

# Blood Sorcery

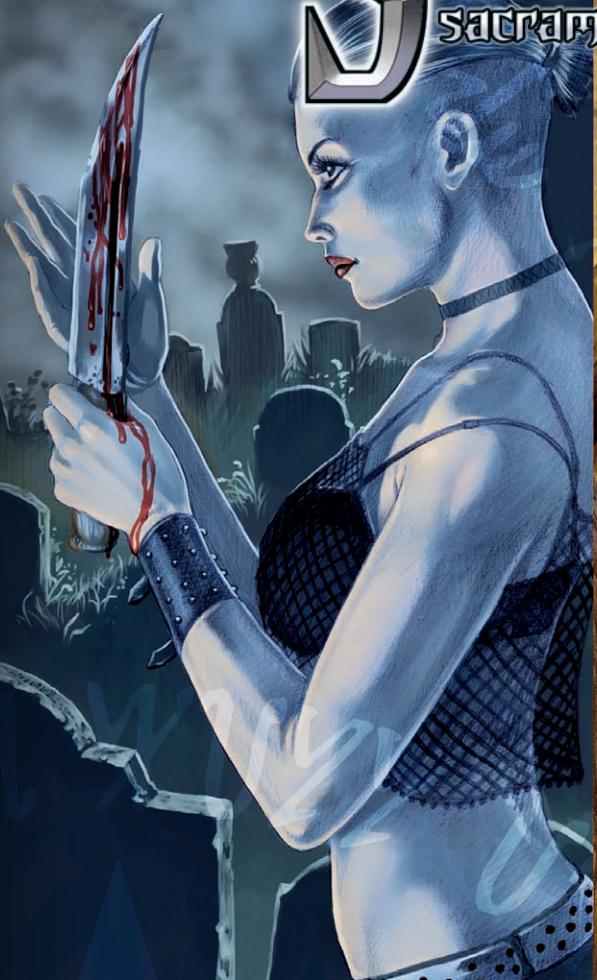
sacraments & blasphemies



a sourcebook for  
**Vampire**  
THE REQUIEM

# Blood Sorcery

SACRAMENTS & BLASPHEMIES



Benjamin Baugh, David Brookshaw,  
David A. Hill Jr. & Travis Stout

Boon didn't have enough fingers to count up the week's bad decisions because, when he was 20, a loan shark cut off his left pinkie when he tried to talk down the vig on money he'd already lost betting on a slow dog.

Probably didn't matter anyhow, he thought. He'd made way more than nine bad calls already, and it was only Thursday.

He held the little girl closer to his chest and hunched around her as the wind came down from the mountain, and laid her hands on his face and found ways inside his clothes to stroke him.

Getting into my pants easier than a than a 50-dollar whore.

He felt a stab of guilt, thinking about whores while holding the child. His sister had been about this size when she died. His momma had cried, and not quit. She cried until her lips split and bled because Daddy tried to make her stop with an open hand and, when that didn't work, a closed fist. When she jumped down the well, Daddy got Boon to help drag her out, and made sure to tell the law and the priest it was an accident so they'd bury her in the church cemetery.

The girl stirred and made a little mewing sound. Boon pulled the zip on his leather coat up a little, edging out a little more winter from getting in where he'd zipped her up inside it. He worried she might smother, but not for long. If he gave her air, it would kill her faster.

His boots were frozen to his feet now, where he'd got them wet when the ice over the creek cracked under him, but he had to keep moving. When Feldman and Pete got back to the farmhouse and found Boon and the girl gone, they'd be coming with shotguns. He tried to remember if agreeing to Feldman's scheme to kidnap the judge's daughter was bad decision #9 or #10—was it something he had in his hand or something that fell through the place where his finger was missing. Did it rattle as it hit the floor? Roll around, break open like an egg? Got to be careful with eggs, or Daddy'll tan my hide.

What am I thinking?

He somehow turned as he fell, landing on his side instead of on top of the girl, but the impact jarred her and she started crying into his chest.

GET UP.

No.

GET UP!

No.

"GET UP!"

*No! It's dark finally. I'm going to get some sleep, now that I'm warm.*

"You're dying, son. Get up, or you'll freeze where you are, and that'll be a waste. I got mouths to feed, and they're sick to hell of rabbit."

Boon opened his eyes. The winter hid the stars, but the moon glowed through the snow, making shapes with tree shadow he didn't want to stare at too hard. He looked

# Boon & Kitty 1940

hard around for the speaker and saw the silhouette—big, wrapped in furs. Big as a standing bear. Boon somehow pushed himself up to sit, back against a pine.

“Hang on now, you’re not a fat bastard, you got something under your coat.”

Boon heard an audible sniffing sound.

“Somebody. That your kid you have in there?”

Why lie?

“No. She’s not mine.”

“But you wrapped her up. You carried her.”

“She’s innocent. Worth 10 of me. I got to make it right. Take her back. Feldman’ll kill me, but it ain’t right us taking her.”

“Is Feldman that fella coming up the trail with the shotgun?”

“Probably.”

“He’s got somebody else with him. I can smell his aftershave. Nasty and cheap.”

Boon managed to keep this chuckle from turning into a cough.

“That’s Little Pete. Nasty and cheap gets him coming and going.”

“And you? How’d you end up with the girl dying in the snow?”

“If I ever call heads, you bet on tails. I never made a decision I didn’t regret.”

“I hear that, brother.”

“What are you going to do?”

“I’d been planning on dragging you back to my cabin and feeding you to the family.”

“So, this is how I die? Cannibal hillbillies. Daddy was right.”

“Your Daddy tell you that you’d end up eaten by cannibals?”

“No, he said I’d end up as nothing but shit. I guess when you bastards eat me, that’ll be true.”

The furred silhouette snorted, and then laughed, and then slapped his knee. He laughed for a full minute, and Boon felt himself chuckling too.

“Hell, boy, I don’t think I could kill a man that made me laugh. How do you think those two coming after you would hold up if they was sitting where you are now?”

“Feldman would probably be cursing you and threatening to kill you. Little Pete would piss himself and beg.”

“That’s more like it then. Don’t die boy. You don’t die, and I’ll be back to see about you.”

Inside his coat, the girl stopped crying, but he could still feel her breathing as she settled into a rough sleep. He thought about standing up, and trying to walk to stay warm, but his legs were numb, and his hands getting there too. Instead, he rocked and hummed the tuneless song his daddy would hum while driving or working.

When the double report of a shotgun sounded down the trail, Boon hardly flinched. When the screams started, he surprised himself by smiling a little. When they stopped—one and then the other—in a loud meaty sound, he quit smiling.

This time, he heard the big man coming back, crunching snow and then the groaning thumps of Feldman and Little Pete being dropped—bloody but alive—before him.

“Well, these two will take care of me and my family for a little while yet. I already got too many mouths to feed, but I thought I’d make you an offer.”

“You... asking for a decision?”

“Yeah. I can let you and the girl live. See you safe out of these woods and off living wherever you like.”

“Don’t ask me. Just figure I pick the wrong thing and gotta live with the consequences. Nine outta ten chance, that’s what I would have picked anyhow.”

“Then, this is gonna hurt.”

“It always does.”

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# Blood Sorcery

SACRAMENTS & BLASPHEMIES

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The fashion was for wide collars, so wide they extended over the lapel, and worse, worn open without a tie. Pastels too were the style, and pants with a slight bell at the ankles. Fry boots. Blow dried hair. Lots of gold. So Boon's watch, cuff links, collar caps, pinkie ring, and chain were gold and chunky. When Kitty made him leave his old-fashioned charcoal suit and leather coat in the apartment, he felt like he'd been skinned.

"Kitty, I carried you in that coat. It means something to me."

"Then put it in your hope chest, sweetheart! We have to move with the times, and people expect their men of god to have a certain style!"

"Have you looked? Is there a good crowd?"

"The tent is filling up. Deacon Frank is getting them stirred up a bit."

"Maybe that will be enough tonight. Do you think? I don't know if I'm feeling up to using the old man's trick right now. We've had too many fireball nights. Too many revivals in too short a time. You know how it makes me get."

"Boon, we need the money. The bishop wants his pieces of silver."

"Maybe I can talk to him again. Get a little breathing room."

"Sweetie, darling... you know we never get breathing room, never anymore."

He looked at her then, a brief frisson of fear and disgust at the cynicism and resentment marring her features. Still the girl of five in body and, if Boon was honest, in spirit as well. The engine of her mind revved higher and higher, scheming and planning, and devouring the world with the ease only a child can manage, but emotionally, well. Boon recalled horrors, blood on hotel room walls, a child screaming in fear and rage, cursing as no child should.

"OK, Kitty. I'll use the trick tonight, but this is the last time for a while. I can do pretty good just preaching, and the Bishop will have to be happy with a little less for a time."

The child only sighed and primped her ringlets.

Boon walked out onto the little stage, and flowed into his role—arms raised, Bible in his right hand, left hand wrapped in the patterned coils of a western diamondback rattlesnake.

As was his style, he wasted no time with pleasantries or salutations, not even a "Welcome Brothers and Sisters!" People didn't come to the tent of the Fire of Salvation Revival looking for a pleasant evening hearing about Jesus. They came to feel the power of God knock them to their knees, for the Holy Spirit to grab a handful of their hair and twist until their faces stared at Heaven and the light burned into their skulls. They came to weep and to suffer tribulations, to speak in tongues, and to handle snakes.

And they came to see demons revealed and cast out.

He nodded to Deacon Frank, and the heavily built young man stepped back into the line of similar heavies at the back of the stage. When the time came, they'd catch people thrown into swoon, support those needing to be healed, and hold the possessed when the demons came roaring out of them. And of course, when the crowd was spent and gasping, reeling from the high of being slapped around by God, the big dark-suited deacons would pass the offering plates around, with a hard look for anyone who didn't dig deep.

"When the rich man died, he lifted up his eyes from the lake of hellfire, and he became aware! The truth came upon him that, in Hell, all is spoken that might be spoken, and all is done that might be done.

In Hell, all that remains is to pay for a life lived wrong, a life lived contrary to God! There's no saving once you're in Hell! There're no more chances to turn your face to God and no more chances to feel the Holy Spirit move you!"

# Boon & Kitty 1969

He felt the rhythm, the rise and punch of the preacher's passion coming onto him.

"And if you went before the Throne without being washed clean, the light of God would annihilate you, destroy you, waste you so that you'd pray for the fires of Hell. You go to God with a black stain on your soul, and you'll beg for the eternal suffering of Hell!"

They were nodding and responding, "Amen!" blending with wordless hoots and moans.

"The world is a place of darkness and temptation! There are demons walking among us, and they're hungry for our damnation. The whole world belongs to the Devil, and there's only one light in the darkness, and if you can follow it, you can see it, you can feel it inside you, then no power on this Earth or in Hell can ever stand against you!"

There, he thought. He held up his right hand, Bible high, and shock his arm so the lose sleeve of his jacked slid down. He raised he snake and caressed its tiny arrowhead mind.

"If the Power of the Christ is in you, then the Satan's serpents have no power!"

The snake struck his wrist, twisting its head to work half-inch fangs in deep.

His audience screamed, swooned, moaned, and surged forward to see, and Boon showed them his teeth and did the old man's trick. Inside him, the demon woke up and snarled, pain and poison the goads, Boon's mastery of the snake his focus—the demon Beast jumped unseen into the crowd, and threw them into tribulation.

Behind him, Boon knew his deacons were moving to surround and corral the crowd, in case he couldn't keep them mesmerized with his preaching, but tonight, he had them. He felt it, felt the channels torn open by the Beast's escape.

Down in front, a plump, middle-aged woman screamed and tore her dress open, then tried to climb up onto the stage. The crowd surged back from her, invoking Jesus... or more scatological deities.

"Deacons!"

And two dark suits were there, locking her arms and riding it out as she heaved and shook them with strength to which she had no rightful claim.

"Demons dare come into this holy sanctuary! People, do you see what the Devil will dare? If he'd send one of his maggots into this circle, then what's he doing in your factories, your homes, your schools? What words is he putting in the mouths of your children's teachers? Do your children hear the word of God or the word of man? Because the Devil can only speak with man's words, not God's! Deacons, bring the afflicted one here! Bring her up here."

The woman's eyes rolled like a horse's, insane with terror and fury both, but his deacons held her fast, and he came upon her slowly, so the crowd could feel the tension build,

feel the little bit of the Beast squirm within them. Some fell to their knees then, and covered their eyes and wept.

Good. A man who weeps now will feel shame later—and then gratitude when a friendly deacon shakes his hand and slaps him on the shoulder. The plates will fill up fast.

He reached the woman and raised both his hands, the Bible and the snake. The crowd moaned, and she lurched between the two hands, like she was fighting to decide which scared her more,. Then he caught her head between his hands, and the strength of his blood was in them, and she couldn't move. He leaned closer and closer, so he could whisper in her ear. The crowd hushed, and even those weeping swallowed their sobs. They strained to hear what he whispered, and tomorrow, they'd all remember something different. What he said didn't much matter though, because he suddenly raised his right hand and struck her with the Bible, knocking her sprawling to the floor, and in his left hand, the rattlesnake went mad, striking his hand and arm over and over, blood blooming through his powder-blue suit where it punctured his skin below.

He screamed, he fought the snake, and he called out to the crowd, "Help me now! Jesus, speak through these people and help me now!"

And as one, the crowd howled and invoked its God, and on cue, Boon held the snake high, threw it to the stage and, with one echoing stomp, crushed the serpent's skull under his boot heel. He then reeled back to be caught by Deacon Frank, who helped him to his feet.

Boon pulled the dazed woman upright, and holding her in his left arm, he held up the Bible in his right and sang out in prayer to his audience. In the morning, they'd question and doubt, and some might wonder if they'd been tricked, but for right now, they were true believers every one, and the offering plates overflowed before the evening was out.



# INTRODUCTION

A cold wind through a closed window. The cawing of ravens at an hour when no bird should be about. Rage at someone who hurt you, and the willingness to hurt back. Your reflection in the mirror, blurred, distorted, yet somehow still staring back at you.

Being a vampire is inherently trading humanity for power, but most Kindred didn't do it on purpose. Blood sorcery is about wrapping your arms around blood sacrifice or inhuman philosophy and holding it close against your silent heart.

As presented in *Vampire: The Requiem*, sorcery is a series of rituals passed down from hierophant to acolyte, pastor to parishioner. The blood caked on these rituals is dark and dried, and they are ancient and horrible indeed. But what if that blood were fresh? What if the heart were cut out, cut open, and made to beat again?

That's what this book is: a gory and grand new exploration of blood sorcery from the powers of the great covenants to the dirty secrets of the street to the figures that lurk in the shadowed history of the Kindred.

## How to Use This Book

**Chapter One: Rites of Damnation** presents new systems for Theban Sorcery and Crúac. These systems allow players and Storytellers to improvise new rituals for their chronicles, using a common system that reinforces the basic theme of blood sorcery: nothing without a price.

**Chapter Two: Threnodies** reveals the street's alternative to the hallowed rituals of the covenants: dirty secrets that extend Disciplines in exchange for painful sacrifice. Threnodies can add a little bit of sorcery to almost any character concept, if one is willing to accept the hooks in the vampire's flesh and soul?

**Chapter Three: Antagonists** introduces new occult-themed enemies for your chronicle. Are the Sons of Phobos an object lesson in pride and the fall? Or are they predators who have abandoned even the pretense of morality clung to by the Kindred? What force drives the Empty Liars to stalk the Kindred? And what fate befalls those who feed on their ill-gotten knowledge?

Most Learned Hierophant

Dearest Brother

I fear we have been made fools of, but as yet I have no idea by whom.

The Roche Incident in Daytona Beach (Florida, USA) calls our policies regarding proliferation and dissemination into question.

It is also undeniable now that the anarchic tendency we successfully disrupted through the majority of the last two centuries has found new outlet. We have been outmaneuvered by new media. While we still struggle with the printing press, and reel from the mimeograph machine, the Cacophony has burrowed into art, music, film, print, television, and now, the internet.

We enthrall politicians, we buy corporations, but it is almost like the secrets themselves fight us, having grown feral in their cage of centuries.

Your order and mine are uniquely vulnerable, for our secrets can be written down, and now, if you know where to search, you'll find our sacred texts, apocrypha, and liturgy available for nearly untraceable download, and for you, lists of your sages and teachers, those who know your mysteries and might be induced to teach them. Have your witches had more eager students than usual these last couple of years?

There is a culture of online troublemakers who consider it their duty to disseminate secrets—any secrets. We used our special methods, and we found some of these mortal children for the most part—and dealt with them, but it made no difference. We fight the hydra.

With my complements, find enclosed with this letter the jacket containing our files on the Roche Incident. Your insight into this would be greatly appreciated. And, of course, as always, I hope I can rely on your discretion regarding these documents assembled by our Inquisitio Magne Pravitatis.

Your Eternally Loving Sister,  
Cardinale Inquisitore

The Bishop weighed the cabbage roll in his hand, and then smiled.

"You done good, Boon. Getting awful close to covering what you owe. I wanted to talk to you about what comes next."

Boon strained to listen through the pounding in his head. Bishop Pike's accent was thick as yesterday's gravy, and just as greasy.

Yuh dun guh, Bune.

Boon just nodded. He knew Kitty was listening from the bedroom of the Airstream. He knew to nod and seem agreeable, but to agree to nothing until he'd talked to her. He rubbed at the stump of his missing finger like a worry stone.

"You came to my parish, with your odd little ways, and your tent show. I knew you weren't one of my flock. So I wrote some letters, and none of my fellows had heard of you."

Mah Parsh

"We came from the Northwest. It's Crone country up there. They let us be."

"But down in the Heartland, we keep a more

civilized society, with proper faith and service."

Ean tha Hawytlan

"Yes, sir. I come to see that as the proper way."

"And we don't take too kindly with folks who preach that northern nonsense, or use the Old Lady's blasphemy to turn a profit."

Owld Laidya's blasmie

Boon just nodded again, as the Bishop pocketed a fat roll of profits won by blasphemous ritual. Kitty would never let him explain to the Bishop how the Old Man's tricks had nothing to do with the Crone. It was the Circle that drove them south.

"I got a spot to fill. I need a priest I can rely on to deliver, somebody who can minister to kin and kine alike. You got the touch, boy! A golden touch. Protecting the word costs, and the world is changing. You seen Graham? Roberts or Swaggart? The television is taking over, and buying in ain't cheap. I need somebody that can deliver and understands how to make the Word pay."

Yuh ga tha toush, boya

"Give me a night to think it over?"

The Bishop's lips curled, cutting grooves from his eyes to his jowls. Boon decided to take it as a smile, because he didn't want to think it was anything else.

"Yeah, boy. You talk it over with your little boss lady. She knows what's good for you."

Yow luhttle bowss laidya

Boon didn't move until the sound of the Bishop's Cadillac faded, lost under cicada and frog crooning love songs into the night.

# Boon & Kitty 1976

# Boon & Kitty 1985

Kitty raged, and Boon held back while Frank tried to calm her down, hoping he'd be able to handle her. Then she clawed his face open to the bone and took out his left eye, and Frank lurched out of the room squealing through hands clutched to his face.

"Kitty! Get control of yourself!"

She came at Boon then, but he was ready. He caught her in the legs of a chair he grabbed and slammed her back against the wall, her feet flailing uselessly beneath her, black bird's talons clawing at wood, trying to destroy everything.

The rages came almost daily now, and Frank was the last of the old Revival crew that had stayed with them, but sure as damnation, he was gone now. He'd be carrying those scars for weeks, and he had pride in that pretty face. That's why Kitty had taken it from him.

After a few minutes, her shrieks gave way to sobs, she sagged between the chair legs, and her fingers were again soft and pale and human.

He let her go, picked her up, and held her while she cried and then got control of herself.

"Well, girl, I think Frank's probably gone. I'll talk to him, but I can't see him staying after what he said the last time."

She trembled a little.

"So it's just you and me again. We'll be all right."

He sat her down in the flower-print chair, and she sagged into slouched immobility, a marionette with cut strings.

"We need to get out of this city anyhow. The new Bishop is old school. I don't know how an Assyrian sect Bishop got an American Midwestern city. If it's an exile, then he's a bad one. If he's on some kind of mission of faith, then it's probably worse. He had us all kiss his ring and stumble through the Latin greetings. We had to demonstrate our understanding of the mysteries."

"What did you do?"

"The only thing I know. Absolution. I dressed it up pretty, though, and did it perfect. Gave him a line about the duties of the officiants of the Sanctified being the perfection of will and correct obedience to the forms. I think I snaked him."

"Where will we go?"

"We can run back up North. Stop off and see the Old Man, maybe. It's been more than 20 years."

"I don't want to go back to that shack and those stinking inbred yokels."

"We could try the West Coast. Washington or Oregon, maybe. I hear things are pretty laid back up there. We could start a commune. You could milk the goats. We could make cheese."

"Good luck preaching hellfire to the hippies."

"I'll read a book on yoga on the way up. I can pull a Maharishi Mahesh. Invent some kind of meditation system and sell it to the Beemer crowd. We'll found the Fire Serpent Ashram."

"Where do we belong, Boon? I don't know if I can keep going."

"We belong together, you and me. And if you get tired, I'll carry you."



Chapter One  
RITES OF DAMNATION

# Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!

– William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*

The stolen blood of mortals grants powers beyond simple immortality. Using Vitae, a vampire may evince supernatural strength, read the minds of kine, or change shape. No outside props, incantations, or complex actions are required. The vampire asks, and the blood obeys. The only price is that by using the blood, the vampire forces herself to feed more often. Many Kindred—even most Kindred—require nothing more from Vitae and spend their Requiems never pushing the limits of what the blood can achieve.

But blood can do so much more.

This chapter is devoted to more elaborate uses of vampiric magic, requiring more effort and preparation from the Kindred but offering strange and potent results in return. The Ritual Disciplines of Crúac and Theban Sorcery allow a practitioner to perform the rites and miracles of blood magic. Applying ritual principles to other Disciplines produces “Threnodies”, secret applications of the Disciplines that produce esoteric and frightening powers.

## *The Ritual Disciplines: Crúac and Theban Sorcery*

A Sanctified priest takes a homing bird from the coop and neatly slices off the wings using a thin-bladed knife. As the animal dies discarded, he holds the wings and concentrates, calling out for the relic stolen from his haven. The wings crumble to dust and ash, painting his hands white, and he instantly knows where the thief can be found.

The Acolyte thief knows the priest is onto her—unknown assailants have attacked her safe houses and ghouls, but she only needs a little more time with the relic. Regarding her own blurred reflection in a mirror, she tears open the palm of her right hand with her own fangs and slaps the bloodied palm on the glass. As she smears Vitae over her image, she hopes the rite will keep her hidden from divination for long enough.

The priest enters the Acolyte’s refuge to find her—and his relic—long gone. Discovering the blood-caked mirror, he realizes she is using heretical sorcery against him. The miracle he was taught by his Bishop serves only to find those who have taken his possessions, and the thief has guarded herself against it. He must adapt the miracle against her magical protections. Returning to his haven, he takes another bird, but this time, he removes the eyes. Swallowing them, feeling them turn to ash in his atrophied stomach, he feels his changed miracle take hold—he can’t locate the thief, but he can see the person she last fed from. It’s a place to start.

The systems for Crúac and Theban Sorcery found in *Vampire: The Requiem* present rites and miracles as fixed effects, bought individually and cast using the Ritual Disciplines themselves. This section presents an optional system that expands and replaces those rules, following the lead of other *World of Darkness* games in allowing dynamic ritual creation and improvised casting.

Rather than enumerate every possible ritual or miracle, this system breaks the Ritual Disciplines down into Themes that are then combined to produce new effects on the fly—a Sanctified master of the Destruction Theme may attempt any miracle he can think of using that Theme, without the need to buy them separately. There is still a reason to buy rituals with Experience, however. Rituals the practitioner “knows” are easier to cast and more potent than improvised ones.

### *Learning Sorcery*

The requirements for becoming a blood sorcerer are unchanged from *Vampire: The Requiem*, but they are reproduced here for clarity.

Dots in Crúac may only be bought by characters possessing at least one dot in Covenant Status: Circle of the Crone. A character that somehow loses the Status Merit may not buy any additional Crúac dots until it is bought again. In addition, Crúac “caps” the Humanity of

## Blood Sorcery and the Clans

The Nosferatu clan weakness does not apply to blood sorcery rolls involving Presence or Manipulation. In a change from the rules in *Vampire: The Requiem*, the Gangrel clan weakness does *not* apply to blood sorcery rolls using Intelligence or Wits either.

the ritualist to a level of 10 minus dots in the Discipline; developing Crúac beyond this limit automatically causes Humanity degeneration with no test and prompts a derangement check.

Dots in Theban Sorcery may only be bought by characters possessing at least one dot in Covenant Status: Lancea Sanctum. As with Crúac, a character who loses the Merit does not lose dots in the Discipline but may not buy more until the Status Merit is bought again.

Unlike the system described in *Vampire*, characters do not buy rituals based on their Discipline dot levels, but instead, learn rites and miracles through common Themes.

## Learning Themes

Progression in a Ritual Discipline simultaneously grants dots in the Themes of blood magic; the five common threads running through the known rituals of Crúac and Theban Sorcery. By becoming skilled in one or more Themes, a ritual practitioner may learn rites or miracles based on them and improvise similar effects when those learned rites prove insufficient for his needs.

The Themes are Creation, Divination, Destruction, Protection and Transmutation. Each is rated from • to ••••• like a Discipline but has a maximum rating of the Ritual Discipline.

The first dot of Crúac or Theban Sorcery grants two dots of Themes linked to that type of sorcery, as well as a dot in the player's choice of the other three. The linked Themes of Crúac are Creation and Protection, while those of Theban Sorcery are Divination and Transmutation.

Theme dots may be bought independently of the Ritual Discipline for (new rating x 5) Experience. In addition, every time a character gains a new dot of the Discipline itself, an extra dot is gained in a Theme the character already knows.

If a character somehow learns another Ritual Discipline (for example, an Acolyte already skilled in Crúac renouncing the Crone to join the Lancea Sanctum and then learning Theban Sorcery), the Theme dots she already has at equal to or lower level to the new Discipline are usable with it, but she only gains one extra Theme dot rather than three when first learning the new Discipline.

## Motif and Theme

The two Ritual Disciplines each contain all five Themes, but that doesn't mean they are interchangeable. A Destruction •• miracle cast by a Sanctified priest will feel very different to a rite of identical effect cast by an Acolyte, even beyond the disparity in casting style between the two. Despite the levels of commonality exploited by the very rare sorcerers who learn both Disciplines, Crúac and Theban Sorcery are not the same and do not share common origins or metaphysics. In much the same way that the five clans may learn one another's Disciplines, the Ritual Disciplines may be leveraged to achieve similar ends by very different means. Those means *matter* to a ritualist, though; they are the very essence of her craft. The Circle of the Crone and the Lancea Sanctum both regard their sorceries as religious experiences, the prohibitions on teaching until the student earns status serving to preserve the proper reverence for blood sorcery as much as keeping that sorcery proprietary.

As far as the Acolytes are concerned, Crúac has always existed, reaching back into the occluded prehistoric origins of the Kindred. Theban Sorcery is both relatively

## Alternate Moralities

The *Danse Macabre* introduced alternatives to the Humanity scale, emphasizing different aspects of *Vampire* by using variant systems for tracking the moral slide of the Damned. Crúac is limited by Humanity, but what effect does this have when Humanity isn't being used?

In games using *Atrocity*, dots in Crúac add permanent Atrocity Dice, which cannot be alleviated by the Calloused Soul Merit. Characters with Crúac • or •• gain one permanent Atrocity Die, those with Crúac ••• or •••• gain another and those practitioners who gain Crúac ••••• add a third.

In games using *Hell is Other People*, Crúac caps the number of Anchors a character may have at 10 minus dots in the Discipline.

recent and unknowably ancient. The formulae for the first miracles were, the Lancea Sanctum teaches, recorded in hieroglyphs shown to early members of the covenant by the angel Amoniel nearly two millennia ago, but who or what recorded those hieroglyphs is unknown. The magic of Thebes may even be non-vampiric, the Lancea Sanctum unknowingly adapting the sacrificial magic of a long-vanished culture to the power of the Damned.

Experienced Kindred ritualists refer to the “flavor” of each Ritual Discipline as the Motif; extending the musical metaphor of Themes to the underlying structure of the ritual magic itself. Elder Acolytes and Sanctified Bishops independently describe the Motifs as sixth and seventh “Themes” that *must* be included in any ritual cast with the corresponding Discipline, consequences of the Covenant lore and ritual methods bound up in that Discipline’s operation. Crúac is deadening to the soul, requires Vitae to be spilt and has a primal, instinctive feel to its rites. Theban Sorcery requires conscious effort, deliberate planning, and the offering up of a sacrifice that burns to ash without the touch of any fire.

### *Learned and Improvised Rituals*

The Lancea Sanctum and Circle of the Crone have devoted centuries to the study of blood sorcery, recording hundreds of rites and miracles. Thanks to the isolation of Kindred across cities, no single vampire has ever known or even heard of all the rituals practiced around the globe. Each covenant rewards new discoveries with status, providing that the practitioner can pass on the new ritual and add to its arsenal.

Once a practitioner gains experience with her Ritual Discipline, she becomes able to follow the Themes to design variations of rituals she knows, altering the incantations, sacrifices, and formulae of the ritual to achieve related but different—sometimes very different—results. Improvised rituals are slower and more difficult to perform than those the caster has memorized and made part of herself.

Characters gain one “learned” miracle or rite when they first buy Crúac or Theban Sorcery. The ritual must use a Theme from the three the character gained when buying the Ritual Discipline.

Whenever a character gains a new Theme dot—whether it’s from buying an extra dot in the overall Discipline or raised independently with Experience—she gains a learned ritual of the new Theme rating (*not* the new Discipline rating). For example, an Acolyte with Crúac •• who buys Crúac ••• and chooses Destruction •• as the free dot gains a level two Destruction rite as the free learned ritual.

### **Within the Covenants**

The attitude of the covenants to improvised rituals varies with local prejudices, both Crone and Lance containing innovative and conservative groups.

Certain Acolyte sects believe that every Crúac rite lives on inside the Vitae of the Kindred learning it, changing them as its host. To these covens, improvised rites are akin to teaching a chained animal to perform tricks: sometimes useful, but dangerous.

Another Acolyte philosophy holds that it is Crúac itself that is the power, indivisible and insidious, and that individual rites are simply ways to leash that power. Adherents teach that rites should be improvised whenever needed but encourage practitioners to pass on new techniques within the Circle.

A minor denomination within the Lancea Sanctum, the Congregation for the Scribes of Thebes believes that only the miracles revealed in the cavern below Thebes were handed down by angelic visitation, and so, only those original miracles possess the approval of God. If it gains political power within a city, the Congregation punishes practitioners that blaspheme by turning Theban Sorcery to their own ends.

The majority of Sanctified Bishops, however, teach that revelation is ongoing. A priest who is inspired to new miracles is not “creating” those powers, but having them revealed to him by God’s design. Even so, most Sanctified congregations look on priests who refuse to codify miracles they use multiple times with suspicion and begin to doubt their commitment to the cause.

Rituals may also be bought independently at (Theme rating x 2) Experience.

Rituals that use more than one Theme are rated for Experience purposes as the highest Theme included.

### *Casting Rituals*

The specifics change, but the core of every ritual is the same—the caster summons the power within herself, activates the Ritual Discipline with a sacrifice and makes her request. Sanctified chant their requests in angelic glossolalia, pray, whisper, write in strange symbols, or plead to the heavens. The power is above or outside them, God or His agents responding to their pleas. Their sacrifice is part of the request, a symbol or token taken by the miracle. For the Acolytes, the power pours out from within their own bodies. The Curse itself carries the

request, pooling into the world around a vampire to twist it to her will. Their sacrifice is always the same. Blood.

### *The Sacrifice*

The sacrifice must be made before a practitioner can even begin a ritual—if a miracle or rite should fail, the ritualist doesn't get the sacrificial item or Vitae back.

A Crúac rite costs one Vitae per dot in the highest Theme of the rite. The first Vitae is absorbed by the caster as though fuelling a Discipline. Any remaining Vitae used must leave the ritualist's body and be used in the ritual's casting—usually by means of a self-inflicted wound. Traditionally, the focus of a rite's energies is marked with the Vitae, which is magically “neutralized” by the ritual. Vampires drinking blood used in a Crúac rite do not gain any sustenance from it, and it is no longer “vampire blood” for magical purposes including Vinculum, feeding ghouls or even the Embrace.

A Theban miracle costs one Willpower to focus the mind of the ritualist and an offering of some kind to whatever force answers the miracle request. At the end of a failed ritual attempt or the end of a successful ritual's Duration, the offering magically crumbles to dust as though it were an ancient vampire exposed to sunlight. The destruction of the offering is quite safe to the ritualist and any bystanders. The ritualist may even hold the offering with his bare hands while it is consumed and feel nothing.

While miracles require physical offerings that must be prepared in advance, and are therefore less able to be used freely, their Willpower cost is set. Rites require only Vitae, but the amount needed increases with the potency of the rite. Miracles start costly compared to rites at beginning levels of power, but for advanced rituals, they keep the same cost, while rites become much more expensive.

These requirements are the bare minimum needed to activate a Ritual Discipline. Most ritualists go further, customizing their known rituals with elaborate props and performances that help to focus the mind. At the Storyteller's discretion, especially elaborate or appropriate rituals reap a one to three dice bonus on the ritual casting rolls but increase the time taken per roll.

### *The Request*

Rituals may only be cast as extended actions. Instant actions are the preserve of the other Disciplines, and to make the Request takes time. Each roll represents one turn of casting by default, but ritualists may take extra time to gain bonus dice, as follows.

Time per Roll	Dice
One Turn	0
Two Turns	+ 1 dice
Five Turns	+ 2 dice
One Scene	+ 3 dice

The dice pool used varies by Discipline and by whether or not the ritual is already known to the ritualist. Improvised rituals always use the same Attribute + Skill combination, adding the character's dots in the Theme used. Learned rituals, however, use Attributes and Skills according to the following table, added to the Theme in use.

Improvised or Theme	Crúac	Theban Sorcery
Improvised	Manipulation + Occult + Theme	Intelligence + Occult + Theme
Creation	Composure + Crafts + Creation	Wits + Expression + Creation
Destruction	Presence + Athletics + Destruction	Wits + Intimidation + Destruction
Divination	Composure + Investigation + Divination	Resolve + Investigation + Divination
Protection	Presence + Stealth + Protection	Resolve + Stealth + Protection
Transmutation	Manipulation + Survival + Transmutation	Intelligence + Science + Transmutation

The target number of successes is the total (not just the highest) Theme dots used in the ritual, adjusted according to any Ritual Factors used—these will be discussed later.

### *The Response*

If the ritual succeeded, the effects occur immediately.

**Dice Pool:** See table above. Also note that many rituals are contested or resisted.

**Action:** Extended. The ritualist must perform the ritual from start to conclusion without being interrupted, or the ritual will fail. If the caster suffers any wounds while casting, each wound levies a one-die cumulative penalty against further casting rolls for that ritual on top of any wound penalties applied.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The miracle or rite fails spectacularly or dangerously, inflicting some aspect of itself on the caster.

**Failure:** The ritual fails but without presenting any danger to the caster. The cost of the ritual is still consumed.

**Success:** The ritual succeeds and takes place as described by the player. Excess successes are lost for improvised rituals, but they may be assigned to the ritual factor or factors of the player's choice for learned rituals.

**Exceptional Success:** The ritual succeeds and takes place as described. Excess successes are lost for improvised rituals, but they may be assigned to the ritual factor or factors of the player's choice for learned rituals.

The ritualist may not continue rolling once the target number of successes is achieved; only excess successes on the final roll may be assigned.

#### Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+2	Power is turned on or applies to a vampire with whom the ritualist has a blood tie.
0	The ritualist is unaffected by threats or distractions.
-1 to -3	The ritualist is rushed or distracted, such as being in the presence of a bane or attempting a ritual in combat. The penalty is cumulative with multiple distractions. Successes gained in a meditation roll for the night offset interruption penalties on a one-to-one basis.
0 to +3	The ritualist takes extra time to prepare an elaborate ritual.

## Defending Against Sorcery

Before rolling for the outcome of a ritual, the Storyteller should determine the nature of any resistance to the effect. Living beings have an innate resistance to blood sorcery, the Vitae of Kindred fights against the influence of a ritual, and supernatural creatures other than vampires have strange defenses of their own. The sorcerer must overcome the natural or supernatural resistance of the target for the ritual to succeed.

If the effect of a ritual is incremental, in that the number of successes achieved matters—rituals that inflict wounds, reduce the Vitae in a target, or create penalties to other rolls, for example—then the dice pool for the ritual is reduced by one of the target's resistance Attributes. If the effect is physical in nature, Stamina is used. The Ritual Discipline used in the casting determines resistance against other rituals: Composure against Crúac, and Resolve against Theban Sorcery.

Any supernatural power traits such as Blood Potency are not added to the resistance Attribute, but if the target is aware of the ritual, the target's player may spend one Willpower to increase the Attribute by two for purposes of the defense against a single casting roll.

If the effect of the ritual is all or nothing, such as detecting a lie, scrying for an enemy's location, or transforming a victim into a ghoul from a distance, the target may reflexively Contest the ritual rolls using the resistance Attribute plus any supernatural power trait it possesses.

**Contested Roll:** Resistance Attribute + Blood Potency

The target's player may increase this Contesting pool by three dice by spending a Willpower point if the target is aware of the ritual.

As rituals are always Extended in action, the casting is Contested each turn.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** The target completely fails to resist the ritual, and the target's player may not make any contesting rolls against rituals from the same caster within the scene.

**Failure:** The target fails to prevent the ritualist from accumulating successes this turn.

**Success:** The ritualist makes no progress on the ritual this turn and does not accumulate any successes.

**Exceptional Success:** The ritualist makes no progress on the ritual this turn and does not accumulate any successes.

## Ritual Factors

The target number of successes for a ritual is based on the complexity of the Themes involved, but achieving that target number creates an effect that may still be insufficient for the ritualist's needs. Successes equal to Theme dots produces a basic effect that works on one target within touch range of the ritualist, lasts only a turn, or inflicts a single wound; to achieve more, the ritualist's player may alter the target number of successes according to the Ritual Factors described here.

Alteration of the target number must be done before the first roll to perform the ritual is made—a player cannot change the target number of successes once a ritual has begun. If a ritual is learned rather than improvised, excess successes on the final roll may be spent on Ritual Factors.

*Example: An Acolyte ritualist is performing a rite to immunize her coterie from the effects of Vinculum. This is a*

Protection •••• effect, so the initial target number of successes is four. Making the effect last until the next sunrise adds three successes to the target, and affecting all three members of the coterie adds another two. The final target number is nine. She rolls Presence + Stealth three times, and gains ten successes.

Because the ritualist knows the rite, rather than improvising it from her knowledge of Protection, her player may then spend the extra success. She chooses to increase the duration to a month.

**Area of Effect** is used for rituals that have power over a circular region around a specified spot or a cubic volume.

Radius	Defined Volume	Target Number
1-yard radius	5 cubic yards	None (basic success)
2-yard radius	10 cubic yards	+1 success
4-yard radius	20 cubic yards	+2 successes
8-yard radius	40 cubic yards	+3 successes
16-yard radius	80 cubic yards	+4 successes*

\* Affecting larger areas is more difficult. Add an additional two successes to the target number per x2 radius or volume.

**Duration** is used for ritual effects that must persist longer than a single turn. Note that wounds and other lingering consequences of the ritual persist even after the Duration ends.

Duration	Target Number
One turn	None (basic success)
Caster's Ritual Discipline turns	+1 success
One scene	+2 successes
Until next sunrise	+3 successes
One month	+4 successes*

\* Add an additional success to the target number per month of additional duration.

**Number of Targets** is used for ritual effects that must be applied equally to separate individuals, objects or areas.

Number of Targets	Target Number
One	None (basic success)
Two	+1 success
Four	+2 successes
Eight	+3 successes
Sixteen	+4 successes*

\* Add an additional success to the target number per x2 targets.

**Potency** represents the strength of the ritual; it is used whenever the ritual has an incremental effect. Rituals that add or subtract dice from dice pools use Potency to determine the dice by which to modify the pools. Rituals that inflict damage use Potency to determine how severe the wounds are.

Potency	Target Number
1	Basic success
2	+1 success
3	+2 successes
4	+3 successes
5	+4 successes*

\* Add an additional success to the target number per die or wound.

**Range** is used whenever the ritualist wishes to affect a target further away than what she can touch. “Touch”-range rituals require the ritualist to make physical contact with the target. In combat, this requires the sorcerer to touch the subject with her open palm (see “Touching an Opponent”, page 157 of *The World of Darkness*) before the Duration of the ritual ends. The ritual then takes effect against the target.

Range	Target Number
Touch	Basic success
Line of sight	+1 success
One mile	+2 successes
Two miles	+3 successes
Three miles	+4 successes*

\* Add an additional success to the target number per additional mile of range.

**Size** is used to affect very large targets; a basic success is sufficient to achieve a ritual with power over a subject of size 20 or less. If multiple subjects are targeted by the ritual, the size of the largest one is used for this factor.

Size	Target Number
20	Basic success
21-30	+1 success
31-40	+2 successes
41-50	+3 successes
51-60	+4 successes*

\* Add an additional success to the target number per additional 20 size.

## Themes

Each Theme is split into five degrees, granting the ability to perform increasingly powerful rituals. The descriptions at each degree are not intended to be an exhaustive list—if a power would logically fall within a Theme but is not listed, the Storyteller should gauge how potent the proposed ritual is against the effects already described and determine how many dots in the Theme are necessary. There may be additional Themes known to practitioners of obscure and secret Disciplines.

Themes describe the ritual, not the subject of that ritual: immunizing a vampire from the Vinculum, preventing a delicate object from being damaged, or warding a favorite mortal plaything from another sorcerer's rites are all Protection rituals.

## Creation

One of the key Themes of Crúac, Creation allows the ritualist to summon items, creatures, or phenomena out of nothing, fuelled only by blood or sacrifice as a catalyst for the generative urge. Any ritualist hoping to keep herself magically stocked in mundane supplies or to produce blood fit for drinking by ritual quickly finds the taint of vampirism limits the Theme. Items summoned by Creation rituals are brittle, decayed or evince a patina. Rituals performed to create prey animals or humans fail, while those made to summon insects, vermin, or nocturnal predators succeed. Homunculi are obviously supernatural, twisted, thin-skinned beings pulsing with blood and, in the right dim light, resembling their creator. The products of blood sorcery can't be used to sustain life, or even unlife. Created food is unwholesome, air foul, water dark and stagnant, and blood unsatisfying. Created diseases, drugs, poisons, and toxins follow the rules on pages 176-177 and 180-181 of **The World of Darkness**, using the ritual's Potency factor to determine the number of successes needed on an Intelligence + Medicine roll to treat a disease or to determine a substance's Toxicity.

The “target” for a Creation ritual is usually the thing being created. The Area of Effect Ritual Factor is used to determine volume. When the Duration of a Creation ritual expires, the created item or creature vanishes without a trace.

The Creation Theme can't be used by itself to generate Vitae, but it can do so if coupled with a Theme that destroys Vitae elsewhere as part of the same ritual, in which case the magical nature of Kindred blood can transfer from one source to another. Blood created by this Theme used in isolation is not suitable for drinking; it lacks whatever sustaining properties “real” blood has.

## Creation •

With the first dot in Creation, a ritualist can summon liquids, which typically pool up from wherever the ritual is targeted, and dead organic matter—corpses and the rotten remains of plants. She can also create sensory phenomena, such as sounds emanating from nowhere, strange smells, or lengthening shadows that aren't cast by anything. If a sensory phenomenon is intended as a help or hindrance to a dice roll, the bonus or penalty added is equal to the ritual's Potency.

## Creation ••

With the second dot in Creation, a ritualist can summon living insects or arachnids, vermin, amphibians, fungi, plants, spoiled food, drugs, and gases. Living things created by ritual are under the mental command of the ritualist so long as she maintains concentration.

## Creation •••

With the third dot in Creation, a ritualist may summon predatory and scavenging animals, such as wolves, foxes, owls, and cats. As at Creation ••, animals summoned are under the control of the ritualist. Living creations don't have to be natural animals, however—homunculi, stunted humanoid servants made of twisted flesh and warped blood—make for excellent fetches and helpers.

At this level, a ritualist also learns how to summon physical objects made of solid, homogenous material and to trigger weather so long as conditions are appropriate. She can make it rain or snow from a clouded sky, even make it rain blood or hail frogs or fish, but she can't summon a thunderstorm out of a cloudless night.

Finally, a ritualist at this level of proficiency may produce diseases.

## Creation ••••

With the fourth dot in Creation, a ritualist can cause the Curse to extend to her creations. Animals, plants, and homunculi can be brought into being as ghouls by spending Vitae during the ritual (on top of any spent as the sacrifice in a Crúac rite). Combined with Destruction or Transmutation Themes to remove it from elsewhere, she can even create Vitae within her own system. Homunculi may be granted dots of her physical Disciplines on a one-to-one basis with the ritual's Potency.

Objects created may now be complex or made of multiple materials, but they may not include valuables such as precious metals or gems. The ritualist's command of the environment now extends to creating heat or cold, blanketing areas in magical darkness (that is still pierced by sunlight during the day), and whipping up strong winds.

## Creation ••••

With the fifth dot in Creation, a ritualist can now grant her non-physical Disciplines to homunculi on a one-to-one basis with the ritual's Potency. Her command of the environment can create radically different weather patterns: she can summon thick cloud cover from a sunny day, or call up a gale-force wind or tornado. Her ability to create material goods is now complete with the knowledge of creating valuables through sorcery, though jewels are always dark or flawed and precious metals have an unhealthy sheen.

## Destruction

The Destruction Theme allows a ritualist to magically deal damage to a target, reduce the effectiveness of defenses, increase the effectiveness of attacks and corrode durability. Although the Theme isn't favored by either the Lancea Sanctum or the Circle of the Crone, well-rounded blood sorcerers learn at least the first few levels. True specialists in Destruction are feared for their power to rend subjects apart without even having to physically face them, to lay traps for feeding vampires by turning the blood of mortals toxic, and to cause prized possessions to crumble to dust.

The most important Factor for Destruction spells is Potency—the dot-level the practitioner knows determines

what sort of damage can be inflicted, but the Potency of the spell after any resistance is taken into account then becomes the number of wounds inflicted or the amount of structural damage taken by inanimate subjects. As the Potency for improvised rituals is fixed, Destruction ritualists must carefully gauge how much damage they wish to inflict before starting a ritual, which, in turn, makes most improvised Destruction rituals use "all or nothing" resistance, prolonging the effort needed to perform the ritual. With this in mind, most attempts to magically wound a foe are performed using learned rituals, where the ritualist may compensate for overkill. Even then, compared to employing the physical Disciplines or growing claws with Protean and then confronting an enemy personally, Destruction rituals make for a long, slow way to kill someone.

## Destruction •

With the first dot in Destruction, a ritualist may make attacks more potent, upgrading bashing damage to lethal. He may also produce poisons with a Toxicity equal to Potency.

## Destruction ••

With the second dot in Destruction, the ritualist may instill destructive properties that lie in wait for unwitting victims—he can turn the blood of a target toxic to vampires feeding (so that it inflicts lethal wounds) or cause



a relic to burn anyone who touches it. He may also reduce the Durability of objects and the dot rating of armor by the Potency of his ritual. Lastly, he can inflict bashing wounds to a subject directly, without engaging in combat.

#### Destruction •••

With the third dot in Destruction, a ritualist may upgrade lethal attacks with the armor piercing quality. Alternatively, he may reduce the Resistance Attributes of a target for a time, weakening her so she might be finished off.

#### Destruction ••••

With the fourth dot in Destruction, the ritualist may inflict lethal wounds directly to the target instead of upgrading existing attacks or may upgrade lethal wounds to aggravated. He may also destroy blood—vampire or ghoul targets lose points of Vitae equal to Potency, while mortal victims suffer that many lethal wounds. He may also sap the will of a subject, reducing her Willpower.

#### Destruction •••••

With the final dot in Destruction, the ritualist may inflict aggravated damage directly to a victim. He may also reduce the Power or Finesse Attributes of a subject.

### Divination

One of the favored Themes of Theban Sorcery, Divination allows a ritualist to magically uncover knowledge and to divine for the location or circumstances of a target. At medium levels of expertise, the Theme can be used to foretell the future in the form of omens or to reveal the history of objects, while seeing a location as it was or will be is reserved for the most powerful Diviners.

The future as revealed by Divination is not set in stone; ritualists can prevent events they prophesize from coming to pass, and many uses of the Theme along these lines are designed to help in that course of action. If the ritualist has already seen how he “should” fail at a task, he will avoid the steps that lead to failure. Past events uncovered by Divination are only reliable back to the point of the ritualist’s last torpor. Events further back are clouded by the Fog of Eternity. This only applies to viewing the past, not searching for lore in the present. Using a ritual to see the last meeting, centuries ago, of an elder and his sire would be clouded, but using another to douse for that sire’s long-torpoled body would not.

The two important Factors for Divination rituals are Potency and Range; range still applies even backward or forward in time, so conducting a ritual to understand the haven security of a leader of a rival covenant will fail unless that haven is within range of the ritual. This applies even when the ritualist doesn’t know precisely what the target of her ritual is.

With the first dot in Divination, a ritualist may glimpse details about a course of action she has decided to undertake or learn basic information pertaining to a target. Glimpsing the future reveals fragmented and confusing imagery around an intended action, which the ritualist must interpret. This interpretation is represented by a Wits + Occult roll, with successes granting dice pool bonuses or penalties for the event being foretold. Rituals made to uncover secrets instead do so in descending order of importance to or about the target within the category of information sought, at one revelation per Potency. For example, the ritualist might wish to know what the target considers his most shameful acts or his closest-held secrets, or which owner of an object cherished it the most.

#### Divination ••

With the second dot in Divination, the ritualist may gain knowledge of events happening at the present time. She may witness events at a long distance, borrow the senses of a target, or learn if a specified event is taking place. By combining this level of Divination with another Theme, she can create rituals that trigger in response to a precondition; the Duration of the ritual technically begins when it is first cast, but the second effect does not start until the precondition is met and then it lasts for the remaining Duration beyond that one turn.

#### Divination •••

With the third dot in Divination, foretelling future events and seeing into the past of a target becomes more accurate, and it enables the ritualist to ask basic yes/no questions such as “Is this a good idea?”, “Was this the dagger used to kill my sire?” or “Is the Bishop plotting against me?”, at one question per Potency. Detailed foretelling of her own future actions allows her to play those events out in her mind ahead of time, represented by allowing her player to reroll (keeping the second result) one roll per Potency.

The ritualist may ask for specific information about a target, learning what she wants rather than the most important information.

#### Divination ••••

With the fourth dot in Divination, revelations gained become even clearer. The ritualist may ask specific questions such as “Who do I need to confront?”, “When did they last meet?” or “Which of them will act against me?” She can gain clarity by asking further questions on the same topic by spending any Potency after the first on a one-for-one basis. Forewarning of future danger now allows the ritualist to grant bonus dice equal to Potency to attempts to overcome a hazard.

## Divination •••••

With the fifth dot in Divination, the ritualist can see specific times in the past or future without them having to be the answer to a question. She may also uncover knowledge about targets that no one knows, such as solutions to ancient puzzles and the lost locations of treasure troves.

## Protection

The Theme of Protection is the counterpart to Destruction, enabling a ritualist to defend a target from physical and supernatural harm or danger. The dream of a vampire magically protected from sunlight cannot be completely achieved—at least, not with the known properties of the Theme—but the limited alleviation of banes is possible with the greatest applications of Protection.

Successful Protection rituals either impose penalties against the actions they defend against or provide bonuses to avoid undesirable outcomes. Potency is converted into dice-pool penalties against other rituals, for example, but dice-pool bonuses to avoid frenzy or to stay awake during the day. When used to create armor, the beneficiary receives one point of armor per dot of Protection the ritualist possesses. Aside from Potency, Duration is the key factor in most Protection rituals, as a defense that fails before the danger manifests is useless.

Protection rituals may also be used to heal injuries, but only in vampires—the power of blood magic can't close the wounds of the living, but it can help stricken Kindred. The ritualist must spend Vitae as though he were healing his own injuries, in addition to any used as a sacrifice in Crúac, up to a maximum of the ritual's Potency.

## Protection •

With the first dot in Protection, a ritualist can make it more difficult to harm his subject with other blood sorceries, subtracting Potency from the ritual roll for anyone targeting the beneficiary. He may heal bashing damage in vampires and grant protection from the very least power of the Kindred, the Kiss. Subjects protected from the ecstasy of a vampire's Kiss are still fed from, but add the ritual's Potency in dice to the resistance roll.

## Protection ••

With the second dot in Protection, the ritualist can protect a subject from injuries by granting armor and ward off environmental hazards such as electricity. Vampires can be made more able to resist frenzy.

## Protection •••

With the third dot in Protection, the ritualist can shield the ritual's subject from physical dangers. Targets can be rendered untouchable or unable to be fed from, and the physical effects of Disciplines such as Nightmare

## Destruction, Protection, and Banes

The description of Protection above assumes the mystic banes of vampires are those described in *Vampire: The Requiem*: fire and sunlight. *The Danse Macabre* introduces a system where Kindred may suffer from additional banes instead of derangements when losing a struggle with their own Morality. A vampire might become unable to cross running water, or perhaps be repulsed by the smell of garlic.

The *Danse Macabre* system for banes splits them into mild and severe types, much like derangements. Unlike the universal banes of fire and sunlight, mild and severe banes can be created by blood sorcery so long as the sorcerer does not also suffer from that particular bane. Protection rituals can defend against mild banes at three dots and severe banes at four.

can be warded off. Using the Theme on vampires allows the ritualist to protect his target from being staked or to heal lethal wounds.

## Protection ••••

With the fourth dot in Protection, the ritualist can defend his target against the mental effects of Disciplines such as Majesty or Dominate. Targets can be protected from the Vinculum for a single dose of Vitae per Potency, and vampire targets can be protected from falling asleep against their will during the day, allowing them to remain active for turns equal to Potency.

## Protection •••••

With the fifth dot in Protection, the ritualist can protect his target from becoming addicted to Vitae. Using the Theme on vampires, he can heal aggravated wounds and ameliorate the effects of sunlight or fire to a limited degree—reducing the health lost per turn of either bane by Potency, to a minimum of one.

## Transmutation

The Transmutation Theme allows practitioners to alter the physical, mental, and supernatural properties of a ritual subject. It is the most versatile Theme, but it still has limits that surprise novice sorcerers.

Transmutation rituals work by extending the supernatural forces within the ritualist over the subject—the forces that animate a vampire, that transform death into a semblance of life, that he commands to boost his physical prowess and skills. The Theme is easier to use on



subjects that those forces can grip, and in ways related to their nature. Blood sorcerers find it easy to store Vitae in objects, to animate the dead, or to inflict elements of the Curse on mortals, but the transmutation of one substance to another is much harder.

By drawing on the life-mimicking power of the blood, practitioners may animate a Transmutation ritual's target. If that target is a living being, this ritual manifests as a form of overt control, compelling thoughts or actions the subject did not intend. However, blood sorcery exercised for that purpose is a blunt instrument when compared to the elegant mental Disciplines of Majesty and Dominate.

As with other Themes, Transmutation rituals interact with game systems by converting Potency into dice penalties or bonuses whenever those rituals affect an attempt to use a skill or ability. Equipment created by Transmutation grants an equipment bonus equal to Potency, while the types of wounds inflicted by ritually created weapons are based on each weapon's form.

#### Transmutation •

The first dot of Transmutation allows a ritualist to make a wide variety of minor changes to her subject. By forcing a target to share the Curse, she can store Vitae

#### Growing Your Own Food

Transmutation rituals can't remake everything about a subject. Some essential nature of the original remains. Blood may seem to have changed along with the rest of the subject, but vampires feeding from a Transformed vessel find that the ritual hasn't changed whichever sanguinary property supplies the Beast. If a vampire of Blood Potency high enough to be unable to feed from animals uses a ritual to turn an animal into a human and drink from it, she would gain no sustenance.

in inanimate objects, make Kindred instinctively fall asleep as though the sun were up, and inflict ravenous pangs of hunger on mortals in a mirror of the Wassail. If such changes hinder or help the target, apply the Ritual's Potency as a dice-pool modifier.

At this level, the ritualist's ability to alter physical properties is restricted. She may make minor manipulations to the appearance of a living or vampiric subject; aging,

scars and other features may be altered, but nothing so extreme that he becomes unrecognizable. Dead matter, however, can be warped relatively easily, as long as the new appearance remains similar in size. Finally, she may animate liquids, including blood.

#### Transmutation ••

The second dot of Transmutation allows the ritualist more control over her target. She may disguise a living or vampiric subject as another being of the same general height and weight, and may completely transform dead matter, changing inconvenient corpses into decaying plants, for instance. The animating power of the Theme now extends to gases and plants. The ritualist can also disrupt a thinking being's volition enough to alter speech, but not to force physical actions.

By instilling a ritual's target with power, the ritualist may "bless" an action or confer the will to carry on beyond normal limits. Rituals at this level may grant 9-again on dice rolls, or grant Willpower or Vitae above a character's normal maximum.

#### Transmutation •••

The third dot of Transmutation allows the ritualist to alter living and vampiric beings, granting them the abilities and physical properties of others. Complete transmutation is still beyond the ritualist's reach, but she can (for example) give a human being the scales of a reptile or coat the palms of a ghoul's hands in stinging nematocysts. Inorganic objects may have their appearances changed. The ritualist's ability to animate subjects has also progressed to having power over animals. Lastly, she may bless or curse a specified action, applying Potency as a dice-pool modifier.

#### Transmutation ••••

The fourth dot of Transmutation allows the ritualist to completely change one living thing into another. She may curse humans into animal shape or keep attack dogs in the guise of plants until needed. Her ability to animate subjects now extends to the dead, allowing for the creation of zombies, and to the physical control of thinking beings, allowing for actions to be forced on a sentient subject. She may also grant material objects the properties of one another. Although she can't give "inert" blood the mystic properties needed for vampires to feed, she can remove them from true blood, neutralizing it so it provides no sustenance. (Once a vampire *has* fed, though, removing Vitae requires the Destruction Theme.)

#### Transmutation •••••

The fifth dot of Transmutation allows the ritualist to transform any object or creature into any other, transferring and changing characteristics as she sees fit. Her power over

### Born of Blood

Basic rules for homunculi and gargoyles can be found on pages 225-226 of *Vampire: The Requiem*. More elaborate systems are presented in *The Danse Macabre*, including a non-sorcerous ritual for creating Children of the Stones; if these systems are being used, the Potency of any blood sorcery ritual to create a gargoyle equals the Rank of the creature, but ritual factors are still used. This means that using blood sorcery to create a gargoyle is easier, requiring fewer successes, but the creature is still a magical creation and will vanish or revert to the materials from which it was made at the end of the ritual's Duration.

vampirism now extends down to the urges that drive the Beast—she may manipulate Blood Potency and Vices. Finally, she is now at the point of being able to animate objects, allowing for the creation of gargoyles and similar effects.

### Motifs

Beneath the Themes, influencing every rite or miracle used, are the Motifs that lend each Ritual Discipline bias and flavor. Unlike Themes, Motifs do not progress in power—the Themes define what a ritualist may attempt, while her Discipline's Motif defines how she attempts it and lends detail to the final ritual.

Each Motif is divided into two parts—how the Discipline functions at its most basic level, the "engine" powering the blood sorcery, and the influence it then has on the Themes.

All blood sorcery leverages the power of a vampire's nature to affect the world, but Crúac and Theban Sorcery go about that in two different ways. Crúac approaches the power underpinning the ritualist's existence through the Beast. Theban Sorcery calls out to the Man. Miracles are deliberately thought, while rites are instinctively felt. Rites emphasize the physical and base aspects of vampirism—the thirst, frenzy, and Wassail—while miracles emphasize vampires' cursed state.

### Crúac

Bloody-handed gift of the Crone, Crúac stirs the Beast through rituals that call upon the primal, animalistic blood-totem-gods of pagan nights. The Crone, Kali, Morrigan, Hecate, and countless other mothers of murder

are appeased by blood sacrifice, the ritualist turning herself into a channel for their power.

Rites are frantic, almost desperate affairs, and Acolyte ritualists are prone to frenzy when a ritual fails, having left the Beast roused without cause. Success depends on the ritualist, along with any participants, *feeling* the purpose of her ritual. As such, Crúac uses Social Attributes in ritual casting rolls.

Crúac is **corrupting**—the Beast twists and degrades everything it touches, and summoning its power through the invocation of ancient, bloody goddesses leaves a dedicated ritualist with a battered soul, limiting how humane practitioners can be. When the power of Crúac settles in the subject of a ritual, it does so like blood seeping into a surface, sinking in and tainting her long after the rite's effect has faded.

Crúac is **wild**—successful rites treat Kindred and kine as animals, following their urges and hungers. Rites affect blood and sinew, stone and water. Crúac lends itself to subjects that are immediate and manifest, even when the ritual targets the mind; if a rite forces an action or emotion, it will do so immediately and strongly.

Crúac is **pagan**—the gods of Crúac are in the world, as old as life and death, and as many-faced as the cultures the Circle of the Crone takes cues from. Even when an effect is obviously unnatural, it has physical substance; Crúac can animate homunculi made of stolen flesh, summon wolves or rip an foe's flesh apart, but it can't produce ephemeral visions or constructs of energy.

### Creation

The Creation Theme is a mainstay of the Crúac Discipline. Creation rites mirror the generative process of nature; Acolytes performing Creation Rituals go through mock-pregnancies (even if male), their twisted “offspring” tearing themselves out of a ritualist's body. Blood spilt on the ground calls up writhing masses of worms or bloodthirsty vines, or it is obscured by rapidly gathering fog. Creatures summoned with Crúac Creation are dark-bodied and predatory examples of their species. Insects are large and the thorns of plants long.

Objects made using Crúac look rough, hand-made or grown from natural materials, but they otherwise conform to the cultural prejudices of the ritualist. A seal over a haven's entrance will be a stone slab, still wet from the ground, while a sword will be pitted, hand-beaten iron but still wickedly sharp.

### Destruction

Acolytes see the Destruction Theme as a means to an end, a brutal use of the Crone's gift to rip, batter and gouge the focus of the ritualist's displeasure. Crúac Destruction

rites tend to focus on increasing the damaging potential of elements already present; it requires less mastery of the Theme and leaves the enemy in just as many bloody chunks as the “cleaner” miracles Sanctified use.

Acolyte specialists in Destruction are expected to act as support for the covenant, spending a little power on behalf of the many rather than focusing a ritual on one individual enemy. Acolyte ritualists anoint the covenant's warriors in blood, spread Vitae over objects to be eaten away, and slice their tongues to lick blood onto weapons to be enhanced.

### Divination

The Circle of the Crone is known for its ritually gleaned omens, and a practitioner of Crúac renowned for being able to reliably interpret the future is highly respected in the covenant. Acolytes performing Divination rituals make a great show of the divining method, throwing bones, consulting the entrails of animals or humans, or reading signs in the yolk of partially developed eggs. Rituals meant to observe a target at range often involve representations of the subject: corn dollies, scraps of clothing or images scratched in soil.

When searching for answers about personal matters—scrying for those who have harmed them or looking at their own past or future—Acolyte sorcerers prefer to taint their own image with the sacrificial blood, pouring it into water, smearing it on mirrors, or mixing it with the paint of artworks.

### Protection

Crúac rites of Protection focus on vampires, not mortals; Acolytes invented rituals to heal Kindred without allowing them to feed on the donor, and members of the covenant speculate that the Coils of the Dragon were based on Protection rituals stolen by Dracula after his short time among the Circle.

Protection rites are performed as mirrors to Destruction rituals, revolving around marking or painting a subject with blood and a representation of the doom to be deflected—splinters of wood are inserted under the skin to ward off stakes, ash is mixed into the Vitae to protect from fire, and vitreous humor harvested from unwilling donors is poured over the face to ward off Dominate.

### Transmutation

Acolytes point to the Theme of Transmutation as evidence for Crone beliefs; vampiric existence *can't* be static if the blood can be used to warp the object of a ritualist's attentions. Crúac lends itself to physical alteration without outright transformation, providing new traits to subjects rather than putting them into new forms, but the Circle rarely uses the Theme for mental control. When Acolytes

grant their subjects a taste of the Curse, they emphasize the animalistic, physical aspects of vampirism—hunger, anger, sudden strength, and territoriality.

Transmutation rituals make connections between the ritualist, the subject, and symbols of the changes the ritualist means to make. When a Crúac ritualist uses her rites on another vampire, both she and her subject share a vessel or feed from one another. Such ritualists allow blood to soak into targets they intend to animate, or pierce their own flesh with weapons to be made thirsty.

### *Theban Sorcery*

Revealed by an angel and performed by the Damned, Theban miracles are brought into being by ritual supplication, with the ritualist in the role of a sinner offering something to the stern angels of the Sanctified faith in return for their aid. Miracles are paced, rhythmic, and deliberate—a Sanctified ritualist plans every word and gesture ahead of time, preparing a suitable sacrifice and calling on the Man, the part of himself that thinks, worships, and sins, to prove that it is more than a Beast. Miracles use Mental Attributes in casting rolls.

Theban Sorcery is **judgmental**—angels possess no concept of mercy, and Theban Sorcery does not forgive those who trespass against the ritualist. Debilitating effects, and even some beneficial ones, manifest with stern finality. While Crúac sometimes gives the impression that whatever power the Acolytes use hates and hungers for its subjects, Theban Sorcery is emotionless, uncaring, and unstoppable.

Theban Sorcery is **holy**—the powers that guide it are not of this world, but watch over it. A Theban sorcerer knows, deep within his soul, how lowly he is whenever he performs a ritual. The results of miracles are sometimes obviously ephemeral or spiritual in nature, or are accompanied by strange lights or sounds.

Theban Sorcery is **deliberate**—performing the sacrifice for a miracle requires spiritual and mental effort from the ritualist, and unlike Acolytes, Theban sorcerers don't carry their ritual supplies with them wherever they go. The magic of the Lancea Sanctum is written and studied; even improvised rituals draw on the ritualist's long work examining the Themes.

### **Creation**

The miracles of Creation bring forth their products ex nihilo, with the Sanctified requesting their formation in the language of angels or cutting open sealed containers to reveal the objects or creatures desired waiting inside. Theban Sorcery can produce biblical plagues of insects or rains of toads, but larger animals such as predators have

### **Beast and Man**

If you want to really play up the difference in Motif and source for Crúac and Theban Sorcery, consider mirroring Crúac's corrosive effect on Humanity. In this optional rule, Theban Sorcery requires a ritualist to keep the rational part of his nature healthy; Theban Sorcery automatically fails if the ritualist's Humanity is lower than the highest-rated Theme in a ritual.

a unnatural, spirit-like appearance when summoned with the Discipline; insubstantial, blue-flickering owls and wolves made of cold fire will do their master's bidding but are rarely used for fear of breaking the Masquerade. Physical items produced by miraculous Creation are ornate and richly detailed, even when made of continuous material and common substances.

### **Destruction**

The Lancea Sanctum's ritualists rarely use Destruction by itself, instead learning to combine it with other Themes, especially Divination. Destruction miracles are divine retribution for wrongs, and as such, the covenant favors using the Theme to strike transgressors down from afar—wracking a victim with agony without her ever seeing the ritualist, destroyed by her own actions. The covenant also sets magical traps using the Theme, maiming anyone touching the wrong relic or feeding from a forbidden vessel. Using Destruction sorcery in a combat situation, however, is seen as desperate and unbefitting of Amoniel's bequest.

When a Sanctified performs Destruction rituals, he does so by marking the subject in some way, informing the victim of the doom that awaits her. The miracle's effects manifest as burning sensations, magically opening wounds such as stigmata, and uncontrollable actions such as a vampire forced to vomit blood until torpor.

### **Divination**

Every Sanctified practitioner of Theban Sorcery learns the Divination Theme. The magic of the Lancea Sanctum revolves around punishment and transgression, and its miracles use Divination to uncover those transgressions. Sanctified use rituals to learn the most shameful sins of mortals, to find those that have broken the laws of God, and to properly target retribution for wrongs done to the covenant.

As soon as they are accomplished enough in Divination, Theban sorcerers learn how to include it in other

rituals—creating curses that prevent incorrect or sinful actions in the target, destructive miracles that cause terrible wounds when the subject breaks her word, or transmutations that only end when the victim modifies her behavior according to the ritualist’s wishes.

Finally, the scholarly side of the Lancea Sanctum is drawn to the use of Divination to uncover the lost treasures of the past: finding the hiding places of torpid elders, uncovering forgotten scholarly works, or seeking out the ancient marks left by their forebears.

### Protection

The church uses the miracles of Protection to enforce prohibitions against harming select individuals, to defend their crusading Kindred and ghouls from heathen weapons, and—in extreme circumstances—to heal vitally important covenant members rather than allow them to succumb to torpor.

Most Sanctified congregations, however, regard the use of Theban Sorcery to ward off banes as heretical, a subversion of vampires’ cursed state using the powers granted by the angel. Individual cities draw the line in different places, and it’s not necessarily clearly applied within a congregation’s ranks—Sanctified native to one city may regard protection from the Vinculum as permitted but draw the line at attempting to survive longer exposure to sunlight, while another might allow their ritualists to protect church members from any and all threats but regard helping a mortal to shrug off blood addiction as blasphemy.

Sacrifices for Protection miracles present a target for the threat to be warded off onto other than the beneficiary, symbolically drawing the doom away. Humanoid statuettes made of materials susceptible to the doom, items of the subject’s clothing, or even sacrificed body parts are all used.

### Transmutation

Transmutation miracles are a mainstay of the Lancea Sanctum’s rituals, but Sanctified dogma limits their application of the Theme. It’s an article of faith for the covenant that all God’s creations, including the Kindred, have a place in His design, so miracles that transform one creature into another or—worse—share aspects of the Curse with mortals are viewed with deep suspicion. The other uses of Transmutation are not so proscribed, so specialists in the Theme concentrate on inanimate and vampiric subjects. Theban Sorcery is famous for miracles that force Kindred to sleep, that store Vitae in sacred vessels, or that curse those who wrong the covenant. At the most potent levels of the Theme, Sanctified sorcerers manipulate the vices of their flocks.

Transmutation rituals for Theban Sorcery use sacrifices that represent change or transubstantiation, especially items in which the process of change has been arrested or lies in potential. Communion wafers, cocoons, and rare seeds are offered up to begin the magical transformation of the subject. When Theban sorcerers work miracles that compel behavior, alter the mind, or animate a subject in a semblance of life, they do so through language, inscribing glyphs and angelic ciphers onto sacrifices that are then consumed, preferably by the subject.

### *The Limitations of Blood Sorcery*

Blood has its limits. There are some goals that the Ritual Disciplines can’t achieve no matter how dedicated the sorcerer is. Both Ritual Disciplines harness the nature of vampires, and they are limited by that nature.

No ritual may summon or destroy banes: Fire and sunlight remain inviolate despite rumors of Sanctified miracles causing the covenant’s enemies to combust. And no ritual may completely ward off banes.

Blood sorcery has no analogue to the “counter-magic” found in the ritual magics of some supernatural creatures. Once a ritual has been successfully cast, it can’t be “dispelled” by the powers available to the Kindred.

Blood sorcery can produce flashes of oracular insight, but not the granting of new magical senses—that’s the province of the Auspex Discipline.

The effects of blood sorcery can’t be made permanent. Rituals may have their Duration factor extended for months, but eventually, the power will wear off.

Blood sorcery can’t access other realms of existence—it deals with the world as vampires know it, not any of the strange spiritual realms spoken of in the lore of other supernatural creatures.

### *Existing Rites and Miracles*

The following lists convert the Crúac and Theban Sorcery rituals found in *Vampire: The Requiem* to the new blood sorcery system. Because the detailed system offers variable ritual factors, the effects as described in *Vampire* are not always exactly translated or represent a specific allotment of ritual factors that a player may choose to alter.

#### *Crúac*

- **Pangs of Proserpina (Transmutation •)** Apply Potency as a dice penalty to attempts to resist Wassail in vampiric subjects, and then trigger a Wassail check.

## Other Sorceries

Crúac and Theban Sorcery are the best-known Ritual Disciplines, but they aren't the only ones that have ever been practiced by Kindred. Fragments of ancient lore and the Fog-addled memories of Elders point to earlier or variant forms of the Disciplines having once existed. Also, some bloodlines develop Ritual Disciplines of their own, based on one or the other of the common pair.

Ancient forms of Crúac and Theban Sorcery are detailed in *Ancient Mysteries* and *Requiem for Rome*. Modern practitioners would recognize many of the ritual forms if they somehow witnessed or had access to detailed records of such rituals, but time and distance have had an effect. The basis for the Disciplines—which Attributes they use and the mechanics of their sacrifice—remain the same, but the Motif is different.

*Example: The Veneficia was the Crúac tradition of Imperial Rome during the time of the Camarilla. It was more "civilized" than modern Crúac, calling on the deities of Rome using carefully designed and learned rites. Veneficia loses the "wild" aspect of Crúac's Motif and replaces it with "occult", marking the study of secret knowledge ritualists undertook.*

Bloodline sorceries are Ritual Disciplines unique to specific bloodlines, who have usually based them on Crúac or Theban Sorcery. The Motifs of the "parent" Discipline change, keeping only the basic casting form.

*Example: Two rival European Bloodlines have developed strangely similar powers through different means. The Architects of the Monolith and the Család, respectively based in Paris and Budapest, both practice Ritual Disciplines with a Motif of "Territory"; their rituals give them power over their domains. The Architect Discipline, Gilded Cage, is based on Theban Sorcery and utilizes careful diagrams and elaborate rituals. The Család Discipline, Lithopedia, is a specialized form of Crúac that treats the domain as though it were a vampire with a blood tie to the ritualist, using blood to infect everything within the territory with her presence. Gilded Cage is detailed in *Bloodlines: The Hidden*, while Lithopedia can be found in *Night Horrors: Immortal Sinners*.*

- **The Hydra's Vitae (Destruction ••)** The ritual as described in *Vampire* uses +3 successes on the Duration factor as part of the roll, but only a basic success on Potency, inflicting one lethal wound per Vitae drunk.

- **Deflection of Wooden Doom (Protection •••)** The ritual as described in *Vampire* uses +3 successes on the Duration factor as part of the roll.

- **Touch of the Morrigan (Destruction •••)** The ritual as described in *Vampire* uses no Range factors (so it is performed at Touch range), uses +2 successes on Duration, and uses any extra successes on Potency, inflicting lethal wounds.

- **Blood Price (Creation ••••, Destruction •••• or Creation ••••, Transmutation ••••)** The ritual neutralizes Vitae using either Destruction or Transmutation, transferring the properties so that it may be formed inside the subject's system with Creation. One Vitae is transferred per Potency, and the ritual as described in *Vampire* uses +1 success on Range and +3 successes on Duration as part of the roll.

- **Willful Vitae (Protection ••••)** The ritual as described in *Vampire* uses + 3 successes on the Duration factor as part of the roll.

- **Blood Blight (Destruction ••••)** Note that this ritual cost five dots in *Vampire* but is available at four dots under the new system. One Vitae per Potency is destroyed in the subject.

- **Feeding the Crone (Transmutation •••, Destruction ••••)** The ritual as described in *Vampire* doesn't add extra successes to Potency, but relies on the vampire making attacks after she has transformed. Note that this ritual only requires four dots rather than five under the new system.

## Theban Sorcery

- **Blood Scourge (Transmutation •, Destruction •)** The ritual animates a portion of the caster's blood as a whip with an equipment bonus equal to Potency and then converts the damage that whip inflicts to lethal.
- **Vitae Reliquary (Transmutation •)** The ritual stores Vitae equal to Potency, but the ritual described in *Vampire* needs some adjustment—sorcery can't be made indefinite, and blood from a reliquary still does produce a Vinculum.

- **Rigor Mortis (Transmutation •)** Apply Potency as a dice penalty to physical actions. This ritual only affects vampires.
- **Cheval (Divination ••)** The ritual conditions specified in *Vampire* are the result of applying extra successes to Duration.

- **Curse of Babel (Transmutation ••)** The ritual as described in **Vampire** uses extra successes on Duration.
- **Liar's Plague (Creation ••, Divination ••)** The ritual as described in **Vampire** uses + 2 target successes to last a scene.
- **Blandishment of Sin (Destruction • or ••••)** Performing the ritual as described in **Vampire** requires four dots in Destruction to upgrade wounds to aggravated, but it can be used at Destruction • if the damage suffered by the subject is bashing and therefore only being upgraded to lethal.
- **Malediction of Despair (Divination ••, Transmutation •••)** Reduce the dice pool of the specified action by Potency. The ritual as described in **Vampire** has used extra successes to reduce the subject's dice pool to a chance die.
- **Gift of Lazarus (Transmutation ••••)** The ritual as described in **Vampire** uses extra successes on Duration.
- **Stigmata (Destruction ••••)** The ritual as described in **Vampire** uses only basic Potency (inflicting one lethal wound per turn) but applies extra successes to Duration.
- **Transubstantiation (Transmutation •••••)** The ritual as described in **Vampire** uses + 3 successes on Duration.
- **Wrathful Judgment** This ritual is not possible under the new system as it summons fire, which contradicts the limitations of blood sorcery, is cast beyond achievable range, and uses multiple Willpower points in the sacrifice. Miracles designed to inflict aggravated damage at range do exist and may be constructed using the rules in this chapter. At the Storyteller's discretion, Wrathful Judgment may be available with six dots in Crúac and the Destruction Theme, but like all elder-level Disciplines, the specifics are left up to individual troupes.

## *New Rites and Miracles*

The following rituals have been designed with the chapter's improvised blood sorcery system in mind, as examples of how to construct rites and miracles from the Themes.

### *Crúac Rites*

The Circle of the Crone has developed these rites by exploring the Themes, seeking ways to protect

themselves from other covenants and strike against their enemies.

#### **Line in the Sand (Creation •)**

The Circle of the Crone is often pushed to the marginal spaces where city meets wilderness, which often suits its members, allowing the covenant's rituals to take place away from prying eyes. The edge of the city brings its own problems, however; the sites the covenant finds to its liking have a way of attracting other supernatural beings. The worst of these creatures take the form of wolves, at least until they *change*. Accidental violations of territory bring bloody confrontations, and negotiation is difficult. The covenant is often faced with the problem of how to stake a territorial claim to avoid hostilities without always being able to talk to the beasts—and how to do so without risking the Masquerade.

Line in the Sand is simple in application and relies on a sense that vampires and werewolves have in abundance but mortals do not share: the ability to smell blood at a distance. The ritualist leaves trace amounts of blood spread around an area, walking counterclockwise around its edge. If the rite succeeds, the area gives off a scent of blood faint enough that humans can't detect it but strong enough to be quite clear to vampires and wolves—especially supernatural, shapechanging wolves. The rite is typically performed by all members of the covenant working in concert, the individual Areas of Effect quite small but acting as boundary markers, together describing a border that is obvious to both Kindred and wolves without either party having to speak or even meet.

#### **Cloud the Watcher's Eye (Protection •)**

In cities where the Lancea Sanctum and Circle of the Crone are in open conflict, Acolytes need ways to defend themselves against hostile miracles aimed at driving them out. This rite is an example of the low-level uses of the Protection Theme, taught to novice Acolyte sorcerers as a means of defending against rituals cast on them at a distance. By forcing the Sanctified to use their magic in person, the Circle itself decides the field of battle.

The Acolyte ritualist takes an image of the subject or subjects to be protected and covers it with blood until it is no longer recognizable—if the one Vitae required to cast the rite is not sufficient, more blood may be added from any source. If the rite succeeds, any attempt to target a protected subject with blood sorcery is penalized by the rite's Potency in dice.

Advanced forms of this rite exist, using Divination •• as well as the Protection component to show the Protected subject a snapshot vision of the ritualist attempting to target her. Even more sophisticated forms better live up to the rite's name, adding Divination ••

and Transmutation  $\bullet\bullet\bullet$  to strike the offending ritualist blind for the rite's Duration.

#### Harvest of Slaves (Transmutation $\bullet$ )

The members of the Lancea Sanctum store Vitae in objects, but they do so for their own use. At best, a starving vampire might be fed by the Sanctified in exchange for favors later.

The Circle of the Crone also performs rituals to impregnate objects with blood, but it does so for an entirely different purpose. By hiding Vitae in foodstuffs, they are able to feed Vitae to mortals without the kine realizing what it is they're ingesting, only that—thanks to blood addiction and the Vinculum—it tastes really, really good. Enterprising Acolytes with money troubles sometimes even use this rite to place Vitae in drugs.

The ritualist adds blood—the Vitae needed to activate the rite along with as much Vitae as she needs to feed to mortals—to the consumable goods during the preparation stage. Raw fruits and vegetables are empowered by blood spilt on the plant's roots, while prepared cuisine and pharmaceuticals are twisted during preparation. If the rite succeeds, the Vitae is divided among all the goods. The victim must eat, use, or drink an entire "share" or "portion" to receive the Vitae and enjoy its addictive effects, so the more Vitae the ritualist places into the subject, the better.

#### Biting Blade (Transmutation $\bullet$ )

This rite allows an Acolyte to feed without the kiss, drinking blood through the intermediary of her weapon. The ritualist takes a blade—typically a ritual athame—and makes several long, shallow cuts across her own flesh, allowing the weapon to "taste" her Vitae.

If the rite succeeds, every level of lethal damage dealt by the blade "feeds" the wielder one Vitae, as though she had fed directly from the victim. A biting blade neither grants immunity to Vinculum or blood addiction nor allows the vampire to feed successfully from vessels prohibited due to Blood Potency. Each biting blade only works for the Acolyte who performed the rite; if another person uses it, neither he nor the intended recipient receives Vitae.

Curiously, a biting blade does allow for autophagy and may even have originally been discovered for that purpose. If its true wielder uses the blade to injure herself, she still suffers a wound, but she also receives Vitae as though she had fed. Acolytes have used this rite in emergencies to build up enough Vitae to cast another, critical, rite.

#### One Hundred Needles (Creation $\bullet\bullet$ , Destruction $\bullet$ )

Sometimes, mortals must be disposed of in ways that are final, have no chance of harming vampires as collateral

damage, and do not threaten the Masquerade. The Circle of the Crone has many methods of arranging horrific but "natural" deaths that the mortal authorities will accept, and this rite is one of the most popular.

The ritualist crushes a beeswax effigy of the subject and pours the sacrificial Vitae onto the ground in front of her. If the rite is successful, the blood bubbles and spits as a host of stinging insects bursts up out of it into the air—and toward the subject of the rite. The swarm attacks the target, dealing poison damage of Toxicity equal to Potency for Potency turns, but the victim reflexively resists each turn's damage with Stamina + Resolve as described on page 181 of *The World of Darkness*.

#### Thorned Snare (Creation $\bullet\bullet$ , Transmutation $\bullet\bullet$ )

This rite allows an Acolyte to ensnare a subject in agony, bleeding him for easy feeding or as an object lesson to others. The ritualist clenches a large thorn—if one isn't available, a metal or stone replica will do—so tightly in her fist that she draws blood, and presents the bloodied palm to her target. If the rite is successful, thick rope-like vines burst from the ground and wrap around the subject, sprouting long, wicked thorns that pierce the subject's flesh as the vines constrict. Treat the vines as a creature making a Grapple action with a Strength + Brawl dice pool equal to the rite's Potency and the ability to inflict lethal damage.

#### Creeping Spy (Creation $\bullet\bullet$ , Divination $\bullet\bullet$ )

Acolytes needing spies in places they can't physically go, or when Stealth is required, sometimes use this rite to summon a suitable agent. The ritualist bleeds out the Vitae used as the sacrifice, mixes it with a little soil, and then drinks it again. She does not gain any Vitae from the re-ingestion, but at rite's end, a swelling appears on her body, rapidly growing until it reaches the size of a large egg just under the skin. When the skin finally splits, a monstrous, foot-long centipede crawls out.

The ritualist constantly sees what the spy sees, in an oddly wide field of vision, and may direct it mentally by concentrating and motioning as though controlling the strings of a puppet. Dealing with her senses and those of the spy at the same time is confusing, so a ritualist will often go to a safe place, close her eyes, and concentrate, trying to blot out distractions. The spy is quiet and low to the ground, receiving a four-dice bonus on Stealth rolls, but is only Size 1, so it is both small and possesses only two health dots. If the ritualist attempts to perform any action other than to control the spy, or is interrupted while doing so, her player must succeed at a reflexive Wits + Composure roll or the character loses control of the spy for a turn.

Advanced forms of this rite use Transmutation •• to grant the spy the ability to swim or crawl unimpeded up walls, or include Destruction • to give it a poisonous bite.

#### Miasma (Creation •••)

A defense against sites sacred to the Crone being found by mortals, this rite ensures that intruders don't live long after their visit. The ritualist wades into a body of still water—a pond or lake—and cuts her feet, allowing Vitae to spill out into the water. If the rite succeeds, a thick mist gathers around her, blanketing the Area of Effect factor of the ritual.

To vampires and other supernatural beings that don't need to breath, the mist provides cover but has no other effects. Mortal victims who breathe in the vapor, however, suffer an agonizing death unless they can survive long enough for the rite's Duration to end. The mist is full of contagion, inflicting Potency in lethal damage every day until the Duration ends. A successful Stamina + Resolve roll can allow a victim to "skip" one interval of damage, but it must be rolled for each day. When the rite's Duration ends, the diseases vanish from the victim's system.

This rite is not for novice blood sorcerers; the ritualist must carefully allot ritual factors to Area of Effect, Duration and Potency for best effect. Advanced forms of this rite offset the difficulty by using Transmutation •• to control the mists after they have been created, allowing the ritualist to target them more precisely and spend less effort on blanketing a large area.

#### Contortion (Transmutation •••)

This rite allows Acolytes to slip through spaces and entrances normally far too small for their bodies, letting them squeeze through air vents or thick pipes. The covenant uses this ritual to infiltrate areas of the city other vampires can't access, to place hidden sanctuaries in otherwise inaccessible areas of the underground, and to sneak past security into rivals' havens.

To perform the rite, the ritualist digs her fingers into her flesh until she touches bone, and then presses down hard until the bone cracks. Pulling her fingers out of the wound, she draws parallel lines of blood down a vampire target's limbs and face. If the rite succeeds, the subject's bones become elastic and bendable, which together with the lack of need for his internal organs to operate allows him to contort and squeeze his body into impossible forms. Reduce the subject's effective Size by Potency (to a minimum of one) only for purposes of determining if he will fit into an opening—the subject doesn't lose Health or Speed. This rite may only be performed on vampiric subjects.

#### Cheating Fate (Divination ••••)

The Circle of the Crone survives anything the other covenants throw at it, thanks to its primal, ever-evolving nature and the use of magic such as this rite. Cheating Fate permits an Acolyte to examine the future, allowing the covenant to plan ahead and direct its members to avoid a looming disaster.

The ritualist prepares a sacrificial victim—preferably a human, but an animal will do—as a representative of the doom the covenant needs to avoid. If a rival covenant is involved, one of its servants might be used, or someone dressed in a rough imitation of its ritual garb. If an individual is the source of doom, the sacrifice will be dressed as him. Once everything is ready, the ritualist kills the sacrifice and opens its gut, running her hands through the entrails. If the rite is successful, she states the nature of the doom and receives a vision of how the covenant should act to avoid it. The players of any of the ritual's participants (who must be added as Target factors) then receive bonus dice equal to Potency on rolls that contribute to following the vision's instructions.

#### Mirrored Tears (Protection ••••)

This rite protects the subject against the use of mental Disciplines such as Dominate or Majesty, foiling the plans of any vampire attempting to use her as a puppet. Following the magical principle that the eyes are the windows to the soul, the ritualist anoints her eyelids with vitreous humor harvested from the eyeballs of sentient beings.

If the rite is successful, any attempt to control the subject's mind is confused and partially deflected by the ointment. Mind-controlling powers suffer a dice penalty equal to the rite's Potency.

#### Stone Sanctuary (Transmutation •••••)

This rite allows an Acolyte to create an emergency haven for herself and her coterie, protecting them if they are caught near dawn or need a place to hide and recover away from their usual haunts. Unlike the Protean •• power Haven of Soil, the rite opens a physical space deep in the ground that can accommodate multiple vampires.

The ritual should be performed in as low a place as possible—in the foundations of buildings or on natural soil will do, but directly on rock is best. The ritualist draws a circle describing the area to be protected, and she and anyone else to be saved steps inside. If the rite succeeds, the solid material beneath the ritualist warps around a sphere marked by the circle, lowering everything in that sphere "through" the intervening matter (which bends out of the way and then returns to normal) until the area affected by the ritual

reaches a safe distance into the bedrock, a spherical, airless bubble containing the ritualist, her passengers and anything they were standing on. When the Duration of the ritual ends, the Sanctuary rises back to the surface.

### Theban Miracles

The Lancea Sanctum have developed the following miracles by exploring the limits of the Themes, allowing them to better fulfill their purpose as the Sanctified of God.

#### Tempter's Eye (Divination •)

This basic miracle, taught to many Sanctified as they begin to learn Theban Sorcery, allows a ritualist to gain insight into a mortal subject's baser nature. By using the results of the miracle, Sanctified determine how best to then drive subjects toward temptation, fulfilling their roles as God's agents of damnation.

The sacrifice for the miracle is a tarnished silver coin, into which the ritualist scratches the name of the subject with an iron nail. If the miracle is successful, the ritualist learns that subject's Vice.

#### Thief's Mark (Divination ••, Transmutation •)

Churches are understandable targets for theft by the desperate, mortal and Kindred alike seeing places of worship as storehouses of treasures that are easily fenced for funds. The Lancea Sanctum must defend its relics and ritual objects, and Theban Sorcery provides means beyond physical security.

After a theft has occurred, a Sanctified ritualist prepares the miracle. Using the sacrifice of a hollow glass imitation of the stolen object filled with black ink, the ritualist calls for the thief to be identified. If the miracle is successful, the ritualist learns where the stolen item is now located. Moreover, the skin of the thief's face blisters and peels, leaving behind an angry red mark. When Sanctified soldiers arrive to retrieve their property, the culprit is easy to single out for retribution.

#### Dust to Dust (Transmutation ••)

The Lancea Sanctum occasionally finds it politic to clean up the messes of other vampires. For instance, the childe of an important Kindred, confessing her first accidental kill to a Priest, will remember the church kindly if the covenant deals with the problem. And even among experienced vampires, there are always inconvenient bodies. This miracle allows a ritualist to transform an incriminating corpse into something more able to be transported without attracting attention.

The ritualist sacrifices a few drops of myrrh-scented oil, marking the corpse on any wounds. If the miracle

is successful, the corpse transforms into unremarkable refuse, composting plant matter or food waste that, although unpleasant, can be shoved into garbage bags and transported to a location where it can change back into body parts safely once the Duration of the ritual wears off.

#### Bastard's Line (Divination •••)

Certain cities take a hard line on the Tradition of Progeny, and as the guardians of vampires' souls, the Lancea Sanctum takes transgressions seriously. When new Kindred appear claiming not to know who sired them and all the suspects deny responsibility, the Sanctified have ways of determining the truth.

This miracle allows a Sanctified ritualist to see a vision of a vampire's Embrace, allowing him to identify the sire. The sacrifice is a personal item that was owned by the subject in life and present at the Embrace, such as an article of clothing or an ID card. If the miracle succeeds, the ritualist receives the vision. Wits + Composure rolls may, at Storyteller's discretion, be needed to pick out particularly obscure details, and if the sire was disguised in some way, the vision will not allow the ritualist to see through that disguise.

#### Torment (Destruction •••)

The miracles of Theban Sorcery are a gift from God, granted by His agent to the Lancea Sanctum to do His work. Sanctified ritualists do not take failure to perform a miracle well, especially if it only failed through the resistance of the subject. The failure can't reflect on God, so it must be *their* fault. After suffering such humiliation and shame too many times, a Priest might begin looking for ways to tilt the odds in his favor.

This miracle strikes a subject with a total lack of subtlety, throwing all the power the ritualist can muster into breaking the target's defenses. Once this miracle has found purchase, however, subsequent rituals will have a much easier time, as Torment devastates the defenses it overcomes.

The sacrifice for the ritual is a representation of the subject that is slowly and methodically destroyed over the course of the ritual, such as a crystal model crushed underfoot. If the miracle succeeds, the subject loses points of Resolve equal to Potency to a minimum of one. Any remaining Potency then removes Willpower dots. All traits return at the end of the ritual's Duration.

#### Wolf in Child's Clothing (Transmutation •••)

This miracle allows a Sanctified ritualist an edge in using other miracles targeted on a vampire in whom the covenant has taken an "interest", by appropriating the blood tie of one of the subject-to-be's vampiric relatives.

By acquiring and sacrificing a small portion of such a relative's body (a finger will suffice), the ritualist calls on the angels to disguise him as that vampire for purposes of magic. If the miracle is successful, the ritualist and the target are unchanged to the naked eye, but their blood ties have been exchanged, and if their auras are scrutinized with Auspex, any Diablerie lines have also transferred. At the end of the miracle's Duration, the blood ties and auras of both vampires revert back to their normal state. Note that any sire or progeny of the subject using the blood tie to sense the emotional state of the subject will read the ritualist instead and realize, on a successful Wits + Occult roll, that her family has been infiltrated.

#### **Aversion (Transmutation •••, Divination ••)**

There is more than one way to train an animal. This miracle allows a Sanctified ritualist to forbid a target from acting in a certain way, and backs up that prohibition with pain if the subject fails to heed his advice.

The sacrifice is a lock of the target's hair crushed and mixed together with lye flakes, which the ritualist burns as he explains the taboo the target is now under. If the miracle succeeds and the target then breaks the conditions specified, she suffers wracking pain as though seriously injured, taking a dice penalty equal to Potency until she ends the transgression.

#### **Break the Chain (Destruction ••••)**

This miracle allows a Sanctified ritualist to take away the tools of his enemies, burning the Vitae out of ghouls so that they no longer pose a threat unless their master wastes resources to resupply them with blood.

The sacrifice is a gold chain, such as a piece of jewelry, broken with the links scattered over an image of the subject's master. If the miracle is successful, Vitae equal to Potency in the ghoul's system is destroyed.

Advanced forms of the ritual include Transmutation •••• to also suppress the Vinculum and blood addiction of the ghoul for the Duration of the miracle.

#### **Lord's Chalice (Protection ••••, Divination ••)**

The potency of advanced age brings danger and paranoia, as elders are forced to feed from other vampires, risking Vinculum and Vitae addiction. The chance is only slight if they keep to weak-blooded vessels, but there are times in the duties of a Sanctified Bishop or Priest when an elder must drink blood of which he is not entirely sure; comingled Vitae in group rituals, for example. A slight chance of Vinculum is too great a chance. A Priest should submit only to God.

This miracle was developed to defend against the possibility of potent Vitae being introduced into a ritualist's blood supply. The ritualist vomits blood into a silver chalice, then pours it out in a line. If the miracle is successful, the chalice (which is also the Sacrifice) becomes a protective intermediary. Anyone drinking Vitae that has been collected in the chalice does not form a stage of Vinculum or test for blood addiction. The Divination component of the miracle provides a further safeguard, giving a bitter taste to the blood if the drinker is unaware of the donor.

#### **The Blackened Hand (Protection •••••)**

This miracle protects a vampire from the dangers of fire through sympathetic magic of a brutal sort, allowing an advanced ritualist to escape destruction. The hand of the miracle's name is the literal left hand of the subject to be protected, amputated, wrapped in linen and placed in a sawdust-stuffed box. The injury may not be healed until the miracle's Duration ends, but the pain and loss is an equitable price for the ritual's potent protection. If the miracle succeeds, the hand becomes a conduit for flames. Any damage suffered by the subject due to fire is instead done to the hand, which has "Health" equal to the ritual's Potency. The miracle does not, however, stave off Rötschreck.

#### **Seek the Sleeping Lord (Divination •••••)**

This ritual is used by the Lancea Sanctum to uncover the resting places of torpid vampires that have been lost to all other means of inquiry. The most experienced Diviners in the covenant are required, but the effort is worth it; the ritualist doesn't need to be looking for a specific subject, or even know if there are any to be found.

Making a sacrifice of fangs removed from vampires of at least a century in age, the ritualist draws a large map of the area to be searched on the floor in charcoal. If the ritual succeeds, drops of blood bead from his skin as he paces methodically over the map, falling in the locations of any Kindred in torpor. One vampire is uncovered per Potency, unless all torpid Kindred in range have been found. Typically, the ritualist builds as large a Range as possible to cast the net wide.

The covenant doesn't necessarily awaken the vampires it uncovers, first using lesser Divination rituals to discern their identities, but it keeps records of where they are to be found. Some Sanctified make an annual practice of performing this miracle, updating their maps with the locations of vampires freshly fallen, or spotting when sleepers awake.

Boon hated the beard, and the loose unbleached cotton clothes made him feel naked. Clothes were armor, the look and the weight and the constriction helping him keep everything outside himself away. For awhile, he'd gotten to wear the old leather coat again, and inside it, he felt safe, like everything was in hand, but they'd been spotted in a park bundling a homeless man's corpse into the bushes, and he'd ditched the coat as they ran. Every night for the last 11 years, he regretted losing it.

The joke to Kitty about the ashram and hippies wasn't so funny anymore. The Old Man's little trick worked for them here—the patois of Kundalini yoga replacing the hellfire Christian revival, and one-on-one meditation sessions replacing the crowd of swooning and crying faithful. And the damned beard.

They headed Northwest with their nest egg and bought the compound of the Heaven's Messenger congregation. The bank seized it after the whole cult took arsenic so it could ride Heaven's Chariot into the sky. The cult's buildings already looked sufficiently exotic and Eastern, so white paint over all the UFO murals and lots of floor pillows gave it some minimalistic class.

Kitty found a homeless woman named Marsha to be her 'momma', and as far as the human staff and the ashram's students knew, she was the cleaning lady's kid. Marsha was devoted to the child and more than once gave Boon a jealous glare when her 'daughter' spent more time with him than her.

Boon cleared his mind and smiled through the beard at Patent Lawyer. The man had a name, but Boon did not care to remember it. He handled patent disputes for tech companies, which seemed to sue

one another  
as part

# Boon & Kitty 1997

of their normal business practices. It paid for Patent Lawyer's Bentley, and the 10,000 dollars he fronted for this weekend personal workshop with the Shankaracharya to—as the Fire Serpent Ashram's website promises—"unleash your cellular animal strength and channel it into achieving harmony and mastery of self and desire."

The magic was the same as when preaching under the hot tent—snakebite and the Beast wakes in somebody else's belly, uncoiling like unleashed Kundalini. Boon dressed it up good, but Patent Lawyer tensed up as Boon drew the four foot cobra he now employed from the ebony chest beside his cushion. Under the tent, the congregation was made to swoon and gasp when he showed them the dark miracle, let them feel the fury inside them. Here though, the congregation was one man, and he'd already paid. Here, he needed to feel the angry power unleashed and believe it was his own, and then, he had to control it. He'd walk away feeling like a giant among ants, filled with animal power that he alone controlled. He'd probably feel it for a few weeks, maybe a month. Then, he'd be calling trying to get another weekend with the Shankaracharya.

Last year, they cleared a quarter million. One of his first students was Nonfiction Editor, and she was trying to get Boon to agree to a ghostwritten self-help book. He'd had requests for interviews. He and Kitty'd hired somebody to handle those things.

When he left Patent Lawyer panting and pale on his cushion and bowed out of the meditation room, Boon found Kitty waiting for him with Marsha standing possessively behind. Kitty's expression was enough to start him worrying.

"What?"

"Somebody is here to talk to you."

He nodded.

"Not the usual sorts of somebodies? No, I guess not.  
Who?"

"She said was a Hierophant. Her name is Gail. She called me 'sister'."

"I guess we knew the Circle would want to talk to us eventually. Is she scary? One of the old hags?"

"No, she's little and streamlined, looks young."

Dressed in jeans and a band t-shirt, and she came by herself."

"Is she so dangerous that she doesn't need company, easy going enough not to worry about it, or are there half a dozen heavies lurking in the trees outside?"

"I don't know! My little dollies don't tell me anything, even when I feed them."

Boon nodded. The Old Man's little girl had taught Kitty things that Boon didn't want to think about. He tried not to notice how pale Marsha was. The hold she had on Kitty's shoulder seemed less possessive now and more like she was trying to keep her balance.

"Where is she?"

"She's waiting in the office lounge. She asked if we had any real furniture to sit on."

"Well, alright then."

Hierophant Gail was as described: small and compact, and dressed casual. She was curled up on one side of the old sofa, reading a dog-eared paperback copy of *Dragonflight*.

Boon wondered how to play this, and when he felt the force of her gaze carving him up, he decided on honest. He banished the namaste he'd been about to deploy, and instead said, "Howdy," and dropped into the deep leather chair opposite her.

She nodded, and didn't seem displeased that he'd dropped the persona he wore for the credulous.

"I'm Boon. Welcome to my sanctuary, Mother Gail."

He deliberately unclenched his jaw and made himself relax. He crossed his legs and waited.

She smiled, "Just Gail please. We don't worry too much about titles and what-not up here."

Boon nodded. "Sorry about that. I'm used to folks who put a lot of stock in forms and ritual."

"Oh, we do, too, but only to impress the newbies. So much of what we do is a magic act, isn't it? The left hand conceals while the right hand reveals!"

Boon rubbed his finger stump, and then held up his hand.

"I guess I reveal a little more than I conceal then."

She laughed, "Yes you do, Boon. Yes you do."

He waited.

She sighed, a touch theatrically. Uh-oh, he thought. She's about to pull off those silk gloves and show the brass knuckles underneath.

"I'm afraid we're going to have to ask you to close the place down."

Boon blinked slowly.

"You don't half get to the point, do you? I was expecting 20 minutes of innuendo and vague threats."

"You knew I'd be coming?"

"I knew somebody would come, eventually. We had a call last week from somebody with *The LA Times* looking to schedule an interview for their Sunday lifestyle section."

"Well, the things is... it isn't the public attention you've been getting. That sort of things happens, and we deal with it."

"So?"

"Well,  
to be  
entirely  
honest, it's  
because you've been  
dealing on somebody  
else's street corner."

"So, it's money again."

"Again?"

"Last time we got run out, it was because the Lancea Sanctum wanted us under their big tent."

She looked confused.

"Shave me, put me in a white suit, and I can run hell of a revival meeting."

"But you're not, yourself, one of the Sanctified?"

"Technically, I guess I am. They made me Father Boon for awhile, but it didn't stick."

"I understand it's hard to leave the Lancea Sanctum. They don't much like to see their Priests go."

"Well, technically, I'm here ministering to the faithful."

She smiled, "Really?"

"I think they've forgotten about me."

"Unlikely."

"Well, I hope they have. A certain percentage of our income goes to keep questions from being asked, and if anyone does asks them, to keep the answers unexciting. Officially, I'm a mediocre shepherd of a dwindling flock."

"Well Father Boon, I never would have guessed. Why did you tell me these things? Are you not concerned we might use them against you?"

"Naw, I did the math. I've lost at blackjack enough to know when the table goes cold. I still lose, but I learned enough over the years to get up before I blow my whole roll. That's about as wise as I've managed to get."

"You are not what I expected when I came to see the mysterious master of the Fire Serpent Ashram."

"Good?"

"Oh, yes. Very good."



chapter two  
**THREE JUDGES**

# ...the street finds its own uses for things.

## — William Gibson, “Burning Chrome”

At one point or another, every vampire has had a moment where he or she considered the severing a body part and using it as a weapon. Even if it's only for a split second, the idea that vampiric regeneration makes no wound permanent gives even the most timid Kindred a burst of confidence. There's something visceral and desperate about the idea of clubbing a foe with one's own severed arm. The 'thud' sounds so much better when it's your own flesh and bone smashing into your enemy's face.

Worthless neonates joke about this concept. Clever (or suicidal) neonates take this concept to the next level. They

take that instinct from simple brutality and carry it into the metaphysical. Many of these neonates find themselves on the wrong side of a Sheriff's wrath after stretching the fabric of the Masquerade. Some, though, succeed. These Kindred come back from their exploration with a deeper understanding of their Beasts, and the power of sacrifice. They burn more than blood in their pursuit of power. They burn flesh, bones, assets, and loved ones. They burn time, life, and emotion. Most importantly, when they burn, the world listens. These Kindred sing Threnodies.

### *A Threnody*

Traditionally, in mortal parlance, a threnody was a hymn composed as a memorial for the dead. These wailing poems expressed grief and tragedy with a depth and intensity so strong, it was meant to be heard by those passed from this mortal coil. Kindred Threnodies, however, are rituals that expand the power of the known Kindred Disciplines.

On the surface, Threnodies appear to be personal injuries and sounds that elicit great and esoteric applications of the Kindred condition. It's true that each requires a sacrifice—not always of a Kindred's self—and a sound, usually a song, whisper, or poem. These two elements serve only as pathways to the Beast, a Threnody being a far more direct route to the Beast's strength than simple Vitae expenditure.

Typically, a Discipline taps a tiny portion of the Beast. Look to the Vitae as a pinprick on the caul of the Beast, with the pinprick allowing the monster a tiny passage through which to tear into the world. Even some of the most potent tricks of the Kindred are restricted to relatively safe, secure manifestations of the Curse. Threnodies, on the other hand, are like knives jabbed into the Beast's caul. These dead songs allow the Beast greater congress with the world around it. While the effects might be terrifying, they're doubly terrifying for the vampire singing the song. While the Beast lashes out, the Kindred soul must fight to stitch that wound before the Beast comes out too far.

### *Creating Threnodies*

In game terms, a Threnody is a Merit, tied to a Discipline dot. It's purchased at the same cost as any other Merit. Each Threnody is its own separate Merit, even if a character learns multiple rituals for one Discipline. Alternately, if you wish your game to have a heavy emphasis on Threnodies, you might consider different rituals under one Discipline to be scaled Merit levels, and thus cheaper when purchased consecutively. The only real requirement for developing a Threnody is that the character knows the relevant Discipline at the necessary level. Threnodies do not require teachers. In fact, teachers do not help the learning process. Every Beast is different, and each requires different songs and sacrifices to make contact.

If a character wishes to create a Threnody, discuss with the player the effect she'd like it to have. Compare it to her Disciplines, and try to find a spiritual match for the effect, to determine the Merit level. Sometimes, finding a match will be difficult. The point of a Threnody is to do strange, extraordinary things. It would make sense that finding parallels within the existing, structured Disciplines may be difficult. Use the sample Threnodies at the end of this chapter as a starting point. If you have difficulty, default the Threnody to one level higher than the character's current Discipline level. That way, you have a chance to work the Threnody's development into the Discipline's evolution in-game.

Once the Merit has been determined and purchased, the character may attempt to use the Threnody ritual. However, until the character has successfully completed the ritual, all rolls are made with a penalty equal to the Merit level. For example, a three-dot Threnody levies a -3 penalty to activation rolls until it is successfully cast.

While Threnodies are varied in nature, and are often quite personal, they have a few facts in common. First, they require the same components. They use Sacrifices and Songs to evoke their effects (see "The Guts: Components", below). Second, the user must be able to frenzy in order to tap into the Beast's power. For example, a character currently benefiting from the Coil of the Dragon Exhaust the Beast may not use a Threnody. Third, Threnodies tend toward the eldritch, macabre, and morbid. They are often alarming or disgusting, even beyond the sacrifices required for their use.

### *The Guts: Components*

Every Threnody requires two components in order to cast, the Sacrifice and the Song. Without both parts, a Threnody automatically fails (and causes the effects of failure, as described below in "The Bones: Rules"). These two elements are the bait and lure to draw the Beast from hiding in order to fulfill the vampire's unholy desires. While the Song must be performed at the time of the ritual, the Sacrifice can occur any time during the same night of the ritual, before the casting.

Most Kindred keep the specifics of their Threnodies under lock and key. They don't advertise anything more than the barest facts about a given ritual's effects. A famous urban legend had a clever neonate using The Forgetful Mind to convince a Prince that he'd made the correct Sacrifice for a powerful Threnody. During court, he unleashed the Threnody to disastrous effect, ending in his violent death and the overthrow of his long-standing regime.

### *The Sacrifice*

The first and most unique part of the Threnody is the Sacrifice. Without the Sacrifice, the Beast comes to the surface unfed. The Beast does not like hunger. Without proper Sacrifice, a Threnody is resolved as if the roll were made with a Dramatic Failure (see "The Bones: Rules"). Sacrifices are always personal affairs. While not always physical, the loss should always cause pain to the caster. For example, if a loved one is sacrificed for the Threnody, the 'love' in question must be the caster's, not the sacrificial lamb's.

### **Derangement: Tragedy Addiction (Minor or Severe)**

Many Sacrifices involve bringing terrible events to those dear to the vampire. Since the subjects must be truly close to the vampire, this breeds a vicious cycle. Some Kindred establish powerful emotional attachments to others, only to destroy those relationships in the name of power. Some of these Kindred even develop an obsession for such tragedy. Unless they are in pain and anguish, or otherwise surrounded by it, they are incapable of achieving greatness.

**System:** Every night, the character must be exposed to pain and tragedy. If she does not witness a life-altering bit of tragedy in a given night, she cannot spend or gain Willpower. If the derangement evolves to the Severe version, any rolls made to resist Humanity loss suffer a loss of two dice. The character can temporarily mitigate these penalties by suffering from a lethal or aggravated wound that causes a wound penalty. The mitigation only lasts as long as the wound persists. With the Severe version of the derangement, the wound penalty must be at least -2.

The Beast requires different foods for different Threnodies. Technically, any Sacrifice of a certain magnitude will get the job done. However, the Beast does not take kindly to table scraps. Each Discipline has a different type of preferred Sacrifice. These Sacrifices allow the Threnody to be performed with a standard chance of success. The listed samples are thematic guidelines; feel free to use other Sacrifices or personalize them or their levels. As a rule of thumb, the more personal it is, the greater the Sacrifice. If a character uses a Sacrifice suggested for a different Discipline, the roll suffers a -3 penalty, and any failures are considered Dramatic Failures.

Additionally, Sacrifices have levels that equate with the Merit levels of Threnodies. A character must perform a Sacrifice of equal or higher level to the Threnody. With the expenditure of a point of Vitae, a character may use a Sacrifice no more than one level lower than the Threnody, but she suffers the penalty of an insufficient Sacrifice (-3 to roll, failures are considered Dramatic Failures). If a character uses a higher level Sacrifice than the Threnody, she enjoys a +2 bonus to the roll per level of difference. For example, using a fourth-level Sacrifice on a second-level Threnody offers a +4 bonus to the roll.

The act of Sacrifice must be committed during or prior to the casting, on the same night as the ritual. The act

of Sacrifice can be symbolic, but it must have a clear and damaging effect. If the act does not cause some degree of quantifiable harm to the vampire, the Threnody is considered cast without sufficient Sacrifice (and thus Dramatically Fails). As a Storyteller, do not use this as an opportunity to surprise your players. Let a player know if you feel a given Sacrifice is insufficient for the ritual in question. Discuss with the player how the loss or injury affects the vampire. Let her defend her choice. The point of the Sacrifice is to bring pain and tragedy to **Vampire**, not to nitpick about semantics.

### *The Song*

The second important part of the ritual casting is the Song. The Song isn't always a literal song, but it's always a verbal expression, and always one unique to the Threnody. Often, the Song takes the form of a poem. One vicious Gangrel spoke the words of her own mortal obituary to draw out her Beast.

The Song needs only to be heard by the vampire using the ritual, and by proxy, her Beast. However, louder Songs are far more effective in the casting, and softer Songs can cause complications due to lack of clarity. For reasons unbeknownst even to masters of many Threnodies, if the victim of a ritual hears the Song, the Threnody tends to be more effective.

Also, each Song has a long and a short form. Generally, the long form lasts at least one minute. The short form is a short string of iconic phrases from the full version. While short forms are less effective than the long forms, they are often more useful in stressful situations, where lengthy preparation is not an option. In game terms, while the long form takes at least one full minute of recitation, the short form can be used in a single turn (generally in the same turn as the ritual, thus making the entire ritual an Instant Action).

If the victim of a Threnody hears the Song, he loses the ability to spend Willpower to increase his Resistance traits against the casting. If the casting is whispered, the casting roll suffers a -1 penalty. Rolls are made normally when the Song is sung in full, but they suffer a -1 penalty when cast with only the short form.

### *The Bones: Rules*

All Threnodies use the same rolls and have the same basic terms for success and failure. Unlike normal rolls, however, failures on Threnody rolls cause terrible things to happen, and Dramatic Failures are markedly more frightening than usual.

### **Silent Screams**

A myriad of situations will motivate Kindred to quiet or otherwise obfuscate their Songs. One might need to go undetected in dangerous territory, or to keep oppressive authorities from witnessing sorcery. If a player wishes a character's Threnodies to go unknown, there are two main methods.

First, keeping a Song beneath the audible range leaves potential witnesses unable to notice the ritualist's action. The ritualist's player rolls Wits + Stealth, penalized by the highest Wits + Composure of all potential witnesses. Success leaves the character unnoticed. Normal stealth rules otherwise apply. Remember though that whispering a Song incurs a -1 penalty to the ritual's activation roll as well.

The other method is to couch the Song within other discussion. This is markedly difficult. The player must make a successful Manipulation + Subterfuge roll, penalized by the highest Wits score of the witnesses, with an additional -2 if any witnesses have heard the Threnody's use in the past. This technique cannot be used with the full version of a Song, only the short form. This means the character will suffer the normal -1 penalty.

### *The Roll*

A Threnody roll uses the vampire's Blood Potency + Discipline. The Discipline used is the Discipline attached to the Threnody used. The vampire has access to all relevant Discipline dots, not just the dots for the Threnody's level. In addition, modifiers might apply for quiet Songs, the first use of a Threnody, or an inappropriate Sacrifice (see above).

If the ritual directly affects another character, the roll is Resisted, not Contested. Each Discipline has a specific Resistance trait that it targets. With a targeted Threnody, subtract that trait from the vampire's dice pool. If the ritual affects multiple characters, use the highest relevant trait in the crowd.

Unless otherwise noted, Willpower adds the normal three dice to Threnody rolls, and it adds two to Resistance traits against Threnodies. Willpower is an important trait for most vampires who learn Threnodies, since failure is an atypically high risk, and Willpower can curb that risk substantially.

### *Success: Something Happens*

With a successful roll, the ritual takes effect as described. An Exceptional Success doesn't do anything different, unless noted. Often, successes on the ritual roll

will further empower the Threnody's effect, but that will be noted in the individual ritual's description.

### *Failure: Something Collapses*

Whenever a Threnody fails, the Beast gains some amount of hold on the vampire. Two things happen immediately. First, the vampire's player must roll for the character to resist frenzy. Double any penalties for hunger (see *Vampire: The Requiem*, p.179). The subject of the frenzy will be the target of the ritual, or if no target is available, the vampire will literally frenzy against herself, thrashing about and tearing violently at herself. Second, the vampire takes one point of damage. The type of damage is determined by the Threnody's level. A one- or two-dot Threnody causes bashing damage. At the third or fourth dot, the Threnody causes lethal damage. A five-dot Threnody causes aggravated damage. This injury manifests as savage and spontaneous tears in the Kindred's flesh. Around mortals, it almost always risks the Masquerade without a significant cover-up.

### *Dramatic Failure: Something Escapes*

In addition to the effects of failure listed above, Dramatic Failures on Threnody rolls cause *something* to escape from the vampire. This something depends on the level of the Threnody. These examples are not Gospel; just use them as a jumping point for further horrors.

A one- or two-dot Threnody causes the loss of flesh. The normal damage is caused as for a simple failure, but the flesh comes off in chunks, and those chunks scamper about the area like large rodents, looking for a place to hide. A three- or four-dot Threnody causes the loss of blood. Vitae gushes from every possible orifice. The vampire loses one Vitae for every point of the Threnody. Worse still, the blood tries to find a new home. It'll creep toward the orifices of whatever living (or unliving) beings it can find. A five-dot Threnody causes the loss of the Beast. See the sidebar for the Beast's game statistics. It acts as a manifested spirit. Until she coaxes the Beast to return, the vampire cannot gain Willpower, and all failures on feeding rolls are considered Dramatic Failures due to the loss of the 'killer instinct'. On the

## **The Beast**

The Beast is the vampire's instinct personified. The bestial spirit manifests physically and is difficult to discern from its source. As well, it has all the knowledge and memories of its host. This affords the monster access to the vampire's most sensitive secrets. Often, the Beast will attempt to consume those the vampire loves or wants. It is clever, crafty, and a very good actor. Think 'The Parent Trap' on methamphetamines. The Beast feeds like any other Kindred, and uses its Vitae to fuel Disciplines, to heal, and to awaken from night to night. However, as it is technically a spirit, it uses a spirit's traits.

**Virtue:** None, **Vice:** As its host

**Power:** The highest two of the vampire's Strength, Intelligence, and Presence

**Finesse:** The highest two of the vampire's Dexterity, Wits, and Manipulation

**Resistance:** The highest two of the vampire's Stamina, Resolve, and Composure

**Willpower:** 10

**Vitae:** 10

**Disciplines:** Per the vampire.

other hand, the vampire is completely immune to frenzy (which renders her unable to use further Threnodies). The Beast looks similar to an idealized, if particularly predatory, version of the vampire. It often tries to take on the identity of its former shell.

### *Without the Beast*

Without the Beast, Threnodies cannot be performed. This means that without the risk of frenzy, Threnody rituals are no more than fruitless pain and words. A power that allows a character to ignore frenzy cannot be used in the case of a failure on a Threnody roll.

However, because the Beast is such an integral part of Threnodies, a Kindred can muster the lucidity necessary to use these rituals, in short form, while in frenzy. This has led to numerous stories of draugr, lost forever to the throes of the Beast.

## Sample Threnodies

Here are a series of Threnodies, for each of the more common Kindred Disciplines. Each Discipline has a Resistance trait used against any targeted rituals. As well, a list of sample Sacrifices for each is included, with varying levels. Unless otherwise noted, these rituals can only be used against targets the ritualist can directly perceive at the time of casting.

### Animalism Threnodies

#### Resistance Trait: Resolve

**Sample Sacrifices:** Hair and nail clippings (1), a family or pack of animals you've fed from at least three times each (2), riding the wave of frenzy when feeding (2), beloved (ghouled) pet (3), lifelong pet (4), a night in willing frenzy in public (5), the last of a species you have subsumed (5)

#### *Kill the Messenger (•)*

By extending the nature of Feral Whispers, the Kindred instills a single sentence, in any known tongue, into an animal. The animal then repeats the phrase continuously,

until the point of its death. The vampire can even command the animal to search for a recipient for the message. The animal's death is a painful and violent affair, leaving quite the bloody mess for the listener.

**Effect:** The animal has no choice but to verbally repeat the message, until the point of its death. The animal suffers one lethal wound per hour, until it dies. Every success on the ritual roll protects the animal from injury for one hour. If the vampire gives the animal a personal possession from an intended recipient, the animal will hunt for that recipient. It can use all its typical methods of finding a target, and it also knows the general direction of its quarry. If the caster chooses to give the animal a recipient, the animal will immediately die upon delivering the message, regardless of its current injuries.

#### *The Blessings of Beasts (••)*

This ritual gives the subject a benefit based on a given animal's mythological or cultural advantages. For instance, a cat may grant better eyesight, or the ability to escape from tight places. A zebra might give a heightened ability to blend in, or to run. A dog might grant tracking ability, or loyalty.



**Effect:** The animal chosen must be killed at the height of the ritual. If the animal was personally trained by the caster, it may suffice as the Sacrifice. The ritualist determines the animal's blessing. If successful, the ritual subject gains two bonus dice on any roll pertaining to the blessing. As well, if the character spends Willpower on such an action, she achieves Exceptional Success on three successes instead of five. The ritual may confer minor, story-based advantages as well. In addition, the subject will, for the duration of the ritual, physically change in some small way related to the blessing conferred. For example, a character benefiting from a serpent's ability to charm may develop a bifurcated tongue. The ritual lasts for one night per success on the casting roll.

### *Plague Dog (•••)*

With this offshoot from Animalism, the Kindred infects an animal with tainted Vitae and gives it a personal possession belonging to an intended target. The animal pushes its dying legs to their limit as it hunts for its quarry, and when the animal finds its victim, the beast's body explodes in a cloud of venomous blood, bone, and sinew.

**Effect:** This ritual requires a point of Vitae, fed to the animal, in addition to any Sacrifice. The Vitae infects the animal, and inflicts a single point of lethal damage per hour. The animal immediately pursues its target by any means possible, and it always knows the general direction of the target. If it arrives at its mark before death, it explodes. Consider the animal an explosive with a blast area and damage score (see *The World of Darkness*, pp. 178-179) equal to the animal's Size or the caster's ritual successes, whichever is less.

### *A Beast's Mind (••••)*

Animalism masters often become intimately familiar with certain favored creatures. With this ritual, a vampire can impart the mannerisms of an animal onto a victim. The body remains the same, but the person becomes bestial. He speaks, he goes about his days, but fundamentally, he's reacting with his lizard brain (or wolf brain, or cat brain, or whatever brain was chosen). Most strangers will only notice the person is 'acting odd'. Anyone who actually knows the character will realize their behavior is more than merely odd.

**Effect:** Successes on the ritual determine the number of nights it lasts. The ritualist chooses the animal in question, but it must have had long-term contact with that species in the past. Primarily, this ritual affects roleplay. The character must be played bestially. He can

communicate, but he's likely to weigh most things in terms of fight or flight responses. In fact, the slightest provocation is likely to send him into a frenzy. Any use of a Mental Skill by the victim requires a point of Willpower be spent to bring the necessary degree of focus.

## *Auspex Threnodies*

### **Resistance Trait:** Resolve

**Sample Sacrifices:** Forgetting a bit of mortal nostalgia (1), willingly ignoring a portent (2), the removal of a sense via lethal damage (3), aggravated destruction of a sensory organ from one with whom you share a blood tie (4), telling a dark secret to a mortal enemy (4), removing all major senses but one through aggravated damage (5)

### *Farseeing (•)*

As the crux of this ritual, the vampire removes her eyes, ears, tongue, fingers, or nose. She feeds them or it to a mortal being, human or animal. So long as the feature is removed, the vampire experiences the sense sacrificed through the subject. The sense lost is considered a sufficient Sacrifice for Farseeing.

**Effect:** The vampire may choose any or all senses to impart on the meal maker. The vampire loses the relevant senses, herself. However, she experiences those senses through the subject. For instance, if she feeds a bird her eyes, she'll see through the eyes of that bird. The number of successes rolled determines the number of nights for which the subject cannot remove the sense organs. The organs graft themselves to the victim's innards, effectively becoming part of his body. The vampire may use Auspex through these displaced senses.

### *Seeing the Shred of Truth (••)*

Every good lie is based on a shred of truth. Kindred society is built on a foundation of lies. Often, lie-detecting Disciplines and rituals prove ineffective because of the sheer abundance of deception the average Kindred requires in order to get by. This Threnody allows the user to single out the important kernels of truth within the lies.

**Effect:** Once cast and for the rest of the scene, this ritual allows the vampire to detect true statements when couched among lies. A character must have lied before the ritual becomes useful. Then, whenever a true statement is made, the vampire employing this Threnody gets a notion of its honesty. Generally, this manifests as hairs standing on end or a proverbial 'sixth sense'. Either way, it's unnoticeable to others.

### *Know It in My Gut (•••)*

The vampire relies on the wisdom of their decrepit entrails as part of this disgusting means of prophecy. The vampire considers a time in the past (often discerned using Spirit's Touch) then cuts deep into his stomach. His entrails spill out over the floor and give the vampire a remarkably clear image of the time and place in question. Clever ritualists can extend the clarity of this vision to others as well.

**Effect:** After the Song and the Sacrifice, the caster eviscerates himself (causing at least three lethal wounds), then the entrails pour out with detail and clarity. If the ritualist's player chooses to spend a point of Willpower at casting for the purpose (which means the roll cannot benefit from Willpower expenditure), any witnesses may see these details as well. The player may ask clear "yes or no" questions of the Storyteller about the scenario played out. The Storyteller must answer a number of questions equal to the Threnody's successes.

### *Writer's Block (••••)*

With this Threnody, the ritualist rips raw ability and talent from a victim, taking it for herself. The theft is very precise; anyone knowing the victim's ability has the possibility of placing any works created by the thief. A painting will feature the telltale style of the victim, for instance. Or a writer's specific spelling and grammatical tells will stand out to his editor.

**Effect:** When casting the Threnody, choose a Skill the victim possesses. Success removes that Skill and all relevant Specialties for a number of nights equal to the successes rolled. The Skill dots and Specialties go to the ritualist. If someone knows the victim well, then while witnessing the skill's use or results, his player can make a Wits + Investigation roll to determine the source of the skill. Success doesn't identify the mystical nature of the theft, but it clearly identifies the skill's true owner.

### *The Ideal Tomorrow (•••••)*

After a massive sacrifice, the most powerful soothsayers amongst the Kindred can see detailed potential futures. This augury allows a ritualist to play an entire night's possibilities in her mind, potentially reversing its course. The ritual requires an in-depth investment of time for the troupe, however, so it should be discussed before a player purchases it for her character.

**Effect:** Once the casting is successful, the ritualist foresees the following night. In-game, play through the next night. If the player so chooses, the night may be replayed in its entirety, and things may be avoided using

the knowledge gleaned from the Threnody. However, the second play-through must be kept, regardless of any outcomes or rolls.

## *Celerity Threnodies*

### **Resistance Trait:** Stamina

**Sample Sacrifices:** Chemically removing inhibitions (2), cutting a tendon (3), using half your Vitae reserves while sprinting (4)

### *One Step Ahead (•)*

While Celerity focuses on making a vampire obviously faster, this ritual provides a subtler benefit. Instead of making the character significantly faster, it makes her *just fast enough*.

**Effect:** For the remainder of the night, the ritualist enjoys a handful of benefits. First, she always acts first when initiative is tied. Second, during any chase (see **The World of Darkness**, pp. 65-66), she starts with additional successes equal to the Threnody's successes. Lastly, she benefits from the Fresh Start Merit (see **The World of Darkness**, p. 112) if she does not possess it already.

### *Quicken the Dead Blood (•••)*

Once enacted, this rite speeds the Vitae flowing within the vampire's system. For the remainder of the night, the ritualist may spend far more Vitae than her Blood Potency allows.

**Effect:** The ritualist may spend more Vitae than dictated by her Blood Potency. However, she takes one point of lethal damage for each Vitae spent beyond her limit. This manifests as ligaments snapped and tendons pulled. While this damage can be healed normally, it cannot be healed in the same turn it was incurred.

### *The Curse of Marathon's Alacrity (••••)*

As the caster touches her target, the target's muscles thrash with barely contained velocity. The victim has little choice but to move with intense and blinding speed, or else the body fights its owner and shreds itself from overexertion. Some morbid Kindred use this ritual to empower their servants for use as messengers.

**Effect:** For a number of hours equal to the Threnody's successes, the victim moves with the ritualist's full level of Celerity. This inhuman speed costs the victim nothing, and it confers the full benefit of those Celerity dots. If he opts not to move the full, normal allotment of that enhanced Speed in a given turn, he suffers one

lethal wound. If he is restrained or rendered unconscious, however, he does not incur the injury.

### *Be Still My Heart (••••)*

With this potent curse, the ritualist stops the flow of blood in her target. For a mortal, this is a deadly prospect. For a Kindred, it means a far less potent vampire for the duration of the Threnody.

**Effect:** This ritual requires the caster to touch the target during the Song. For a number of nights equal to the caster's successes, the subject's blood is stilled. For mortals, this is a death sentence without immediate and prolonged medical attention. For vampires, it means the inability to spend Vitae for any means. To spend a single point of Vitae, even just to awaken, the vampire must spend a point of Willpower.

## *Dominate Threnodies*

**Resistance Trait:** Resolve

**Sample Sacrifices:** Intentionally failing in a Dominate power (1), abandoning a dot of Status (2), feeding from another Kindred (2), destroying a relationship with a valuable associate (3), killing a ghoul after more than a year of service (4), willfully entering a full Vinculum (5)

### *Idiosyncrasy (•)*

While not as potent as many other Threnodies, this simple curse infects a victim with a minor, irritating habit. The caster must describe the behavior during the Song, and it must be something that can be accomplished in a matter of seconds and should not interrupt other actions. For instance, it may be a burst of profanity or a rude scratching.

**Effect:** For a number of nights equal to the successes rolled, the victim must undertake the idiosyncratic behavior at least once per scene. Ignoring the ritual's effects for a scene requires the expenditure of a Willpower point.

### *Puppetry (••)*

Whereas traditional Dominate allows for a deep-seeded mental control, this ritual affords direct, physical control over a victim. Once the ritual is cast, for the remainder of the night, the caster may take a physical action and force the victim to take the same action. The ritualist does not need to be in the presence of the victim once the ritual is cast; it works over any distance thereafter.

**Effect:** After the ritual's casting, the ritualist may choose to force the victim to take any physical actions

she does. If the victim chooses to resist a given action, his player may spend a point of Willpower and make a Resolve + Blood Potency roll for the character. Each success affords one turn of immunity from the ritual's effects. If the action would cause direct physical harm to the victim, the player may spend a point of Willpower for the victim to shake the ritual's effects completely.

### *The Illusion of Control (•••)*

This focused Threnody was the creation of a vindictive Ventrue who grew tired of her sire's incessant use of Dominate. It not only defends the ritualist (or a subject of her choosing) from Dominate effects, but it gives an equal benefit against hapless would-be controllers.

**Effect:** For the remainder of the night, the successes on the Threnody roll add to all rolls to resist Dominate (or add to Resolve for the purposes of a resisted roll). In addition, when a Dominate power is successfully resisted, all the aggressor's initial successes are added as automatic successes to the next Dominate roll made for the subject against that aggressor.

### *Soul Contract (••••)*

With this fearsome ritual, the master of Dominate writes a contract between a party (usually herself) and a subject. The terms of the contract must be clear and understood by all signing parties. If one party violates the contract, his free will is forfeit to the other party. In many domains, knowledge of this Threnody has been banned. However, in some, Princes offer influential positions specifically to Kindred willing to initiate such contracts for the Court.

**Effect:** The contract must be signed by one free of will and sound of mind. No Dominate or Majesty powers, Vinculi, or the like can be used to coerce signing. If either party breaks the contract, she or he becomes immediately susceptible to all the Dominate powers of the other party. Effectively, all Dominate powers are considered Exceptional Successes, and the player of the contract breaker cannot roll to resist. As well, the contract breaker suffers the effects of a full Vinculum to the other party.

## *Majesty Threnodies*

**Resistance Trait:** Composure

**Sample Sacrifices:** Embarrassing yourself before peers (1), telling the truth despite obvious danger (2), betraying a friend (3), destroying a loved one (4), murdering a soul mate (5)

### *The Shortcomings of Others (•)*

This Threnody has the vampire focus on a single failing or shortcoming of her victim-to-be. It can be cast from any distance, so long as a personal possession of the victim is included with the Sacrifice. If successful, the shortcoming becomes more pronounced and more discussed in polite society. It quickly overwhelms the victim's accomplishments in the rumor mill.

**Effect:** Successes must be spent to garner an effect. Successes may be spent to add -1 to any relevant Status traits or to make the ritual's effects last one week.

### *Personality Contest (••)*

There's nothing more damaging than the truth, particularly when a vampire lashes out with this Threnody. Everyone seeing the victim in person immediately and openly speaks their opinions of the person. Alliances fall apart, and true motivations reveal themselves.

**Effect:** Once cast, the subject bears the weight of this curse for the rest of the night. Whenever another character comes into contact with the subject, the compulsion sets in. A player may roll Composure + Blood Potency for her character to resist the compulsion. As well, she may spend Willpower and resist as if this Threnody were a Majesty power (see *Vampire: The Requiem*, p. 129). If affected, the character immediately spouts off whatever held opinions they have of the victim. The speech is brutally honest, often uncharacteristically. Characters will wait their turn to speak, so all the relevant speech is coherent. Characters with lower Composure scores tend to speak first.

### *Tainted Love (•••)*

Whereas Entrancement charms a victim and coerces him to follow a trail of behavior dictated by the vampire, this vicious curse forces an all-encompassing, self-destructive love on its subject. The victim suffers when not in the presence of his 'beloved'. He only derives pleasure from the object of his dark affections. The caster may act as the object of the obsession, or she may curse another with that burden.

**Effect:** If the object of the Tainted Love is different than the caster and is unwilling, use the higher of the object's or the victim's Composure when making the roll. The ritual lasts one night per success. The victim suffers from all the effects of a full Vinculum to the object, even if the object is not Kindred. The object may use the Majesty power of Entrancement on the victim at any time, whether or not she possesses it. For every night the victim goes without his object's attention (positive or negative), he suffers a

cumulative -1 to all dice pools to resist frenzy and addiction, or to otherwise control his own emotions and compulsions. These penalties go away by one per night he has the desired contact. As a separate fourth-level Threnody, the duration of the ritual changes to weeks.

### *Safe Word (••••)*

Daeva rule through subtle influence and control. The core of Majesty involves tugging the heart strings of those surrounding a charismatic leader. This ritual turns that core on its head, and affords a give and take relationship for greater (but riskier) advantages to the Daeva. Once a character has been subjected to this ritual, he becomes able to 'opt out' of Majesty effects at any time. However, using that advantage benefits the Majesty user.

**Effect:** This ritual lasts for one night per success on the activation roll. Once cast, the subject may opt out of any Majesty effect at any time. There's no roll required. However, the Majesty user gains a point of Willpower if that is done. Also, each time the character uses the ability to opt out, the Majesty user gets a permanent +1 bonus to all social actions against him (including later Majesty powers), up to a limit of +5.

### *The New Truth (•••••)*

This fearsome curse takes a fundamental truth about one person and shifts it to another truth, irrevocably. The shift may be subtle and up for interpretation, such as changing "Daniel hates the Prince" to "Daniel will forever respect his Prince", to something drastic and life-altering, such as changing it to "Daniel's undying loyalty for Martigan knows no bounds, not even death".

**Effect:** The statement must be clear when the Threnody is cast. Once cast, that statement becomes true. Without subsequent use of the Threnody, this particular curse cannot be undone. Most importantly, the spirit of the statement is followed, more than the wording. The victim truly believes the nature of the curse and cannot be convinced of anything to the contrary. Any powers that would contradict the statement automatically fail. Even extended efforts to convince the victim otherwise result in no progress.

## *Nightmare Threnodies*

**Resistance Trait:** Composure

**Sample Sacrifices:** Removal of your fangs (1), destroying a weapon in a dangerous situation (2), revealing a phobia to a nemesis (3), removal of a spinal disc (4), permanent removal of facial features (5)



### *That One Thing* (•)

With this classic curse, the ritualist instills an intense fear of one specific thing in the subject. The thing in question must be determined at the time of the Threnody's casting.

**Effect:** For a number of nights equal to the successes rolled, the victim suffers a phobia of the caster's choosing (see *The World of Darkness*, p. 97). The chosen phobia must be at least moderately specific and something that isn't constantly surrounding the average person. "Oxygen" clearly would be invalid. "Spiders" is a fair choice.

### *Night Terror* (••)

This particular Threnody plagues its victim's slumber with disgusting, heart-shaking nightmares. Sleep becomes something to be feared and avoided.

**Effect:** For a number of nights equal to the successes rolled, the victim suffers intense nightmares that prohibit restful slumber. While the character can sleep, it's limited and torturous. Kindred find themselves waking from daysleep soaked in blood sweat. For the duration of the Threnody, its victim becomes unable to regain Willpower. Kindred lose an additional Vitae per night as well. In addition, all actions

requiring mental coherence receive a cumulative -1 penalty per night spent without sound sleep.

### *An Offering of Death* (•••)

A vampire must draw on her own experience of death in order to cast this Threnody. It implants the sensations of death into its victim's mind, forcing him to relive the ritualist's last moments. As a side effect, the ritualist gains a bit of insight into the victim's behaviors, since she's shared such an intimate experience with him.

**Effect:** The Threnody lasts for one night per success. At the beginning of each scene, the victim's player must succeed in a Composure + Blood Potency roll with a penalty equal to the successes rolled in casting, or the victim suffers a full wound penalty (-3) on all actions for the scene. Also, the ritualist's player enjoys a +1 bonus to all Empathy rolls made against the victim for every success rolled. The victim gains the same benefit toward the ritualist in perpetuity, however, thanks to the intimate knowledge shared.

### *Harsh Reality* (••••)

As a result of this Threnody, its victim suffers nightmares while waking. Hallucinations come at the worst possible

times, and plague the victim's most sensitive affairs. While most of the hallucinations are obviously false, they make normal existence a difficult prospect at best.

**Effect:** For a number of nights equal to the successes rolled, the victim suffers from waking hallucinations of his greatest fears. The character suffers from the equivalent of the Hysteria derangement (see *The World of Darkness*, p. 97). However, in every scene, a hallucination occurs that triggers the derangement. Each time the victim successfully resists the derangement's effects, a cumulative -1 penalty is levied against further rolls, until the roll is failed.

## Obfuscate

**Resistance Trait:** Resolve

**Sample Sacrifices:** Leaving written evidence of your existence (1), creating of a piece of art or other visual representation of yourself (2), introducing yourself to an authority figure (3), an obvious and memorable breach of the Masquerade (5)

## Deny Everything (•)

Mekhet spies often need to conceal things from the curious. While Obfuscate is often enough to keep physical objects from sight, when the thing that needs to be concealed is in your mind, it doesn't work so well. This Threnody makes a vampire completely forget a piece of information, only to remember it later. The effect protects the vampire against any revelatory powers and powers that discern the truth.

**Effect:** The Sacrifice must relate to the memory in question. If the ritual is successful, the character chooses the amount of time until the memory returns, or a trigger event that'll return it. Until that time, the character literally cannot remember the thing in question. If hypnosis or the Dominate power The Forgetful Mind is used to draw out the memory, the successes on the Threnody's casting roll add to any resistances.

## Erasing a Legacy (••)

Affectionately called "The Paper Shredder" by younger practitioners, this Threnody removes evidence of the subject's existence. Paintings fade or end up buried in a vault somewhere. Documents suffer unfortunate coffee spills or get eaten by the proverbial dog. Coincidence moves against these items, until all such documentation ceases to be.

**Effect:** The ritual, if successful, makes all material traces of a character's existence disappear. Vague

references, such as footprints, will not vanish, only things that could be used by untrained witnesses to identify the character. The disappearances do not seem supernatural in nature. They all take place through some form of coincidence or another. Most of these disappearances take only one night. If coincidences are harder to come by (such as one necessary to eliminate a piece of evidence locked away in an empty vault), the Threnody may take longer to affect the item.

## Forget Me-Not (•••)

This Threnody extends the powers of Obfuscate to the memories of witnesses. The ritualist (or a hapless victim) becomes forgotten in the minds of all those who knew her (or him). While the ritual is an imperfect erasure, it can cause untold damage to reputations, or allow criminals to start their lives anew.

**Effect:** This ritual requires multiple castings to cause the full erasure of an identity. Each successive casting erodes the subject's impact on the memories of those around him. The ritual may only be cast on a given subject once per month. Compare those who knew the subject with the following 'levels' of relationship. With each casting, reduce those relationships by one. This ritual does not prevent further relationships or memories from forming; it only erodes previous ones.

### Relationship Level Examples

0	Stranger
1	Passing Acquaintance
2	Associate
3	Friend/Rival
4	Lover/Enemy
5	Soul Mate/Nemesis

## Silent Treatment (••••)

Generally, granting another character Obfuscate must occur on a willing target with Cloak the Gathering. However, this Threnody turns the boons of Obfuscate against its victim. He becomes completely unnoticeable, and cannot reverse the effects.

**Effect:** The ritual lasts for one hour per success. During this time, the cursed individual is subject to all the effects of Mask of Tranquility and Cloak of Night. However, he cannot reveal his presence, even by making loud noises or interacting with his environment. Onlookers will simply not perceive him. Unless he causes physical harm to an onlooker, he goes completely unnoticed.

## Protean Threnodies

**Resistance Trait:** Stamina

**Sample Sacrifices:** Sleeping in a space open and prone to foot traffic (2), submitting to the Predator's Taint (without rolling to resist) (2), going one week without hunting (3)

### *The Lingering Predator (•)*

This ritual adds a more literal definition to the term 'Predator's Taint'. The vampire infects a spot with a lingering aspect of her Beast. Any Kindred who later visit the area are subject to Predator's Taint as if they were first experiencing the influence of that Beast. This could result in either a destroyed room or immediate flight. This Threnody may cause Masquerade breaches, depending on where it's used.

**Effect:** The given spot radiates the essence of a vampiric Beast with a Blood Potency equal to the casting vampire's for the remainder of the night. The vampire can modify the Blood Potency level up or down a number of dots equal to the additional rolled successes on the ritual beyond the first. Alternately, additional successes may add nights to the effect.

### *Poisoned Haven (••)*

Practitioners of Protean have an intimate knowledge of the nature of havens, once they're able to find respite within the Earth. This Threnody exploits that understanding to blight a Kindred's haven and make it a terrible resting place. The drawback is that the vampire must access the haven in question and commit the Sacrifice onsite, which adds a whole other layer of complication.

**Effect:** The ritual lasts one week from casting. During that time, the defined area (usually no more than a single building or an acre of open land) becomes tainted against Kindred slumber. For a vampire to awaken on the ground, additional Vitae must be spent equal to the caster's successes. For example, if the ritualist's player rolled three successes, a vampire waking in a tainted tomb must spend four Vitae.

### *Protean Assault (•••)*

This morbid rite forces change upon another's form. Some ritualists use this Threnody to give advantages to allies and servants. Many use it to wreak havoc on an enemy's physical capabilities. Such deformation is always a gruesome affair, as bone and flesh twists out of place, causing obviously unnatural changes.



**Effect:** The subject's form warps. If the subject is willing, the caster may use any of her Protean abilities on him. Against an unwilling subject, choose a deformation, which can affect a single limb or sense. The deformation causes lethal damage equal to the successes rolled, and it prevents use of the limb or sense until all the damage is healed.

### *Chimeric Form (••••)*

The vampire's shapeshifting ability takes a twist toward the mythical. Where Shape of the Beast allows a vampire to change into various real-world animals, Chimeric Form allows for strange and fantastic changes. The vampire's new form emerges from the husk of her former body, sloughing it off like a cicada emerging from its shell.

**Effect:** Chimeric Form reveals the true potential of a vampire's shapechanging ability. The player chooses a form, and successes on the casting roll are 'spent' on various features. Each success can purchase one of the following features: +1 or -1 Size; claws or teeth that cause 2 lethal damage; flight equal to the vampire's Speed; +2 to Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina; two additional working limbs; 2 points of armor; or other effects, as agreed upon with the Storyteller.

### *A More Perfect Monster (•••••)*

This ritual turns the shapeshifting abilities of Protean inward, idealizing and optimizing every bit of the vampire in order to temporarily maximize her predatory efficiency. The effects are subtle; muscles tighten, skin hardens, and pupils stretch. An expert, or someone who knows the vampire well, will realize something has changed. More obviously, the vampire becomes able to change shape with ease and fluidity.

**Effect:** Once cast, this ritual affords a number of advantages to the vampire for the remainder of the evening. First, the vampire's Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina scores double. This imparts bonuses to any relevant derived traits, such as Defense, Initiative, and Health. Next, the vampire's Protean powers become Reflexive actions. Lastly, the vampire gains points of armor against all bashing and lethal damage equal to the successes on the ritual roll.

## *Resilience Threnodies*

**Resistance Trait:** Stamina

**Sample Sacrifices:** Eating a knife (2), exposing a limb to the sun (3), impaling yourself for an hour (4), flaying off all your skin for a week (5)

### *The Blood's Blessed Lotus (••)*

The lotus grows from the mud, yet it remains unstained. The lotus is a symbol of purity, of breaking attachment. Ma Durga carries a lotus into battle, to show she has no fear and nothing holding her back. With this Threnody, a ritualist can take the attachments from Vitae and focus them into that pure flower, allowing the flower to break Vinculi.

**Effect:** The ritualist plants a lotus seed in the subject's flesh (or in her flesh, if she is trying to break her own bonds). This process causes one point of lethal damage, in addition to any from the Sacrifice. If the ritual is successful, the lotus grows rapidly, fueled by the bound blood. This upgrades the lethal damage to aggravated (and cannot be downgraded with Resilience). Once the lotus is plucked from the flesh, all Vinculi suffered by the subject decrease by one stage. Because of the purity inspired by the lotus, the subject's soul is temporarily vulnerable to corruption. For a number of nights equal to 10 minus the ritualist's Resilience dots, any degeneration rolls made suffer a -1 penalty. This penalty does not affect the roll to resist derangement.

### *Strength in Agony (•••)*

To many practitioners of Resilience, pain is no more than a motivator. This Threnody expands upon that concept. The recipient of its blessings still suffers injury, but the injury empowers her, and emboldens her to greatness. Every iota of pain pushes her further.

**Effect:** If the Threnody is successful, the character ignores all wound penalties for the remainder of the scene. Additionally, each lethal or aggravated wound taken gives her player a die that can be used at any time during the scene. These dice may be used immediately or saved up.

### *Breaking the Chains (••••)*

Breaking the Chains is another example of Resilience being twisted to shatter attachments, similar to the Blood's Blessed Lotus. However, this Threnody shatters a different Kindred standard: the blood tie. The ritualist links the target and a blood relative subject to a blood tie (see *Vampire: The Requiem*, p. 162). If no such relative exists, the closest surviving relation will suffice. The link used is a physical one, such as a chain or rod. When the link is forcibly removed as part of the Threnody, the blood tie is severed. However, the link must be interred into both vampires' bodies, not simply touch them. For instance, one well-known story had a childe tear into

her own heart and her sire's, and to place a chain within. After both healed the wounds, the chain was then stuck holding them together.

**Effect:** The surgery to insert the link required must at least cause two lethal points of damage. The link's removal inflicts one point of aggravated damage (Resilience cannot downgrade this damage). If successful, the ritual breaks all the subject's blood ties. This means the character is no longer subject to blood sympathy and cannot opt to join a relative's bloodline. Functionally, he's no longer member of a family, but he does retain his clan affiliation.

### *The Chains Anew (••••)*

Few Threnodies require another before use. The Chains Anew, though, builds on the effects of Breaking the Chains. With its successful use, the Chains Anew establishes new blood ties for a subject. In addition to the standard casting requirements, the Chains Anew requires the subject drink at least one point of Vitae from her new prospective surrogate sire (subjecting the vampire to all relevant blood addiction and Vinculi). During the vampire's next daysleep, she suffers terrible nightmares and thrashes about violently. When she awakens, she's of a new family. While this ritual only works within the subject's original clan, rumors persist of a stronger Threnody that can shift a vampire's clan affiliation.

**Effect:** Once cast, the subject effectively becomes the blood donor's childe. The new childe can join the sire's bloodline at Blood Potency 2, is subject to all the benefits and drawbacks of a blood tie, and Embraces new childer into her new lineage.

## *Vigor Threnodies*

**Resistance Trait:** Stamina

**Sample Sacrifices:** Vigor Sacrifices typically involve removed limbs or organs, the seriousness of the harm inflicted relating to the level of the Threnody. At higher levels, the injuries should be aggravated and, in some cases, even permanent.

### *The Blessing of Steel (•)*

While Vigor grants a vampire great strength, it often does little good when tools and weapons just cannot survive the stresses imposed by such might. With this Threnody, the vampire sacrifices a part of himself to give an object some degree of preternatural sturdiness.

### *The Truly Unfettered (.....)*

This legendary Threnody is the subject of hushed rumors in the halls of some Elysia. If it truly exists, it upsets many traditions and expectations of Kindred society. In effect, it destroys the limitations of clan. Once successfully cast, its subject becomes effectively clanless, with no family and no inherent affinities or lineage-based weaknesses. However, the Sacrifice required for such a Threnody would likely be the stuff of legend.

**Effect:** The subject becomes clanless. She immediately loses her clan weakness, and she loses access to any bloodline advantages. All blood ties and blood sympathy disappear. Finally, all Disciplines are now purchased at New Rating x 6. While the game effects are limited, the story implications are great. The discovery of this ritual alone could be the focus of an entire chronicle.

**Effect:** The Sacrifice for this ritual must be a limb severed from the vampire, inflicting at least two lethal wounds. Upon a successful casting, the vampire imparts a number of points of Structure and Durability to an object equal to his Vigor score. This bonus lasts for a number of nights equal to the successes rolled in the casting, or until the wound is healed, whichever comes first.

### *A Serpent's Stare (••)*

This ritual takes the force of Vigor and extends it beyond the physical. The subject of the Threnody, often the caster, removes an eye and replaces it with that of a serpent. If the Threnody is successful, the eye grows to fill the socket for the ritual's duration. With concentration, the subject can assert the caster's strength on any that catches her gaze, physically restraining him with a single look. The loss of the eye does not count as a Sacrifice for the purposes of this ritual.

**Effect:** When cast, the subject's eye is replaced with the serpent's for a number of nights equal to the ritual's successes. At any time, the subject may gaze upon a target and exert the force of the caster's Vigor. Roll Intelligence + Subterfuge, penalized by the target's Defense if he's aware of the power's effects. Success results in an immobilization, with an effective Strength equal to the caster's Vigor score (see **The World of Darkness**, p. 157). The character must maintain concentration and cannot take other actions while mentally restraining a victim. Only a single such target can be restrained at a time.

### *Wilo's Fire (•••••)*

This sorcery creates a potent potion that's both deadly and greatly beneficial. It distills the force of the caster's Vigor into the draught, and intensifies the subject's physical form to a dangerous level. The imbiber enjoys immense speed, strength, and stamina for some time. But after the effects end, the body falls apart under the weight of the excess stress.

**Effect:** Once created, the potion lasts until ingested. Once imbibed, the drinker gains the following benefits for a number of hours equal to the initial successes rolled. Any successful physical actions gain two additional

successes. The character enjoys the benefits of two dots of Celerity, without needing to expend any Vitae. The character gains five health levels and two points of armor against all injury, and he suffers no wound penalties until rendered torpid or otherwise unconscious. At the end of the potion's effects, however, the drinker loses all these benefits and immediately takes five points of aggravated damage, or merely dies if a mortal. Count these injuries before upgrading any damage persisting from the added health levels. If the drinker chooses to fight the potion's effects upon drinking it, a contested Stamina + Blood Potency roll can be made against the caster's successes.



Boon stared at his left hand, split and shattered, and short a few more fingers now. Trying to throw the flashbang back through the window had been classic Boon, almost a return home. Bad decision.

No, trying to toss the grenade was just the exclamation point at the end of the sentence. The big bad decision was letting Gail have the compound, relocating the ashram to Portland, and then moving in with her. Vampires just can't play happy families, even in the Pacific Northwest. Kitty started acting out, killing. Her advice went bad, and Boon started making his own decisions full time. Gail went after Kitty when she came home glutted off a string of murdered au pairs, and Boon got between them. Gail was old and powerful, but furious beyond thinking. Boon put the leg of a broken bar stool through her, caught up Kitty's broken body, and ran like hell. A couple of nights in the sewers, then a stolen car heading East—by the time they hit Nevada, he was starting to feel a little more optimistic, and then the sleep terrors started, and he'd wake all cut up and half bled out. The Circle put a whammy on him, one of the bad ones.

Kitty quit talking. It was like she'd regressed, that keen intelligence wilting, leaving only the terrified

and traumatized child. She healed from Gail's attack, but something never came back.

They slept in the soil by the side of the road, the false child held close to the man, and together down into the ground. Outside Reno, they woke to find the car gone. A cop stopped because a man and a child walking down the side of the road at night raises alarms, and Boon turned his face away when Kitty briefly surged back out of her lethargy, tore the man apart, and then fed until she was sick.

They stole the first car they could find after ditching the police car in a culvert, and Boon made the final decision and turned North, going home.

Sixty one years changed everything and nothing. The same streets ran to different places, except the one he wanted, the one he'd last driven with Feldman and Little Pete sitting in the back, and somebody else riding in the trunk.

The cabin was still there, kept up, modernized a bit. Somebody's getaway spot. Inside, the kitchen was new, and the furniture different, but when Kitty saw the closet they'd put her in, she latched onto Boon and wouldn't let go.

Together, they walked a rough circle around the cabin out about 50 yards, dribbling a thin stream of blood from open wrists. When they closed the circle, Boon felt the territorial instinct that dogged him all the time wake up and spread out to encompass the whole circle. He'd know the moment anything came or went. They'd be protected if (when) they came, though they'd have to go out and hunt soon. Boon thought he could probably still manage with a deer or even a rabbit, but Kitty needed something stronger than that.

Hell, if it comes to it, I'll get me a deer and then let her

# Boon & Kitty 2011

have something from my wrist. Just to keep her going.

It scared him how appealing that was, the thought that he'd finally be able to put a leash on her.

Please, let them come sooner than that.

When they came, it was almost dawn, and they came with flashbang grenades and body armor, and the first thing Boon did was try and throw a grenade back through the window. They tripped the circle though, so at least they didn't catch him sleeping, even if Kitty had already curled up and gone still.

The first killer to come in got opened up, throat to groin—Boon's hands twisted like root burs, his nails black apostrophes. He took the man's heavy coat and shotgun, and with his mangled hand scooped Kitty up and held her against his chest.

Outside, there were seven more, but six scattered when the head of the tall one talking on the phone burst. Boon would have shot another, but he didn't have a hand free to work the shotgun's slide, so he ran hard, and his legs found the old trail. If he could get clear, get enough distance, they could go to ground and maybe not be dug up before next evening. Maybe the Old Man still had his cabin up at the edge of the tree line. The air started to lighten, the first kiss of morning creeping over the horizon behind them. He stopped for a second to zip Kitty up in the coat, and to work a shell into the shotgun with his mangled hand. A spray of deer shot made a decision for him then. He unloaded his shotgun back down the trail to get their heads down, and turned and sprinted as fast as he could, as fast as his diminished vitality would allow.

His back started to feel warm, then hot. A sweat broke out across it, running down his ass crack. He knew it was running red, and under the coat looked like Jesus whipped to the cross.

He made one last decision—he poured all he had left into speed and raced the sunrise and the killers (Circle? Lancea? Did it matter?). He broke from the trail and into the trees, each shadow a brief respite from the chasing sun's claws.

And then he'd gone as far as he could go, and he fell forward against the leafy incline. The impact made Kitty wake and cry out.

"Kitty, darling. You have to go into the ground now."

She mewed, an animal sound, not a person's.

"Go into the ground. I'll follow you."

She stirred. A direct splash of the rising sun danced on his back and neck, and he bit through his lip trying not to scream.

"Kitty!"

And she was gone, and he collapsed against the leaves.

One last thing to do then. He lurched to his feet, the world whiting out as the sun chewed into him, crawled up and down his nerves, shutting things down, burning things out. The Beast tried to wake and throw him into a mad frenzy, or force him down into the ground himself to escape the Final Death, but he spent 60 years making his Beast do tricks, and now he knew it too well, knew how to own it.

He ran until his calf tendons burned through and snapped up like cut elastic bands. The Beast raged at him, and he imagined it spoke.

*You killed us! We could have lived! One more stupid worthless decision, you stupid worthless man.*

Yeah, well at least that's how I'm dying, as man making a man's mistakes.

And the Sun came in then and Boon had a fraction of a second, a moment stretching on forever—the scream of the Beast, and then... silence. Beautiful silence inside his head. He lived just long enough to smile.



chapter three  
ANTAGONISTS

...happy is the tomb where no wizard hath lain,  
and happy the town at night whose wizards are all ashes.  
—H.P. Lovecraft, “The Festival”

Sibilant whispers in an empty room. A half-glimpsed figure in the corner, its knobby, many-fingered hands caked in strange and stinking ichors, its words offering power and its smile promising damnation. Empty-souled men and women whose blood provides terrible insight but loosens the Beast’s chains just a little more with every forbidden sip.

The Kindred cross paths with many strange things as they waltz through their Requiems, but for those who delve into the blasphemous secrets of blood magic, the shadows run deep, dark, and mysterious. Like an oceanic explorer in

the Marianas Trench, the blood sorcerer is surrounded by a vast, cold, crushing blackness, never knowing what lurks just outside her meager pool of illumination.

Sometimes, though, like some monstrous deep-sea fish, one of these mysteries slithers into view, and just for a moment, the Kindred glimpses a thing that, unlike herself, was born to navigate that black ocean and feed upon those foolish enough to intrude upon its domain. These encounters might bring revelation, but they are also fraught with peril, for when you notice them, they, invariably, notice you.

## *The Sons of Phobos*

Long ago, a group of vampires sought a bargain with a Strix. They asked for the power to call down dreams and reshape the world to match their nightmares.

The Strix bade them: “Gorge yourselves upon the blood of peasants.”

The vampires did so, but they did not gain the power they had asked for. They returned to the Strix.

The Strix bade them: “Gorge yourselves on the blood of lords.”

The vampires set upon the lords and kings of every land, but they did not gain the power they had asked for. They returned in a rage to the Strix.

The Strix bade them: “Gorge yourselves on the blood of wizards.”

The vampires flew across the land, scooping witches and warlocks from their hovels and towers, and dragging them before the Strix to devour them. But the mages’ blood burned inside them and destroyed them like sun from within. The mages, meanwhile, rose from the dead.

“Look around you, my children,” said the Strix, “for I have cleared a kingdom for you to rule.”

And with the Strix in their ears and their thoughts and their blood, the wizards raised the dead kings to rule and the dead peasants to serve. And they ruled the land wisely, but without compassion or mercy.

Tonight, they remain. They possess the avarice of mages and the hunger of vampires. They must feed only

rarely, but in the most gruesome fashion. Their victims live, yes, but with neither heart nor soul, little more than automatons. Even larvae have a better half-life.

## *Who Delights in Blood*

Worshipers of the fiery-eyed embodiment of the horrors of war, the Sons of Phobos rose to prominence in ancient Macedonia, under the patronage of Alexander the Great. They practiced terrible rites in the service of their god, and they wielded powerful sorceries not unlike the blood magic of the Circle of the Crone’s antecedents.

Left to their own devices, the Sons of Phobos likely would have come to the same end as most of the sorcerous cults of the day: destroyed by rivals, perhaps, or murdered by kings fearful of their powers, or simply drying up as the old wizards died and new blood was slow to trickle in. Any of those things might have happened, but instead, the vampires came.

These Kindred sought to steal the mystic arts of the Sons of Phobos, but they were unprepared for the power inherent in the willworkers’ blood. In the act of consumption, they were themselves consumed. Those vampires are long lost to history, but the Sons of Phobos, by dint of some mysterious occult resonance, lived on, albeit altered in strange ways. Whatever connection they had to the higher mysteries of existence was cold, dead, empty. Many gave themselves over to despair and hurled

themselves from their towers, but a few held to the faith and the ritual, and in the midst of bloody sacrifice, they discovered a way to rekindle the spark of their power.

Hearts, that was the key. Freshly cut, freshly consumed human hearts unlocked a terrible might within them—not the magic that was stolen from them, perhaps, but something raw and wrong and bloody. Blood magic, not unlike the arts of Crúac, and a kind of immortality without the banes of vampiric existence. Sustained by the stolen lives of their victims, the Sons of Phobos haunt the ages, seeking power and knowledge. And though few remain from the earliest days of the cult, they still remember it was the Kiss that brought them low, and that the Kindred know many more secrets of blood sorcery the Sons would love to possess.

### *Stolen Hearts*

Unlike the Kindred, who are cursed with their eternal hunger from the moment of the Embrace, the Sons of Phobos labor under no compulsion but their own lust for power. Oh yes, the rush of stolen Vitae, the thrill of bending the laws of reality to one's will, these are heady experiences, but every single member of the Sons of Phobos, from the rawest initiate to the hoariest elder who recalls the courts of Alexander, could walk away from all of it tonight and suffer no ill effects beyond living out the remainder of their natural, mortal lifespans. That so few do is a testament to just how potent the lure of occult mastery can be.

The Sons of Phobos practice a form of blood sorcery functionally similar to Crúac. Since Crúac rituals require Vitae to fuel their blasphemous effects, however, the Sons long ago discovered a dreadful sacrificial rite that allows them, in some crude fashion, to ape the feeding process of the Kindred by cutting out and devouring their victims' hearts. It's an involved, lengthy process, involving excruciating pain on the part of the victim, but it's all the Sons of Phobos have.

This ritual may also be performed on behalf of another, inducting him into the mysteries of the cult. Once a celebrant has undergone the heart-stealing rite once, he instinctively knows how to perform it in the future.

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Occult

**Action:** Extended (each roll represents 15 minutes of butchery, 5 successes required). Unlike most extended actions, the heart-stealing ritual is limited to a number of rolls equal to the victim's Stamina rather than the character's base dice pool. If the target successes are not acquired by then, the victim dies.

**Dramatic Failure:** The ritual is irreparably botched; the victim dies, and no Vitae is acquired.

**Failure:** No progress is made toward completing the ritual.

**Success:** The ritual proceeds apace. Once the required successes are accumulated, the character successfully removes and consumes his victim's heart. Actually choking the heart down requires a successful Stamina + Composure roll, with the number of successes dictating the number of points of Vitae the character gains.

**Exceptional Success:** The ritual is completed successfully, and the Son of Phobos gains a number of points of Vitae equal to his Stamina + Composure rather than rolling.

**Suggested Modifiers:** Target is unconscious (-2), target is not securely bound and stationary (-2), ritual is performed in a makeshift location that hasn't been properly prepared or sanctified (-1), ritual is performed with grand, ceremonial appointments (+1 per dot of Resources expended on components and sacraments), victim is blood-bound to a vampire (+2), victim is a ghoul with Vitae currently in his system (+3).

### *Stolen Blood*

The Sons of Phobos use their heart-stealing ritual to infuse themselves with the power of Vitae, but lacking the unique physiology of the Kindred, they can't make use of it as fully as a vampire can. In some ways, they're even more limited than ghouls.

- The only Disciplines a Son of Phobos' Vitae can fuel are blood sorcery. Most commonly, the sorcerers of the cult learn Crúac, but other Vitae-fueled blood sorceries are possible. No reliable records exist of a Son of Phobos learning Theban Sorcery.
- Sons of Phobos can spend Vitae to heal wounds or augment physical dice pools, using the same rules as vampires.
- The stolen Vitae acquired from the heart-stealing ritual cannot create ghouls, nor can it induce the Vinculum.
- Should a vampire feed on a Son of Phobos, she drains Vitae directly from the victim's Vitae pool, just as if she was feeding from another vampire. Once the Vitae pool is empty, the normal rules for feeding on mortals apply.
- Like ghouls, so long as they have Vitae in their system, Sons of Phobos don't age. Unlike ghouls, their age does not "catch up" to them if they

find themselves deprived of it, no matter how unnaturally long their lives have been.

- A Son of Phobos who wishes to advance his understanding of blood sorcery must have Vitae in his system for the entire time he studies the mysteries. Learning higher dots of the Discipline simply isn't possible without the perception-altering properties of Vitae to nudge the enlightenment along.
- Sons of Phobos can hold a maximum amount of Vitae equal to  $(10 + \text{Stamina})$  at a time. They can only ever spend one Vitae per turn, however.
- Finally, it's worth noting that a Son of Phobos can also become a ghoul and that, in such a case, Vitae bestowed by a Kindred domitor is not subject to the above limitations. That Vitae follows the normal rules for ghouls found on pages 166-168 of *Vampire: The Requiem*.

### *Stolen Lives*

Perhaps the most dreadful thing about the heart-stealing ritual of the Sons of Phobos is the fact that, when properly performed, it doesn't actually kill the victim. Within moments of the removal and consumption of the heart, the victim's wounds close, leaving no sign but a faint, red scar that follows the line of the breastbone. The victim continues to live, and despite the absence of a heart (easily detected by even a cursory pulse-taking), all biological functions proceed as normal.

While they may technically be alive, at least in the loosest sense of the word, these thralls, as the Sons call them, are little more than mindless puppets of the Son of Phobos who ate their hearts. They can respond to simple orders (guard this door, copy this manuscript, kill that woman, etc.), but they must be coached through any complex task step-by-step and, if left to their own devices, will simply stand in one place until they expire from dehydration or exposure.

A thrall has an effective score of 0 in all Mental and Social Attributes and Skills, with the exception of Resolve and Composure. Both of these Attributes are effectively rated at 5; the thrall responds only to orders from its master, and once it is given those orders, it follows them through without hesitation or deterrence. Thralls do not suffer wound penalties from bashing damage, as pain simply does not register to them. In all other respects, however, a thrall is a normal human.

If a ghoul is subject to the heart-stealing ritual (which is not all that uncommon, given the significant bonus

### **Optional Rule: Deadly Thralls**

As presented, thralls are a tragic byproduct of the depredations of the Sons of Phobos, a creepy bit of scenery for a scene set in the sorcerer's lair, or moderately useful servants and minions. If you want to make them truly terrifying, and have access to *World of Darkness: Slasher*, consider having thralls come back as Slashers of the Brute or (for *really* nasty thralls) Mask undertakings. If you don't have access to that book, Brutes suffer no wound penalties at all and do not roll for unconsciousness until their Health tracks are filled with lethal damage, but they suffer a -3 penalty on all Perception rolls. Masks possess the same benefits, plus they have no need to eat or sleep, and all attacks inflict only one point of damage, no matter the source.

This murderous apotheosis might not be a universal thing: maybe it only happens on an exceptional success on the heart-stealing ritual, or maybe a Son of Phobos can invest her thralls with this terrible power by sacrificing a dot of Willpower at the culmination of the rite. Or maybe the cult's belief that its mastery dies with the last of the stolen power from a thrall is true, and the expenditure of that last Vitae creates a Slasher free from the sorcerer's control and hungry for revenge.

on the ritual roll that a ghoul victim provides), the poor wretch may use physical Disciplines so long as it possesses Vitae, but it is unable to use any more esoteric Disciplines, even if instructed to do so by its master.

According to the Sons of Phobos' lore, a sorcerer only retains control of her thrall until she burns the last of the Vitae stolen from that victim. As such, most Sons of Phobos keep thralls around just long enough to act as servitors and assistants for a single rite or two before killing them. This particular tradition has no truth to it, but given how easy it would be for a living thrall to raise all sorts of uncomfortable questions if its heartless nature's discovered, it's usually best to dispose of them quickly.

### *Gabrielle St. George*

**Quotes:** "What secrets have you dug up over the centuries, I wonder? And how long will it take me to pry them out of you?"

"I've lost so much at the hands of things such as you. I want it back."

"No! Keep that blood away from me!"

**Background:** Born into an aristocratic London family in the late 18th century, Gabrielle began taking an



interest in the occult during her teenage years, mostly out of a general sense of ennui and a desire to be seen as scandalous. While most girls her age were courting young gentlemen and eagerly awaiting proposals of marriage, Gabrielle was exploring the salons of Paris, immersing herself in the orgiastic rites of any number of "enlightened" cults. Shortly before the onset of the Terror, she was initiated into the Sons of Phobos (who, despite the name, had become significantly more egalitarian since the Enlightenment) by a French count by the name of Villefort. Before Villefort could teach her much more than the basics of blood sorcery, though, the French Revolution erupted into full fury, and he lost his head to Madame Guillotine.

Gabrielle fled France before the Revolutionary Council could take her and spent the next century wandering Europe, learning Crúac from scattered contacts of her old teacher and stealing hearts in both the literal and metaphorical sense. By 1894 she had amassed a considerable fortune and considerable occult power, but she had also drawn the eye of more than a few powerful Kindred. In Budapest, she was betrayed by a servant and taken by the Ordo Dracul, which saw in her potential enlightenment into the vampiric condition, and possibly a chance to study the secrets of blood sorcery firsthand. For 100 years, it kept her prisoner, ghouled, blood bound, and enslaved, subject to every examination both physical and arcane the Order of the Dragon could devise. When it had finished with her, it cast her out into the streets, broken in mind and body, never expecting her to survive, but more of Gabrielle's low cunning remained than they knew. She still knew the ancient secrets, still recalled the prayers to Phobos and the proper ritual for consuming the heart, even if she had forgotten what she once knew of the arts of sorcery.

**Description:** Although considered a great beauty in her own time, Gabrielle is plain at best by today's standards. She bears the weak chin and prominent ears characteristic of a few too many aristocratic cousin marriages, and her complexion remains a pale, fish-belly white. She dresses conservatively and rather unfashionably--quite a lot changed in the century she spent as a prisoner, and she hasn't entirely caught up yet.

Gabrielle is quite insane from her time in captivity, but her high Willpower means she keeps the crazy on a short leash most of the time. Only when confronted with the possibility of recovering a particularly juicy piece of mystical lore, or with something that reminds her of her time in captivity (small, confined spaces, Vitae from a vampire rather than a stolen heart, etc.), does her veneer crack.

**Storytelling Hints:** You were on top of the world, and they took it from you. All your wealth, all your power, all gone. Your first and foremost goal is to get it all back; vengeance would be nice, but you're not stupid enough to make a play until you're attacking from a position of power. So, for now, you bide your time and move carefully—you have more enemies out there than the vampires.

Speak precisely and without emotion. Iron self-control is the key; you aren't the flighty, scandalous child that left England so many years ago. Never show a moment's weakness, and if you do, be sure that any who bear witness are next on your altar.

**Embrace:** N/A, became a Son of Phobos in 1792

**Apparent Age:** Late teens

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 1

**Mental Skills:** Academics 3, Investigation 2, Occult (Ordo Dracul) 4, Politics 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 1, Larceny 2, Survival 1

**Social Skills:** Expression 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize (High Society) 4

**Merits:** Eidetic Memory, Language (French, Latin, Greek), Unseen Senses (Vampires)

**Willpower:** 4

**Morality:** 4

**Virtue:** Justice

**Vice:** Wrath

**Health:** 7

**Initiative:** 3

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 9

**Vitae/per Turn:** 10/1

**Blood Potency:** n/a

**Disciplines:** Crúac 3 (Creation 3, Destruction 1, Transmutation 3)

**Crúac Rituals:** Miasma, One Hundred Needles, Rigor Mortis, Thorned Snare

## *The Empty Liars*

Sometimes—not every time, but just sometimes—when something of terrible occult significance occurs, they come. The Empty Liars, with their hollowed-out bodies and their lives that just don't exist. Some say they're a kind of immune system for the fabric of reality, making sure the egregious effects of blood sorcery are contained. Others say they're there to observe, to record major shifts in the mystical landscape. Still others say they aren't supposed to exist at all, that powerful rituals actually tear the world open and let these *things* in.

Whatever their origins, these false mortals are intimately connected to blood sorcery: Kindred occultists swear that, buried in the patterns of the false lives they lead, in the exact cadence of their words, in the designs of their skin when flayed oh so delicately, lie the secrets of the greatest arts of sorcery. Secrets even the Circle of the Crone and the Lancea Sanctum have forgotten.

## *Hollow Little Lives*

Wherever they come from, the Empty Liars are hard to pick out of a crowd. Outwardly, they resemble ordinary mortals, though perhaps with a certain stillness about them. Even the breeze seems to barely stir their clothes

and hair, giving them an oddly detached air, as though they aren't really part of this world. Auspex •• shows the Empty Liars for what they are. Not only are they completely lacking an aura, their literal emptiness is readily apparent; they appear as little more than hollow bags of skin, crudely inflated to roughly human dimensions.

It's when one begins to dig deeper that things start to get really weird. These people, they aren't supposed to exist. Oh, they have complete, detailed memories of the lives they supposedly led, and the mortals who are pulled into those lives remember them too, but when you start digging into the details... they aren't there. The childhood home that burned down and killed her family didn't. The college roommate was never born. The government has no record of her ever existing. And yet, if you talk to her boyfriend, hell, if you Dominate him into revealing his deepest secrets, he'll remember meeting her two years ago at a concert and the terrible pick-up line he used on her that somehow worked.

Even the Empty Liars themselves seem to perceive nothing out of the ordinary about their existence. Only in the direct presence of blood sorcery (and possibly other forms of magic) do they reveal themselves as anything



but mortal. An Empty Liar in the vicinity (roughly one city block per dot rating of the ritual) of a spell being cast is drawn to the site like an iron filing to a magnet. Sometimes, one actively intervenes and attempts to disrupt the spell, but most times, they simply observe and, at least according to the relatively few Kindred who have studied them, record them somehow.

### *The Bloody Business*

Every single Empty Liar “remembers” every act of sorcery it’s ever witnessed. This isn’t a literal memory (in fact, Empty Liars seem to have no recollection of the events they witness while observing sorcerous activity); rather, the ritual is encoded into the Liar’s very essence. It’s there in blood and skin, hidden away in the occult significance of its movements and even the words it speaks.

Feeding from an Empty Liar is a dangerous prospect, but one heavy with potential rewards. Whatever their outward appearance, Empty Liars are not mortals, and they have no blood within them. A Kindred who attempts to take Vitae from one gains no nourishment, but gets a little taste of unholy enlightenment instead. Those initiated into the mysteries of blood sorcery are (sometimes) prepared to receive it and can gain a momentary boost of mystical power from it, but the unfortunate Kindred with no sorcerous talents is left woefully unprepared for the sudden rush of information that flows in place of blood.

When a vampire “feeds” on an Empty Liar, track the amount of Vitae he attempts to consume normally. Consuming an amount greater than the vampire’s rating in a blood sorcery Discipline leads to a state of madness and near-catatonia, as bizarre visions crash through the Kindred’s psyche. For the rest of the scene, the drinker suffers the effects of the Schizophrenia derangement. Even after the derangement passes, Kindred who have fed from the Empty Liars sometimes experience memory loss, or even memory alteration, much as one might when coming out of a long torpor.

Modulating the consumption, however, provides insight into forgotten secrets and occult knowledge. Every “point of Vitae” consumed translates into a single dot of a Theme appropriate to the practitioner’s style of blood sorcery. These bonus dots can be applied as the character wishes, but multiple feedings do not “stack.” That is, the vampire cannot drain two “Vitae” to acquire two dots of the Transmutation Theme and later consume another three to increase his Transmutation to 5. Moreover, this rush of enlightenment is temporary; immediately after

the feeding, the vampire's player must roll Composure + Occult. The mystic insight stolen from an Empty Liar lasts for one night per success.

## *Edith Parker*

**Quotes:** "Who the hell are you, and why are you fuckers following me?"

"I've had entirely enough of this weird shit."

"You. Answers. Now."

**Background:** Edith Parker doesn't exist, and even a little bit of preliminary research will show one that. And yet, she lives in a third-floor walk-up in a decent part of the city, holds down a job as an analyst at an investment bank, and maintains a profile on a popular Internet dating website. Also, she occasionally has blackouts and comes to in strange places, sees pale strangers following her late at night, and feels as though she's connected to something larger than herself.

Edith is something of an anomaly among the Empty Liars, in that she seems to recognize that something is not quite right about herself. She hasn't put the pieces together yet (and how could she?), but she's seen enough of the local Kindred, usually in the aftermath of her "blackouts" (when her nature takes over and she's drawn to the site of blood magic being performed), to connect them to the strangeness in her life.

**Description:** Edith is a short, relatively plain-looking woman, with flat brown hair and eyes that could best be described as "neutral." She tends to dress conservatively, in unremarkable business attire, and wears little makeup. All in all, she's the sort of person that easily fades into the background--though even that hasn't prevented her from catching the eye of the local Bishop, who is strongly considering passing her information off to the Inquisition. She's just been a bit too omnipresent for the Sanctified's comfort.

## *His Majesty, the Prince of Riots*

**Quotes:** "Princes, paupers, cabbages and kings. It's all the same in the end."

"The only way to break the system is to appropriate the system. Burn it from the inside."

"Mystical secrets not meant for the uninitiated? Bullshit. Unfuck your mind; the power of the Blood is our right."

**Background:** Everybody knows that only two covenants have blood sorcery. Sure, there's the odd bloodline with its own particular, limited-focus form of blood magic, and to the layman, the Coils of the Dragon might well look like sorcery,

**Storytelling Hints:** You don't know what's going on in your life yet, but you've decided you're not going to take it lying down. You've started digging into the timing of your blackouts and the individuals you've seen shortly after them, and you've scratched the tip of the vampiric iceberg. You haven't yet discovered that your life is a cosmic fabrication, but even as you follow the trail back to Sanctified and Acolyte, the Kindred are digging into you. Eventually, someone's going to put two and two together, and God knows what will happen then.

**Apparent Age:** Mid-20s

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

**Mental Skills:** Academics 1, Computer (Online Research) 2, Investigation (Herself) 2, Occult 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Firearms 1, Stealth (Tailing) 2

**Social Skills:** Empathy 3, Persuasion 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 3

**Merits:** Contacts (Conspiracy Theorists, Fringe Journalists) 2, Danger Sense, Resources 3

**Willpower:** 7

**Morality:** 7

**Virtue:** Hope

**Vice:** Envy

**Health:** 7

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 8

but it really comes down to the Circle of the Crone and the Lancea Sanctum. They're the ones with the occult big guns, and they take extreme measures to keep it that way.

Apparently, no one bothered to tell the Carthian agitator Daniel Macallan, who goes by the alias His Majesty, the Prince of Riots. Daniel believes that the secrets of blood sorcery are the birthright of every Kindred, and that the Circle and the Spear represent just two more facets of the hoary conspiracy that dominates Kindred society.



Exactly how Macallan learned the rudiments of both Crúac and Theban Sorcery remains a mystery—he certainly learned them before arriving in the city six months ago, but everyone seems to have a different theory, ranging from exceptionally successful campaigns of espionage to Macallan being a Kindred bodhisattva, having reached Golconda and unlocked the powers of the Blood through sheer enlightened will. Whatever the truth, Macallan isn't saying; or rather, he's saying all of them, all at once, to whoever will listen.

**Description:** Macallan's the sort who wouldn't look out of place at a Clash concert circa 1979. Picture leather, spiked hair, and lots of piercings, and you've got a good basis. He's loud and brash and violent; to his way of thinking, the only way to break the Kindred out of their complacent acceptance of the hegemony of the Circle and the Spear is the short, sharp shock. Still, the Prince is no mindless thug; he knows well that he dances a dangerous Requiem, and he keeps to the shadows, skulking on the fringes of Kindred society, looking for disaffected neonates and hardcore revolutionaries who might be amenable to his philosophy.

**Storytelling Hints:** You are the Angry Young Man. Bishops and Hierophants alike are as much tools of Kindred oppression as Princes (and God help the Prince who owes her own allegiance to the Circle or the Sanctified), but theirs is a more insidious prison: one of superstitious awe rather than tyrannical domination. The only way to break those chains is to remove the mystique behind their power. When blood sorcery is free to all, all Kindred shall be free.

“Free to all” doesn't mean “handed out at Elysium to all and sundry,” though. At least, not yet. The old masters of blood sorcery guard their secrets jealously, and anyone who would help you spread your philosophy has to be dedicated enough to withstand the Inquisition and smart enough to not get caught in the first place. You test prospective apprentices mercilessly, usually without their knowledge, before you even reveal yourself to offer tutelage. Even then, the challenges don't end. To your way of thinking, your apprentices have to shed themselves of all that mystical mumbo jumbo that the covenants have built up around the sorcerous Disciplines if they're going to free themselves. That means lots of highly unorthodox, some would say sacrilegious, training methods. Lots of Kindred don't even survive your training—which, to your way of thinking, just means they weren't ready for freedom yet.

**Clan:** Daeva  
**Covenant:** Carthian Movement  
**Embrace:** 1954  
**Apparent Age:** Mid-30s  
**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 3  
**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4  
**Social Attributes:** Presence 5, Manipulation 3, Composure 2  
**Mental Skills:** Computer 2, Investigation 3, Occult (Blood Sorcery) 3, Politics (Tearing Down the System) 4  
**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl 3, Firearms (Pistols) 2, Weaponry (Improvised Weapons) 3  
**Social Skills:** Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 3  
**Merits:** Allies (Former Apprentices) 2, Fame 1, Haven 2, Retainer (Current Apprentice) 2, Status (Carthians) 2  
**Willpower:** 5

**Humanity:** 4  
**Virtue:** Justice  
**Vice:** Pride  
**Health:** 9  
**Initiative:** 4  
**Defense:** 2  
**Speed:** 10  
**Blood Potency:** 3  
**Vitae/per Turn:** 12/1  
**Disciplines:** Celerity 2, Crúac 2, Majesty 3, Theban Sorcery 3, Vigor 2  
**Themes:** Creation 2, Destruction 3, Divination 2, Transmutation 1  
**Crúac Rituals:** Pangs of Proserpina, The Hydra's Vitae  
**Theban Sorcery Rituals:** Blood Scourge, Liar's Plague, Tempter's Eye, Torment

## Mister Fixer

**Quotes:** "Police lookin' into your kills? I can mix you up a Law Keep Away spell, no problem. Or maybe a little dash of Follow-Me-Boy; the kine'll be fighting like dogs over you? What can I fix for you?"

"Got to get up earlier in the night you want to outsmart a two-headed doctor."

"Boy, I got one of your footprints. I can do whatever I want to you."

**Background:** Tom Munson was born in western Alabama in 1889, the son of a locally renowned blues musician and her sharecropper husband. His parents died when he was young, both victims of influenza, and young Tom spent much of his life living with his uncle Joe, who had a fearsome reputation as a hoodoo man. Tom learned the art at his uncle's knee and, by his early 20s, had a reputation of his own. Locals came to him to attract love and money, to lay tricks on their enemies, and to remove tricks those same enemies had laid on them. They even came to him when unexplained supernatural phenomena plagued the community.

It was on one such job that Tom encountered Caroline Jefferson, an elder of the Circle of the Crone who had preyed on the area for over a century. Tom's conjure-work was no match for the old witch's Crúac, but his tenacity impressed her enough to Embrace the young sorcerer rather than kill him outright. Though he never

quite connected with the religious aspects of the Circle, Tom—now going by the name "Mister Fixer"—took to Crúac like a duck to water. These nights, he lives a semi-nomadic life, traveling between various Kindred domains in the region, selling his services for cash, Vitae, and whatever mystical artifacts he can lay his hands on.

**Description:** Surprisingly short and skinny, Mister Fixer has a pale, ashy complexion that's only made more noticeable by the black suits he favors when he's "on business." His clients expect a certain Delta blues mystique, after all, and even if he'd rather keep up with modern fashion, Fixer's more than willing to play his part. Indeed, a flair for the theatric is all part and parcel of Fixer's services: to his way of thinking, nobody trusts a conjure man who just shows up, splashes some blood around, and leaves. His workings are almost always lengthy, elaborate rituals, mostly drawing on his old traditional hoodoo, but over the past century, he's added elements from Santeria, Louisiana Vodoun, and even Pennsylvania Dutch hexwork.

**Storytelling Hints:** It's all about the deal for you. You don't much care what you're hired to do or who you're hired to do it to; hell, you'll put a trick on a Kindred for one of his rivals on Tuesday and take his money to remove the hex on Wednesday without a second thought. The only thing you won't do is cross the Circle—leastwise, not unless it crosses you first.



C. Wilkins

You were Embraced right into the Circle of the Crone, and while you outwardly play the part of the dutiful Acolyte, you're a rural Alabama boy at heart, and deep down, you sometimes find yourself thinking that the Lancea Sanctum's beliefs are closer to your heart. Not that you'd ever share that little tidbit with anyone.

**Clan:** Mekhet

**Covenant:** Circle of the Crone

**Embrace:** 1914

**Apparent Age:** Mid-20s

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

**Mental Skills:** Crafts (Hoodoo Workings) 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 4

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Drive (Big Old-Fashioned Sedans) 2, Firearms 3

**Social Skills:** Empathy 3, Expression (Rituals) 2, Intimidation 4, Socialize 3

**Merits:** Allies (Old Clients Who Owe Him Favors) 4, Contacts (Acolytes, Backwoods Folks, Conjure Men) 3, Haven 3, Status (Circle of the Crone) 2

**Willpower:** 7

**Humanity:** 5

**Virtue:** Charity

**Vice:** Greed

**Health:** 9

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 9

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Vitae/per Turn:** 11/1

**Disciplines:** Auspex 2, Crúac 4, Obfuscate 3

**Themes:** Creation 2, Destruction 3, Divination 2, Protection 2

**Crúac Rituals:** Cheval, Cloud the Watcher's Eye, Creeping Spy, Repel the Hunter, Touch of the Morrigan

# The Prophet of the Eyeless Face

**Quotes:** "At midnight, the owls scream the death of the moon. The risen child weeps in his manger and does not know the reason why."

"A crowned fool stands before a throne. He thinks to sit in this bloody chair, but cannot see that the Beast has made it its own."

"Three liars speak the same truth and think themselves clever. Their wit will choke the dragon and see the birth of ignorance in its place."

**Background:** It's been a fixture of the city for as long as the Kindred have records. At first, it lived in the caves on the outskirts of town. Later, as the city grew into the sky and the earth, it moved into the sewers and claimed its territory. When a secular Prince attempted to give its hunting grounds to a favored lackey, said Prince's haven was smitten by a thunderbolt from a clear sky at midday, tearing the roof off of his sleeping chamber. It is known to the Sanctified as the Prophet of the Eyeless Face, and to the other covenants as "that thing in the sewer."

The Prophet holds no office in the Prince's court, nor even (officially, anyways) in the Lancea Sanctum, but unofficially, it's widely acknowledged that, if a Kindred in good standing with the Sanctified requires a certain insight into her future (or the future of one of her long-term schemes), she might—just might, mind—be permitted to enter the sewers under the old church on 7th Avenue and seek an audience with the Prophet. On the other hand, it's also known that the Prophet has sufficiently rarefied blood that mortals no longer provide it with sustenance, and Kindred not in good standing with the Sanctified are more likely to end up with fangs in their throat than insight into their future. The Bishop, naturally, finds this state of affairs ideal for disposing of inconvenient rivals and sees no reason to inform heretics of their transgressions.

**Description:** If anyone has ever actually seen the Prophet, time, torpor, or outright madness has muddled the memory beyond all recognition. Even the Prophet's name is a guess; based on certain turns of phrase it used and the way it moved, the old Sanctified who first encountered the Prophet assumed it to be blind.

The Prophet of the Eyeless Face shrouds itself in the ornate finery of the medieval Church: all cassocks and mitres of rich, sumptuous fabrics replete with cloth-of-gold and set with priceless gems. A deeply hooded cloak of ermine-trimmed black conceals its face, and it wears the taloned metal gauntlets the Lancea Sanctum sometimes call the "Claws of the Beast" over its hands. Its voice is a deep, resonant bass, surprisingly cultured and possessed of only the slightest trace of what might be a South American accent.

**Storytelling Hints:** God has given you the curse of prophecy, and in your damnation, you reveal His plan to your fellow sinners. You have no need to seek glory or power; let the heathens squabble and grub in the dirt for their tawdry crowns. For you, there is only the Sight, the Blood, and the holiness of your purpose.

**Clan:** Nosferatu

**Covenant:** Lancea Sanctum

**Embrace:** Unknown, at least a few centuries

**Apparent Age:** Unknown

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 5

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 4

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Testament of Longinus) 4, Medicine 2, Occult (Theban Sorcery) 3

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 4, Brawl (Grappling) 4, Stealth 3, Weaponry 3

**Social Skills:** Expression (Prophecy) 3, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 2

**Merits:** Allies (Sanctified) 4, Fame 1, Iron Stamina 3, Status (Lancea Sanctum) 4

**Willpower:** 9

**Humanity:** 3

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Sloth

**Health:** 9

**Initiative:** 8

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 11

**Blood Potency:** 7

**Vitae/per Turn:** 20/5

**Disciplines:** Auspex 3, Dominate 1, Nightmare 4, Resilience 2, Theban Sorcery 5, Vigor 3

**Themes:** Creation 4, Destruction 5, Divination 5, Protection 2, Transmutation 4

**Theban Sorcery Rituals:** Bastard's Line, Blandishment of Sin, Blood Scourge, Liar's Plague, Seek the Sleeping Lord, Stigmata, Tempter's Eye, Thief's Mark, Vitae Reliquary

## The Wild Priest

**Quotes:** "I'm so close! I can hear God's will calling me. I need only find my way to Him."

"Shh... don't struggle. This is a holy thing."

"Forgive me, Lord. I know not what I do."

**Background:** Embraced in the early 1950s, Gideon Marshall found the religion in the Lancea Sanctum that had always escaped him in mortal life. After 30 years of service to the Spear, Gideon heard the call of Amoniel and sought to study the arts of Theban Sorcery. While his study of rituals of Divination and Protection proceeded apace, his clan's limitation thwarted his understanding of the fundamentals of the art and stymied his ability to master the other Themes of blood sorcery. His instructors began to suggest that the young Kindred was perhaps mistaken in his belief that an angel of the Lord had called him to the Theban arts.

For a time, Gideon surrendered himself to despair. How could God have mocked him, who had been true to his faith and resolutely accepting of his damnation? Eventually, though, after starving himself to the brink of torpor and spending his every waking moment in prayer, Gideon realized the "truth": God had not put this task before him to mock him, but to test him and to make him rise above the curse of his Blood. He began to study heretical texts, particularly those stolen from the Ordo Dracul, and he became convinced he could find a way to transcend the shackles his Beast had placed upon his mind, and that the key lay somewhere in the forbidden practice of diablerie.

The first test subjects of his theory were the Sanctified tutors who had doubted his vision. Leaving his home domain before the crime was noticed, "Brother" Gideon traveled from domain to domain, always one step ahead of the Sanctified heralds proclaiming his blasphemy. He's been excommunicated in three cities, has an open blood hunt in at least four more, and yet, he's never been caught. Gideon sees this as proof that God has set him on this path.

**Description:** If a biker from the Hells Angels found Jesus, he might look a little like Brother Gideon. Wild-eyed and long-haired, he dresses in sturdy denims and leathers with a prominent white "dog collar" like those worn by Catholic priests. He's given to quoting from *The Testament of Longinus*, and if his words sometimes stumble, well, who'd call him on it?

Gideon usually presents a controlled façade to the world, but reminders of his clan weakness (particularly failures on Theban Sorcery rituals caused by the Gangrel clan weakness) drive him into a near-frenzy. Even when preparing a victim for diablerie, he remains humble, almost apologetic. God commands him to do this, after all.

**Storytelling Hints:** You have a mission given unto you by the Lord your God, and you will not be dissuaded. Neither will you proceed rashly: in nearly every domain across the world, diablerie is punished by the Final Death, and you will not fail God by letting those who cannot hope to understand stop your holy duty. You know that what God has asked of you is a terrible sin, but did He not ask as much of Longinus?

**Clan:** Gangrel

**Covenant:** Lancea Sanctum

**Embrace:** 1952

**Apparent Ages:** Late 20s

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 5

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

**Social Attributes:** Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 1

**Mental Skills:** Academics (Testament of Longinus) 2, Crafts 3, Medicine 2, Occult 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Larceny 2, Stealth (Stalking) 4, Survival (Urban) 3

**Social Skills:** Animal Ken 3, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3

**Merits:** Danger Sense, Fame 1, Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 2, Striking Looks 2

**Willpower:** 6

**Humanity:** 2

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Gluttony

**Health:** 8

**Initiative:** 4

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 15

**Blood Potency:** 4

**Vitae/per Turn:** 13/2

**Disciplines:** Auspex 1, Protean 3, Resilience 2, Theban Sorcery 2

**Themes:** Divination 1, Protection 1, Transmutation 2

**Theban Sorcery Rituals:** Curse of Babel, Tempter's Eye, Vitae Reliquary

## *The Ash That Devours*

If you dig back deep enough into mortal folklore about vampires, you'll find some curiously in-depth ritual requirements for properly destroying one. Some say a stake to the heart is sufficient (they are, of course, quite wrong), others more correctly say that the head must be severed as well, and some recommend even more extreme measures: severing the head, stuffing the mouth with garlic or holy wafers, then burning the head and the body separately and scattering the ashes at a crossroads—sometimes even two separate crossroads.

Most Kindred recognize that as overkill born out of mortal ignorance and the admittedly impressive ability of the undead form to withstand punishment. Sometimes, though, when the dead vampire was a master of blood sorcery, it's not so much overkill as it is a sensible precaution. Sometimes, the unholy power of a blood magician lingers within the ash of her Final Death, allowing something like her soul (or whatever passes for a vampire's soul) to escape destruction and poison the very earth where it lies.

## *The Corrupted Soul*

Not every blood sorcerer has the power necessary to survive the Final Death in this manner. Hard and fast rules for this sort of thing don't really exist, but in general, for there to be even a chance of a sorcerer's Final Death creating the Ash That Devours, she must have had at least Crúac •••• or Theban Sorcery •••• and a Humanity lower than 5; lower blood sorcery ratings simply don't infuse the Kindred form with enough mystical corruption, and a higher Humanity rating prevents the Beast's furious self-preservation from taking hold at the instant of Final Death.

Exceptions to this rule might crop up occasionally. In particular, a vampire who dies as a result of the mystical backlash caused by a dramatic failure while performing a blood sorcery ritual might leave behind an Ash That Devours. And if a blood sorcerer meets Final Death in a particularly inauspicious circumstance (e.g., on a mystically significant date or on unhallowed ground), the Ash That Devours may also be birthed.

## *Unholy Genesis*

So long as the above criteria are met and the vampire's ashes are not dispersed, the occult power still lingering within them will begin to seep into the surrounding

area. This process takes about a week, and if the ashes are disrupted or the site cleansed (for example, by an exorcism) within that time, the process is halted and the sorcerer is truly, Finally Dead. After that week, physically disrupting the Kindred's earthly remains doesn't have any effect on the formation of the Ash That Devours. The power has already poisoned the landscape, and only a ritual cleansing can disrupt the process.

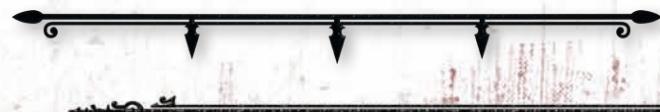
Once the process has begun, it takes a long time for the Ash to fully manifest itself—the same amount of time the Kindred would have spent in torpor, as described on page 175 of *Vampire: The Requiem*. Before the full manifestation, though, the power coursing through the area still causes all sorts of strange, potentially dangerous phenomena that can resemble a haunting to the uninitiated: cold spots, poltergeist activities, phantasmal figures appearing, and the like.

During the initial manifestation period, the Ash That Devours is effectively a ghost, anchored at the location of its ashes. Assume the spirit's Power is equal to the highest of the original vampire's Strength, Intelligence, or Presence; its Finesse is the highest of that vampire's Dexterity, Manipulation, or Wits; and its Resistance is the highest of the vampire's Stamina, Resolve, or Composure. The shade can mimic whatever blood sorcery it knew in its unlife (substituting Essence for Vitae or Willpower costs), but its power is weakened without the Vitae



## **Blood Sacrifice**

Much as with awakening from torpor, the manifestation of the Ash That Devours can be expedited by the spilling of Kindred Vitae. The process is somewhat less efficient than forcing a torpid vampire to awaken: every two points of Vitae from a vampire of higher Blood Potency than the dead sorcerer spilled within the area haunted by an Ash That Devours increases the sorcerer's effective Humanity score by 1 for purposes of how long it takes the full manifestation to form. If the blood comes from a vampire with equal or lower Blood Potency, it takes four points of Vitae. Multiple sacrifices are cumulative, and should they raise the Ash's That Devours effective Humanity above 10, it fully manifests immediately. Many blood sorcerers command cults of disciples with strict instructions to make bloody sacrifices in their names, thereby hastening their inevitable return.



coursing through its system: it does not gain the benefit of the 10-again rule on these Numina. At the Storyteller's discretion, the shade might have other ghostly Numina, either to mimic Disciplines it once possessed or simply to fit the needs of the story. Those powers are not subject to the weakness of blood sorcery-mimicking Numina.

### *Dreadful Chrysalis*

Once the initial period of torpor-like slumber is completed, the Ash That Devours is able to fully manifest itself. The unholy energies that have suffused the area coalesce, forming a rough, humanoid shape from whatever loose detritus happens to be in the area: fetid earth, stinking trash and bits of broken glass, even insect life. This construct is not yet the same being as the vampire it once was: it has the same game statistics, but its Humanity is 0, effectively rendering it a draugr. Likewise, its Blood Potency begins at 0. The fully manifested Ash is not bound to its place of death any longer and may roam freely.

In order to regain itself, the Ash That Devours must replace its lost soul by stealing from other Kindred. The Ash is compelled toward diablerie to make itself whole again, and for every Kindred it consumes, the Ash That Devours regains one point of Humanity and one point of Blood Potency, up to the ratings it had when it met the Final Death. This overrides the normal rules that diablerie automatically costs a point of Humanity and only grants a point of Blood Potency if the victim's Blood Potency is higher than the diablerist's, but *only* until both scores are restored to the vampire's pre-Final Death values.

With each diablerie committed, a bit of the makeshift body of the Ash is replaced by dead flesh. Once its Humanity and Blood Potency are back at their original values, the conversion is complete, and the Ash That Devours is, for all intents and purposes, the Kindred sorcerer it was before.

### *Beecher House*

**Quotes:** *<Window shutters slamming shut, one after the other.>*

*<A flash of image in your brain: a naked man, bound to an altar, being beheaded as several figures in robes look on.>*

*<A soft footfall from behind you.>*

**Background:** Everybody in the neighborhood knows the old Beecher place is haunted, even if nobody knows why or by what. Nobody seems too interested in finding

### **Diablerie from the Other Side**

A similar, but less common, phenomenon to the Ash That Devours sometimes occurs when a powerful blood sorcerer is diablerized by a Kindred of lower Blood Potency. Rather than taking root in the place where the sorcerer met Final Death, the corrupting power takes root within the diablerist himself. If the diablerist is weak-willed, he can find himself losing control of his body to the soul of his victim—this effect is easily mistaken for the Sanguinary Animism derangement, but it is in truth much more.

The struggle to maintain one's identity against the invading presence is an extended action, with one roll being made each night when the diablerist rises. The diablerist's player rolls Resolve + Blood Potency, while the Storyteller rolls Presence + Blood Potency (or what those values were at the moment of Final Death) for the shade of the victim. The target number for both is equal to twice the diablerist's Willpower. If the diablerist reaches the total first, he has fought off the shade's corrupting influence and remains himself. If the shade crosses the threshold first, however, it consumes and replaces the diablerist's mind and soul. The new character has the diablerist's Physical Attributes and Skills, Blood Potency, and any Physical Merits, but the Mental and Social Attributes, Skills, Merits, Disciplines, and Humanity of the victim, along with the victim's memories and personality (including Virtue and Vice).

As an added wrinkle, after each opposed roll, whichever contestant has the most total accumulated successes at the beginning of each night has control of the body. The diablerist can fight to assert control if he's losing the contest, with his player spending Willpower and rolling the character's Resolve + Composure. Each success gives him one turn of control, which he can spread out across the current scene as he sees fit.

out, either. Even the local kids don't dare each other to go in there. In fact, 50 years ago, it was the headquarters of a breakaway sect of the Circle of the Crone, led by a powerful blood sorcerer named Gilroy Haupfmann, who met a rather messy end when the local Hierophant decided they were a little too heretical. Either the Circle's attack dogs weren't aware of the risk or didn't think Haupfmann powerful enough to leave behind an Ash That Devours, because they simply left the ashed remnants of his corpse scattered in the basement. With his Humanity of 2 and Blood Potency of 5, that means Haupfmann's due to rise as an Ash That Devours in 200 years—but the Circle didn't manage to round up all of his followers, and they're out there looking for Kindred

who won't be missed and whose blood can hurry along their master's return.

**Description:** Beecher House itself is almost stereotypical haunted house fare: a crumbling old Victorian set far back from the street on a weed-choked lot, appearing as if a strong breeze might knock it over at any time. Inside, the place is dilapidated but surprisingly free of the empty beer cans, used condoms, and other detritus empty houses such as this tend to accumulate. The shade of Gilroy Haupfmann is still gathering itself. It rarely manifests directly, instead using its Numina in an attempt to convey its inchoate rage and sense of betrayal.

**Storytelling Hints:** The Circle of the Crone must pay. It doesn't matter whether the current Hierophant is the one who destroyed you or a successor; all that remains in your understanding is the white-hot certainty that the Circle must be broken and its power scattered like ash on the wind. Your cultists will take any vampire they think won't be badly missed, but whenever they manage to snatch an Acolyte, you exult in that small taste of revenge.

**Attributes:** Power 5, Finesse 3, Resistance 4

**Willpower:** 9

**Essence:** 15

**Morality:** 2

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Envy

**Initiative:** 7

**Defense:** 5

**Speed:** 18 (species factor 10)

**Size:** 5

**Corpus:** 9

**Numina:** Creeping Spy\* (dice pool 8), Ghost Sign (dice pool 8), Miasma\* (dice pool 8), One Hundred Needles\* (dice pool 8), Phantasm (dice pool 8), Terrify (dice pool 8)

\* These Numina replicate the effects of Crúac rituals, substituting Essence costs for Vitae.

# WHAT IS THE ONYX PATH?

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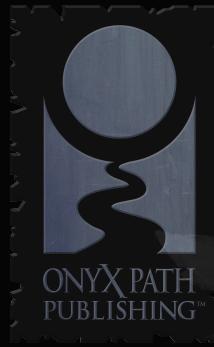
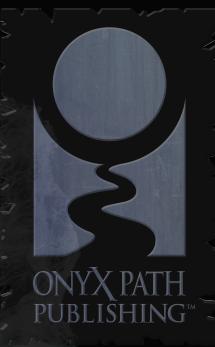
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God doesn't love me.

But He's given me these teeth  
to spill your blood

and these words to  
speak over your remains.

And when I do that,  
He's going to make  
my dreams come true.

God is good.

-- Sister Snow,  
upstart Bishop  
of New Orleans

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- A flexible new system for blood sorcery, allowing you to build and enact your own rituals
- Threnodies, sacrificial charms that build on Disciplines and add a little mojo to any character
- A legion of occult antagonists, from the heartless Sons of Phobos to the enigmatic Empty Liars

