.

However, this is not necessarily due to the temperament of the individual Nosferatu. Haunts are terrifying by nature, and the Vinculum does not stop the effects of the Lonely Curse on Nosferatu ghouls. Often, they find themselves in very confusing love-hate relationships with their masters: Are they serving the regnant because they want to, or are they serving to avoid being dragged into the skin-crawling darkness of the Nosferatu's inner world?

The answer is often both. Service to a Nosferatu often involves a lot of interaction with the mortal world, since the Haunt herself may not be able to interact without a backlash, and this takes the ghoul away from her master fairly often. However, the lure of the blood always draws them back. Some ghouls romanticize this, thinking of themselves as the Beauty to their Nosferatu regnant's Beast. Others simply try not to think about it, going about their business of presenting a public face for their disgust-inducing masters and treating it like an intellectual exercise.



To try to counteract the Lonely Curse, Nosferatu often pick ghouls who have a strong sense of empathy or compassion. A Haunt may spend weeks, months, or even years observing a potential ghoul, either directly or through their other ghouls. Once she is sure the ghoul will be useful and will not betray her interests, that's when the Nosferatu reveals herself and administers the Vinculum. Ghouls sent to observe a target may attempt to warn her about their masters' interest before this point, but that is heavily dependent on how the ghoul feels about the Nosferatu. Some ghouls do come to genuinely care about their regnant, even though the Lonely Curse continues to evoke disgust. Unfortunately for these ghouls, they run the risk of becoming Nosferatu themselves, once their master notices.

**Concepts:** middle-aged bank manager, PTA mom, amateur chef and host, daycare teacher, compassionate bartender, single father with a foster child, charity fundraising director, Peace Corps alumnus

## Ventrule

Of all the ghouls caught up in the *Danse Macabre*, the ones closest to the aforementioned *Downton Abbey* daydream are the servants of the Ventrule. Whether picked for their incredible intelligence, polished charm, or laser-like attention to detail, all Ventrule ghouls are exceptional in some way. To be any less is unacceptable.

There is no off-time for a Ventrule ghoul. Everything they say, everything they do, is a reflection of the regnant they serve. For an Invictus Ventrule, this means that his ghouls will never be caught dead riding the bus, eating fast food, or dressed in anything less than business casual. However, a Carthian Ventrule might only care about how well her ghoul fights the good fight, whereas a Circle Ventrule cares very deeply about the spiritual power of her ghoul instead of the trappings of mortal puissance. Ventrule do not keep subpar ghouls around. Anything less than perfect will not do, and not finding a way to keep oneself afloat while looking sharp and well-groomed (or dedicated and attentive) is considered disgrace enough to let the Vinculum lapse.

Of course, once the ghoul passes this test, a whole avenue of options opens to them. Ventrule are more than willing to open their purses, and other, more esoteric resources, to a worthy servant. The more one proves oneself, the more opportunities the regnant provides. A discreet maid-servant with studied skill in poisons may be given a monthly stipend worth more than what her mortal sister with a medical doctorate makes in a year, while a chauffeur who drove their regnant's enemy out of town, both literally and figuratively, might be rewarded with a penthouse and a cushy sinecure with an established banking firm. Anything the ghoul has to offer that might be of some value, the Ventrule takes advantage of, but the rewards only keep increasing as long as the ghoul continues to be useful and attentive to the Ventrule's every need.

Most of the clan's servants come from highly structured environments. It is easier to create a ghoul from someone who is already accustomed to taking orders and presenting well without additional training, so many come from the military, boarding schools, cotillion societies, or the upper levels of academia. This method of selection does have the unfortunate, but often humorous side effect of the regnant's entire staff scrambling

to avoid blame and point fingers when something goes wrong. This is also a problem that solves itself. If a ghoul can't keep their nose clean in the most trying of circumstances, then what use are they, really?

**Concepts:** former debutante, intimidating chauffeur, the butler who did it, overclocked administrative assistant, attentive lady's maid, keeper of the keys, fawning best friend

## *Ghouls by Covenant*

While clan determines general ghoul choice and how one individual Kindred might treat her servants, covenant determines how ghouls are viewed by the part of society that vampire frequents.

### *The Carthian Movement*

Ghouls are an old, established part of Kindred society, almost as old as the Kindred themselves. It therefore stands to reason that the Carthian Movement has almost as many opinions on the practice as there are ghouls in existence.

### *A Liminal Space*

The general consensus among Carthian vampires – if one could say they had a consensus at all – is that ghouls represent a unique part of supernatural society. They are neither immortal nor mortal, neither Kindred nor kine. Ghouls are special, not unlike objects d'art, and to have one around in court is a sign of prestige for a Carthian.

That's about where the similarities end, however. The traditional relationship between ghoul and vampire is rejected as an artifact of the past, though that in no way precludes any Carthian from practicing it. Some are of the opinion that it can be revitalized and rewritten in such a way as to fit the revolutionary ideals of the Carthian Movement – a new proletariat, so to speak. Some are of the opinion that it should be closer to the Mekhets' idea of a ghoul relationship: Ghoul only those you would bestow the Embrace on, and leave the rest for feeding. Some just think that the practice should be done away with entirely, and make a show of not making any ghouls at all (the crasser among them boasting about the chances they had but didn't take). A thousand other opinions hold sway among the Carthians, each one as different as the vampire who holds it.

### *Vox Populi*

Carthian ghouls, when they exist, tend to be outspoken opponents of *something*. Carthians do not use meek servitors, or those who exist placidly and uncontested. Anti-war activists, hellfire preachers, gang members, environmentalists, anarchists, and anyone who might be conceivably arrested for disturbing the peace or obstructing law enforcement could wind up as a Carthian ghoul. Such people tend to know ways around the

legal system and other, more volatile people – exactly what the Carthian Movement is seeking.

These ghouls take care of street-level business: collecting information, running messages, obtaining stolen goods and services, and other errands. Such ghouls are used to living off their wits and expect their plans to go awry, and are therefore incredibly good at improvising. This is an invaluable trait in anyone serving the Carthian Movement, and vampires occasionally find themselves pleasantly surprised by the brilliant last-minute plans of their ghouls.

Some younger Carthians see this as needlessly circuitous and decide to try to control The Man, instead of those who are fighting him. Their elders and betters smile and shake their heads – they'll learn soon enough. A vampire might have awesome powers of mind control and persuasion, but there is only so much you can influence a mortal who has wealth and power all her own without completely breaking her. At the top of the chain, mortals tend to have opinions that aren't easily swayed, and the vampire may actually find himself outmatched by his intended target!

Of course, the older members of the Carthian Movement won't tell the neonates this. It's important they learn for themselves.

On the other hand, should a clever Carthian choose to work within the establishment instead of against it, bureaucrats are a Kindred's best friend. The accountant who manages the finances of a city ward, the secretary to the mayor, the head of HR at the target company, all of these are ripe for becoming thrall to a Carthian vampire. While they do not have the influence of a CEO or a governor, they are an excellent foothold into a system that the vampire may wish to influence or dismantle. Having the ability to divert funds or shut down construction of a rival's haven due to zoning disputes is nothing to overlook.

### *Do as Thou Wilt*

Of all the covenants, the Kindred of the Carthian movement are the most likely to give their ghouls time off – or the nearest approximation thereof. Carthian ghouls rarely live in servants quarters in their masters' havens and are rarely, if ever, under surveillance. Most figure that they chose their servants for a reason. If you thought your ghoul was good enough to give Vitae, why wouldn't they be capable of operating on their own, without a firm hand to guide them?

This is something of a mixed blessing for the ghoul. On the one hand, the most they have to worry about is being woken at odd hours to retrieve a package that writhes and drips a foul-smelling, caustic substance; or to drive a pale, silent woman from the airport to their master's haven; or to plant a bomb in a government building; or to commit any number of illegal and dangerous acts, all without asking any questions. Carthian ghouls are rarely seen trailing their regnants, and some even manage to have families where the excuse "I had to stay late at the office" consistently works. Some regnants encourage this, the better to study this tenuous emotional bridge between Kindred and kine.

On the other hand, however, this puts the impetus on the ghoul to engage with their regnant outside of working hours. Other covenants expect their ghouls to constantly be hovering in case of need, but the Carthian Movement is not other covenants. Unfortunately, the benefit of keeping your ghouls close, a constant reminder to refresh the ghoul's Vitae when it begins to run dry, is lost on the Carthians. More than one ghoul has found themselves slowly and painfully reverting to simple mortality just because their regnant forgot it was feeding day. Older ghouls quickly learn to make use of calendars and polite, if slightly desperate, reminders to their regnant to avoid crumpling to dust. The Vitae denial is rarely intentional, but with the myriad of different opinions on ghouls and treatment thereof, it is not impossible that some member of the Carthian Movement would treat their ghouls in the traditional (read: abusive) fashion.

## *The Circle of the Crone*

Ghouls are a tradition as old as darkness and as useful as a knife. The Circle of the Crone takes great care to sharpen and hone them in the traditions of their covenant, even before they take the Vitae. Regnants take promising mortals into the outer circles, and teach them some small mysteries. Once they prove themselves worthy, the real lessons begin.

## *The Blood of the Covenant*

Ghouls of the Circle, from the moment they are initiated, are locked into a circle of ritual and mysticism. Calling themselves "votaries," "initiates," or "lambs," regnants choose these special servants because of their interest in mystery. They may be seminary students yearning for a truth beyond mainstream theology, pagans desperately searching for a more spiritual experience, or children of broken homes seeking something they can't put into words. All of them feel something is lacking. All are looking for some straw to grasp. In other words, the sort of people who might be headhunted by a cult are perfect recruits for the Circle of the Crone.

The similarities don't end there. Exact methods vary from domain to domain, but in general, mortals taken in by the Circle are expected to attend elaborate ceremonies, study

occult texts, and accept the indoctrination fed to them along with the power-giving Vitae. Some Kindred prefer the Jonestown model: simple clothing, communal housing, constantly keeping their mortal herd on edge. Others prefer something closer to Scientology, couching their secrets in psuedo-scientific terms, making liberal use of electrodes and technology, and constantly dazzling their flock with doublespeak. Some use other methods of indoctrination and control entirely. What matters is that the herd obeys.

Cults from which ghouls are drawn do not always immediately present as blood cults. They may start with wine or grape juice, a sort of mockery of Catholic communion (the Kindred never drink, of course). Those who are intended for greater roles, however, may be invited to a ceremony called the "inner mysteries," or some variant thereof. While it is usually presented as a symbolic rite, the sharing of blood to symbolize a bond with a high priest or spiritual leader, this is how a mortal receives the Vinculum from their regnant in the Circle of the Crone.

## *Further In, Further Down*

The air of mystery cultivated so carefully by the Circle of the Crone does not dissipate once a mortal is bound. A curious initiate always finds another set of puzzles, another veil of shadows to be pierced. This is intentional on the part of the Circle. Why keep ghouls around if not to ask the questions that bore the Kindred needing the answers?

Most ghouls are on carefully regulated, almost monastic schedules. The cult-like indoctrination fed to them while they were still mortals ensures that they have no ties to distract them from their regnant's will. Many have strict curfews, cleansing diets, and scheduled research and study sessions. Some may have a regular exchange in which they feed their regnant some of their blood in exchange for Vitae. Occasionally, ghouls of a Circle regnant live together in dormitory-style housing, sleeping in bunk beds and reporting on any deviations each other's actions to a very interested high priest.

However, this is not to say that being a ghoul in the Circle is boring. Many experiment with occult substances or research occult texts. Some discover that they possess a small amount of magical talent beyond their regnant's gifts. Circle ghouls write poetry and essays, dissect strange creatures for bezoars and toadstones, and generally engage in exploration and experimentation of strange and wondrous arts. Their regnants encourage this as long as it benefits the Circle.

## *An Eternity in Darkness*

Sadly, most ghouls in the Circle of the Crone are doomed to spend their limited immortality in carefully managed cycles of sleeping, researching, recruiting, and bleeding. Many do not fit the very specific requirements of the Circle, but continue to be useful to have around. Every high priestess needs her acolytes, and the votaries fulfill that role.

### A Note on Trauma and Mental Illness

A player or a Storyteller who wants to explore mental illness as an Invictus ghoul should do so with a thoughtful mind and an open ear. It is unlikely that any given gaming table does not include a participant who is suffering from some form of mental illness, and so playing something like BPD or PTSD as though it were a joke is an absolute no-no. Do research, read articles by people with those conditions, and if possible, talk to someone who lives with mental illness. Do not just read the DSM and think that a list of symptoms defines the experience of anyone with any given illness. Realize that a mental illness is a part of a person, not their entire personality. Your fellow gamers will thank you.



Sometimes, however, a ghoul distinguishes herself. A dedicated researcher, an observant snitch, or an overenthusiastic ceremonial participant, may be selected from the ranks for the Embrace. This is the highest honor that can be bestowed on a ghoul of the Circle of the Crone, and is often done in front of the other ghouls, as an example of what awaits a promising acolyte.

Of course, once the new childe is Embraced, then the real mysteries begin.

### *The Invictus*

At the heart, a ghoul is a slave, bound to serve the whims of an uncaring, undying master. Their blood is their master's blood. Their bodies are their master's bodies. They are forever locked into this oath of servitude, a serf in a modern feudal system, never to rise above their station.

At least, according to the Invictus.

### *Surrender unto Us*

Kindred of the Invictus do not choose their ghouls for skill. Skill can be taught, after years of servitude. Style and wit and grace can be learned. One can even develop a killer instinct, if given enough practice. What cannot be learned is the desire to serve — the need to be constantly, abjectly subjugated by the all-consuming demands of a vicious master.

Oh, the First Estate do take pleasure in breaking in their servants. The haughty, the proud, those who would not kneel — they're good for an evening. The true treasures, though, are the ones who have already been broken by their mortal lives. Children of abusive homes, addicts of various substances, and wage slaves ground to dust by an impersonal capitalist machine are all ideal slaves just waiting for a vampire of the First Estate to come take the leash. The vampire lures them

in with promises of relief from the pain, of a better job, or freedom from the addiction. They prey on the self-hatred of their targets, playing the belief that they are worth nothing like a skillful harpist.

It never amounts to anything, of course. The Invictus do not intend to give their servants any relief, merely more work. Ghouls under such a regnant are often given a little glimmer of hope that their master loves them — only to have it gleefully snatched away or "forgotten." Gaslighting and word games are common. Some ghouls develop severe mental disorders under the constant, abusive stress; an Invictus ghoul with severe abandonment anxiety, acute stress disorder, or even Borderline Personality Disorder is not uncommon. It only worsens with time. Many Invictus regnants keep their ghouls around as long as possible, letting them age on Vitae like a fine wine. Having a stable of ghouls well past their normal lifespans is an important status symbol for a vampire of the Invictus.

### *Unbroken Fidelity*

Ghouls of the Invictus know they cannot trust their regnants. Their senses of self-worth are totally obliterated, so they cannot trust themselves. The one thing they learn to have faith in is their work. Invictus ghouls throw themselves into their duties more fanatically than the servants of any other covenant. They are the secretaries with the separate phone for their unseen master, the chauffeur with the car always running. An Invictus ghoul may spend hours perfecting his look, making certain that there is nothing for his regnant to criticize, or she may seem to predict the regnant's needs before he makes the request. To have a day with no criticism is a point of pride for such wretches, though these days are fleetingly rare and always marred by something else, often their own broken and twisted internal monologues.

No job is too debased or disgusting for a thrall of the First Estate. Among themselves, ghouls of the Invictus often compare who can take the most pain: whose master hung them as a living, screaming centerpiece at a party, whose punished them with the whip for sitting down too fast, whose turn it was to take the rotting remains of a master's feeding out to the river. To suffer without complaining is a mark of great distinction for a ghoul, and that's the way the Invictus prefer it.

### *The Lancea et Sanctum*

If vampires are predators blessed and sanctioned by a deity, then surely they don't need prey to serve them beyond baring their necks. Like everything in nature, this is not as simple as it seems. Every crocodile needs its plover bird.

### *Lambs of God*

To become a ghoul to the Lancea et Sanctum is to make a choice not unlike that of accepting salvation in Christianity. One may not know what, exactly, it entails; but even without

having made the choice one knows it must be better than daily life. At least, this is how the Sanctified sell it.

Ghouls come to know Kindred of the Lancea et Sanctum through their charisma. The Sanctified seem to radiate peace and sincerity, presenting as gurus or spiritual shepherds. Future ghouls find themselves transfixed by these Kindred, seeking them out for advice and guidance. Once they are sufficiently spellbound, the vampire offers the choice. Usually, the new ghoul accepts, as to do anything else seems completely insane.

Sadly, this acceptance does not come with any transcendent love or acceptance from the Sanctified. The ghoul no longer needs to be drawn to the vampire, and so they can reveal their true purpose: using the ghoul like one might use a favorite dog or a clever tool.

### *Beyond My Wants*

While abuse of ghouls is not encouraged within the Lancea et Sanctum, being bound to a member is anything but pleasant. Ghouls find their regnants to be cold at best, never asking, always demanding. Everything is for a higher purpose: the whims of the sacred predator. Questions are met with surprise, as though the ghoul should instinctively know how things are already. The Sanctified do not hesitate to punish those who disobey their divine orders. To ghouls, these punishments are often humiliating, at best. This is not usually intentional — while some regnants are deliberately cruel, most simply have no sense of scale. After all, they are God's chosen race, and they are doing nothing but smacking a disobedient animal.

Despite their lack of empathy and absurd sense of what is reasonable, the Sanctified also understand that beating an animal one too many times causes it to bite. Sometimes they let things slip, just to keep their ghouls in line. The unpredictability keeps their flock careful and obedient.

### *Thy Rod and Thy Staff*

Out of all the covenants, the vampires of the Lancea et Sanctum are most likely to feed from their ghouls. They represent a higher form of prey, a cultivated, domesticated strain for a gentler palate. Ghouls are almost always expected to give some of their blood in exchange for their Vitae. The vampire feeds from her flock in a small, intimate ceremony, a small taste of the ghoul's life before, when they were obsessed with the wisdom of an apparent spiritual leader. Giving her blood may be the only time that a regnant shows genuine affection, and so many Sanctified ghouls are happy to oblige.

The other thing that sets Lancea et Sanctum ghouls apart is one specific duty: recruitment. If vampires are predators, and ghouls are their most precious prey, then it benefits the covenant to bring in more. Ghouls may promote their regnant as a spiritual leader — or, more frequently, found ghoul families (see below).

Although some ghouls do stray from the flock after several years under the Lancea et Sanctum, many are genuinely devoted to the cause. The Sanctified provide a sense of structure and purpose. For those questioning their places in the world, assisting in the sacred endeavor of shepherding the flock of humanity is an attractive option. Everything she does, be it making friends with a government official to bring him under her regnant's influence, arranging spaces for sermons and sacrifices, digging up obscure sacred texts of dead mortal heresies, or simply assisting her regnant in a ceremony, is for the betterment of the world as a whole.

### *The Ordo Dracul*

The Dragons are studious by nature, often caught up in esoteric projects demanding their full attention. Without ghouls, they might starve at their work, which makes ghouls themselves an important part of this covenant. To be a ghoul of the Ordo Dracul means being a combination of valet, lab assistant, and occasional project.

### *Dragon Eggs*

With the exception of the Carthian Movement, no other covenant gives their ghouls quite so much agency as the Ordo Dracul. With all of their research into the nature of life, death, undeath, and the occult, they simply do not have time to spare harassing, humiliating, or micromanaging their ghouls. Ghouls are chosen for their competence and discretion — while the Dragons want to know everything, they are not often willing to engage in the logistics necessary to, say, murder a child to observe how the family reacts, for example. Ghouls do the dirty work. They select the child, the weapon, and the time, down to the second. Then they must carry the murder out, and deal with the mental fallout in their own time.

Vampires of the Ordo Dracul do not praise their ghouls. All work is expected to be of the highest caliber, or it is not worth doing at all. A clever ghoul can discern when her regnant is pleased by how much of his time is dedicated to research based on the ghoul's efforts, or how often the ghoul is summoned for more menial tasks, such as driving her regnant to Elysium or editing hundreds or thousands of pages of scribbled notes into a readable treatise on some obscure quirk of Kindred unlife. If a Dragon has more than one ghoul, the jockeying is not unlike that of graduate students vying for an important internship. This is only metaphorical if the ghouls themselves are not actual graduate students. Academia, apart from the ghoul families under the ownership of the covenant, is the most important resource for recruiting Ordo Dracul ghouls. The Vitae invigorates burnt-out students and professors alike, and once given a taste, many are willing to do almost anything to get more.

## *Hatchlings*

There is another important reason for a Dragon to create a ghoul, however. Most neonates in the Ordo Dracul were once ghouls. Their work was so useful to their regnant, important in some way, that they have earned a promotion in the ranks. This needn't be a major breakthrough in the nature of vampirism — were this the case, there would be no new members of the Dragons. It may be something as simple as a full psychological profile of a bloodline or family of ghouls, or successfully collecting all of the works of an obscure sage. Whatever it is, it's worthy of eternity.

## *Caught Between Worlds*

Vampires and other ghouls aren't the only people ghouls interact with. Much of a ghoul's function is, of course, liaising with mortals in the sunlit world on a vampire's behalf. Ghouls aren't robots, however. They love, hate, and need companionship beyond that of the Kindred who holds their leash — and sometimes they just want to be around people who don't worry about being punished for making a simple protocol mistake.

As with everything else in a ghoul's life, this is never simple.

## *Tug of War*

Nothing mystical prevents a ghoul from having a relationship with a mortal. They can feel all the emotions they could before the Vinculum and empathize just as much. There is no force preventing mortals from remembering who they are, or from talking to them. At first glance, ghouls should have no issue.

This is, of course, dead wrong.

Few relationships between mortals, romantic or otherwise, survive if one of the mortals has a codependent or abusive relationship with someone else. People tend to get deeply frustrated (or worse, concerned) if a friend or loved one is constantly checking the phone, answering messages from a controlling spouse or a parent who just can't seem to let go. These people are dangerous. These people put on a good show of controlling another person's life. These people aren't even vampires.

Laboring under the Vinculum is like being in a controlling, manipulative relationship, but with the added, blood-soaked devotion born of drinking your regnant's Vitae. No matter how she may feel about him as a person, once a vampire says "Jump," a ghoul scrambles to figure out how high. A ghoul can't *not* be there for her regnant. The regnant-ghoul relationship is above all else. It has to be. The vampire relies on the ghoul for a tenuous connection to the sunlit world, and the ghoul relies on the vampire for the limited immortality of Vitae, no matter how much of a monster the vampire is.

No matter how much the vampire might wish it, though, they are not their ghoul's whole world. A ghoul had parents, possibly siblings, almost certainly friends. Ghouls with spouses

A ghoul can spend years or even decades chasing this elusive breakthrough. What finally earns them their Embrace depends on their regnant. Some Dragons are interested in small details, some quirk of the condition that causes a small sect of Kindred to act a certain way. Others want answers into the existence of an entire clan or covenant. However, if a ghoul is charming, erudite, or simply persistent enough, she may have a chance of convincing her regnant that whatever she is discovered is worth immortality. It just takes skill and a sense of timing.

or roommates are just asking for trouble. If a vampire turns someone with a family, they had best be prepared to deal with people asking questions. Why is daddy constantly leaving for "family emergencies" in the middle of the night? Why did my wife get fired from her job when she's been working overtime? Why is my child suddenly flunking all of their college courses? The ghoul's excuses aren't going to hold up forever, especially if the vampire is also feeding from them. Someone is going to get too close, eventually.

For the ghoul, someone asking the wrong question may mean the death of their whole family. More commonly and more immediately terrifying, however, a regnant simply abandons a ghoul because she became inconvenient. This is many ghouls' worst nightmare. Some try very hard to continue on as normal — but whenever the phone rings, they jump, fearing and hoping for that rasping voice on the other end of the line. Others go for the scorched earth solution: Burn every other relationship except the one with their regnant, in the hopes of not hurting anyone else.

## *Noli Me Tangere*

Ghouls who decide to smash all of their relationships to dust don't do so with the intent of hurting anyone, at least not at first. They explain to their spouses as they hand them the divorce papers and the keys that "It's not you, it's me." They write letters to their parents as they pack to leave on a cheap bus. They stop showing up at brunch because of missed alarms or prior engagements. The ghoul frames everything as their fault, destroying their own reputation to protect the ones they love. Generally, this works, and people slowly stop reaching out.

Sometimes, though, a vampire makes the mistake of picking a ghoul with healthy relationships. Breaking away takes a little more work. For a ghoul with a Nosferatu regnant this is usually done for them — perhaps a little more violently than the ghoul would prefer. For other ghouls trying to break free of their mortal support systems, however, this is often a deeply heartbreakingly experience. Friends may offer abuse resources, offering to "be there" and "I'm here if you want to talk," as though talking about being a ghoul could make it any better.

Parents may beg, weep, and cajole, pleading for their child to reach out to them. In extreme situations, loved ones may call police for welfare checks, as loved ones fear the ghoul is being abused or harming themselves.

After several such occurrences, wiser ghouls simply vanish. This may take the form of deleting social media, changing their phone numbers, or even altering their names or appearances. Any grieving about family is done in private. A regnant's comfort is cold comfort at best, even if it is the only comfort a ghoul can reasonably expect now.

Fortunately—or unfortunately—for the ghoul who chooses to avoid intimate relationships, doing so only gets easier as the years go on. They learn to see people as objectives—a bribe to make, a target to kill, a body to fuck—much like their masters. Not all ghouls who decide to take this route turn into glassy-eyed, dissociated figures of tragedy, however. Some are even quite pleasant to be around, though attempting to ask them about anything more personal than their favorite food results in a smooth topic change and a cold look.

Anyone who tries to get close to a ghoul like this will, at the very least, find that the phone number they gave is fake. At worst, a ghoul may kill someone who tries too hard to get close. If the ghoul is older and more jaded, they may even harm friends or family members who continue to be persistent.

It's not that these ghouls don't want intimate relationships. Many do. Most have just given up, realizing that only one person can matter—the regnant.

### Ghouls and the Strix

One might think that ghouls, being less powerful than their regnants, would be an attractive target for the Strix. Not so. While it's true that their disciplines are weak and they can't produce their own *Vitae*, the fact that they are still in possession of souls protects them from the worst of the Strix ravages. Far easier to worm their way inside a vampire than chew their way through the protective layers of *Vinculum* and mortal spirit. However, this does not stop Strix-ridden vampires from creating their own ghouls to work their will in the world. Strix ghouls are no different from normal ghouls, with one exception—for as long as they are bound by the *Vinculum*, they do not cast a shadow.

### Reaching Out

Some ghouls stubbornly refuse to let their regnant be the be-all end-all of their life, however. They're not undead. They're not vampires. They can walk in the sun, drink coffee, and fall in love without the assistance of magical weirdness. Why shouldn't they be allowed to indulge their mortal side?



## Black Swans

What about blood dolls and ghouls? Shouldn't their places near the bottom of the Kindred hierarchy make them natural allies?

For most of them, no. The Vinculum makes many ghouls deeply possessive of their regnents, while blood dolls crave the sexual thrill of the Kiss as many times as possible. Most ghouls treat blood dolls like shit — at worst, like their regnant's affair. Woe betide the rare blood doll who is newly bound to the same regnant as the ghoul who looked at her with murderous jealousy.

There is a middle ground, however. Ghouls are closer to the source of the blood doll's obsession and carry with them a certain amount of glamor and mystery. If a vampire's blood dolls are her groupies, then her ghouls are her personal assistants and best friends. A blood doll may actively seek out a ghoul to get closer to the vampire, under the cover of trying to befriend the ghoul. This can actually be a mutually beneficial arrangement for both the ghoul and the blood doll, so long as both of them keep up the polite fiction that the ghoul would still be interesting if her regnant weren't around.



Owning a ghoul who chooses to establish intimate relationships has both its benefits and drawbacks. The drawbacks are more immediately obvious. A ghoul who has friends may decide to try to protect them from her regnant, or to encourage them to ask said regnant for favors. They may also decide to do things for their friends, taking valuable time away from their regnant's list of duties.

Attempting to devote emotional energy to anyone outside of the vampire they're bound to also poses a significant problem for most ghouls. Many regnents expect their servants to be on-call all night, every night. During the day, ghouls are supposed to take care of the things that vampires cannot or will not do. This constant state of frenzied activity for the sake of one's master leaves little time for anything beyond an hour or two of sleep, plus a quick bite to eat and maybe a 30-second shower. Trying to repeatedly explain to your friends why you didn't answer their texts for three days at a time can be a major drain on a ghoul. Many get frustrated at the neediness of their mortal friends and (what they perceive as) an unwillingness to understand, prompting cold shoulders and explosive fights. Some ghouls just give up after this. After all, only their regnant understands what they're going through. Why should they want anyone else?

Simple. Ghouls who have friends just do better in the sunlit world. A ghoul who manages her contacts and who genuinely likes at least some of them can be invaluable for a regnant.

She can garner influence through fear — but if a ghoul is able to grow her network through a cheerful smile and in-depth personal conversations, the vampire's reach can extend that much farther. As long as the ghoul keeps her mouth shut about the true nature of her servitude, what harm can it do?

A ghoul made responsible for a vampire's influences, therefore, has a major advantage. Her job may be to simply make friends and spend time with them. If the vampire needs a favor — an account opened, a file deleted — it would only seem natural for the ghoul's new best friend to oblige. This may also be a boon to the ghoul. Having friends "on the outside" gives her someone to connect to who may actually experience emotions and empathy beyond a brief, intellectual attempt. It helps her remember that she is not alone. Mortals in important corporate, religious, or industrial positions may also be willing to overlook the ghoul's terrible response times, assuming their strange friend is simply a workaholic or dealing with her own problems.

On the flip side, ghouls who do not deal with their regnant's influences tend to form deep attachments to one or two people outside of the Danse Macabre. Being a chauffeur or a bouncer, for example, does not allow one to have breadth of attachments. However, the chauffeur develops an attachment to the valet who shares a cigarette with him every night after parking the car, or the bouncer might find herself falling for one of the mortal waiters at her mistress's club. Ghouls in these situations tend to pick their attachments much like they themselves were picked: Someone who serves their needs and won't ask any awkward or unwanted questions when someone is dragged out the back door bleeding from the neck.

This constant neediness can also be exhausting for the mortals involved. Ghouls who use mortals as Touchstones may find that mortal canceling on appointments more often, or getting suddenly irritable at the idea of hanging out for the fifth night this week. Ghouls, especially less sociable ghouls, are not great respecters of boundaries at the best of times. Mortal friends may find their phones full of hundreds of text messages from a ghoul who had the rare afternoon off for coffee, asking *where are you, are you free, let's go to lunch, why won't you pick up, fine, do you hate me now? Fuck you. I didn't like you anyway. Asshole.* Mortals who are patient enough to stick around will find this cycle repeats every time a desperate ghoul reaches out and doesn't receive an answer immediately.

Some well-meaning mortals may gently suggest a ghoul could use the assistance of a therapist. Some stop answering phone calls, or avoid their new friend. Many try to politely ignore the neediness, but develop an obvious resentment when the ghoul doesn't stop. Most ghouls take the hint and tone it down. Others get angry — and then immediately regret what they've done once their now-former friend is rushed to the hospital or hastily thrown into a dumpster. A vampire wouldn't notice, but for a mortal, hell hath no fury like a ghoul spurned.

## Our Kin

Inter-ghoul relationships range from contentious to peaceable. Ghouls often find reasons to feud with one another; whether for reasons of rivalry over a regnant's favor, competition for Vitae, or an opportunity to learn a devastating new power. Conversely, ghouls may band together. Tighter than any natural family or group of friends, ghouls form bonds based on their mutual standing in the All Night Society, and the traumas linking them as individuals. Even the loftiest ghoul chauffeur in service to the city's relatively benevolent prefect must drink blood to survive, and so through his addiction, shares a common feature with the lowest ghoul junkie.

Ghoul coteries are first recorded in Invictus texts following Rome's decline. Something changed in the All Night Society that made servitors feel the need to band together against shared foes. Few ghouls remain from that era, but those who claim to do so reference a time where Kindred sacrificed hundreds of ghouls to fuel blood magic, empowering the regnants in times of war, using and brutalizing the thralls for the Camarilla's pleasure. Such debased treatment drove ghouls to ally, no matter their regnants' allegiances. Many of these coteries persisted or evolved over the centuries, to ensure Kindred would never again take advantage of the ghouls in their service. The coteries' ambitions were noble. They continue to battle for liberty from mistreatment every night.

### Treasured Siblings

*Felicity grasped her friend under one arm, and with all her Vitae-borne might, pulled her from beneath the fallen beam. The building was collapsing above them, one floor concertinaing into another with increasing rapidity. With her last ounce of strength she bounded through the lobby doors and threw her friend to safety, as behind her the skyscraper descended into dust and rubble in a cacophony of noise. Felicity knew her legs were pulverized beneath the piles of masonry, perhaps severed by the sheets of falling glass. She couldn't see them or feel them. She could see her friend desperately poring through the rubble. Felicity knew he wasn't looking for her. He was looking for his master. Felicity knew she might die here, but she didn't mind. She'd saved her friend, and given him another chance at life. Maybe that was enough.*

Ghouls work together for the same reason any downtrodden class bonds. They all suffer, in one way or another, due to the actions of their betters. Ghouls are stronger as a cohesive group than as individuals. That's not to say ghouls don't also form unions of genuine friendship and love. The issue, many ghouls find, is the Vitae's intoxicating power easily subverts and twists affection into something unwholesome. Many ghouls fear falling for another of their kind. It would be a simple thing for a displeased regnant to slow the supply of Vitae, only for the ghoul to discover her beloved has suddenly aged 50 years, or died.

A loose faction of ghouls originating in Victorian London and known formally as the Mutual Protection League reaches out to all ghouls they know of who suffer unreasonable harm at the hands of their regnants. Ghouls who ascribe to the League's

doctrine make initial efforts to investigate the vampire and see if the treatment is out of keeping with her nature, and if not, proceed with plans to smuggle the ghoul away from the vampire. The challenge then becomes finding an alternative Vitae source for the freed ghoul, who likely resents her newfound freedom. The Vitae calls her back to the vampire, no matter what horrors she endured. This hostile form of intervention is a carefully orchestrated matter. The League keeps its presence hidden from Kindred, who view such groups dimly. Any ghouls saved in this way are named as League members, and have friends scattered across multiple domains for as long as they're needed. The only mandate the League imposes on its members, is that if a ghoul is witnessed in a state of duress, the League member must inform at least one other ghoul and act. A rivalry between the League and the more recently formed Kinnock's Boys exists, as while the League advocates freedom for ghouls, the Boys believe it is their lot to struggle, no matter their master.

Not all ghouls require such formality to band together. Some ghoul relationships evolve like that among siblings. This manner of ghoul bond frequently appears when they share the same regnant. Such servants often live together, work together, and receive the same praise or punishment together. However, just as siblings may share stories of good humor and watch one another's backs, they are also prone to one-upmanship. Regnants pit ghouls against one another in efforts to divide and conquer. While it's not common, vampires do hear of ghouls rising up and destroying their tyrannical masters. Fortunately for the ghouls, when the Kindred impose harsh punishments on their thralls, it often binds their friendships a little tighter, due to the shared events.

Ghoul families rarely see interneccine conflict. Tight ghoul families have bonds at a DNA level, as well as sharing their natures as long-lived creatures in Kindred company. They have much in common, and many reasons to rely on one another. Such ghoul families often cross-pollinate between family groups. They proclaim the bonds of family run deeper than the bonds of Vitae, and constantly reinforce their devotion to one another through family rituals, inter-marriage, and adoption of wards from different ghoul families.

Loose families such as the Alley Men pursue cannibalistic urges, but never turn on one another. They have a shared crime. Shared guilt compels loyalty, as the Daeva sultan of Tabriz discovered following the insurrection that elevated him to power. He toppled his rival, leaving his opponent's ghouls without a regnant. The sultan compelled the vulnerable ghouls to torture and murder any other ghouls or vampires loyal to his predecessor's memory. By muddying up the domain's ghouls, he conveyed on them a shared guilt and associated crime. He knows they remain loyal to one another, as no other ghoul could understand the depths of horror the group reached in efforts to please their new master and ensure their survival.

Ghouls cannot blood bond each other, but by being bound to the same regnant can ensure they remain in each

other's company for some time. Some attempt to simulate the Vinculum by sharing drugs, and intense near-death experiences guaranteed to bond them together. This artificial bond strengthens some unions, enough that a rash of ghoul drug overdoses in Caracas brought the Invictus' attention down on those responsible. As the covenant attempted to levy punishment on the thralls who went too far for a genuine, loving experience, the sheriff stayed his hand. He recognized why the ghouls acted as they did, and now arranges for the ghouls to receive treatment like mortal addicts attending a doctor. They now receive clean needles, and guidance on how to take drugs in the least harmful ways.

Ghouls have good reason to befriend one another, and remain as intimate associates for years. Any mortals treated with affection will soon wither and die during a successful thrall's long life. Any vampires he respects are far higher than the ghoul in the All Night Society's hierarchy. This leaves other ghouls as one of few options available to him for long-term companionship. Whether simply meeting to play a game of chess every year, or spending every waking moment in each other's company, ghouls gravitate to each other because they're the only constant element in a ghoul's existence. They attempt to downplay the infamous story of the ghoul lovers who destroyed each other out of sheer frustration, after spending over a century together. Skeptical ghouls claim that no relationship can truly last over 100 years. Anyone would grow tired of another human by that point. Yet, some ghouls disprove the cynics. Ghouls possess a greater capacity for change than their vampire masters. They can experience more in the daylight hours, and maintain more of common mortal behavior than their undead regnants. Ghouls on lengthy missions often tell eternal love stories and dreadful romance tales, part in humor, and part in longing that such a thing could be. While it's rare — largely due to a ghoul's obsession with a single regnant, acquiring Vitae, and maintaining his immortality — true love between ghouls is rumored to release them from their bonds and return them to true mortality. Achieving such a feat requires trust, which is near impossible when Vitae's addictive properties are added to the mix.

## Deadly Rivals

*"I don't want to fight you, but I will." That was a lie. Jade brandished one of sire's ceremonial daggers in their right hand, the left balled into a fist ready to strike out or defend. Their fellow ghoul reclined languidly in the lazy chair, never taking his eyes off them. He'd gone too far. He'd claimed sire was gifting him the Embrace for Christmas. "The Embrace is mine, not yours. I don't know what trick you pulled, or how you convinced sire that you deserved it, but it's mine!" Their colleague chuckled, sitting up from his seat. He was about to speak, but thought better of it. Shaking his head, he left the room. Jade crumpled to the floor and wept, holding the dagger over their exposed wrist.*

Ghouls cannot help but distrust one another, even in the cases where love, family, and political allegiances make firm bedfellows. A ghoul will always look over her shoulder and

check her back for a knife, as her peers attempt to curry favor with the same mistress or take control of the ghoul family. For all their bonds, confidences, and shared experiences, Vitae evokes paranoia, jealousy, and barely simmering rage. Ghouls are bombs waiting to explode, but they rarely aim the blast at their regnants or the mortals beneath them. A ghoul's ire traditionally pours onto another ghoul, who suffers the scorn and loathing for causes real and imagined.

The conventional ghoul rivalry stems from competing affections. Similar to the way children may vie for a parent's attention, ghouls do likewise with their regnants, except with a powerful drug added to the mix. Vitae inflames the situation exponentially. A child just wants her dad's eyes on her as she performs her new skateboard trick. A ghoul wants her regnant's blood, immortality, and tutelage in inhuman gifts. That same ghoul also wants her regnant to watch as she performs a new musical piece. When multiple ghouls seek that Vitae, eternal life, Discipline use, and attention, egos clash, a pecking order appears, and the loser suffers the victor's ridicule and pity.

Vampires are quite aware of ghoul feuds. They cultivate them. The Invictus and Ordo Dracul encourage their members to regularly chastise ghouls to get the most out of them. The worst two words in the world for regnants of these covenants are "good job." It is better to continually challenge thralls, pit them against each other, and witness which servant is the toughest or smartest. Kindred generally halt rivalries before the ghouls destroy one another; a dead ghoul is a wasted investment. Better to fuel the competition and then sternly rebuke such activities, so the ghouls know their place, until it comes time to provoke them into action once more.

Just as clans and covenants clash, the ghouls of each Kindred family and faction may take up the banners of their regnants and war with their opponents on the other side of the aisle. The movement of politics and philosophy sweeps up ghouls easily, perhaps more so than the vampires they serve. While a vampire can theoretically abandon or join a covenant as they please, the ghoul has no say over her master's allegiances, and must follow the party line her Vitae source decrees. For servants of mercurial Kindred, this movement between societies causes no end of diplomatic quagmires. A friend one night may be an enemy the next. A dutiful ghoul serves her regnant in all ways, even if it means clashing with former allies.

Ghouls possess a level of freedom to think and consider their positions within their regnants' covenants. A ghoul may identify strongly with her regnant's clan or covenant, and detest ghouls of different affiliation. Some cling to the words of the First Estate as if they were meant for the thralls. The Invictus ghouls in the city may consider the domain's Acolyte ghouls as scum who threaten their masters, no matter the actual situation between the two covenants. Ghouls who develop this kind of fixation on their regnants' Requiems proudly adopted the title "loyalists," though ghouls who see past this way of thinking call them "simulacra." They say simulacra imitate their regnants in a desperate cry for validation, while others misinterpret or over-inflate statements made in heated moments. Such ghouls pursue quests for their regnants'

covenants without checking for permission. These simulacra earn the derisive, and long, epithet of “drunken knights freshly returned from the Crusades,” in reference to Thomas Becket’s killers, who misconstrued their king’s angry outburst regarding the archbishop as a call for his death.

More ghouls harm each other in efforts to please their masters than from any personal enmity, though the punishment for killing another vampire’s ghoul often earns more punishment than reward.

## *Life Lessons*

Heinrich took to the stage and wielded the microphone like a preacher, addressing his congregation of fellow ghouls. “Today I’m going to tell you the story of one of our own. You’ll have heard of her. Mathilde.” The assembled blood addicts murmured their approval, some stamping their feet on the floor to express their pleasure. “Mathilde was one of us, but she was better than us. Mathilde fought for us. Mathilde died for us. So many of us have attempted to emulate her. Mathilde achieved more for our rights in German domains than anyone before or since. She was so earnest, so passionate, so right, that her regnant felt the need to deny her the blood and... we all know how it ended. But let’s talk about how Mathilde’s journey began.” By the time the tale ended, the ghouls in attendance openly wept, held one another’s hands, and each recited a prayer to Mathilde’s memory. The Mekhet watching from the back row slunk out, terrified of what an empowered population of ghouls might mean for Munich.

Ghouls hold dear a strong oral tradition regarding their reputable and infamous cousins. Just as their regnants attempt to conceal their natures from humanity, the ghouls do likewise; partly due to vampire edict, but also because they realize the danger of exposing their monstrous existences. Ghouls encourage one another to recite tales of their successes and failures. They must never write down an experience, or make records a hacker could access online. Instead, thrall society warmly encourages storytellers to blend history with fables, so a ghoul might better survive in the All Night Society and flourish under his regnant’s command.

Ghouls gather at events they call “symposiums” – often held in vacant Elysiums at daytime, or during evenings where Kindred are occupied elsewhere. These galas range from the subdued, resembling Alcoholics Anonymous meetings with a circle of chairs and coffee and biscuits, to the sublime. Rome’s ghouls are known for their extravagant parties, at which each attendee wears an opulent costume and mask, and freely speaks about regnants, indignities, humiliations, and of course, successes. Ghouls consider it the role of any guest at the symposiums to speak highly of at least one other thrall. Much like in group therapy, the thralls believe in aggrandizing the actions of their attending fellows. The first thralls to arrange these symposiums – a Rio de Janeiro ghoul coterie named “the help” – recognized the need to offer their peers persistent vindication after a one-year spate of ghoul suicides in their domain highlighted the lack of communal support among thralls.

## **Ghoul Polari**

The ghoul coded language takes many terms from the gay slang of 1960s London. Other terms are adapted, or created wholesale to refer to their unusual situation as thralls. The below is a short list of terms ghouls commonly utilize to cloak their true intentions:

- Omi-Polone:** Daeva
- Butch:** Gangrel
- Lilly:** Mekhet
- Rim:** Nosferatu
- Fruit:** Ventrue
- Plebi-Ono:** Carthian
- Hagfags:** Circle of the Crone
- Sharpies:** Invictus
- Intros:** Lancea et Sanctum
- Geckos:** Ordo Dracul
- Daddy:** Regnant
- Queen:** Vampire
- Blue-Eyes:** Ghoul
- Straight:** Mortal
- Spring Chicken:** Fledgling
- Chicken:** Neonate
- Handbag:** Ancillae
- Starry:** Elder
- Trade:** To drink Vitae
- Gargle:** Vitae
- Spat:** Torpor
- Bona:** Good
- Naff:** Bad
- Black Kerchief:** Dangerous individual
- White Kerchief:** Trusted individual

Kindred remain largely unaware of the ghoul community’s broad communication network. Though much of what ghouls know of their fellows in other domains comes as apocrypha and rumor, they do know other ghouls exist and suffer the same hardships the world over. Names of trustworthy ghouls and the locations of safe havens make their way across countries as ghouls travel at their masters’ behests. Whenever a thrall encounters another, providing their relationship is not already antagonistic, they share information pertaining to their recent encounters, any regnants in need of servants in the area, and which vampires to avoid. Similarly, ghouls openly voice concerns regarding their fellow thralls in danger of abandonment or reaching a breaking point. Ghouls who make a habit of stabbing their peers in the back soon find their names on the lips of every other ghoul in the domain, and farther afield.

This underground railroad of ghoul intelligence runs efficiently in most domains, though some coteries attempt to clamp down on such openness. While all ghouls appreciate the ability to pass on warnings and advice, some cloak their



messages in code. This code is an invention based on the Polari of the historic British gay subculture, where homosexuals were forced to speak in colloquialisms, innuendo, new turns of phrase, and gibberish words to hide their proclivities from a harsh and unfair legal society. The founders of the ghoul Polari are a pair of London ghouls named Julian and Sandy, who share a Venttrue regnant. The couple discovered one another after their thrallodom commenced, and fell in love at a time when two men were disallowed from practicing affections. They both knew the existing Polari, and realizing its uses, adapted it for other ghouls. To date, no vampires have cracked the Polari code.

## *Ghoul Status*

Shinobu stalked through the store, looking for the appropriate mask. Just as the regnants had their Masquerade, so did their thralls. The ghouls' masquerade was a little more literal, however. The storekeeper, a ghoul like her, suggested a mask signifying her status in Tokyo. A cream-white full-face mask with the rising sun emblazoned across it, or perhaps an Oni mask. Shinobu glanced at both, but neither appealed. Too many Japanese ghouls opted for the historic. She wanted something distinctive. When she spotted the marbled slab with holes gouged out for her eyes and mouth, she grabbed it immediately. The marble of the gravestone she would never rest beneath, the defaced holes representing her deviant existence, the primal, brutal beauty of the mask's weight and shape... As she presented it to the shop owner, the man bowed, but did not ask for money. "The mask is the

*perfect fit for the prestigious herald of the Burakumin. Take it with our blessings, and wear it often.*"

Due to the diversity of ghouls around the world, there is no singular vertical hierarchy in which thralls arrange. Though some domains attempt to layer echelons of power, where older, wealthier ghouls hold authority over the younger, most avoid any such structure. As ghouls respond to regnants before affording their fellow ghouls respect, any such setup would swiftly collapse when a vampire gifts her freshest ghoul a mansion, allowance, and an intriguing new power, while simultaneously declaring her oldest ghoul exiled from service.

The ghouls have a different house of cards in place to recognize status and rank. Ghoul society is primarily a meritocracy, where thralls who behave in a way that benefits the lot of other ghouls earn titles, the deference of their peers, and sacred baubles with which to adorn their bodies.

Titles vary from domain to domain, though frequently used terms such as "mannequins," "Alfreds," "shattered," and "gigolos" imply certain activities and roles within ghoul society. One is not considered higher than another, as status is viewed less on an upward trajectory than as a record of achievement and experience. Some ghouls may see "mom and pop" thralls in a worse light to how they see their "simulacra" peers, though it's guaranteed that at least one ghoul in the domain will see the merit of having a mom or pop in the area. Titles of this type grow increasingly prevalent, their meanings communicated throughout the talkative ghoul society.

Deference is earned. A ghoul must risk something substantial and perform a dramatic deed, such as saving another ghoul from becoming shattered, or salvaging a relationship between ghoul and regnant. Doing so, with the ghoul at risk testifying as to his savior's activities, earns a ghoul a small boon from all other ghouls in the domain. In most senses this manifests as a form of freedom of the city, where a ghoul can expect to live the next few months without having to pay for bus fares, cover the cost of shopping, or handle the rent. Other ghouls step in to assist the savior, until the community considers the debt repaid. Some ghouls begrudge the need to sacrifice their own wealth to support one of their own, but this semi-socialist method has historically shown itself to work as a strong means of community building.

The longest-lasting ghoul status comes through sacred baubles. These trinkets differ across domains, but almost all tie to the importance of a regnant, or regnant's clan or covenant in the domain. East Asian ghouls favor extravagant masks and costumes to highlight which ghouls belong to which Kindred.

This practice is steadily spreading to Australia and the American West Coast. Middle Eastern domains see the ghoul inhabitants awarding each other the caretaking of mortal relations. Though this practice seems more a burden, it is in fact a great honor to the recipient to see his fellow ghouls entrust precious loved ones to his care. In Europe a similar practice occurs, as the ghouls award their highest acclaimed peer jewelry and memorabilia of emotional and nostalgic weight. When a ghoul gifts the wedding ring she was given a century ago to the prince's thrall, she is saying "I trust you to advocate for all of us to such a degree that I would trust you not to lose this item, that while a simple bauble to you, is a connection to my very mortality." Whether costumes, donated possessions, or people – the risk a ghoul takes by accepting these honors is great. If a ghoul takes one of these sacred baubles and loses it, or dismays the domain's ghouls in another way, he can expect castigation and maybe even death in the future. For this reason, many ghouls decline these offerings. There is no shame in doing so. Agreeing to remain on the same level as his fellow thralls essentially declares all ghouls equal beneath their regnants.

## *Ghoul Families*

While most ghouls are products of a vampire finding a single useful or desirable mortal and binding him or her with the Vinculum, this is not always the case. Some ghouls are born and raised to it. Products of generations of breeding experiments, illicit liaisons, social grouping, or sheer luck of the draw, these ghouls are members of *ghoul families*. Two types of ghoul families exist: biological and social.

Children of biological ghoul families are born under the Vinculum, age slower, and do not require constant intake of Vitae for their limited immortality. They also, depending on location and regnant, have knowledge of the workings of the Danse Macabre, and do not need to be instructed on proper behavior around Kindred and mortals. As such, members of these families are of immense value to interested vampires – something the family may not see as a benefit.

Social ghoul families, on the other hand, are loose groupings of mortals and ghouls brought together by either the ghouls themselves or their regnants. Social families include groups of ghouls who are forced to live together as a family by their regnant, mortal families that a single vampire or coterie selects ghouls from generation after generation, or chosen families of ghouls who seek an escape from their regnants in each other.

### *Family Ways*

All ghoul families share some common traits, no matter what their upbringing or social status.

*Every ghoul family has a regnant.*

This seems like a given. Of course they have a regnant, they're ghouls.

Unlike solo ghouls, however, the regnant's whims do not just determine the actions of whomever they directly shared the Vinculum with. The words of the family founder's regnant resonate like scripture in the culture of the family in question. A family whose original regnant was a Venttrue in the Ordo Dracul, for example, is much more involved in academia and high society affairs than a family whose founder was an Invictus Gangrel. While the ghouls themselves may not always be allied with their regnant's sect or clan, the original regnant's beliefs always show themselves somehow in a ghoul of the family, sooner or later.

All ghoul families are created for some purpose. The Venttrue above might seek to have a family line completely and utterly devoted to them, instead of breaking in new servants one at a time. Breeding that devotion in also makes a family member less likely to complain when being used as an assistant, or occasionally a subject for dangerous occult experiments. The Gangrel counterpart, on the other hand, might simply wish to have a clan of supernaturally empowered mountain folk to keep mortals off her turf in the Appalachians. A Carthian Nosferatu

### *Nests of Owls*

The Strix have made some motions towards creating biological ghoul families. Fortunately for the rest of the Danse Macabre, nothing has come of it just yet. Something about the loss of the shadow seems to prevent ghoul mothers from bearing ghoul children.

## Hunger Knows No Friend

Those born as ghouls have an unnatural lifespan (even without Vitae, a born ghoul can live around 150 years), access to Disciplines, and an insatiable hunger for Vitae. This is all well and good, but what happens if a ghoul impregnates someone and abandons them? What if the child is orphaned by circumstance or design? Some ghoul family children slip through the cracks and never discover their true natures. These orphans have a constant insatiable hunger for *something*, although they're never quite sure what, and it dominates their lives. They can be dangerous enemies, or fast friends if led to what it is that they actually want. Use the Conditions for unfed ghouls on p. 123 to represent these unfortunate souls.

may foster a family of choice, a group of ghouls trying to escape from their former regnants and find purpose in their existences. All families serve a role for their regnant, though over time, deviations from this purpose are common.

## *Ghoul families are just that — families.*

While ghoul families are generally under the sway of some vampire or another, it is important to note that they are not all single-minded thralls. Ghouls still possess emotions. Ghouls are still able to feel compassion, jealousy, and the unreasonable attitude that comes with being a teenager (and ghoul teenagers are moody for a *long* time!). Ghoul families, therefore, have all of the drama that comes with a normal mortal family — plus the added stress of an undead monster controlling the direction of the lives of some or all of their members.

On the surface, this seems more harmful than anything else. The Vinculum induces a fanatic devotion to one's regnant, so a member of a ghoul family newly bonded to a vampire may behave like that obnoxious sibling who just fell in love for the first time — except the new crush is a Nosferatu who enjoys inflicting pain on her servants for maximum entertainment value. Or the family's regnant might sell one of the family's sons to a Ventre, when he wasn't yet ready for the demands of the job. Backstabbing and double-dealing is common in ghoul families, and since they feel regret and pain so strongly, it's made all the worse by the messy emotional complications that result. Some regnants even actively induce this — all for their own amusement, of course. Arguments that turn violent, days of the silent treatment, and general emotional abuse (as well as physical, in some cases) are rife in ghoul families where the regnant is still actively involved.

On the other hand, the connection in ghoul families is not simply driven by the Vinculum. Member of families are able to feel genuine empathy and love for each other, and often form

healthy relationships, provided that the regnant is not actively tearing them apart. Even then, alliances can form — and more than one regnant has met death at the hands of an enraged pack of cousins, human or ghoul, avenging a family member who was toyed with just a bit too much. Parents care about their children and, while they understand that a vampire may decide that their firstborn is a fit companion, do generally try to love and support them as much as any mortal under the eye of a merciless master can. Families of choice are fiercely devoted to each other and the regnant who took them in, and any outside interference is met with suspicion, at best. Siblings fight and collaborate and sometimes love each other a little too much — but hey, incest keeps the bloodline pure and the Vitae flowing, right?

## *Not all ghouls in a ghoul family serve the same regnant.*

While it is the case that a ghoul family is created under the auspices of (usually) a single regnant, as the family branches out, second and third generations may be farmed out to other vampires. There are some limits on this: a family created by a vampire in the Lancea et Sanctum probably won't give their children to Kindred in the Circle of the Crone, for instance. But, as with everything in the Danse Macabre, there might just be someone willing to pay enough.

There are a lot of advantages to a family with many different regnants. Should the family come under attack by an outside force, the vampires might be convinced to come to the defense of their bonded ghouls. Family members bonded to a clan that is not their original regnant's might receive training in disciplines they otherwise wouldn't, and then pass that along to their children or siblings. And, in the unlikely event that two members of the same family are bonded to rivals, a third member of the family might be able to sell one or both out and reap the rewards — this is an incredibly dangerous gambit, however, as one or both vampires may decide to destroy the family itself to get to their nemesis instead.

This is not even to speak of the tangible rewards. It's somewhat taboo in more established ghoul families to talk about how much their regnant sold one of their members for: several million dollars, an old book full of occult secrets, or a Tesla sports car, are all acceptable currencies for a single member of a well-bred ghoul family. Sometimes, a regnant sells a member of her family for a desirable member of another ghoul family, swapping ghouls like trading cards. While this is more common with biological families, it's not unheard of for a vampire to "lend" a member of a family of choice to another regnant for an indefinite period. Regnants may also offer to let other vampires create ghouls from the mortal families they've been haunting for generations. In any case, it's often a heart-rending experience for members of the family to see their relatives sold like cattle.

Some ghoul families, though, have enough prestige to charge a finder's fee for the privilege of meeting an up-and-coming child. Usually biological families who have been "breeding true" for

generations (see the “Hunger Knows No Friend” sidebar below), these ghouls seek out others of their kind to continue the line. For an old biological family, maintaining the bloodline is second only to serving their regnant.

### *Breeding first, power second.*

As biological ghoul families begin with one member being able to bear a ghoul child, the capacity to breed and multiply is of utmost importance. The head of the family is usually the founder — by default, someone with a uterus. Members of the family with fertile uteruses are highly valued by both families and vampires alike. The more ghouls in the family, the more possible power and influence grabs the family can make.

While having children is technically a choice in a biological ghoul family, the benefits of breeding are such that many ghouls choose to impregnate someone or carry a child. Being a parent comes with status and a sense of purpose. You are doing what is expected of you and maintaining the family line. Parents are venerated and given more say in what goes on in the family. Ghouls who can carry children are generally expected to have at least one, if not more. Ghouls who can impregnate others are expected to meet a certain quota of children — five per year, for example.

Finding a partner (or partners) for a fertile ghoul is essential to the health of a biological ghoul family. An old, established family might be on cordial terms with other ghoul families of any variety, and so regularly exchange correspondence on the state of their most eligible children, hoping to find a match among others of their kind. The majority of families, however — new families, isolated families, and families on the brink of extinction — take whatever they can get, be they mortals, untrained ghouls, or other family members.

Of course, there are some ghouls who are not interested in breeding at all. Some have a price — a full-time caregiver for the child, signing over their parental rights, just enough money or material goods — but some cannot be convinced. Some, through no fault of their own, simply can’t produce a child of any kind. The head of the family sells members who cannot or will not breed to the highest bidder. These prodigal children are expected to learn everything they can from their regnant. While they may not have as high a standing in the family as they otherwise would, they exchange interpersonal influence for personal power. Some ghouls are just willing to make that bargain.

### *Family first, to hell with the rest.*

Members of non-biological ghoul families, be they families of choice, mortal families vampires haunt for their servants, or simply groups of ghouls forced to live together as family units, all develop a fierce attachment to each other over time. They are servants to strange, dead beings, and the only people they can rely on are each other. In this case, it’s survival of the individuals, not survival of the bloodline, that matters.

Ghoul families of these types will go to great lengths to protect each other. A member of a haunted mortal family may become a vampire hunter, just to prevent her mother from getting hurt any more. A matriarch of a family of choice may betray her regnant to another vampire to prevent the sale of one of her “children.” The daughter of a monastic “family” might misplace the sacred text to postpone a blood sacrifice. Any act, no matter how great or small, might fall to a ghoul to commit if she sees her family threatened.

### *Creating a Family*

While the above section provides guidelines for ghoul families in general, the families themselves vary wildly in origin, culture, and customs. Below are some parameters to consider when creating a ghoul family to fit your chronicle.

### *The Original Regnant*

Every ghoul family serves a purpose, and the personality and needs of the vampire who created the family almost always determine that purpose. Think about why someone might need an entire extended family of servitors. Did they need a discreet, loyal staff for their haven? How about a generations-long experiment to probe the very nature of ghouls and ghoulhood? Was it for aesthetic, the ability to showcase their entire collection of demure, blue-eyed blond ghouls? The answer will give you a good idea of who the vampire was, what their affiliations were, and how they treat family members.



### *Family Systems*

Why use a ghoul family? Simple: Ghoul families are ready-made sources of drama for any chronicle. Groups of Vitae addicts bound together by love, responsibility, resentment, and other wonderful familial feelings make for great conflict. A human hunter might stumble across a starving family and see it as yet another reason she has to take out the undead. A ghoul player character grows up as a member of a family and is repeatedly made to choose between her family and her regnant. A vampire has to deal with the demands of the family she inherited from her sire. There are dozens of possibilities.

In terms of mechanical benefits, every member of a ghoul family has one or two Touchstones (another family member, plus the original regnant if they’re still involved). The family as a whole also has a benefit and a drawback. Benefits can be Merits, bonuses to Skill Specialties, or access to a certain Discipline. Drawbacks are often, but not always, derangements or physical flaws.



*Example:* Emma decides she wants to create a ghoul family for her chronicle that was bred to a certain aesthetic. They are all tall, pale, and have big green eyes that always seem to be full of tears. She decides that the sort of Kindred who might create this family is a wealthy Daeva of the First Estate, someone who can afford to keep ornamental ghouls around for the sole purpose of subjugating and controlling beautiful things.

### *The Original Ghoul*

Perhaps more important than the Kindred creator is the ghoul who was chosen to do the more visceral bits of the family creation process. The progenitor may have been picked for looks, temperament, grasp of Disciplines, or simply on their regnant's whim. Why they were picked says a lot about the purpose of the family itself.

The members of a biological ghoul family may venerate their founder, usually a ghoul with a uterus, raising her to saint-like status. They may tell stories about how she was the beloved of darkness, the bride of the night, and other such appellations. Instead, they might revile her, refusing to let her name be spoken and blaming her for their difficult position within the Danse Macabre. How they treat their progenitor says a lot about the family itself.

In a non-biological family, how they treat their founder says a lot — but who the founder is says a lot too. The founder of a family of choice may not even breed. The founder of a haunted family may just be the person who originally sold his relatives to the regnant. The head of a non-biological family might just be the ghoul who has survived as part of the group the longest. Be he or she the original Judas, the ghoul den mother who keeps her children safe, or simply lucky and good at surviving, who's ostensibly in charge of a non-biological family helps determine that family's characteristics.

*Example:* Emma decides she wants the founder of her family to be a ghoul who is a cisgendered woman and a former runway model in the 1970s. The founder made a deal with her Daeva regnant to be her slave in exchange for an extended career with her high-powered fashion house. Unfortunately for the founder, her regnant had other plans, and gleefully broke the promise as soon as the Vinculum took hold. The founder, now in her late 60s but not looking a day over 35, has had children and grandchildren by several of the Daeva's other ghouls. She retains shades of her former elegance, but spends much of her time hidden away, drowning her sorrows in expensive liquor and heroin. Her family tiptoes around her, fearing her passive-aggressive tirades and vicious, cutting remarks about weight or appearance. Some of the younger members consider her outmoded and don't take her seriously — at least, before they meet her.

### *Current Status and Size*

Is the family up and coming, poised to become a major player in local society thanks to a clever regnant or founder? Or is it centuries old, crumbling and shrinking and all but forgotten by the entirety of Kindred society? Is it new but struggling,

suffering under the reins of a regnant who perhaps wasn't quite ready for the responsibility? This is one of the easiest ways to determine what role this family will play in your chronicle. A well-off, established family with a sprawling bloodline is less likely to ask for assistance from player characters, and might play better as decadent antagonists or minions of a greater threat. On the other hand, the same family may wish to expand its influence and see the players' characters as means to even more gain — a sort of ghastly microcosm of the Danse Macabre. A family whose fortunes have taken a turn for the worse, or perhaps were never that good, is more likely to attempt to bargain with or win over player characters, especially vampires. These families are also dangerous, however — if its regnant offers them a better deal, it almost certainly turns on any contract made with a player character.

*Example:* Emma decides her ghoul family is essentially arm candy, but expanded into an entire supporting cast. They've learned a lot from their original Daeva regnant, and even from the mistakes and emotional abuse of their founder. Some of them have been bound to other members of the Invictus, but many of them still serve the original regnant. As a result, they are highly regarded as lovely, compliant servants, all with some unique talent. Emma's players may encounter them as status symbols or as minions of their enemies — or perhaps have the option to purchase one themselves, for an exorbitant price.

### *Family Resources*

A ghoul family's wealth largely hinges on the personality of its regnant. Some vampires may choose to provide housing and food (to some degree) for their ghouls, but casually take whatever money they make without notice. Others may take a laissez-faire approach, letting the family maneuver through mortal society and build its own network of money and influence — that they can then make use of. This may take many different shapes. A ghoul family, especially a more modern one, may have been created specifically due to its founders keen business sense and astounding lack of business ethics. Other families may live in servants' quarters, surviving off their master's generosity and whatever side jobs they can manage to scrounge up.

This is really where you decide how a ghoul family fits in with the mortal world. Do they hold positions in the military, police force, or private military firms? Are they heads and executives of a corporate network? Are they academically inclined, hiding in classrooms and libraries and holding tenure? Or do they eschew legitimate means entirely, instead making a living off the criminal underworld of their city? How a ghoul family makes its money usually aligns with its purpose — though a family created to be corporate overlords now surviving by fencing occult artifacts makes for an interesting story all its own.

*Example:* Emma decides that while her ghoul family makes a great deal of money on modeling and other, more illicit pursuits, much of it is turned over to the regnant, who runs the family like a prostitution ring. Ghouls who are sold to other regnants find that their finances are often less tightly controlled, much to the resentment and confusion of their fellows.

## Of the Blood

Herein are descriptions of some of the more established or unusual ghoul families in the World of Darkness. This is in no way a complete list.

### The Crosses

*"There's nothing you can do to change that this morning, brothers and sisters. Hell does exist! Hell is, my friend, a place! The bible says it was made for Satan and his angels, and it is, therefore, a place of punishment! Not a place to simply go to, it is a place of punishment! It is a place, it is somewhere, and it awaits those who leave this world without the love of Jesus Christ! It is a place the bible calls hellfire and if you are very smart, brothers and sisters, or you have half intelligence, you will be doing some thinking about where you're going when you leave this world!"*

Trinity Cross allowed herself a small smile behind her wicker fan as the "Amen!" rose from the crowd. One woman in front of her was sweating heavily, shaking like a palm in a hurricane gale. Trinity supposed she might be feeling the spirit. Or it might just be the Florida heat.

*"There's one thing that is absolutely certain, and you know this! Come to the facts and face it, my friends. You are going to die! You will leave the planet, and your heart will stop beating in your chest! And when that happens, who are you going to answer to, brothers and sisters? Who will you face in final judgment?"*

*"Amen, Lord, I am here!" the woman cried in front of her, now openly sobbing. Her head was lolling backwards, her neat bun coming unraveled. Another worshipper ran to her side, gently helping her lay out on the floor of the tent. "I am here, don't forsake me! Your servant...."*

She dissolved into gibberish, as the woman beside her began to translate. Her brother continued on, his gestures ever more vicious, the Amens ever louder.

For his first time preaching without Majesty, Trinity thought, Gideon Cross was doing exceptionally well.

In the summer of 1923, Miami was a real-estate dream. The Florida land boom was in full swing, guided in part by a coterie of young Carthians from Atlanta, wishing to establish their own domain far from the stifling presence of the Invictus. One such Carthian was a Daeva named Gilda Norcross. Originally drawn to the budding city because of its possibility, she found herself in love with the Florida heat – and all of the emotional heat that expressed itself as a result. Revival tents and Temperance meetings were her especial favorite. How could such passion thrive under the crushing repression of southern fundamentalism?

She decided to get close enough to find out. Her choice was a woman by the name of Lorraine – a tiny firebrand of a woman, a Pentecostal preacher and charity organizer for the families of the unskilled labor working to develop the surrounding swamps. Lorraine met Gilda at a revival meeting, and became obsessed with the idea of saving her, something Gilda found terribly amusing. This only increased when the Vinculum set in. Gilda let her ghoul believe that she was bringing her regnant towards the

light. Lorraine didn't need to know that she was ever-so-helpfully bringing in more vessels for her wayward mistress.

Not that Lorraine hadn't known. She wasn't stupid. Those people she brought to her regnant "to tell me how Christ changed his life" never really looked the same again – if they ever left her breezy Victorian house.

All was not well for the Carthian Movement in Miami, however. The Invictus Prince of Atlanta had gotten word of the new domain being established. Her own childe had secretly left to join the Movement's settlement efforts, and the embarrassment was far too much. Under orders from her liege, a Nosferatu by the name of Anna Cruz set out to undermine the burgeoning domain and bring back the Prince's erstwhile childe for punishment.

Anna brought her ghoul as well: an architect and surveyor named Jonathan. It was here that the trouble really began.

### Star-Crossed

Lorraine and Jonathan repeatedly met at cross-purposes. Jonathan declared sites unsafe for construction, replaced blueprints with forgeries (always with a single, fatal flaw in the design), and generally made life hell for the floating laborers of Miami. Lorraine, meanwhile, continued to minister to the vulnerable population, providing as much succor and support as she could while simultaneously (and very unwillingly) hunting for her mistress. She found herself deeply discontent. While her preaching was more fiery than ever, her heart beat hollowly in her chest. The very friend she sought to convert completely undermined her mission, and she felt herself ensnared in the Devil's claws. The worst part was that Gilda seemed terribly amused by it all. Lorraine was lonely, deeply lonely, something her regnant actively encouraged with cruel, backhanded remarks and occasional threats.

It should come as no surprise that when Jonathan smiled at her for the first time, she fell from grace.

They had no idea who they each belonged to, at first. But blood calls to blood, and by the time they discovered each other's allegiances in the spring of 1925, Lorraine was already heavily pregnant.

To Gilda, this was an absolute delight. Unplanned and unpredicted, but perfect. Her virginal Christian ghoul was with child – and by the servant of her enemy. She insisted on treating Lorraine like an invalid during the last two months of her pregnancy, something that grated on the ghoul even worse than the deliberate verbal abuse heaped on her before.

Anna was horrified, and ordered Jonathan to kill Lorraine. Jonathan demurred as long as possible, but fearing inevitable punishment and under the full sway of the Vinculum, he set out to kill the one person he had loved since becoming a ghoul, the night she gave birth.

It turned out that he needn't have bothered. Gilda's enforced bedrest had weakened Lorraine significantly, and her labor was bloody and difficult. Jonathan arrived as Gilda bent over

### Thorns in My Side

If you have access to *Changeling: The Lost*, it would be perfectly reasonable to reimagine Catherine Cross as one of the first changelings of the courts of Miami. Her husband may have mistaken Lorraine Cross for her Gentry kidnapper and so attempted to kill her with cold iron — sadly ineffective against vampires. To ghoul Catherine would mean denying herself Changeling blood, and so Catherine remains a fae vessel.

Lorraine, dripping blood into her unmoving ghoul's mouth. The babies, twin girls, lay forgotten and crying at the foot of the bed.

### Crossed Out

Thanks to Anna, with Jonathan's help, Florida's land boom collapsed. Miami became a city of migrants, a preview of the Great Depression before the crash of '29. There was no reason for Anna to stay any more — except one.

She attacked Gilda and the newly Embraced Lorraine as they were out hunting one night, attempting to subdue Gilda and bring her back to Atlanta for judgment. Instead, Anna found herself placed into torpor, and then in a cheap pine coffin, put adrift at Government Cut. Jonathan was bound again, this time to Lorraine — in reality, serving two masters. He did what Lorraine said. She did what Gilda said.

A divide was growing between Gilda and Lorraine as well. Gilda had reverted to her old ways, but Miami wasn't booming anymore, and she found herself growing bored. Lorraine had joined the Carthian Movement, as expected, but continued to wield her influence through charity and firebrand speeches, though containing a little more hellfire than the fire of the Holy Spirit. Both women had very different ideas about how the struggling city should be used, and it came out in more than one argument ending in violence while Jonathan shielded the twins in the basement.

In December of that year, Gilda left. No note, no number, no forwarding address. Lorraine and her new family were on their own.

### At a Crossroads

This turned out to be the best possible parting gift Gilda could have left her childe. As de facto Prince of the city, Lorraine, and by extension her family, survived the Great Depression and enjoyed the massive economic benefits of the post-war 40s. Lorraine continued to expand her influence in the religious communities across Miami-Dade County, while

Jonathan built houses for vacationers flocking to the region with too much money and no impulse control. The tourists represented Lorraine's major source of vessels up until the early 90s. She never did develop a taste for rich blood, though.

All good things must come to an end, however, or at least be interrupted. As early as 1952, vampires from as far north as Massachusetts began to follow the summer surge of vessels to Lorraine's city. Later, vampires fleeing the revolution in Cuba settled into the Riverside neighborhood, bringing their ghouls and blood dolls with them. Most respected the laws of her domain. Some, especially the younger Kindred from the north, did not. Fights broke out over disputed pieces of territory. The 60s were especially bloody, and there was not a Cross that escaped unscathed, either by direct ethnic violence or violence done to a family member. Lorraine did her best to give her family a safe haven — but even her immense power and influence was not enough to keep them completely safe from the seething, scared masses of kine.

An attempt at assassination aimed at Lorraine came at the height of the Cuban missile crisis. Her favorite vessel's husband grew tired of his wife's "sleepwalking" and recurring "nightmares," and decided to take matters into his own hands. The unfortunate corpse was also found floating at the mouth of Government Cut, and his widow, a woman by the name of Catherine, was swiftly wed to Jonathan to make more Crosses.

### Across the Century

Lorraine's family has swelled to a small army, thanks to the Pentecostal community of Miami-Dade County. They're not picky about who they mate with. So long as the blood breeds true, the children of the Cross family are permitted to marry whomever they like. Relatively recent interactions with the Gold family have made this much easier, and there haven't been as many scandals regarding some same-sex liaisons between members of the Cross family and certain parts of the clergy. The Crosses prefer it that way — it distracts from the occasional allegations of incest.

The Crosses are not, as one might assume, a strictly hierarchical family that worships its regnant as the mother of God, or as gods. They are well aware of Lorraine's position in the Danse Macabre, and do their very best to maintain it. Cross children clean and maintain her haven; older Crosses accompany her to her Elysium and act as muscle, court recorders, and messengers. While they do refer to each other as "Brother" and "Sister," their religious views are generally pretty in line with American fundamentalist Christianity. Several of the Cross children have gone on to open churches or ministries of their own and one, Christopher Cross, is an incredibly successful televangelist preacher with his own afternoon talk show and line of books on his literalist interpretation of the Book of Revelations. His wife, Delilah Gold, has been instrumental in helping him spread his word. Where there is Protestant spiritual life anywhere in Miami-Dade county, from the largest megachurches to plywood-and-cinderblock snake handler

shacks, you'll find a Cross there: ministering to the flock, organizing charity events, and pulling aside a particularly pure soul for "spiritual counseling" with Lorraine. It's considered a rite of passage for a Cross to take control of a congregation, and they compare and trade them like baseball cards.

Strictly speaking, there are two lines of Crosses in the modern nights. The first is by Jonathan and Lorraine, children and grandchildren of the original twins. The second is by Jonathan's actual wife. Catherine Cross's children are considered less valuable members of the family, since they do not have the blood of Lorraine in their veins — only in their mouths, if they're lucky. Lorraine never brings Catherine's children to Elysium, though they serve in much the same capacity as her own descendants otherwise. This has, inevitably, stirred up a great deal of resentment in the family, and violence has seriously escalated during family gatherings. No one has died yet, but it's only a matter of time. Lorraine finds this all very gratifying.

Occasionally, Lorraine gives one of her more promising grandchildren or great-grandchildren away as a gift to a vampire in her domain who has pleased her in some way. The gift is not without strings, however. The family is incredibly close-knit and watches a cousin or sibling for signs of wanton mistreatment. As a Carthian, and one who espouses charity and tolerance to a surprising degree, Lorraine is fanatically intolerant of abuse. She sees it as deliberately breaking the gift one was given, a particularly vicious form of ingratitude, and treats it accordingly. Should a vampire leave for a different domain, they are free to take their Cross ghoul with them — but be advised, the Crosses always keep in touch.

A vampire, of course, might be able to convince their Cross ghoul that their family was keeping them stifled, that serving their new master above all else is paramount. It's possible. The Vinculum makes it that much easier — but the only thing the Crosses are more devoted to than their religion is their family.

## *The de Portocarrero Dynasty*

"We can celebrate our family's triumphs with pride, or we can start thinking about the future." Alberto de Portocarrero slammed his fist on the old, walnut table, sending reverberations through the thick wood and waking his other family members from their distractions. His daughter put her tablet down, his brother slid his phone back into his pocket, and his second nephew coughed, stopping his examination of the dirt under his fingernails.

"We are dying on the vine! We love our masters, God rest their souls. Of course we do. But we have relied upon them for too long. It is time to further our dynasty. I consulted with others like us. Some claim there are ways to attain immortality without being beholden to a single regnant." That made them look up, examining Alberto like he'd just slapped their faces. "Imagine that. Immortality without the need for enslavement. You must keep this from your masters, God rest their souls, as they will never allow it." Each of the group suddenly looked ill, their mouths dry as they began to grind their teeth or nervously tremble. Yet, each nodded their assent. For the family to survive and prosper once again, secrecy was of the utmost importance.

## **The Cross Family**

**Touchstones:** Lorraine Cross. Catherine's children have Jonathan Cross as a Touchstone as well.

**Benefit:** 8-again on Occult rolls involving obscure sects of Christianity.

**Drawback:** When given Vitae, a Cross will manifest a bleeding stigmata for 1 day per point of Vitae ingested. This does not drain them of the Vitae, but cannot be closed or concealed by natural means.

Ghoul families exist, but that doesn't mean all ghous know of them. Many ghous serve their regnants for years, sometimes decades, without discovering that the path to a long life and superhuman powers can come from fortuitous birth, alchemical concoction, or blood magic experiment, all without the need for absolute servitude. To the ghous who discover this after years of faithful service and addiction, a bitter resentment brews within. Those ghous may have given up on the idea of the family unit, divorced themselves from the possibility of real love, and abandoned all hope for a litter of healthy children. The de Portocarrero dynasty is one such group of jaded ghous.

## *A Family of Faith*

The de Portocarreros bear their name with pride. A family of history reaching back half a millennium, they've ever been integrated into the worlds of religion, politics, and wealth. Since their ascent to international power in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they've also been integrated into the All Night Society. Luis Manuel Fernández was a Toledo cardinal and scion of the family at the time the Sanctified came calling. The covenant's representative gave the young de Portocarrero a choice: death as a holy man, or undeath and immortality as one of the Damned. It was only after he chose the route of undeath that his new regnant cruelly explained his game. Had Luis chosen death, he would have been "gifted" the Embrace. Luis regretted his decision for the next three centuries of his life, bound as he was to a single Sanctified vampire who rose through the ranks from deacon to cardinal of his covenant, all while de Portocarrero languished in thrall. Luis served his master well, using his many connections in the Catholic Church to buy his regnant power. His reward for doing so was witnessing the Sanctified's coterie enthrall the other members of his family. Luis eventually committed suicide in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Their Sanctified regnants cut the de Portocarreros firmly down the middle between ghous and mortals. The Kindred carefully monitored the dynasty to ensure a healthy line of kine existed to propagate the family and exercise power in the mortal realm, while the ghous supported business in both Kindred and kine society. Vampires shepherded the family for four centuries. The Kindred commanded how the de Portocarrero

morts should develop, while the de Portocarrero ghouls directly influenced their mortal descendants into following the Kindred edicts. Routinely, the Lancea et Sanctum selected a prominent family member for thralldom, at which point the mortal branch began grooming an heir for that individual's position. The care with which the Sanctified treated the entire family resulted in occasional individual grievances, but the family bloc appreciated their supernatural keepers, and the continued influence they received due to their association. Addiction to Vitae and unhealthy, obsessive love seemed a small price to pay.

For centuries, the de Portocarreros acted as slaves to the Lancea et Sanctum. Their continued roles as power players throughout the Catholic Church and Mediterranean nobility meant their uses never ceased. As the Church's influence waned, de Portocarreros appeared in political roles. When the power moved from politicians to corporations, the de Portocarreros bought up energy, water, and telecommunications companies. Their power never faltered. Their masters wouldn't allow it. The family was the Lancea et Sanctum's goose, and it kept laying golden eggs, century after century.

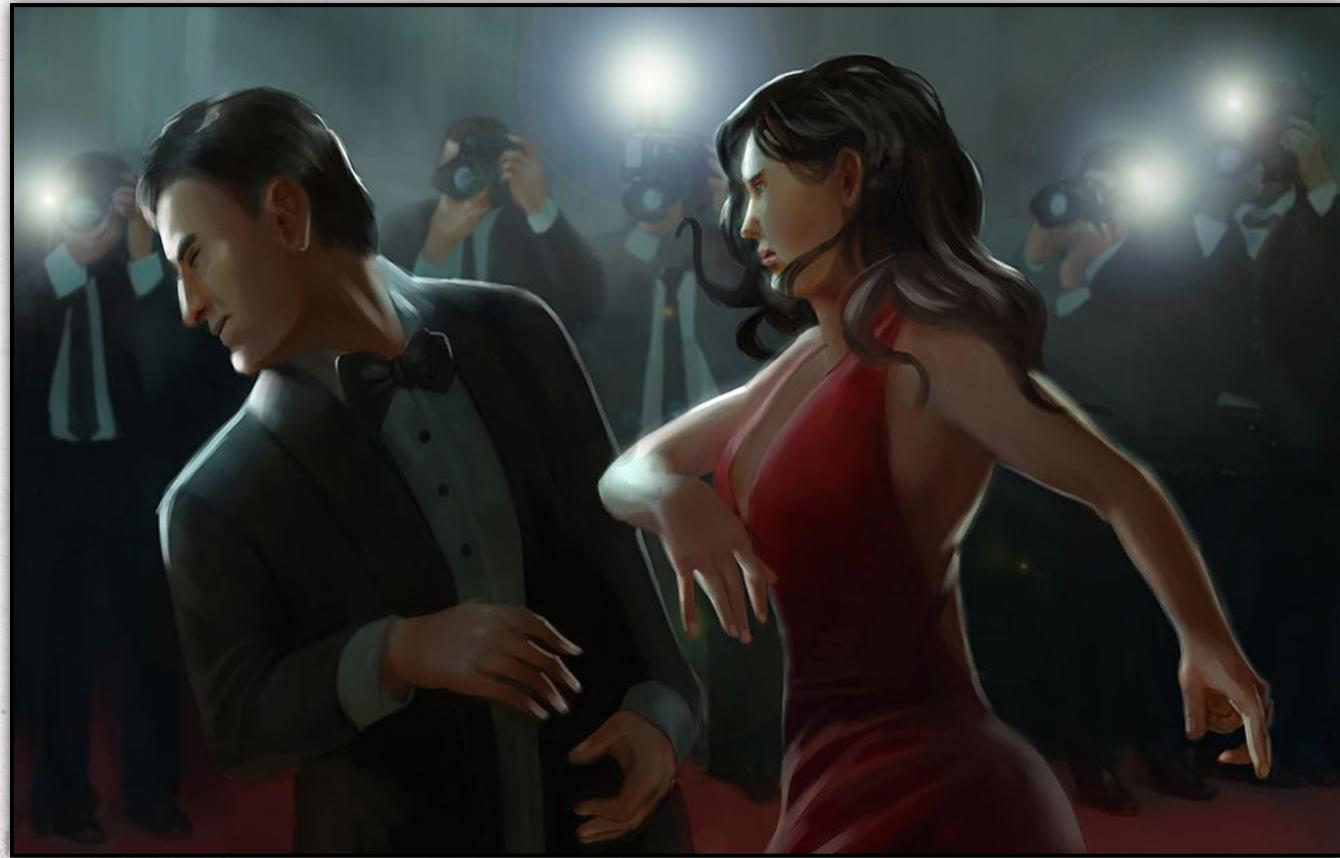
## *Impurity*

The de Portocarrero ghouls never bred. The Lancea et Sanctum forbade it, even mutilating or castrating some of the ghouls who tried, before feeding them hot doses of Vitae to keep them in the fold. The Sanctified passed down the edict

that any child born to a ghoul would be unholy in the extreme, an affront to God, and bring a curse down upon the entire family. Combined with the family's existing ties to faith, the covenant possessed enough gifts to make the threat seem a reality. The only de Portocarreros who reproduced were the pure mortals. To this day, de Portocarrero ghouls uphold a vow of chaste celibacy.

The family knew other ghouls existed, but few sought to mingle. One de Portocarrero in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a woman named Rosa, fell in love with a ghoul of the dignified Crassus line before she discovered his true nature as a fellow thrall. Her subsequent exile from the family was a scandal at the time, but when it was discovered she'd seamlessly fallen in with the Crassus thralls without a need to break her vows of chastity, faith in God, or loyalty to her own family, her family members reached out to her with forgiveness. Maybe there was more to life than what the Sanctified had to offer. Studying the Crassus, they discovered a ghoul family serving the Invictus, but without chains linking them to single regnants. This intrigued the de Portocarrero ghouls like nothing else.

It took until recent nights for Rosa to broker an agreement with her new Invictus masters, allowing her to meet with her father. Alberto de Portocarrero was made a ghoul years after Rosa, but he was the one who commanded her exile. Tentatively, the two met, and Rosa took her time expounding to Alberto that the Lancea et Sanctum's ways were lies. Ghouls could breed, and it was no sin. Ghouls could be free, and not suffer damnation. Alberto's immediate desire was to lash out



at his heretical daughter, but he knew she spoke the truth. Her years away from the family granted her wisdom. She begged Alberto to speak with the other family members, and explain that freedom was at hand. All the family would need to do is bow to the Invictus and betray their Sanctified masters. They could then take Vitae from multiple First Estate Kindred, and feel bound only to the covenant, and not a single regnant. The two left without agreement, but with tears in his eyes, Alberto thanked his daughter.

As their regnants slept, the Madrid de Portocarreros convened to discuss Rosa's proposal. The family could become its own again, as it was over half a millennium before. This was joyous news to the family, but also a bitter pill. If this was always the truth, why did their masters lie all this time? Alberto plucked up the courage to voice his theory, before devotion to his mistress overrode his free will: "They wanted us on a tight leash. They wanted us as slaves. They wanted every reward for every piece of work we've achieved. Not one de Portocarrero will again be born into the service of this covenant of bastards."

### *Fresh Ambitions*

The de Portocarreros are a ghoul family in a non-traditional sense. They are a family connected by mortal blood, and several members of the family are ghouls, but they've yet to spawn any ghouls themselves. Now, the ghoul family wish to expand not through breeding – they may despise the Sanctified, but are still committed to their vows – but by bringing more mortals and ghouls of impressionable mindset into their cultish group. They reason that by sharing blood and philosophy among masters and ghouls, they will have all the benefits and none of the drawbacks of living as thralls.

The family suffered as slaves to individual regnants for several centuries. They feel it's time they seized the power the Lancea et Sanctum took from them, and so they tentatively reach out to other covenants, the Unaligned, and independent ghouls for sanctuary, should the Sanctified grow wise to the family's plot to escape. They intend on enlisting the family's mortal arm to turn their immense wealth and influence against the Lancea et Sanctum, but resisting their regnants' calls will be the hardest task ahead. Rosa is hopeful the family will flock to the Invictus, but Alberto's vision for the family sees no shackles attached. Becoming beholden to another covenant is just another form of slavery. The family members are firm in their beliefs, drilled into them by the Lancea et Sanctum, but they desire absolute freedom from Kindred hegemony. A small number of ghouls from the family already intend to stake and slowly drain their former Sanctified regnants, swapping vessels periodically so as not to form another Vinculum.

When the de Portocarreros break free, they believe their actions will usher in a ghoul renaissance. For generations, they've hoarded the secrets surrounding hundreds of Sanctified plots. The family members know the value of the information they possess. Representatives from the Circle of the Crone, Ordo Dracul, and Carthian Movement all spy on the family's

movements, waiting for the point the ghouls approach interested buyers with sensitive lore. The de Portocarreros intend to sell, on the basis they are never again enslaved, and become free to choose their Vitae sources. When other thralls see how overcoming the Vinculum and betraying their masters can benefit them, the de Portocarreros know others will follow their lead. The de Portocarreros believe that when the ghoul revolution concludes, a thrall's standing in the All Night Society will forever change.

### *The Gold Family*

Krissie Gold smiled demurely, turning her face from the camera and into her master's shoulder; a rehearsed move to imply intimacy and coy embarrassment. The vampire was in no mood to play along. Staring coldly at the journalist, he uttered a simple instruction, forcing the film crew away, and taking Krissie's chances of a red carpet interview with them.

The vampire felt the sting of Krissie's hand on his face before seeing it coming. Opening his eyes to examine the ghoul, he recognized the indignation on her face. There were no angry tears, just pure bottled wrath. He wanted to admonish her for drawing attention. He wanted to deny her Vitae, and leave her alone and embarrassed on this treadmill of fame.

But she was a Gold.

"I apologize most unreservedly, Miss Gold." The vampire bowed, in the middle of the red carpet, and kissed his ghoul's hand. "Please forgive me."

To the world at large, the Golds are a dynasty of movie moguls, comprising a few directors, more than a handful of actors, several screenwriters, and countless celebrities of no real talent or societal worth. To many vampires of the world, the Golds are a Kindred's ticket to star-studded parties, extravagant galas, world premieres, and exclusive soirées. Wherever there's a camera and money to be made, the Golds are in attendance. From Hollywood to Broadway, and music videos to reality TV specials, the Golds infest media like roundworms. They carry the heft of fame on their belts, and Kindred love them for it.

The Golds do not lack for wealth or generous patrons. Beneath the glamor and makeup, however, they harbor terrible secrets. Inbreeding and ritual abuse are only small parts of the family's darker side. Vampires turn a blind eye to any witnessed cruelty. The family's too useful to punish for moral lapses.

### *Made to Perform*

The Golds were not always known as such. Prior to their emigration to the United States, the Goldfarbs were a family of German-Jewish circus performers. Changing their name upon arrival in New York, the Goldfarbs sought to distance themselves from any preconceived "Semitic baggage." The patriarch, Hiram Goldfarb, was critically aware of growing antipathy to people of Jewish heritage and belief, and so instructed his family to divest any and all trappings of the past. Hiram required a clean slate and fresh opportunities.

The Golds starred in a score of films as a unit, Missie Gold often the foil to Hiram's prankster and fool, while their four

### Where Was the Hunger?

The Gold children do not suffer an addiction to Vitae. Lord Moonshine believes their resilience to the Vinculum comes through their ancestry, postulating they were born with immunity, due to their parents' ghoul status.

The Lancea et Sanctum believe differently. Dismissively comparing the Golds to junkies, the Sanctified claim the Golds merely harden themselves to the Vitae. The covenant informs its ghouls that there's no such thing as an immunity to the Vinculum. They say that ultimately, the Golds will suffer one of two fates: They will ingest a blood so potent the hook will once again sink in, and never let go, or they will become monsters, dangerous to the carefully arranged ghoul and vampire relationship. In the latter case, the All Night Society will have to put them down.

Ghouls outside the Gold family aren't sure what to believe. Many fall in love with the idea of the ability of taking Vitae only when they choose, while others wave the idea off. The family's detractors argue that Vitae means power. If the Golds voluntarily adopt weaker bonds for less power, then they are fools.

children played all the supporting roles. Behind the scenes of every performance, friction between Hiram and Missie fueled resentment over the abandonment of the family faith. The two took their ire out on the children. The studios weren't interested in a divorced couple, or a solo performance — the six had to appear together, or not at all. Hiram came to see his wife and children as an albatross hanging over his career, while Missie came to believe her husband was a coward who drank too much and was prepared to sacrifice his love of God for a few dollars and a spotlight.

The Golds' movies seized the attentions of a New Jersey Ventrue known as Lord Moonshine, who despite his venerability and jaded outlook, could not help but fall into hysterics whenever he watched the family at work. He never felt more alive than when surrounded by them. An astute individual, Moonshine also detected the tension among the family members, and feared this Touchstone would swiftly destroy itself if not shepherded carefully. The Ventrue elected to enthrall Hiram and Missie, dismissing the children in favor of the talented duo. Due to their addiction to his rich Vitae, the two could not refuse, and saw their offspring scatter to the wind.

For the next decade, Hiram and Missie served as Moonshine's ghouls, losing all interest in their lost children. Their resentment for one another grew. Though they adored their patron and mentor, they saw each other as rivals at one moment, and untalented hacks at the next. Concerned by the ghouls' withering interest in performance, Lord Moonshine attempted

to guide the pair into fresh vitality, encouraging them to love and laugh as once they had on the silver screen. The Kindred's supernatural influence compelled the husband and wife to act as new lovers. The couple — now nearing their 60s in true age — conceived twins, each born healthy. The following year they produced another child, and in the 1950s, four more. Missie's constitution withstood the repeated childbirth, but she felt ever more compelled to focus only on the Vitae.

The Gold children exhibited some strange traits Moonshine believed were wholly positive. Remarkable mental aptitude, enhanced musculature, and a slow physical growth rate implied the children were born ghouls. Though his knowledge of ghoul families was slight, he introduced the family to a companion from the Ordo Dracul, who confirmed his suspicions. Moonshine was now domitor to a burgeoning ghoul family. Hiram and Missie were apathetic. The bonds to their new children were nothing compared to the bonds to Lord Moonshine, and their powers came exclusively from drinking the Ventrue's Vitae. Their children seemed capable of similar feats without any crippling addiction. History repeated itself, as Hiram and Missie took their pain out on their new progeny.

### *A New Generation*

Lord Moonshine recognized that Hiram and Missie would only sour the children emotionally and mentally. He sent the old ghoul couple to perform on stage in Chicago. By the time they returned to Atlantic City, hungry for Vitae, Moonshine's mansion was bare, with no trace of the vampire or their children. The ghoul couple disappeared into history. The tabloid press reported on a suicide pact, though bodies were never recovered.

On the road to Los Angeles, Lord Moonshine acted as the Golds' surrogate parent. The vampire encouraged the ghoul family to accept their destiny as stars, and used all his resources to ingratiate each member into a field of performance media. The six Gold children born into the ghoul family weathered the physical and emotional hardships of growing with a vampire overseeing their lives, and despised the memory of their weak biological parents. As they grew up, the Gold children refined their crafts as entertainers and moguls. By the late 1960s, they had infested the media world. Lord Moonshine was as proud as any natural father.

Max and his twin sister Miriam took no time advertising their performances from studio to studio across LA, auditioning with a rare energy remarked upon by casting directors all along the Strip. Within months they were extras in major motion pictures, and within years they were starring in their own films. Many in Hollywood remarked on the closeness of the siblings, but the media made them darlings, citing the "wholesome" familial intimacy of the twins. Hollywood's other decadents shaded their incestuous secrets. While they didn't always star together, the only person Max attended premieres with was his sister, and vice versa. Miriam ultimately married a suspected homosexual director in the pre-Stonewall years, bearing four children. All of

## Four Pieces of Gold

Hiram and Missie Goldfarb brought four children with them to Atlantic City. But what became of Reuben, Abigail, Rafela, and Hiram II after their dismissal?

The four remained together through every hardship, despite Hiram II's age of 4, and Reuben as "patriarch" at only age 14. They moved from charity to charity, rebuking all attempts to split them up. Years of hell found the children, who persevered despite it all. Reuben and Abigail remembered Lord Moonshine, what he'd done to their parents, and the unnatural gifts he wielded. They told every rabbi and priest who gave them charity, facing dismissal at each turn.

On Reuben's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, an old New York jeweler named Stein elected to apprentice the eldest son. The four had never encountered this man before, and had no reason to trust him. Yet, at their lowest point, they accepted his offer. Stein listened carefully to the family's tale, and said he believed every word. He cared for them well, and introduced them to a secret society of which he was a member, known as the Loyalists of Thule. The Loyalists adopted the children with care and devotion as Stein's health failed. He rewrote his will to leave everything to the four Goldfarbs before dying. The money secured them for life.

The Goldfarb siblings entered the Loyalists as hunters dedicated to righting the wrongs of enslavement and thralldom. They pursued an aggressive campaign against vampires on the East Coast, ultimately passing down their mission to their own descendants. Nowhere in the world do vampires fear the Loyalists of Thule more than in New York and New Jersey, where the Goldfarb family aims to wipe clean the stain on their name, and the stench of undeath from their blood. Just as the Golds form a family of debased ghouls, the Goldfarbs construct a lineage of righteous hunters, dedicated to purifying the world's many evils.

them were Max's. Two bear the surname Anglemeyer, after their public father, while the other two were named Gold. In current times, Max and Miriam still act, and manage the "Gold Trust" responsible for funding the films starring their descendants, and those of their siblings.

Max and Miriam's children form the rat pack of celebrity offspring who star in reality television, game shows, "leaked" porno videos, and cheap magazines. The twins are quick to express their disappointment in their children, but privately admire their ability to remain relevant in the shifting media culture. Their eldest daughter Krissie Gold appears on more runways and movie sets than her youngest brother Jude Anglemeyer, despite his demonstrable acting talent and critical acclaim. The twins revel in pitting their children against one another, while pushing them into uncomfortable intimacy mirroring their own relationship.

David Gold was Missie's third child, and the only one to return to the East Coast. David made a name for himself treading the Broadway boards for a time, before ultimately embracing his deceased mother's faith and dedicating his life to study and family. For most people, such a cause seems a respectable endeavor. For David, it was an excuse to pore over tales of ghoul families, ingratiate himself in the All Night Society, and systematically produce, exploit, and analyze his children by multiple mothers over several decades. David quickly found that passing on the ghoul bloodline was a rarity unless the mother was also a ghoul. He lives a double life, earnestly religious to the point of self-loathing, while serially abusing his offspring. Despite a relatively brief career in theatre, he maintains all his old friends and contacts, slipping a bribe here or cashing in an old favor there to get any of his talented children into the performing arts. He only supports those who

take his family name, leading to an entire dynasty of Gold ghouls who've passed through New York.

David has far more mortal children than he does ghoul offspring, though he treats all of his descendants equally badly. His status as a single male and popular ghoul in New York make him sought after stock for some of the other ghouls in the Big Apple, but David's interest is science over lust. His activities draw the Ordo Dracul's attentions. The covenant watches him carefully, to ensure none of his experiments result in Masquerade breaches or dangerous monsters unleashed. Meanwhile, he forms bonds with other ghoul families in attempts to further his bloodline.

Anna, Johanna, and Rebecca Gold stayed together as a short-lived band, before trying their hands at television, at first in America, and ultimately in Europe, finding fame in their family's ancestral country of Germany. As West German soap stars and later each leading competing dramas across different networks, the Gold sisters monopolized Central European television. The three remained close throughout, sharing partners, drugs, and vices. As the trio became known throughout Europe, their exploits and youthful appearances drew the attentions of another ghoul family, known as the Angustri, two of whom formed relationships with Johanna and Rebecca, who subsequently bore children. Anna refused the Angustri overtures. Despite her becoming aware of the power in a ghoul's lineage, she held no taste for a male partner, and told her family as such at their annual Hollywood gathering. This displeased her siblings. David locked her away for over a year – described as rehab to the concerned public. In the sexually depraved and yet socially conservative Gold family, an out lesbian of her age was unacceptable. Johanna and Rebecca have taken her back under wing, but Anna understandably

chafes under her siblings' watch. Despite her actual 50 years of age, they still seek to pair her with a virile boyfriend.

The final Gold born to Hiram and Missie was a girl named Esther. Her case exists in infamy among ghouls, and especially among the Golds, who toast her at each gathering. Esther starred in a string of pioneering porn movies in the '70s and early '80s, some of which supposedly contained other ghouls, and even vampires. These movies are rare collectibles, containing displays of Kindred power recorded on film. The notorious reputation of these skin flicks spread throughout the All Night Society, with some Daeva and Carthians viewing their production with amusement or lust, while the more conservative Invictus and Lancea et Sanctum demanded their destruction. As an unintentional rebel, Esther was widely acclaimed within ghoul society, protected from the vampires who sought to put her down.

In 1989, Esther announced her pregnancy at the family's annual convocation. She received warm praise and gifts, unaware of a hunter-drawn noose closing around her neck. She vanished soon after, and the family still seeks vengeance on the unknown party responsible.

### *Starry Eyes*

In these nights, the Golds' influence in Hollywood cannot be understated. LA is their base, and since Max and Miriam started their careers, it remains unassailable. Kindred know this and place great importance on LA as a domain, so overtures to the Golds are common. A vampire may wish for a ticket to a movie premiere, personal time with a celebrity, or exclusive access to a movie set, and the Golds arrange it, for a price. That price is typically Vitae, which they do not require to live, but do need to exercise Disciplines.

### *Ghoulish Aberrations*

The traditional ghoul acts as a faithful servant, unquestioning in her loyalty and efficient in her service. That same ghoul expects regular doses of Vitae, to maintain her vitality and the bond between thrall and regnant.

Other ghouls are not so straightforward.

Rumors traverse the All Night Society of ghouls who do not require regnants. Some supposedly store such a quantity of Vitae as to act like batteries for their fellow thralls. The East Asian tradition of ghouls as honored warriors and feared oni separates them from the servile ghoul role so popular in Europe and America. Likewise, the rare creation of ghouls from the stock of animals and plants destroys the stereotype to which Kindred would love to cling.

Ghouls are as much an integral cog in vampire lives as their prey and their covenants. It behooves Kindred to understand these mutations in the Vitae, utilize them as servants or weapons, and put aside trepidation when dealing with the unknown. Fear and disgust may initially keep at bay the ghouls who rely on syringes to imbibe Vitae, and the cancerous

The Golds regularly seek exposure in new markets. Vampires are global, and for all their power, the Golds are not. Thanks to a debt the Nosferatu archbishop Sven Jepsen owed the family, Lily Gold now holds a starring role in a popular Nordic crime drama. A request for a Caucasian Hollywood actor to appear in a major Chinese historical drama saw the Golds in communication with the Jiangshi, who made the arrangements for Damien Gold to appear in the role. A Gangrel making his haven in Syria reached out to the Golds, to fund and produce a documentary surrounding the ongoing hostilities in the region. Gradually, the Golds permeate the world with their family members, and the awards, notoriety, and influence rack up.

Unique among ghoul families, the Golds find themselves treasured by star-struck vampires who see only the ghouls' uses, and none of their drawbacks. A Kindred with a Gold on her arm is held in higher acclaim than one without — her peers know she can access secret parties, draw on funds, and feed from unreachable stars. A prince with Golds in his Rolodex can redirect media attention with just a single phone call — Masquerade breaches become a thing of the past when Chloe Gold steps out on the town, arranges an up-skirt shot, slaps a journalist, and kisses a member of the public. Suddenly, everyone forgets about the blood magic battle fought between Sanctified and Acolytes in the park. The Golds' plans to ingratiate themselves into every influential domain, market, and public sphere proceeds apace, supported by Kindred who do not realize the amount of power they're placing in this hungry ghoul family's hands.

The Golds dazzle with glitz and glamor. Beneath the polish is a festering family, built on abuse, incest, blood, and corruption.

Heisenberg thralls, but ignoring them for too long will lead to an uprising the covenants are unprepared to meet.

### *Animal Ghouls*

The vampire escorted Mary-Belle to his kennels, a look of pride beaming as he waved with a flourish at the chained, growling hounds. As Mary-Belle crouched to examine the animals, she took in their bulging musculature, bloodshot eyes, and the hanging blobs of bloody sputtle drooling from their jaws. She stood, a hand to her mouth, eyes widening in shock and an equal measure of disappointment. "So, some vampires ghoul their dogs. Guess I'll have to rethink my favorite aphorism." She shook her head, and started petting the hellhound's head.

The Lancea et Sanctum looks down on the act of entralling animals. "The sacrament of the Blood is a holy ritual. God oversees the transition of Vitae from His chosen predators to the most adept among mortals." Anything less than seeing thrallodom as a form of communion is to debase a vampire's very nature. Making ghouls of animals

is equivalent to fucking beasts. Animals are incompetent in comparison to a human. The Sanctified angrily remind anyone who cares to listen that humans can speak, perform complex tasks, and practice thought.

That same Sanctified bishop then storms from the room in exasperation, as his peers go back to seriously discussing the benefits of animal ghouls.

Ventrule and Gangrel are fond of entralling beasts, knowing they're less likely to plot a coup or come up with complex needs the regnant must address. A dog possesses little emotional baggage. A vampire might place faith in an animal's ability to serve faithfully and feel the bond as genuine love over stifling addiction. Others consider animal ghouls a fantastic experiment in the Blood's power. A solitary Mekhet may feed Vitae to a household of cats just so he can maintain lifelong friendships with the pets he adores.

Kindred create animal thralls to complete functions that human servants cannot complete. Whether for defense of havens, companionship, or as beasts of burden; animal ghouls never waver from their course. The vampire old enough to recall a time before automobiles regales his coterie with the tale of how his mount, drunk on Vitae, galloped non-stop one night, allowing him to personally hand a message to the Prince of Leipzig, despite its origin in Berlin that same evening.

Acolytes and Dragons often create animal ghouls for mystical purposes. Reverence of creatures such as owls, cats, bats, and rats is commonplace within the Circle of the Crone's sacred texts. Hierophants keep entranced animals in positions of great privilege, sometimes even more-so than their human ghouls. The Acolytes steadily feed such creatures Vitae, making them repositories of undead power and symbols of nature's dominance. The Ordo Dracul take a similar idolatrous approach, associating animals such as lizards, serpents, and wolves with their founder. Where Acolytes refer to their animal ghouls as "familiars," the Dragons view their animal ghouls in more abstract terms. To study a beast imbued with Vitae is to know how Dracula might behave when at his most cunning, or bestial.

Some vampires extend their Vitae to more bizarre vessels than the already domesticated dog or cat. Spiders, snakes, octopi, and birds of prey have all been subject to thralldom at some point, though prominent Invictus vampires consider imposing domain-specific rules to prevent such activity. A St. Louis Nosferatu once fed a family of cockroaches his Vitae, and within the year an entire block of his domain was overrun. He didn't realize cockroaches spawned 50 eggs at a time, and unknowingly created a ghoul family that still resists extermination. In truth, there's little the First Estate can do to enforce edicts against entralling beasts, but it makes every effort to impress upon vampires the rapid breeding of some animals, and subsequent risk. A hive of bees fed Vitae in Edinburgh became such a hazard for mortals that the kine wiped out all bees in an epic purge, devastating the nearby countryside.

**System:** Ghoul animals may only possess the Disciplines of Celerity, Resilience, and Vigor, and activate them unconsciously

if there is Vitae in their systems. These animals suffer the same withdrawals as humans denied Vitae, once addiction sets in. Their immediate focus in such cases is vengeance against the vampire who bound them. An animal ghoul gains two dots added across one or two Mental Attributes, as the Vitae conveys an additional awareness.

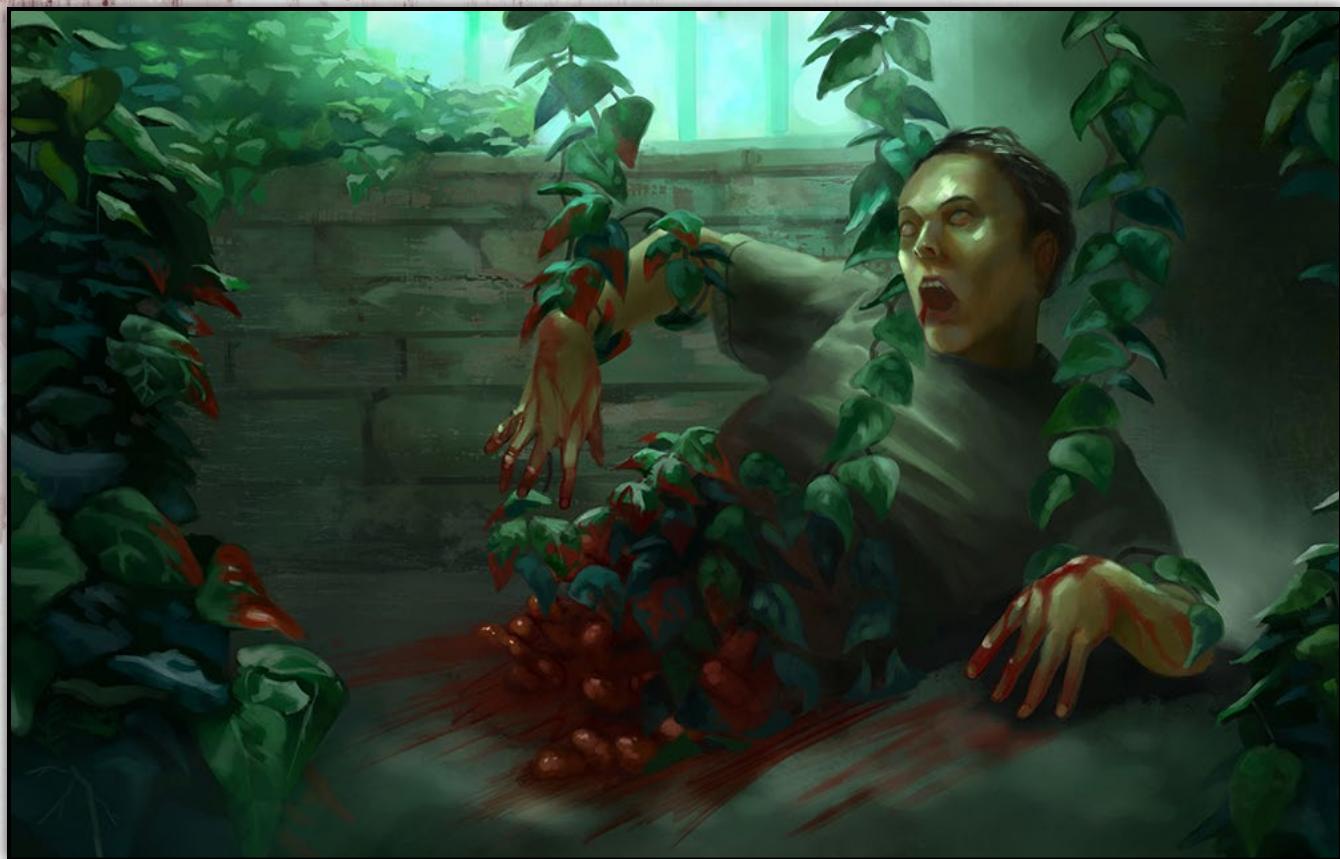
### *Mandragora*

*The Lady of London strolled amiably through Kew Gardens, stopping occasionally to force a sniff over a flower, or take in the natural beauty extended before her. Her ghoul footman obediently bowed and opened the door to the exclusive enclosure, silently closing it behind her as she entered. Ultraviolet lights flickered to life, revealing the great sprawl of English ivy surrounding a glorious rose bush. The Lady gently smiled at the remains of bodies rhythmically pulsating in the ivy vines. "Are you prepared to speak freely yet, my little mutineer?" She projected at one lump in particular, its legs eaten away by the ghoul plant. It groaned a pained, desperate response. "Your mind may be impervious to me, my little mutineer, but my mandrake will pry the names of your co-conspirators from your very Vitae."*

Mandragora are extremely rare, not due to the complexity in their creation, but because most plants are too weak to benefit from Vitae's consumption. Only the most robust, invasive plants benefit from Vitae's introduction. Japanese knotweed, ivies, roses, ragwort, and the black locust tree are among the more likely plants to survive thralldom. Sundews, pitcher plants, and bladderworts become mandragora too, though their creation is harder. The rootless bladderwort mandragora is a staple of Acolyte domains in Poland and Lithuania, and greatly feared.

Plant ghouls are known as mandragora to their gardeners and regnants. Vampires who undertake the cultivation of mandragora must spend at least three months saturating their chosen plant's roots in Vitae, with the volume of Vitae required dependent on the plant's size and feeding requirements. The mandrake breaks the Vitae down, not requiring any other life-sustaining elements typical to plants. The vampire must also instill some of her will in the mandrake, as without it the plant is merely a mutated, static ghoul that quickly perishes. Mandragora stop resembling healthy plants with Vitae's introduction. To the layman, mandragora are withered, dead plants. Only when blood comes near does the mandrake burst into life and lash out in a hunt for food.

Once grown, mandragora never again require light, water, or fertilizer to survive. They only require a vampire's Vitae, the identity of the regnant irrelevant to the plant's feeding. A mandrake can intake mortal blood in lieu of a vampire's Vitae every other month, but if not fed Vitae at the culmination of a 30-day period, it withers and dies without warning. Grown mandragora feed through their stomata — pores on their leaves, thorns, roots, and flowers. They cannot reproduce, with any seeds or fruit grown on mandragora proving toxic to creatures attempting to eat them. The Mexico City Sanctified experiment with making healthy, Vitae-filled fruits grow on mandragora, but report no success. Carthians in the same domain believe the



Lancea et Sanctum hides its true results for some illicit purpose. A liquid known as “lacrima” appeared recently in multiple Mexican domains, with fledglings drinking it in place of blood. They claimed it fills the same needs, though the drinkers have since mysteriously disappeared.

Many vampires dismiss the idea of mandragora as wasteful. They ask, “who would desire such a hungry, static guard dog?” The mandrake’s capacity for movement is the facet most vampires underestimate, and therefore, one of its greatest weapons. Mandrakes move alarmingly fast. Branches flail, vines snake, and barbed leaves snap shut. Mandragora have even been known to uproot and appear elsewhere, though nobody ever seems to notice them move, including their regnants. Even when electronically recorded, mandragora remain in place. This frightening feature increases their popularity in vast, rural domains, though even vampires fear the hunger of a mandrake sent in their direction.

**System:** A small mandrake requires 10 Vitae and 1 Willpower each month for the first three months of growth. A medium mandrake requires 15 Vitae and 2 Willpower each month for the first three months of growth. A large mandrake requires 25 Vitae and 3 Willpower each month for the first three months of growth. After three months elapse, a mandrake requires 5 Vitae every month, or 5 Vitae every other month, with the equivalent in mortal blood for the off month. Failure to feed the mandrake its required intake results in the plant dying suddenly. It cannot be revived. Mandragora have access to Celerity, Majesty, Resilience, and Vigor as Disciplines.

## SMALL MANDRAKE (I.E. ROSEBUSH, THISTLE WEED)

**Attributes:** Power 2, Finesse 2, Resistance 3

**Skills:** Athletics 1, Brawl 2 (Thorns), Stealth 3 (Slithering)

**Disciplines:** Majesty 1, Resilience 1, Vigor 1

**Health:** 4

**Size:** 2

**Speed:** 0 (4 when not being watched)

**Defense:** 2

**Initiative:** 5

**Vitae:** 2

## MEDIUM MANDRAKE (I.E. ENGLISH IVY, JAPANESE KNOTWEED)

**Attributes:** Power 3, Finesse 2, Resistance 4

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 3 (Vines), Stealth 4 (Slithering), Survival 2

**Disciplines:** Celerity 1, Majesty 1, Resilience 2, Vigor 2

**Health:** 7

**Size:** 4

**Speed:** 0 (5 when not being watched)

**Defense:** 2

**Initiative:** 6

**Vitae:** 4

## LARGE MANDRAKE (I.E. BLACK LOCUST TREE, GIANT PITCHER PLANT)

**Attributes:** Power 5, Finesse 3, Resistance 5

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 4 (Branches) (Jaws), Stealth 2, Survival 4

**Disciplines:** Auspex 1, Majesty 3, Resilience 2, Vigor 3

**Health:** 9

**Size:** 6

**Speed:** 0 (8 when not being watched)

**Defense:** 3

**Initiative:** 8

**Vitae:** 8

### Mnemonic Ghouls

*“Who wants a go first?” The ghouls stood nervously in the nightclub restroom, the syringe filled with thick crimson propped in the wash basin. “I’ll be honest, I’ve been jonesing for a couple of weeks since my regnant got the fuck outta town.” The other ghouls shuffled their feet. There’d been a drought of Vitae since the hierophant and her entourage launched their coup. Yet, none of the thralls were enthusiastic about taking the blood in the so-called “mnemonic style.” The volunteer sighed, picked up the needle, and stabbed it into his thigh with a grunt. It took mere seconds for his eyelids to slam open, his pupils darting wildly as his elated voice rung out. “We were right. Our regnants are fine, and they want us to meet them. My master passed on his location via the blood!”*

The mnemonic ghoul is a little-understood phenomenon, even among other ghouls. Such thralls still suffer the bonds to regnants and craving for Vitae all ghouls do, but their method of intake is intravenous. A mnemonic ghoul takes all steps necessary to avoid drinking blood, preferring it transferred to a syringe, from which she injects it into her bloodstream.

Mnemonic ghouls predominantly fall within the service of Mekhet regnants, or vampires aligned to the Ordo Dracul. Their name stems from the ability to recall memories and powers from the blood they inject. The blood’s origin manifests in the ghoul’s mind, along with significant memories and occasionally, the capacity to utilize the originator’s Disciplines as if they were the ghoul’s own.

The Mekhet first experimented with mnemonic ghouls during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, shortly after public acknowledgement of William Harvey’s experiments with the human circulatory system. Their entry into the All Night Society was tentative. Few vampires understood the principles of circulation, or the

benefit to owning a ghoul who could receive Vitae intravenously. It took until recent nights for mnemonic ghouls to appear around the globe in numbers, often assigned clandestine roles. A Shadow may wish to convey a message to a member of his lineage in another country, but wants no risk of this message’s interception. Therefore, he equips a trusted ghoul with a vial of his Vitae and sends her as messenger. The ghoul only knows to keep the blood safe, and does not know the message contents, until the recipient commands her to inject the Vitae and recite the words that enter her mind.

The Ordo Dracul’s experiments went further than memories alone. After a decade of trial and error, a covenant architect discovered that if a vampire was actively practicing a Discipline at the time he extracted Vitae, the ghoul could wield that same Discipline. The ghoul would be able to utilize the Discipline at the same level as her blood donor, after injecting the Vitae into her system. This unusual transference of power is a temporary gift, at least for now. The Dragons continue to investigate the possibility of transferring Disciplines completely into a ghoul, along with deep-seated memories, and ultimately, a vampire’s entire personality. The same architect saw some success at doing so with one of the so-called “hollow” Mekhet as originator, and a dying ghoul as recipient; though the architect met Final Death soon after, and the ghoul vanished.

**System:** If a vampire concentrates on a sentence, equation, or code at the time he loses Vitae, that same Vitae conveys memory of the focused thought when a mnemonic ghoul injects it into her bloodstream, in a vein or artery leading to the heart. Identifying the appropriate injection point the first time requires a successful Intelligence + Medicine roll. The ghoul recalls a simple sentence immediately, without error. The more complex the message, the harder it is for the ghoul to recall, requiring an Intelligence + Resolve roll, losing a die for each layer of complexity.

Mnemonic ghouls may derive a Discipline from the blood, if the vampire was utilizing that Discipline at the time the extraction of Vitae occurred. The ghoul’s Discipline use garners the same number of successes as the vampire who activated it. The ghoul must choose the Discipline’s target, or if the Discipline affects the user, it affects the mnemonic ghoul. The Discipline is only available for the ghoul to use once, in the scene in which she injects the Vitae. The ghoul chooses when in the scene to activate the Discipline’s power.

### Guru

*Her bulging red eyeballs and arched shoulders betrayed her unnatural nature. The guru stalked down the alley in pursuit of her prey: A fledgling vampire, so raw and so pure. She was hungry. She felt the blood stirring, commanding her to uncontrollable violence, but she suppressed the urge. As she rounded the corner and spotted the Kindred desperately attempting to climb through a mound of trash bags to escape her, she emitted a shrill laugh. She wanted control. She wanted to feel every drop of blood, and taste every chunk of flesh on her tongue. Whipping her mask free, she bounded towards the helpless vampire while he pathetically screamed for help.*

The role of obedient servant is synonymous with ghouls. In Japan and Korea, and now farther afield, this role is increasingly tested. The guru are warriors first and foremost, having slipped the leash of butler and handmaiden several centuries ago. Still fueled by Vitae, the guru use their immortal powers to hunt their masters' enemies, investigate and prevent plots against their domains, and maintain order among ghouls and Kindred alike.

Other ghouls wrongly assess the guru as simple killers for hire. Their role in East Asian Kindred society is far greater. They make up the ranks of advisors, chamberlains, bodyguards, and spies for their masters. Held in esteem, a blow against one of the guru is as dishonorable as a blow against one of their regnents. The guru wear distinctive masks to appear separate from their bowing and scraping contemporaries, each mask unique to the bearer.

When hungering for Vitae, the guru are physically distinct from other ghouls. The guru grow animalistic as they hunger, their eyeballs bursting with bloodshot vessels, their shoulders hunched, their hands constantly flexing and clenching. Guru require double the Vitae of other ghouls. Not receiving the blood they require ultimately forces them into bestial rages, where the guru only calms after extracting Vitae from a target by force. Their infamous reputation for tearing through fledglings with blades, claws, and teeth to reach their heart's Vitae warrants their banning from several domains.

**System:** The guru require double the normal quota of Vitae for a ghoul. When lacking Vitae in their systems, the guru fall into frenzy like a vampire, only settling after consuming at least 3 Vitae. Guru do not rapidly age when denied Vitae, but do remain bestial. When fully sated, guru can shift Vitae through their systems to compel other Disciplines in which they may have received no tutelage: i.e. a guru with a Daeva regnant may have a dot in Majesty, but by expending a point of Vitae, he can alter his Majesty to Dominate. The guru can do this as many times as he likes, as long as he has Vitae in his system.

## Heisenbergs

*"You don't understand. I have no choice. It's this, or I die." The ghoul spoke quietly to the vampire laying before her, a response unlikely given the makeshift spear stabbed through his heart. "It was the pneumonia. I could control the HIV. The pills... All those damn pills... They allowed me to manage it. But when I got hit by the pneumonia, well. My life was shortened to days. Without your Vitae I'd just stop and collapse. I'd die. Without a regnant, I need what's inside you, but please, don't worry. I won't just kill you. I won't waste a drop. I'll keep you around forever, if I have to. I'll even bring you food."*

The Heisenbergs occupy an unusual position in ghoul society, straddling life and death from the moment they receive Vitae. Were the supply to cease, and a Heisenberg run dry, his death would soon follow. They serve regnents not for a dose of power, but to avoid the reaper for as long as possible. While some Kindred suspect the Heisenbergs' desperation must make them among the most malleable of thralls, their unique position gives them unusual perspective, and a willingness to do absolutely anything to remain alive — including staking vampires and

bleeding them over years. The Heisenbergs understand what waits for them on the other side, and they're in no hurry to throw their lives away now that they've found a method of maintaining eternal life.

So named after the character in the television series *Breaking Bad*, the Heisenbergs were all mortals suffering terminal illnesses. The first Heisenberg was a nurse named Simone Lowry, who spent a decade resisting the cancer invading her body before discovering there was no hope. Simone attended a group counseling session, where she described her diagnosis and unlikelihood of returning. One of her fellow attendees was the vampire who would become her regnant. A Sanctified Mekhet of an obscure death-obsessed bloodline, this Kindred only fed from those already suffering critical conditions. Purely on a whim, he tracked the downward progress of the dying nurse. Simone's health lasted longer than the Shadow suspected. He developed affection for her, and as her disease took its final toll, he fed her some of his Vitae.

Simone discovered she was able to perceive vampires and ghosts without the use of Disciplines, but for all intents and purposes, she was still mortal. She still bled, still ate, and still breathed. Yet, she required Vitae. As her reserves dropped, she felt her health swiftly ebb, and thus developed a dependence. Bringing this secret of life to the cancer group, she persuaded them to stake her regnant, so all could partake in his blood. Since then, the number of Heisenbergs has grown. Most are loyal to their regnents, content to serve in exchange for a longer life. Their unique powers afford them high status among thralls. Others fixate on ways of elongating their lives without succumbing to mental enslavement, and eye their masters hungrily.

Heisenbergs often take the role of daredevils among ghouls. Their near-death experiences convey a communal feeling of invulnerability. Whether in the board room making aggressive business decisions on behalf of their regnents, or in the streets taking down a rival Kindred's allies, other ghouls fear what Heisenbergs risk in the name of success.

**System:** Heisenbergs are ghouls created from mortals in the latter stages of terminal illness. As soon as Vitae enters a Heisenberg's system, the physical symptoms of her illness disappear. Once the Vitae in her system runs out, her symptoms return aggressively, killing her within hours. Heisenbergs can identify ghosts and vampires without requiring Disciplines. They can interact with ghosts vocally, drawing their attention, but cannot materially interact with them unless the spirits will it.

## The Gorged

*The ghoul sat between two of his peers as they suckled at his nipples. His wrists and ankles throbbed, his neck pulsed, his genitals stirred. The gorged's eyelids fluttered as the pleasure of Vitae coursing out of him pushed him to a feeling far better than any sexual release. A part of his depraved mind wondered at how fantastic it might feel to drink Vitae at the same time as conveying it to others. "Mmf." He would think more on it later.*

The Ordo Dracul's research points to an ancient bloodline – renowned for its members' obese size and constant hunger – as responsible for the Gorged. For their part, the Ventrie offshoot hotly deny involvement in whatever compelled this ghoul line's genesis. The Gorged are no ghoul family, nor are there any indicators as to which mortals will become Gorged. All that's known for a certainty is that some ghouls possess the capacity to carry more Vitae than blood, remain a ghoul, and feed that Vitae to others.

The Gorged have several defining physical features. Their limbs swell, as if suffering badly from water retention or gout. Along the creases in their bodies, their skin thins as if about to bust at the seams. Their ruddy complexions are more purple than red. Any mortal looking at one of the Gorged would see an unhealthy individual due to die from imminent cardiac arrest. Appearances can be deceptive, however. The Vitae in their systems make the Gorged feel alive.

Few ghouls become Gorged. Most who drink excessive Vitae either vomit it up, or find it seamlessly blended into their normal circulatory system. The Gorged for some reason find the Vitae replacing their own blood cells. The regnant with a Gorged thrall who attempts to push this blood replacement to the limit finds that the Gorged ghoul becomes a sated fledgling vampire, filled with Vitae. These fresh fledglings do not frenzy upon becoming vampires, though after the first night the natural inclination to slip into bestial rage returns.

The Gorged serve a peculiar purpose in ghoul society. More blood than body, they act as walking reserves of Vitae to other ghouls, providing they're willing to pay the price the specific Gorged sets for her contents. There's great appeal to drinking Vitae from one of the Gorged instead of a vampire, as the Vitae – in a sense metabolized within the Gorged's system – does not force a blood bond on the drinker. The Gorged is not exempt from such bonds, but they tend to drink from so many masters as to render specific Vinculum redundant. To

an independent ghoul, a Gorged is a valuable friend to have. Drinking tends to occur from the nipples, slight incisions, or intravenous catheters.

Kindred aware of the Gorged see them as useful resources on one hand – they can act as den mothers, batteries, and provisions in the field – but dangerous threats on the other. A Gorged ghoul needs to feed far less frequently than her peers, and they are prone to over-feeding when they do take on Vitae. Their existence also encourages other ghouls to drift from their regnants. The Dragons are experimenting with the Gorged, to determine whether the positives outweigh the negatives. Recent experiments have shown that when a Gorged is drained of all the Vitae in her body, she shrivels up horribly. Depending on the blood remaining in her system, she then dies, goes into shock, or voraciously pursues new Vitae sources with frightening reserves of strength and speed.

Rumors tell of a rising threat to the Gorged, since the members of a coterie of high Blood Potency Kindred discovered they could sustain their need for rich blood from these ghouls. The coterie makes an effort to inform their similarly powerful peers how it's far easier to drink from a Gorged than needing to track and drain a struggling vampire.

**System:** A Gorged can defy her normal blood capacity and hold up to 14 Vitae in her body. If she takes a 15<sup>th</sup> point, she becomes a vampire, the natural blood in her body devoured by the Vitae. Gorged may feed others their Vitae without bonding the drinker. Losing all the Vitae in her system will kill her if she held 9 or more, put her into shock if she held 6, 7, or 8 Vitae, and render her a withered, hungry husk if she had fewer points before losing them. When a Gorged becomes hungry, she gains 2 dots in Strength and 2 dots in Dexterity, while losing 3 dots in Stamina down to a minimum of 1. If a vampire Embraces one of the Gorged, the Gorged cannot frenzy in her first night.

## *Ghouls as Antagonists*

Consuming Vitae is similar to taking a long drag on a sweet cigarette. As the body metabolizes the drug, it acts both as a potent euphoric, and emotion suppressor. Both Vitae and nicotine improve productivity and energy, while also taking the edge off physical and emotional tensions and stresses. Both warm the body on a cold day, make a meal that much better, and improve the feelings during and following sex. Both are addictive, of course. Take away an addict's crutch, and the once chilled-out ghoul becomes something wholly unpleasant.

Without Vitae, rivalries between ghouls swiftly develop into intense jealousies. When a ghoul earns favor with a regnant, that same regnant's other thralls quickly learn to detest their successful peer. A ghoul's worst enemy is another ghoul. No one understands a ghoul's cravings and failings more than another of the half-damned.

Ghouls sometimes lose their regnants to violence or torpor. Occasionally, a vampire decides to embrace the existence of

the outcast, and undertakes a pilgrimage without any of the ghouls in his service. In such cases, it does not take long for the absence of Vitae to drive his deprived servants into fits of psychotic mania. Their drug taken away, the ghouls first question how they are supposed to survive, before instinct takes over. The addicts go to sources of alternate Vitae, whether in the form of vampires, or more rarely, other ghouls. A ghoul who maintains his sense of composure may offer services in exchange for Vitae from a new regnant. A ghoul without such self-control is more liable to ambush the Kindred with his friends and take the Vitae by force, setting up a domino chain of increasingly desperate straits the ghouls pursue for their mouthful of vampire blood.

Ghouls make effective antagonists as darker reflections of what a chronicle's protagonists may well fall to, if the supply of Vitae and a regnant's favor are not maintained.



## *The Alley Men*

The Alley Men took the blows the vampire doled out without complaint, ceaselessly advancing on her. Her attempts at mental domination failed as each time she attempted to spit a command, one of the ghouls struck her across the face. They were toying with her. The Vitae thieves drew their daggers and pressed in. The vampire abruptly slashed her forearm and splashed Vitae across them all, summoning her legion of rats to devour the ghouls' flesh as a method of last resort. By the time the rodents arrived, they were confused. Where was their summoner? Where was their prey? All the rats could see was a toppled stack of greasy ash, and four tramps huddled around it, licking a sticky juice from their fingers and hands. The rats joined in, drinking at the red rivulets making their way down the drain.

Believed to be a loose-knit ghoul family, the thralls known as the Alley Men resemble nothing more than voracious vagrants, but they possess a deadly cunning and willingness to do whatever it takes to get their precious Vitae.

Alley Men commonly appear after a regnant disappears. With no ready source of immortality, ghouls flock to their own for advice and support. The life of a ghoul is one of competition, however. For all a ghoul may empathize with a fellow's struggle for Vitae, she may end up in the same predicament eventually, and it's better to not have active competition for resources. Many ghouls who identify struggling peers therefore decline assistance, or send them in pursuit of false leads while securing their own.

The Alley Men are different. Recognizing a mutual struggle, a sense of desperate camaraderie exists within the ghoul family's ranks. Egalitarian in the sense that each ghoul in the family understands her low position on the predatory totem pole, the ghouls pursue any lengths to feed the family and keep it strong.

The Alley Men set up spotters outside known Elysia, and upon recognizing young Kindred traveling alone, set up elaborate obstacles to divert their chosen prey to isolated side streets and parks. Once the vampire enters the trap, Alley Men either demand the vampire spills sufficient Vitae to fill a large receptacle, in a form of mugging, or ambush and stake the vampire to drain him dry at their leisure.

The Alley Men are fanatically loyal to one another, seeing other ghouls as hopeless slaves. They've yet to embrace the idea of liberating their fellow thralls, but often do so unintentionally, through murdering or kidnapping another ghoul's regnant. When such mishaps occur, urgent wars commence between the ghouls aiming to rescue their masters, and the Alley Men who wish to keep them as their own source of Vitae.

Vampires in domains containing a high volume of unhoused mortals receive regular warnings from the city harpies that the homeless are far from easy targets, just in case a peckish Kindred hopes to score an easy feed from someone who might not be missed, and instead stumbles into a pack of Alley Men.

Many Alley Men are familial ghouls, and therefore do not suffer the pull of hunger other ghouls possess. They may not have a regnant without abandoning the Alley Men. Doing so earns the family's ire. The Alley Men pursue any such runaways with murderous intent.

**System:** Alley Men gain a +2 bonus on attempts at avoiding notice in urban environments, and start with two Discipline dots in *any* Disciplines, due to their indiscriminate feeding practices. Alley Men must remain homeless and own no material wealth beyond what they can carry.

## Protectionists

*"The masters are out of control. They spill Vitae as if it was an infinite resource! They create ghouls and abandon them as if they were nothing." The other ghouls agreed with Mathilde as she spoke so earnestly, curious to hear her proposal. "Obviously, we cannot just tell the masters they're wrong. They would punish us. We can ensure we have greater access to Vitae though. We just need to thin the herd..." Her words drifted across the crowd. The ghouls started looking at each other. Which of them would need to make the sacrifice, for the greater good of all thralls?*

Most ghouls dream of taking their frustration out on their regnants, but lack the power or will to do so in their waking moments. If they were to kill their mistresses, who would continue to feed them?

This quandary compels many to seek other ways to secure their Vitae supply in increasingly stretched times. While the mortal population grows along with that of ghouls, the Kindred numbers stay largely static. As the demands for Vitae increase, the supply does not meet the ghoul community's needs. Several enterprising ghouls proposed to their fellows that it is up to them to regulate their own market, and the only way to do so is to thin the herd of "useless drinkers."

The Protectionists are a confederation of ghouls who closely monitor the population of thralls within their domains, and cull the ranks of those who they deem failures to the regnants. The Protectionists never consult vampires, citing that such petty matters are beneath the true immortals. Instead they self-regulate, maintaining meticulous records of ghoul names, their purported powers, skills, and stability. The Protectionists readily target unstable ghouls, seeing them as a threat to the communal serving class they inhabit. They do not however extend their pogroms to elder ghouls, reckoning that the longest-lived must have justified their long existences.

**System:** Protectionists gain a +2 bonus when attempting to source information relating to other ghouls. Once a ghoul declares for the Protectionists, she ensures the next Discipline she gains is Auspex, no matter the powers her regnant possesses. Protectionists suffer -2 penalty to dice pools relating to socializing with ghouls not within their confederation, as others suspect they're constantly under the Protectionists' surveillance. Often, these suspicions are correct.

## Phagians

*"You can't have it! I need it!" Seth backed away from Jade, stumbling over his own feet. Jade opened their mouth to reveal teeth filed down to points. "My God. What have you done?" Seth attempted to crawl away from his fellow ghoul, but Jade was too fast. They pounced on him, driving their teeth into his shoulder and sucking hard in one swift move. If their regnant would not feed Jade, they would need to draft Vitae from other ghouls; willing or not.*

Few ghouls frighten their fellows so much as the Phagians. Unwilling or unable to target vampires for Vitae, the cannibalistic Phagians attempt to pry the blood from other ghouls. Such a task is wrought with difficulty, as the ghoul must sift through untainted blood before reaching the Vitae she desires. Only when a Phagian attacks one of the Gorged is Vitae immediately gained.

The Phagians do not exist as a collective. That is one of few small mercies associated with this aberrant condition. Phagians lack regnants due to the Phagian's own actions – whether intentional or not. The severing of a tie between regnant and ghoul produces a traumatic psychic event that forever scars the Phagian into a form of self-destruction, except the nihilistic impulse spreads to others like her. Phagians are sociopathic, prone to calculated acts of violence over histrionic displays of aggression.

The Phagians are not without a twisted code of honor. Something in the ghouls with this desire to devour their own compels them to make their victim's final 24 hours as beautiful as possible. They often befriend or seduce their prey, or buy them an expensive gift, before sinking sharpened teeth into their flesh and sucking hard.

**System:** Phagian teeth deal +0 lethal damage. Each time a Phagian takes a mouthful of blood, she makes a Stamina + Resolve roll to consume it. The lower the ghoul victim's Integrity, the closer to the surface the Vitae in a ghoul's system. Each dot of the victim's Integrity requires a turn of drinking, before the Vitae enters the drinker. Phagians can automatically sense other ghouls, without a need for Disciplines.

## Ghoul Merits

These Merits cover a range of ghouls, from those embedded in families, to thralls possessing tight bonds to a single regnant.

### FAMILY TIES (••)

A form of blood sympathy, this Merit allows a character a psychic bond to members of the same ghoul family. A ghoul with this Merit can sense whenever another member of his ghoul family is threatened, or physically harmed.

**Prerequisite:** Member of a ghoul family

**Effect:** The sensations of threat and harm make hairs stand on end, and feelings of nausea roll over the ghoul. To determine the location of a threat in progress requires a Wits + Investigation roll. The geographical location in which a physical injury occurs is immediately known to the ghoul with this Merit.

**Drawback:** Inability to prevent or avenge the harm done to your family member leads to Breaking Points.

### INHERITED (••)

**Prerequisite:** Ghoul

**Effect:** Your ghoul once served another regnant, and entered his current master's service later. During situations in which information pertaining to the ghoul's last master is a factor, you apply a +2 modifier on an Intelligence + Composure roll to see if he can recall anything useful.

**Drawback:** The ghoul's former regnant may want him back, if he's still around.

### INSOMNIAC (•)

Kindred often require their ghouls to work all hours, both day and night. Vampires quickly forget the pressures of a semi-mortal life. As a result, ghouls often end up with the Languid Condition, due to exhaustion. This Merit ensures that never becomes the case, as the ghoul's sleep requirements differ from most beings.

**Prerequisite:** Ghoul

**Effect:** The ghoul can survive with three hours of sleep, spread across as many or as few blocks as desired, within a 24-hour period. Achieving these three hours is enough to ensure a ghoul is rested.

**Drawback:** When the ghoul with this Merit sleeps, he sleeps for the full three hours unless physically shaken awake. The ghoul is incapable of light sleep.

### LURCH (•••)

**Prerequisite:** Ghoul with a regnant

**Effect:** You are your regnant's prized butler, either in a formal capacity, or merely holding the duties of honored footman to the vampire-in-charge. Your character is intimately familiar with every aspect of his master's life and haven, and immediately notices if something is amiss. Gain a +2 bonus to all rolls involving Investigation or Wits, when the subject is his regnant or his regnant's haven.

**Drawback:** The ghoul's reliability puts him in high demand. The regnant may become highly dependent on the ghoul's maintenance.

### SEXUALIZED (••)

Whether it's the Vitae or the perverse regnant-ghoul relationship, something grants your character an undercurrent of carnal power and experience. Whether projecting as dominant, submissive, or somewhere in between; the ghoul finds seducing others an easy matter. The ghoul's physical appearance bears no relation to his sex appeal.

**Prerequisite:** Ghoul

**Effect:** The ghoul gains a +2 bonus on all Presence and Manipulation rolls, when attempting to intimidate, seduce, or distract others with his sexuality, providing the target holds the capacity for attraction to someone of your character's apparent age and gender.

**Drawback:** Some characters might feel disturbed by the feelings the ghoul stirs in them. A character not in the mood for seduction may question his or her own sudden change in disposition, and suspect drugs or hypnosis as the cause for this irrational behavior.

### UNOBTRUSIVE (••)

**Prerequisite:** Stealth ••, Ghoul

**Effect:** You know how to avoid your regnant's notice. Gain a +2 bonus to Stealth rolls when in his regnant's company, or within his regnant's haven.

**Drawback:** The regnant takes your unobtrusiveness for granted, and may not notice for some time if you just disappear.

## Ghoul Conditions

When vampires deny their ghouls Vitae, suffering swiftly follows. The Vitae preserves a ghoul's life, provides her with energy untold, and some of the same gifts her regnant possesses. Lacking the Vitae results in mental duress, physical degradation, and other malignant Conditions. Conditions such as Addicted, Deprived, Enslaved, and Subservient are common among ghouls.

### DETACHED (PERSISTENT)

When a ghoul spends too long away from regular mortals, she runs the risk of behaving like something less than human. She becomes cold, lacks empathy, and starts viewing mortals as resources to be utilized. A detached ghoul suffers a -2 die penalty to Social rolls when in the company of mortals.

**Possible Sources:** Spending a number of days equal to your character's Integrity without regular human contact.

**Resolution:** Spending a full 24 hours away from anything supernatural.

**Beat:** Whenever the ghoul's detachment causes a negative social situation.

### ENERGIZED

Your character has just received a mouthful of Vitae and is filled with health and energy. The short-lived burst of vitality grants you an additional +2 die bonus to your next action, providing it does not require calm or care.

**Possible Sources:** Drinking Vitae, use of uppers.

**Resolution:** After the first action requiring dice rolls, or one scene passes.

**Beat:** n/a

### HUNGER

Something makes your character want to consume Vitae at any cost, even if it means attacking her regnant. When in a vampire's presence, your character is compelled to beg for feeding. If denied, she suffers a -2 die penalty to Resolve and Composure dice pools when attempting to not physically obtain the Vitae for herself.

**Possible Sources:** Being denied Vitae by a regnant, seeing other ghouls feed, being reminded how it feels to drink Vitae.

**Resolution:** Drinking Vitae, successfully resisting the compulsion to take Vitae.

**Beat:** n/a

### INBRED (PERSISTENT)

Your character is the member of a ghoul family. The character bears an affliction due to her parents' consanguinity. Whether this manifests as a mental illness or physical deformity is your choice, but it is noticeable to anyone on the lookout for such markers

**Possible Sources:** Consanguineous parents.

**Resolution:** Whenever the ghoul has Vitae in her system, her condition's ill effects are nullified.

**Beat:** Whenever the ghoul's affliction enters play as a factor detrimental to the character's dice pool (limited to once per scene).

### RECOVERY (PERSISTENT)

A ghoul sometimes attempts to beat her addiction, going cold turkey or attempting to wean herself off the Vitae. She may do this not realizing the full ramifications of Vitae's absence. The struggle is harsh and the effects harmful, though the rewards can be great. If weaning off Vitae by spacing out feedings, the character suffers a -3 die penalty to all actions requiring care. If the character opts to go cold turkey, she suffers a -4 die penalty to all dice pools.

**Possible Sources:** Weaning off or going cold turkey from Vitae or another highly addictive, highly harmful drug.

**Resolution:** Regain a dot of Integrity, or last 16 weeks minus the character's Willpower without Vitae. Once recovered, the character loses two dots from across one or more Attributes.

**Beat:** Drinking Vitae/taking the addictive drug.

Amending Existing Conditions

Some Conditions from *Vampire: The Requiem Second Edition* can be applied to ghouls, with the following amendments:

**Bestial:** As an alternative source, this Condition may manifest because of Vitae withdrawal. Ghouls may resolve this Condition by drinking Vitae, or killing someone.

**Languid:** This Condition may manifest due to being forced into waking action for over three days without sleep. Resolving it requires a 48-hour uninterrupted sleep period. The ghoul gains a Beat for each night past the fifth he remains awake.

**Tasked:** A ghoul may take this Condition when his regnant sets a specific objective. It resolves when the task succeeds or fails.



Family? Ha!

*My mother would show up every few years  
and suddenly be very into my life.*

*She would take me out of school to take trips with  
her, or buy me anything I wanted,  
but she never really listened to  
me when I tried to talk to her.*

*I'd meet these people, all weird,  
all terrible, and then she'd be gone again.*

*To say that I resent her is an understatement.*

*I love her, she's family, but I don't love what she is.*

-- Antonio Ramirez, dhampir

**This book includes:**

- An exploration of what it means to be one of the Half-Damned, dhampir, revenants or ghouls.
- Mechanics for creating Half-Damned characters.
- Information for creating and running chronicles using the various Half-Damned character types, both with vampires and alone.
- Information on Half-Damned antagonists for vampire chronicles.

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THE REQUIEM  
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