



# *Invite Only*

a sourcebook for  
**Vampire**  
THE REQUIEM



# Dressed to Kill

*I hope I'm not Alicia's target tonight. I'm too young; I haven't even completed my apprenticeship.*

Alicia was dressed to kill. Funny, that cliché. Alicia was an assassin, a killer amongst killers. Her dress was Biagiotti. Hunter green. Her heels added four inches to her already impressive 5'10" frame. As she slithered through the dark, closed halls of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, she heard every thought directed at her. These thoughts were her only amusement during Elysium. Alicia was Mekhet, and the most dangerous type of Shadow to boot.

*I wonder if I have a chance with her. Carmina says Alicia will eat me alive. She's probably just jealous. She heard the touching thought from a local neonate. As she passed, she smiled in such a way as to show a faint hint of tongue and a fainter hint of fang behind silky, merlot-colored lips, making his night and breaking his heart at the same time.*

*I can't be her quarry. I paid Archbishop Carmichael off for just that reason. But why is she looking at me that way? She curtsied to the Bishop, not letting her deep green eyes leave his until he forced a restless cough, looking away with crossed arms.*

*That bitch. She walks around as if she runs the place. I have Prince Giocoso wrapped around my little finger. She won't touch me. I'm better than her, and she knows it.* Alicia's smile widened. She stood admiring Bellini's *Agony in the Garden*, an eye fixed on Seneschal Jetter. Jetter sighed deeply and walked towards the modern art wing. "Don't be a stranger," Alicia mouthed to her as they disconnected.

Alicia then made her way through the rest of the Renaissance, admiring the work of men far her elder, but nonetheless more dead than she. One of their contemporaries, however, stood amongst the paintings. "Primogen Calogera, how are you this evening?" she said, placing a deceptively delicate hand on his arm.

"Alicia, you know that I don't appreciate what you're doing here. None of these wretches truly deserve your treatment." Calogera looked to her, warming to her touch both figuratively and literally.

"I know, Christian. We've had this talk before. But no matter what you say, they're still monsters, and they still deserve anything that happens to them." She sighed, leaning her head against his shoulder. He lifted his head to show some propriety in the face of her crass affection.

"Monsters, indeed. But monsters that, left to their own devices, may grow up to do great things. Lessons aren't learned overnight, and all your murder accomplishes is ending any possible lessons they may have learned." He looked to her, emphasizing his words like a chess player declaring check. "And in this place, it's Primogen Calogera."

Her head bowed slightly, eliminating what brief eye contact they had. "I know you say that, but I haven't seen any evidence of it." She spun on her heel, took both his hands and positioned herself between him and a portrait of Alessandro di Medici. Her gold hair spun around, brushing against his suit jacket. He tilted his head to keep an eye on the painting, and she tilted in counter to regain his attention. "Except in you."

"Alicia, remember that I can hear your thoughts, the way you hear others." He smirked, catching her as she had caught so many others before.

She sighed. "I know. You remind me constantly." Her right hand released his left and moved to caress his cheek. "When are you going to let me hear your thoughts? It's only fair." She was met with a chuckle as he leaned in to kiss her forehead.

"Fair? We'll talk about fair once your target for the night has met his end. Alicia dear, you have so much potential. I wish you'd not waste it on senseless



destruction. I used to be just like you, except these art galleries were Florentine bathhouses. I said the same things. I did the same things. I know the path you tread." He then lifted her other hand, politely kissing it before turning to view a panel by Masaccio depicting Saints Paul and Peter.

She took a deep breath. She was quite good at that: looking human. It was an essential skill, keeping her appearance closer to prey and further from predator. Half of her job was getting in close, and amongst mistrusting monsters, it wasn't always an easy task. Her heels struck marble as she made way to the new arms and armor exhibit. She knew it was where she'd find her target.

*She can't be going for me. Not here. Not tonight. The mistress would see. It'd be the greatest let-down of her Requiem, thought a young Acolyte. Alicia confronted him, stepping directly into his personal space. He stopped, blinking three times quickly. Not tonight. What did I do?*

She ran her fingers through his sandy brown hair. He quivered noticeably. "Not tonight, Deputy Darby. Maybe soon, but not tonight." Her smile disarmed him, but she continued on her voyage.

The main room housed hundreds of weapons and pieces of armor from all over Europe, all across time. "It's not surprising this section draws more Kindred than any other. All romantic notions of equality aside, it's still a ridiculous patriarchy, isn't it?"

A much shorter woman that looked to be about the same age as Alicia took notice. "Beg your pardon?"

"No matter what, these creatures are eternally stuck. Their ways are chauvinist, so they'll remain forever chauvinist." Alicia met the woman's eyes, attempting to hear her thoughts. This one was older than her, but not nearly as potent as the old monster Calogera.

"Don't you have a bottom to feed on, whelp? Some poor lick we'll pity in the immediate, then forget in a year?" She snapped, her thoughts leaking out with her disdain. *I don't even know why they let her in here. Her kind serves no purpose but to harm civilized Kindred. She's scum. She's the lowest of the neonates.*

"Careful, Frieda. You're not immune to the list." She turned away from the display, searching for her victim. He wasn't in this wing.

"Oh, I know." Frieda spat, sticking her nose in the air and making her best effort to appear unshaken.

She spotted Prince Myeong wandering just outside the military displays. He was dressed exquisitely. The gray of his suit perfectly complimented the hint of silver in his dark hair. Every time she looked upon him, she was filled with longing. She wanted him, his power, his fire. She wanted everything about him. She knew deep down that it was artificial—Myeong was Daeva—but she couldn't bring herself to care. However, she knew she couldn't act on that desire, lest he end up a target. She needed to maintain objectivity at all costs.

*She should have been my childe. She should be my pet,* he thought, smiling widely to her. The court would attest that a smile from him is a rare sight. "Alicia... A pleasure as always." His thoughts made her shiver.

"You flatter me, Prince Myeong." She always struggled with the pronunciation, although he never seemed to mind. She felt the blood rush to her face as she blushed, enraptured with him.

"When will you join me at my mansion, dear? Eventually, you'll agree. I don't understand why you fight it," he flirted. *If I'm going to need to feed from Kindred in the coming years, I can't imagine a better meal.*

She smiled, wanting so much for his thoughts to offend her. Instead, they captivated her. "My schedule, lord. You understand." With that, she forced her way back out of his presence. It was difficult. It may not have happened at all if she hadn't spotted her prey.

Her focus shifted, and she marched dutifully towards Duke Sussex. *Not tonight, bitch. Not tonight. Stay away, I'm not in the fucking mood. I'll put you down, just like I did Tommy.*

She smiled. By this point, she'd already won. She lifted her chest, and positioned her body low like a prey animal, and Sussex's thoughts responded in kind. *Good. She's not after me. I'd hate to have to slaughter such a hot little neonate. She'd be the perfect thing to get my mind off this Tommy shit.*

"Alicia..." His words were shaky. He was staring at her. Her eyes, her chest, her neck, he was barely able to hold himself back.

"Duke Sussex," she curtsied. "I hadn't seen you tonight. I've been looking for you, I missed you so."



"I've been around." He shrugged, clenching his black snakeskin cowboy hat to his chest.

"Well, you're here now. That's what's important. Let's walk." She said, putting a hand to the small of his back, leading him into the next hall.

"I'm surprised you have time for me. You're always on business." He followed along, wiping a hint of blood-sweat off his brow.

"I'm always on business, but I'll always have time for you, Johnny. For you and for Tommy."

His ears perked up and he turned to her. She backed against the wall of the main hall submissively, looking up to him. She leaned up to whisper in his ear. "You know what's going to happen now. Take the satisfaction while you can. You may be able to break a bone; you may be able to tear my dress. You're not going to make it through the night."

"What do you know about Tommy?" He growled under his breath, his Beast coming to fore.

"I know everything, Johnny. Now are you going to attack me, or are you going to drag this out?" She whispered, arching her back and licking his earlobe. The blood in her neck brightened, pulsing to tempt the killer in him.

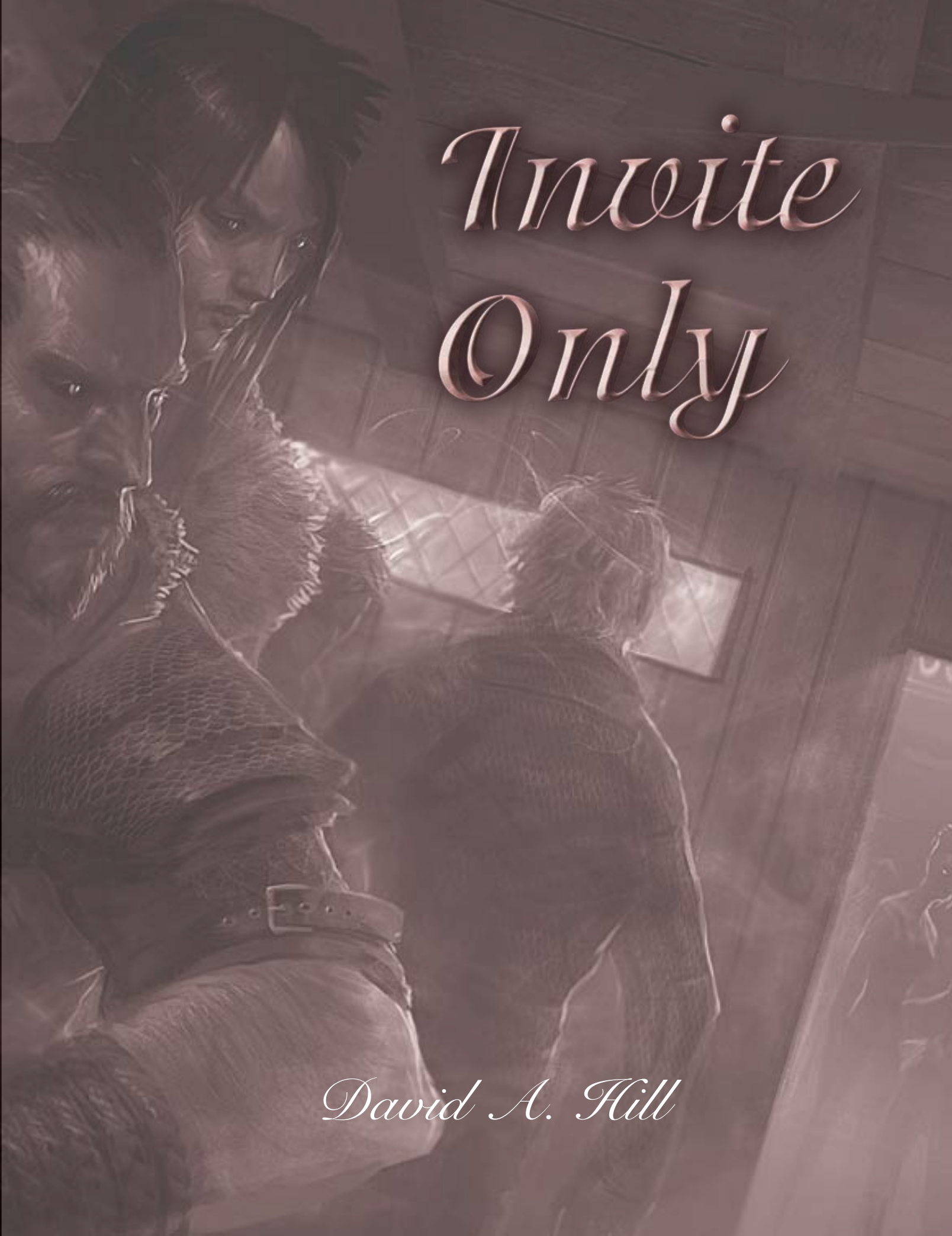
"Bitch."

"I like to think of myself as the victor."

He growled, unleashing claws and biting her neck, just in time to fall victim to a small wooden shaft in his back courtesy of Deputy Darby. Her quarry fell to the ground hard. She looked around, noting the attention paid to her little spectacle. Her job was done, Sussex's reputation was beyond repair and her employer got the leverage of his murder to hold over his head. Again, her work would be the subject of every harpy's chattering for the next few months until someone else hired her to eliminate the opposition.

She watched Calogera shake his head and leave.





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# Introduction

Vampires are total assholes.

One vampire is selfish. She exists on the lifeblood of other people. She puts that concern above all else if she wants to survive more than a few nights.

One vampire is a liar. The nature of the Masquerade frames every word, every action and every alluring look as a lie. To be honest is to violate the Masquerade, and to violate the Masquerade is to forfeit one's claim to the blood.

One vampire is a killer. Sure, not every Kindred may have killed, but there exists within each vampire a Beast. That Beast encourages antisocial actions. Eventually, the vampire will lose control and the Beast will murder someone.

One vampire is a thief. Rare is the human that willingly gives up blood, and some argue that even willing blood dolls don't entirely understand their circumstances. Who really could?

One vampire is a monster. She's a spider, a serpent, a bear, a boar or a rat. She draws you in, scares you away, makes you want things you don't understand. She makes you beg for release after she's taken everything you have.

Singular vampires are so many terrible things. Why should it be any different when many vampires get together? It isn't. In fact, it's exponentially worse.

Kindred are designed to be solitary predators. Why they gather in such large groups is a complicated issue. Are they lonely? Do they need to keep enemies within arms' reach? Do they need to understand the other creatures that inhabit their homes? Do they believe in safety

in numbers? This book specifically addresses how to build an interaction. It's how to host a party, how to make a location and how to make a social structure.

## *Parties and the Cool Kids*

Vampires are cool. They're sexy. They're the ultimate predators. They know just what to say. That's great in a room full of rubes. But when vampires get together, *everyone* knows just what to say. When everyone knows just what to say, priority goes to the person most capable of saying it. Everything comes down to hierarchy and priority. Even if there's not a formal hierarchy, there's always an informal one.

On the other hand, vampires are disgusting. They're hardly apex predators. If you look at how they behave, they're glorified parasites. For every vampire driving a Bugatti, twenty suckle the teat of the lower dredges of society. For every penthouse suite, a dozen mark their territories by which subway train goes overhead at which time.

This book is full of similar contradictions. Vampires are dark mirrors of our culture, pulled from those who drew their sires' attention. Attention comes from more than just who looks best in silk. Vampires party hard, but they don't always party in style.

## *Gospel*

A lot of the information here is presented as the unwritten rules to Kindred society. These rules go far beyond the Traditions. They're the Kindred



equivalents to things like the right fork to use or the rule of who sits next to whom. That having been said, rules are made to be broken. There's a way things are done, and a way things are *done*. Most of the information is presented with examples, to show the way these unwritten rules are either applied or thrown to the wind.

## *The Rules*

One sentiment with some players is, "This is a game about roleplaying. Why do we need dice for social interactions?" While that's a valid viewpoint, it's not the only one. Sure, you use dice, statistics and rules systems to cover combat because shooting your friends isn't socially acceptable. Sometimes though, social interactions don't flow the way everyone wants. Things go poorly. Things fall apart. Chance plays into everything. But more importantly, the rules help frame a scene; they help with flow and pacing. Specifically, in Kindred gatherings, they help turn a six-hour party into a two-hour scene and give quick reference points to heighten the drama.

In addition, not everyone is as suave as their characters. Sometimes characters are less suave than their players are. Have you ever known the player who effortlessly dances through social scenes because of her own social acumen, while portraying a Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Socialize 0 character? Rules help curb that a bit. They eliminate "dump stats." Rules should never be a replacement for good roleplay, but they can certainly enhance roleplay.

This book has plenty of twists and turns on the **Requiem** rules you're familiar with. In fact, many of the story hooks herein have at least minor suggestions on how to bend the rules to better accommodate the given game style. These rules are entirely optional. The goal is to get your mind working towards how to better emphasize certain aspects of the setting.

## *What You'll Find Inside*

**Chapter One: A Dead Man's Party** jumps right into Kindred gatherings. You'll find a basic primer on why vampires would or would not want to attend such gatherings. It addresses who is on

the guest list, security, locations, mortal attention and various other topics. There's some discussion on the role of a Master of Elysium, considering her particularly important role in these gatherings. We touch on the possibility of a mystical Elysium, protected by the collective will of the Kindred within. Lastly, there's over a dozen Kindred gatherings ready to infest.

**Chapter Two: The Hottest Spot in Town** talks about the actual locations where Kindred get together. Chapter Two gives you the tools to bring locations to life and make party spots characters unto themselves. In addition, you'll find a handful of fully fleshed hotspots you can plug into or adapt your chronicle.

**Chapter Three: Being Talked About** is a chapter full of tools for Storytellers and players alike. There's advice and tricks for running numerous NPCs at once, and how to easily build ambiance. We also address the gathering as an encounter, with suggestions for how to frame it as the scene itself, in action and goal. A few play variants and tweaks exist within, and there are some Merits, Devotions and other character items.

**Chapter Four: The Center of Attention** showcases a handful of plug-and-play scenes in the SAS format. They run the gamut of Kindred gatherings and are designed to be modular aides to spice up your chronicle. Each includes a central character and some ideas for implementation.

**Appendix: Barbed Words** closes out the product. It gives options for a social combat system, allowing for quick and easy mechanics to support the drama of a gathering.

## *Inspiration*

### **Film**

*Cruel Intentions*, directed by Roger Kumble, is a vampire story with a little more sunlight. The play between Ryan Phillippe's and Sarah Michelle Gellar's characters exemplify the behavior that can exist within a brood of Daeva. It also highlights how people being introduced into the Danse lose any remaining vestiges of innocence.

*Snatch*, directed by Guy Ritchie, shows what a group of clever people can accomplish when slight-

ed. Brad Pitt's character and his community show the power of a good vendetta. The bonus comes in the form of very non-traditional social gatherings, showcasing how strange bedfellows handle one another outside of their elements.

## Literature

*Othello* could also be known as Shakespeare's classic story of people screwing people over. Iago is alarmingly selfish and manipulative; he would have made an iconic Kindred.





## Chapter One

# Dead Man's Party

Vampires don't like each other. A vampire who awakens and thinks, "I'm eager to spend time around others like me," is a vampire who is extremely naïve, insane or suicidal. Paradoxically, a vampire who refuses to attend gatherings is not likely to see longevity either. Large-scale Kindred gatherings share a few important truths, both arguments for and against such meetups.

### *Why Vampires Hate Parties*

#### *Tension*

The Beast is an unforgiving bitch. She doesn't like others like her. She wants to consume those weaker than her. She wants to flee those more powerful than she. Every Kindred has a Beast, and although they don't all behave in the same ways, the basics are there. It's not comfortable. The more Beasts stuffed in a room, the more chance for eruption.

The introduction of a new predator into the ecosystem heightens this risk. For this reason, many older Kindred do well to avoid larger gatherings, preferring to meet new vampires in smaller, more controlled environments. Many up-and-coming

Kindred believe some elders have snubbed their parties. That's sometimes true. Often, though, it's a justifiably intense xenophobia. An elder's losing control at such a gathering would be a far more substantial gaffe than the snub of not arriving. Elders of particular potency have to be mindful, as often their Beasts are so intense that they can't be stopped when lost to frenzy.

For this reason, the most common type of Kindred gathering is a small meet-and-greet. Due to the nature of Predator's Taint, they're almost necessary. They take far longer, but there's less at stake. A little frenzy between friends is far different from an explosion of fury in the middle of a rented public aquarium after hours.

#### *Infrequency*

Vampires are difficult to contact at best, impossible at worst. Even tech-savvy Kindred only have a certain number of hours available at a given time. Only the most ignorant Kindred releases information as to where she sleeps. Sometimes, coteries or covenants will have something approximating a phone tree or mailing list, but the city as a whole is a much different animal. A Prince who requires constantly available contact information for her vassals is a Prince who wants lies and disappointment.

Kindred have more important things to do, and scheduling far in advance is the best bet for reliable gatherings. A glance at a city's gathering schedule tells a lot about who is *really* in charge.

#### *Loathing*

As we've addressed, vampires don't like each other. They have better things to do. They have Beasts forcing them to each other's throats. Their very social structure requires there to be a hierarchy. One-upmanship is core to the vampiric condition.

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#### STORY HOOK - RUN WITH THE WOLVES

Vampires are excellent escape artists. Coupled with overactive Beasts, they're downright slippery. During a private gathering, a character enjoys himself to the point where he endangers the Masquerade. He might be covered in blood or in animal form. As the situation progresses, more Kindred arrive. A vampire of intense potency arrives, and the character runs in frenzy and manages to escape (he might be Obfuscated or in a flight-ready form). Regardless, the Masquerade needs be upheld.

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### STORY HOOK - THE CENSUS

The leadership of the city has decided to instate an annual census. The philosophy is that if vampires are interested in maintaining their citizenship, they can make a single annual meeting. That philosophy sounds fine on paper, but what happens when vampires try to use the census as leverage to remove the citizenship of enemies? After the characters angered a particularly influential vampire, he took steps to make them late or absent (such as tipping off the police that a member's haven is holding a missing person).

This means that Kindred gatherings are competitive, snarky, hateful and vitriolic. Kindred obfuscate this under a veil of false civility.

Have you ever had an aunt who was just a little too liquored-up at the family reunion? Has she ever said anything most of the family wishes she hadn't? Imagine that same aunt without a family to add social pressure. Imagine that aunt with a few extra decades to amass her bitterness. That's your average Kindred partygoer. Do you still wonder why anyone would want to abstain from these shindigs?

Kindred social mores can be summed up with a simple phrase pulled from the American South: Bless his heart. Anyone who has been to the South can attest for the venom in those words, which sound so innocent and even charming on the surface. Vampires aren't stupid. They know there's a fine line easily crossed. The wrong words mean frenzy. Causing frenzy at a party, while effective, is gauche. It's a tool used by younger Kindred. It's like putting arsenic in someone's drink. Yes, it removes them from the night's festivities and starts all sorts of nasty rumors, but it ruins the party. For some Kindred, ruining a party is a mortal sin.

### *Sticks and Stones*

In Seattle, personal accountability is the name of the game. Say the wrong thing and you're liable to be hurt for it. Citizen Prince Marshall doesn't truck with impropriety. Talking out of station wastes time, and Citizen Prince Marshall doesn't have time to waste.

In Citizen Prince Marshall's Court, Kindred have to watch what they say to vampires of different station. Pushing an agenda to ranking Kindred is just as bad as talking down on those lower on the totem pole. In game terms, the difference in City Status between two vampires plays into all social interactions. A Primogen with City Status 4 blasting a City Status 1 neonate in a public forum suffers a -3 penalty. Likewise, if the neonate spreads rumors later about the same Primogen, he suffers a -3 penalty.

Although this may seem like a disadvantage for vampires of higher station, it goes further. After any such roll is failed, actions against the failing vampire gain a bonus equal to the wrongly addressed vampire's City Status, even if the actions are committed by other characters. Therein lays the advantage for Kindred that are more influential. In the above example, if the Primogen failed, our neonate would gain a bonus die to any effort to find the Primogen's haven or to seduce the Primogen's childe out of her covenant. However, if the neonate failed his rumor-mongering attempt, the Primogen would gain four dice to any roll to convince the Prince to censure the neonate, and the Primogen's ghouls would gain four dice towards attempts to burn the neonate's haven during the day.

### *Why Vampires Love Parties* *One-Upmanship*

Nobody is "just better" than anyone else. In order to be better, one has to be demonstrably better. In a patchwork society like that of the Kindred, opportunities to peacock around are few and far between. Gatherings, parties, covenant meetings, these are the lifeblood of a vampire who wishes to demonstrate superiority. Pomp and circumstance works for those trained in circumstance; vampires who study etiquette and social interaction need their stomping grounds as much as the bruisers need theirs.

Unlike the dark city alleys your bruisers frequent, Kindred parties aren't nearly as commonly visited. This means that every minute is important. The dominant Kindred at a party are the ones that make the most of time. They develop connections, make





allies, promote political platforms, show off wealth and otherwise force themselves to the center of attention. Those vampires vie for attention amongst each other. Typically, there are two at the height of attention. The second most attention goes to the best at social maneuvering. The most attention goes to the vampire made to look like a buffoon by the second-most noticed.

The Beast enforces hierarchy. For the social predator, dominance and hierarchy are best established in collective settings. A small meeting around a table might be a good place to put a fool in his place, but that meeting becomes far more effective in a public gathering, where dozens of other vampires become aware of your dominant position.

That said, there's a time and a place for every interaction. The argument about whose plan to assassinate the Prince will be used or a debate on

the nature of Theban Sorcery has a place outside the halls of public attention.

### *Digging Dirt*

People at parties say things they regret. Incriminating information flows like water at Kindred parties. If somebody knows something juicy, she's liable to let it slip. All it takes is a good set of curious ears to hear damning gossip. For the more motivated vampire, manipulating circumstances around an intended goal isn't as hard as it sounds. It doesn't take an elder to get the goods on another vampire. Mundane methods work wonders, and many lower-level Disciplines are perfect for gathering information.

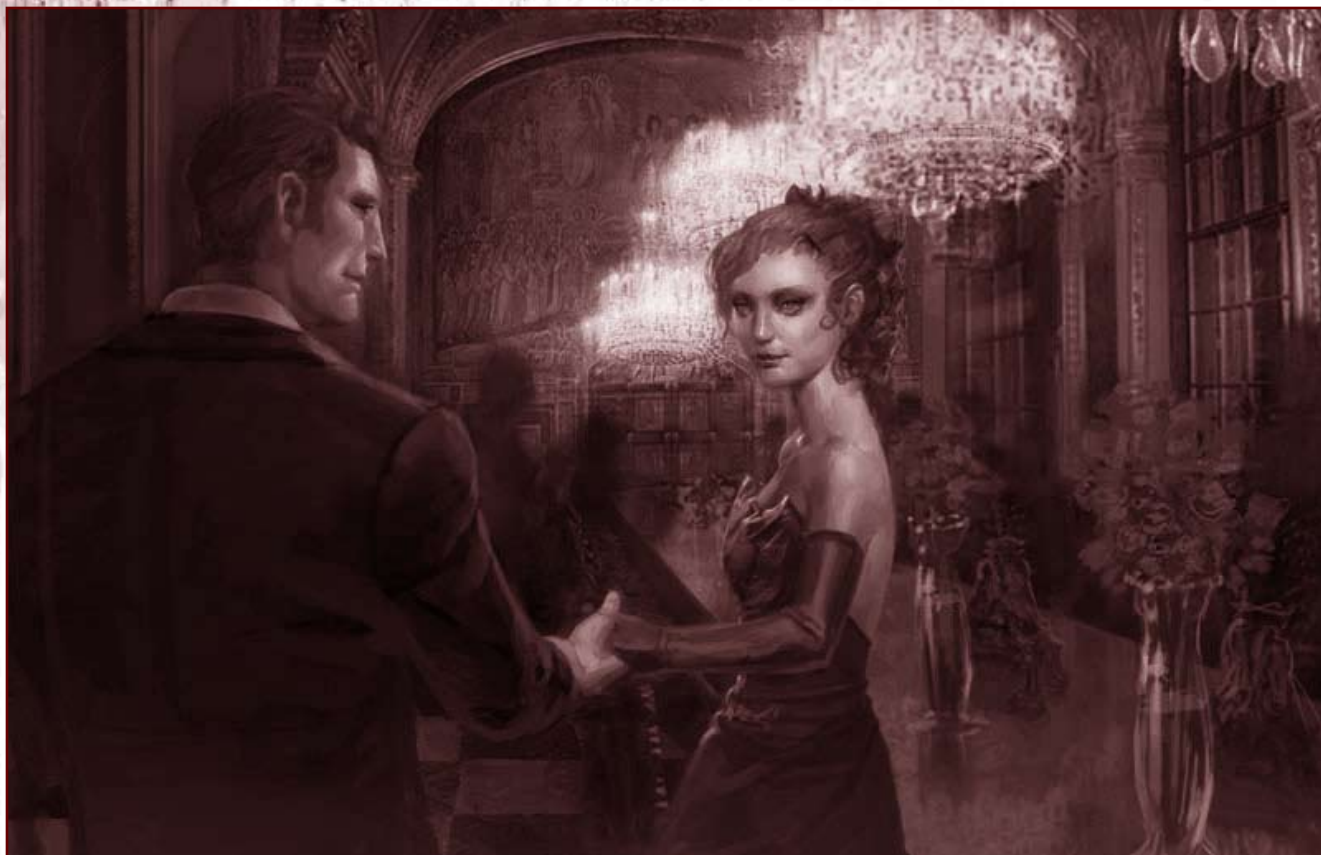
Vampires are creatures of impulse. Due to their deadened and stagnant minds, vampires need strong stimuli to evoke those impulses. Flattery is probably the easiest way to hear things a speaker didn't mean to say. "You've always been the most insightful

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### STORY HOOK - METAPHYSICAL CHICKEN

Sorcery is dangerous. Dark forces hunger for blood power Crúac. God himself fuels Theban Sorcery, or so the stories go. Other, more esoteric arts exist amongst Kindred. Magicians wield fierce mysteries, and when they get together, pride flares. A mystically-inclined character or characters receive invitations to a private gathering to discuss those metaphysics. "Discuss" is a fancy way of saying "to show off," and showing off with sorcery is one of the riskiest things vampires can do.

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of the Acolytes. What did you think about what George has been saying?" A little flattery, peppered with a leading question can cause the information to start gushing forth.

The power of Revelation can also make people say things they didn't want to. Command a rival to "be quiet," then listen to all the wonderfully colorful things that emerge once the effect ends. Use Obedience to bring a rodent in to make the prissy Mekhet nervous, and she'll speak without inhibi-

tion. Dread can heighten the tension of a room. Use a few leading statements and you'll learn about all the terrible prejudices in the room. Remember, vampires have these tools 24/7. Every tool in the box should be used with creativity.

### *Companionship*

Murderers need love, too. Some vampires are more suited for solitary existence. Most aren't. For some, being surrounded by humans is a frustrating reminder of how little they fit into the world. No human can truly understand what it means to be Kindred. If by some fluke they could, would anyone really want to be around that human? The fact is, vampires need confidants. They need companions. They need to know that they're not alone in their conditions. Discussions with humans can only go so far, since every interaction is either a lie, or puts both the person and vampire in mortal danger.

Kindred gatherings help to sate that need. For those suited for solitary existence, these short bursts of time give them all camaraderie. For those needing like-minded individuals to interact with, Kindred

### **STORY HOOK - CAN'T YOU SHUT UP?**

A character's mentor was drugged. Something was slipped into a vessel, and now she's inebriated. The problem is that she won't shut up. The part of her brain that divides what she wants to say and what she should say is completely inoperable. What's worse is that this has made her the life of the party. One by one, she's speaking her mind about everyone present. She knows more than a little sensitive information about the character. How does he shut her up or relocate her without implicating himself or being responsible for a ruined party?



### STORY HOOK - ALL OUTTA ANGST

The Prince's childe has hit that age when all her mortal friends are too old to maintain associations with. Her mortal family has died off. She's distraught and feeling the weight of the world. The Prince can't handle her melancholy, so he's decided to play matchmaker. He invites the coterie to a soiree, with the express (but not communicated) intention of manipulating her into a dalliance with one of its members. His logic is that a little passion could pull her out of her funk. How does the coterie handle a high-maintenance ward whose allegiances are questionable at best? More importantly, can they handle her in such a way that placates the Prince?

gatherings can be something like speed dating. In a short time, a vampire can learn enough about the various individuals present to discern if they're worth spending time with. Kindred that are more humane probably have little in common ideologically with vampires that are more monstrous. Across covenant lines, some philosophies mesh well and make for interesting drinking buddies. Coterie have to meet somewhere; larger gatherings are often the source of these alliances.

A smart Prince organizes events with this goal in mind. Kindred with friends are less likely to make ignorant mistakes. Coterie maintain the Masquerade, taking a huge weight off his shoulders. Coterie also offer peer pressure, something otherwise lacking amongst the Damned. Peer pressure means fewer Embraces and fewer chances of Amaranth. That same wise Prince should keep abreast of the specific behaviors of his city's coterie. While fewer problems occur within coterie, those few problems can escalate beyond the efforts of a single ignorant lick.

### *On Parties*

Parties don't organize themselves. No matter the gathering, each one has a few important features to consider. If the host has addressed them sufficiently, attendees don't have to consider these issues. If any are out of balance, the party falls flat. When the party falls flat, all those considerations go out the door. When the party becomes a madhouse, heads roll.

### *Rule Number One*

The most important rule in organizing Kindred gatherings is to never tip your hand. There has to be a who, what, when, where and why to a party. However, the smart Kindred plays that information close to the chest. The only people who should be aware are those directly relating to the information.

### *A Statement of Intent*

"The crew should hang out and bowl a few rounds" is a statement of intent. One would be surprised at how often parties are organized without even a basic statement of intent. A strong purpose can sometimes make up for a boring party, but a lively party is not a replacement for a strong purpose. This item addresses the "Why" of the party, arguably the most important element.

A vampire planning a party needs to have an agenda. That agenda might be "Make myself look good in front of the Harpies," or it might be "Make Prince Maxwell look like a fool." Any numbers of reasons exist, but a good gathering is framed around that agenda. It sounds black and white, right? Wrong. Every Kindred that steps through the door is thinking that the hosts have an agenda. It's Kindred nature. Framing the party with a solid and well-communicated public agenda obfuscates any *real* agenda that may be underlying it.

An example: Michele Cardenas can't stand Emily Vanderbilt. Michele wants everyone to hate Emily too. To facilitate this agenda, she decides to hold a party. She makes a mortal retainer rent a banquet hall and invites all the cool kids. To Michele's dismay, Emily is one of the cool kids. However, that gives Michele the opportunity to show up Emily and to be the jewel of the evening. The party happens. During the course of the night, Michele catches Emily up in a lie, blasting her in front of everyone. Sure, people are displeased with Emily's lie, but they're more displeased with the gauche manner with which Michele wasted *their* time to handle *her* rivalry.

The counter example: Michele Cardenas holds the party in the VIP room of The Bridges, the elite club everyone's dying to be seen at. The party is billed as a charity event, a casino night where pro-

ceeds go to a local blood drive. Greed and a little irony go hand in hand with Kindred; the party is a smashing success. Over the course of the night, she has a Mekhet friend plant an ace in Emily's sleeve. During a poker game, a subtle bump reveals the card, ousting Emily as a cheater. Amongst vampires, cheating is expected, but being caught is unacceptable. Emily becomes a laughing stock, and Michele is on the tip of every harpy's tongue thanks to her amazing ability to throw a party.

In both examples, Emily was the target. In the first example, Emily was actually at fault. Unfortunate for Michele, vampires are too shallow to care about right and wrong; they only care about themselves. If someone forces an agenda, it shows, and nobody wants to be part of a stranger's agenda. Everyone wants to be part of a stranger's scandal, though.

One final note on intent: Intent should, but doesn't always, mirror the tastes of the guests. Some guests like some things. Judicious attention should be paid to exceptions to that rule. Exceptions can have great impact, but should be reserved for the right circumstances. A stock car race isn't likely to win over the political favor of a Victorian Ventrue obsessed with societal propriety. However, inviting the Daeva Priscus to a boxing match might just tickle her fancy enough to make her open up to business proposals.

## *The Guest List*

If the intent and purpose of the party determines what *should* happen, a guest list determines what *really* happens. Building a guest list is an art. To build a successful guest list, a vampire has to have a finger on the pulse of the city. A given entry on a guest list is a binary state, but means so much more. Inclusion or exclusion can mean insult, compliment, welcome, disgust, a favor, charity or any combination of these things.

### *Inclusion*

For the first few years of a vampire's unlife, she might believe that being invited to a party is always a positive thing. Luckily, for most vampires, covenants and coteries exist to dispel that myth before it goes too far. For those not so fortunate, hard lessons come quick. Every good party has en-

tertainment, and an unsuspecting lick can be the best free entertainment available.

On the other hand, an invitation is a coveted commodity at some parties. Kindred pull favors to get invitations for themselves and their friends. Often, sires will push hard to get invitations for newer childer in order to start them a few rungs higher on the social ladder over their peers. Invitation to a party outside one's league is often a sink-or-swim ordeal; every word can potentially make or break a vampire's future reputation.

Another major use for invitation is to get Kindred together, despite the civility caused by their distance. If vampires have a deep-seeded hatred for one another, inviting both but telling neither the other is invited is a surefire way to raise the temperature of a gathering. If one is actively avoiding confrontation because he's afraid of being bested, a party is a great way to force his hand.

The last function an invitation can serve is as a direct affront. Inviting someone barely above your station when you know they won't arrive is a wonderful excuse to snub your nose at the refusal, looking all the better for the invite. This doesn't always work. The vampire must play carefully. Invitations far outside one's standing look bad on the organizer, and if the intention is clear and evident, it crosses the boundary of using the partygoers in your personal agenda.

### *Exclusion*

"You can come to this party" is a strong message. "You can't come to this party" is often a stronger one. The most obvious message is "You don't belong here," but that's not always the case. The opposite communication can also be true, "We want you here, but we want you to come uninvited."

Correctly phrased, a refusal of invitation is more invitation than not. "Every time your coterie shows up, there's a confrontation with the Lance. I'm sorry, Sam. In strictest confidence, I can't put my reputation on the line by inviting that confrontation into my house." There's a certain implication in that phrase. *We want you here; we just don't want to be held accountable for what you'll do.*

On the other hand, some exclusions have nothing to do with the host's desires or self-interest.



### STORY HOOK - WE DON'T BELONG

This scenario works best after a coterie does something to earn the ire of a vastly more influential Kindred. The coterie receives an invitation to a party they have no business showing up at. Word on the street is that their new nemesis pulled favors to have them invited. The salon is known as a place for city luminaries, and the coterie is completely out of place. Refusal would earn them a number of powerful enemies, but showing up could be political suicide. Showing up and not socializing could be a nightmare, but showing up and socializing could be torture. The coterie is stuck between multiple rocks and multiple hard places.

There are at least as many reasons to refuse a Kindred access to a party as there are Kindred to invite. Again, the most important point is to not reveal the reason for the denial. Known motivations show agendas. Clear agendas are tools of half-way vampires. Those vampires aren't invited to parties. That means those vampires have very short social careers.

## Security

A party without security is a riot with a different name. The host might provide security himself or with retainers, or she might look to outside assistance. Security isn't an exception to Rule Number One; security should not be indicative of the actual agenda of the party. A full security regimen at a party to recognize the success of a scion of a covenant screams "ulterior motives." On the other end of the spectrum, a single ghoul usher at a moot in the woods with three dozen invitees also speaks volumes for the host's intentions.

### *Personal Security*

Personal security is more than sufficient for most small meetings. A Kindred holding a discussion circle at a private home can probably handle the door herself or with the help of her coterie. With fewer than a dozen vampires, mostly like-minded, the chance of excessive turmoil is small. If there is a conflict, the attendants can police the problem with little risk.

Larger gatherings call for more security. Any time there are a dozen vampires in a room, there



should be dedicated security forces in place. When that many Kindred gather, there are liable to be clashing viewpoints and personalities. Depending on the personalities, this might mean an obvious security force or a covert one. If the invited parties are the type looking for trouble, security easily identified as such best serve the host. This shows irrefutable consequences for immature actions, and curbs a great deal of bad behavior. In groups where the attendees aren't actively seeking conflict, overt security just puts them on the defensive, so covert security is the best way to go.

### *Outside Security*

Outside security might be necessary, especially for larger gatherings. Influential Kindred may be able to contract the local Sheriff or deputies, offering unparalleled credibility to the gathering's security. For others, this isn't possible or desirable. Many times, things on the program aren't for the eyes of those in power. This means bringing in trustworthy security, and "trustworthy" is often synonymous with "well-paid" or "well-manipulated." Outside security comes in a few varieties: human, ghoul and Kindred.

#### **Human**

Human security has obvious risks. While the Masquerade is put at risk, mortals work well in public gatherings, particularly in gatherings where the actual risk of vampire on vampire violence is low. Some Kindred swear by mortal security even for Kindred-only events; they just Dominate the help into submission and ignorance afterwards.

Without Discipline use, however, mortal security is the most difficult to organize. It involves things like payroll, which requires accounting agents. It involves actually procuring the talent, which isn't as easy as it might sound. Finding talent that suits the event can be difficult. Finding competent, reli-

able talent is almost impossible. Security firms exist for these reasons, but they often are not worth the paper trails required to hire them.

Arguably, the biggest drawback to mortal security is that they're fragile. A human is not likely to pull apart two frenzied Kindred. If the person even gets up the nerve to try, they're likely to be injured or killed in the process.

#### **Ghoul**

Ghoul security is reliable, cheap (at least in the monetary sense) and less of a risk to the Masquerade. They won't question orders, and they're quite a bit more durable than human agents. They're still not vampires, however. Angry Kindred are likely to kill ghouls in a fit of rage.

Ghouls are also more difficult to replace. They cost quite a bit, in terms of vitae, though if they're preexisting ghouls, that might not be as much of a concern. If ghouls are selected specifically for the purpose, though, they add a unique layer of complication to organization. This limitation inherently stifles any plans for massive ghoul security entourages, but for a very small force, it shouldn't be a monumental issue.

#### **Kindred**

Kindred security is usually the most capable form. The Masquerade isn't a concern if a gathering is all Kindred. Vampires are much more able to stop other vampires than are mortals or ghouls. Vampires are also expensive and full of self-interest – vampires don't always deal in money, and favors have their own inherent complexities.

Vampire security also says a lot about the host's expectations for the night's events. Conveniently, though, many coterie work closely enough that if one member is hired and the rest are invited, they'll serve as unofficial security.

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### STORY HOOK - UNLIKELY BAND OF POLICE

A fellow Kindred calls in a favor, insisting a character serve security duty at an event. The event in question is not appropriate to their skills. Either a street-level coterie is charged for a high society gather, or a social crew is hired for a rough-and-tumble event. Refusing to repay the favor means a loss of political capital, but accepting the job means difficulties and complications the group might not be ready to handle. When a group is out of place, they're not respected. Security means little without respect.

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Kindred have their own associations. Unless the security force is utterly loyal to the host, personal bias will come into play. This can mean uneven security or even the perception of insecurity from attendees. It's a terribly self-fulfilling prophecy: The perception of insecurity leads to tension, which leads to outbursts and insecurity.



### PRYING EYES

Obfuscate adds an interesting layer to security concerns. If a host wants to hold a gathering away from prying eyes, Obfuscate is her worst enemy. A capable vampire with Obfuscate can sneak in wherever he'd like, witnessing whatever meetings he'd like. There are a few ways around this.

The first and most obvious is to appoint a Mekhet talented in *Auspex* to work security. This assumes the Mekhet in question is better than the would-be spy.

The second is to set up specific security measures. The nature of Obfuscate prevents most security from revealing the hidden. However, anything capable of breaching Obfuscate is going to sorely inconvenience the gathering's attendees. One good example is to place an animal near the gathering's entrance. As vampires enter, the animal will react strongly. This doesn't prevent the spy from sneaking in with another vampire. Strong attention-getting methods can help, with equally limiting chances. A pressure plate with an alarm is a similarly unreliable method.

The third method (and the most reliable) is to assume that there's a spy in any given room. Attendees must all be in on the plan. When holding secure conversations, participants seed misinformation mid-conversation. Tight-knit groups can use language barriers or even communal codes to hide their discussions.



## *Festivities*

Shit happens. If it doesn't, you're at a boring party and you're wasting your time. Without something to do, a party devolves into a bunch of Kindred talking in cliques, trying to entertain themselves. Kindred left to their own devices are terrifying and devious. Just like children, though, there's a solution; put something in their hands. Give them a toy. Give them a game. Give them anything to play with, and they'll cause far less trouble.

Two major divisions of entertainment exist: passive and active. Passive entertainment can be handed out prior or at the start of a party, then left alone. Active entertainment requires party organizers to involve some form of staff or crew in order to provide that entertainment.

### *Passive Entertainment*

This is the realm of theme parties. Kindred are so petty that themes in costuming, if sufficiently involving, can carry the whole night's affairs. Costuming is essential to the Kindred condition, and costume parties make for superb displays of Kindred pettiness. To add another layer of depth, costume parties allow a host to show preference (or insult) to a specific subject. If the Prince's mortal years were in Renaissance-era Venice, a festival of Venetian masks is both classy and the purview of a brown-nosing vampire.

A more modern form of passive entertainment is the team-building or ice-breaking activity. They're a common fixture in today's business meetings and retreats; Kindred on the edge of the past two decades have turned these games into an art.

**Example:** Everyone, upon arriving, receives a notecard. These notecards are pinned to their backs. The notecards have a clan and a covenant on them. As the night goes on, they reveal the cards to those attending, and then ask them yes or no questions about their clan/covenant combination. The goal is to discover your clan and covenant, but the game doesn't necessarily end at that point: the questions are supposed to be asked of everyone the vampire strikes up conversation with. There is some temptation for questions like, "Do I smell like a dog with a bit of patchouli?" However, when the room is full of Gangrel and Acolytes, those sorts of questions don't fly. The theory is that this game helps the partygoers abandon some traditional stereotypes and lighten up a bit.

### *Active Entertainment*

Active entertainment requires entertainers to work during the gathering. Music is a good example. Auctions are another. These types of entertainment cater to singular tastes, which breeds a tendency to ignore them. The partygoers are usually less involved in these, but also mean that party staff is



Packing a room full of vampires and blood might sound like an excellent idea. Then, deductive reasoning takes hold. Kindred aren't known for their impressive tempers, how would making it worse help? It's wholly a Hollywood construct. Let's end it.

In conclusion, the age-old tradition of vampire parties full of chained mortals and blood orgies had its time. It's not 1400AD anymore. In the age of reason, we think logically. Your party is not worth my Masquerade.

Kendra Coburn

Sworn of Mysteries

Dedicated Scribe of Hunger

### **Refreshments and Vampire Parties**

Vampires need blood. They prefer fresh blood. Fresh blood makes them happy. Happy vampires mean a successful party. Fresh blood comes from living humans. Humans are weaker than vampires. With minimal effort, most humans are portable. The next step is obvious. At least until you think about it analytically.

When the average vampire makes a feeding mistake, she must spend hours or even nights' worth of effort to cover the potential breach of the Masquerade. Resources must be expended, favors must be called in. This assumes a vampire working with full mental capacity. Vampires at a party don't think with their front brains. At the vampire party, the Masquerade is only as strong as its weakest link. In your average party, the weakest link is demonstrably ignorant.

Imagine a mistake with twenty vessels present. One vampire loses control and murders his meal. The logistics are a nightmare alone. The effort invested must be replicated twenty-fold. Mortals may require killing, mental manipulation, coercion, bribes and all manner of heavy-handed tactics. All this would be expected of the party's organizers, as basic etiquette says that a guest must not be responsible for his or her own meal, even when it's spilled.

What that vampire has to deal with is questions—a world of questions. Questions from the vessels who can't remember what they did that night, questions from survivors wondering where their loved ones went and questions from law enforcement and health officials caused by outbreaks of anemia centering around one event.



involved, so they can adapt as seen fit. If the party has solid entertainers able to improvise and move with the wants of the crowd, the party goes well. If not, the party might as well have no entertainment at all.

## *Mortal Eyes*

Certain risks and challenges exist in holding a Kindred gathering in a public place. The previous section addressed passive entertainment, and maintaining the Masquerade is a perfect form of it. Vampires in public will watch one another like hawks, looking to out them, looking to show they are superior dancers amongst the flock. Further, public gatherings carry with them less direct responsibility for Kindred to appear. This might appeal to busier or attention-deprived Kindred. They can duck in, make their appearances and duck out with less care paid.

In contrast, private gatherings are less edgy. There's not as much inherent risk, and there's not as much to keep Kindred minds busy. Without the pressure to maintain civility, violent minds stew. Some vampires absolutely require privacy in order to "be themselves." Certain bloodlines, some particularly vile Nosferatu and other aberrations of the Blood are walking Masquerade breaches. While they can make due typically, and while they obviously feed, social gatherings aren't always easy. If an organizer wants these types to attend, options are limited.

## *The Master of Elysium*

A Master of Elysium doesn't exist in every city, but in those cities where it does, it's often essential. The Master of Elysium is representative of the collective identity of the city's Kindred population, and a dark mirror of the mortal population. If the party's location is a character of her own, the party's host is her makeup and costuming assistant. The Master of Elysium is her casting director.

In many cities with a relatively young Kindred population, the title of Emcee often replaces the old form. In at least one particular city, he's often called, "The Kitten Wrangler." The job title isn't far from accurate.

## *Harpies*

Prince is a position that nobody grants, everyone hates but everyone respects. Harpy is similar. Often, Harpies are more powerful than the Prince is, since they are responsible for his power. Without Harpies to support his reputation, his power wanes as public opinion falls. He might not lose the position, but he loses the power.

Speak to most Harpies, and they'll say that theirs is a duty of iron gauntlets and silk gloves, a balance of finesse and bluntness. "Bluntness" might be a surprise to some, but it relates to a key factor of vampire psychology: Kindred are not mature. Centuries might pass, but most Kindred stop emotionally developing at the time of Embrace. As early as sixty years ago, the common perception of what was "adult" was far different than now. Seventeen was a peak time for Embraces. In a room full of school-aged monsters with entitlement issues, sometimes finesse isn't the answer. Sometimes

### *A MURDER OF HARPIES*

Harpies have cliques. They have circles. These circles exist outside the scope of traditional clans, covenants and coteries. A recently adopted term for the collective Harpies in a city is a "murder." A murder consists of four or more Harpies, with one Harpy at the top of the proverbial ladder at any given time. Usually, this is an entirely informal and abstract affair. In some cities, a Harpy receives verbal accolades, called a "Grand Harpy," "Queen Bee" or something similar. Most importantly, standing in the murder goes above and beyond the group; the city unofficially recognizes the standing of its Harpies.

In these cities, a Storyteller can use a simple system to reflect that hierarchy. The Murder Status Merit works identically to other Status Merits, except it reflects the character's respect as a Harpy. This is incongruous with City Status; a powerful Harpy can receive the same amount of deference as a Prince, sometimes even more. Additionally, a Harpy can call in her Status to give versatile advantages. Every month, a Harpy has access to a number of Merit dots equal to her Murder Status. These dots can be used as temporary dots of Contacts, Allies or Resources. These temporary dots last only for the night used, as the favors called are fleeting and temporary as the reputation she traffics in.

harsh, biting profanity and lewd sexual jokes do the job. Remember, the job of the Harpy is to say things that are repeated and remembered beyond their initial statements.

Harpies defend the status quo, and at the same time act as a checks and balances system. They smack down idiotic behavior. They make Kindred think before they speak. Rare is the Kindred who doesn't at least pay lip service to the Harpies. They breed a more civilized society, one where citizens are able to practice enlightened self-interest.

## *Elysium*

Elysium can exist without parties. Parties can exist without Elysium. Parties can occur on Elysium. Elysium can occur at parties. The two often go hand-in-hand, and there are a few popular reasons why they do or don't. This section details those reasons.

### *Arguments For*

Elysium defends culture. In Elysium, the assumption of civility is far stronger. Not only is an aggressor improper, but he's disrespecting the sacrosanct tradition. This adds a layer of weight on the shoulder of the would-be rabble. As well, the concept of Elysium can defend beautiful things, while allowing Kindred to gather amongst them. Art is fragile, and tempers and art don't mix. Peaceful meetings without the unnecessary risk of violence have appeal; they can make for more functional and open discussion.

### *Arguments Against*

On the other hand, declaration of Elysium communicates a few things that, in the right groups, mean weakness. "My vassals don't respect me enough to be civil" is a bitter message to convey. Many Kindred see that sort of message as an affront to their own maturity. Elysium also requires more attention to maintain. A little scuffle at a mundane gathering isn't the end of the world. On Elysium, a little scuffle looks very bad on the organizers, and demands fast and thorough attention.

## *Elysium Uber Alles*

In some places, Elysium goes beyond the call of duty. A Prince's power comes directly from the citizens of the city. Certainly, Elysium's power comes

from the collective citizenry, but this is in an abstract, figurative sense. Sometimes Elysium draws literal power from the will of the people. In these instances, the most commonly recognized Elysium in the city is supernaturally enforced; Kindred find themselves almost incapable of bringing disgrace to the tradition.

Those that dislike the imposition of civility derisively call this phenomenon "The Fourth Tradition." Many of these Kindred vocally state that the threat of violence breeds accountability for leadership. Leadership reminds these Kindred that often they are far more capable of violence than the young and vocal majority.

With the Fourth Tradition, Elysium enforces itself. Bringing assault against another on Elysium grounds requires the expenditure of a Willpower point. Note that this prevents Willpower from being spent on the attack itself. To bring Final Death to a vampire (or death to a human) on Elysium requires the expenditure of a Willpower *dot* on behalf of the attacking Kindred. This imposition prevents assault from vampires and ghouls, but humans are exempt from this prohibition. Vampires are unable to prey on humans on Elysium. If attacked, vampires are able to defend themselves, but displays of excessive force or murder still require the Willpower expenditures.

The scope of Elysium must be publicly known to the Kindred of the city. However, ignorance does not prevent the prohibition. Like other violations of Traditions, Kindred are instinctively aware of the effects.

## *Parties to Crash*

Here are a half dozen sample gatherings. Each has a premise and enough details to get it moving, while not being so specific as to restrict it from appearing in most chronicles. There are gatherings for most of the clans and covenants, as well as a few that exemplify more specific aspects of the Kindred condition.

## *The Detroit Rave*

Detroit is either a great place to have parties or a terrible place to have parties, depending on whom you ask. In fact, back in '88, a gathering got





out so out of hand that only about one in twenty of the attendees survived to see another night. Now, smaller gatherings are the rule. The more Kindred in one place, the more the chance exists that the entire thing will explode into violent rage. This particular setting highlights the dangers of Predator's Taint, and takes them to a new level.

This has made Detroit a hotbed of tension. Coteries are the largest groups that meet with any frequency. About once a year, the city breaks its isolation and gets together for a brief show of faces. Due to the risk, these meetings are tense for at least the first few hours. Kindred band together in small groups, just in case of a disaster. For this event, they secure massive numbers of ghoul and mortal security workers just in case of an outbreak. Nobody

knows why this happens, but everyone has theories. These theories range from the geomantic location of Detroit, to a curse laid down by Bacchus to a reflection of the violence in the very blood of Detroit's mortal flock.

### *Location*

This year's Detroit Rave is held in a junkyard. However, in defense of the Prince, the gathering could end up a bloodbath, and the junkyard is devoid of outside influence. The owners are paid handsomely for the land that night, with the caveat that not a soul catches word of the rental.

The location itself is in a high crime area, which means low police attention. The grounds are unlit, and the junkyard itself is settled far lower than its walls. Outside the walls, you couldn't hear a scream coming from inside. Anyone wandering in on the area has problems. They're lucky if they just end up Dominated. Most of the

gang elements know at least some of the Kindred of the city, and are wise enough to stay away.

Organizers clear the event space, surrounded by piles of junk impossible to see over. One shouldn't wear their Sunday best for this event. Walking without strong-soled shoes or boots might leave you with a rusty car part poking through your foot.

### *Music*

Detroit has a rich musical culture, and has for a great number of years. Detroit supports a higher number of Kindred than most cities of its population, and a disproportionately high number of those Kindred are competent musicians. For many Kindred, this is their best opportunity to gain recognition amongst the Damned.



Many older Kindred hail back to the rich gospel and jazz era of Detroit. At least one recognized Motown singer found his way across the curtain of death, and he makes an appearance at each of these events. Modern Kindred are likely aware of, if not involved in, the vast local hip-hop culture. At your average Rave, all these styles and aesthetics clash and struggle for more air time. Older musicians croon and wail, demanding respect from their haunting sounds. Young rappers cleverly sling words at one another, showing their superiority.

All these styles came from elsewhere and people adopted them into something unique and specific to Detroit. Detroit Rock City isn't lacking in innovation; it's often recognized as the birthplace of techno. In fact, this is likely a large part of the reason the annual gathering is called a Rave. Some vampires find some amount of solace in computers making music with little human intervention. That soulless music gets thousands up and dancing. It assures them that sometimes, soulless doesn't mean lifeless.

### *The Nature of the Beast*

Kindred gatherings in Detroit are risky business. Any time more than five Kindred are gathered, stakes rise. Any time a vampire loses himself to frenzy, one random vampire witnessing the frenzy is subject to a roll to resist frenzy, requiring only one success. If she fails, the problem repeats with a cumulative -1 penalty until a vampire successfully resists frenzy.

### *Seasonal Festival*

Naples is a stronghold for the Circle of the Crone. It's beautiful, debauched and harsh. The seasons are extreme, and for this reason, the Acolytes celebrate them fervently. On every solstice and equinox, the city holds a large festival. The tenor of these festivals blesses and curses every citizen. The few local Sanctified despise the tradition, preaching that they're under the hold of pagan magic. They aren't far off on their assessment.

### *The Four Festivals*

Each of the seasons has a corresponding festival. So long as a majority of the Kindred citizenry at-





tends the festival, every vampire residing in the city has a minor benefit and drawback. This effect cannot be circumvented; so long as a vampire has fed within Naples' city limits during a season, the effects persist.

Spring brings the Calling to Mars. The festival takes place on Mount Vesuvius, overlooking the overlooking the ruins of Pompeii. This festival is fiery, heated and full of passion. Celebrations involve contests of strength and prowess. Festivals often feature fierce, emotional plays. As such, citizens suffer a -2 to all rolls to resist frenzy, while gaining a +2 to any roll to coerce a character to fulfill a Vice.

Summer is the Festival of Aestas. Despite the human sentiments of the summer, the Kindred of Naples see it as a time of mourning. For this reason, it's held in the Fontanelle Cemetery, an aged ossuary. Long, hot days and short, uncomfortable nights reign during Aestas's season. Summer festivals are not unlike funerals, somber events with droning requiems and dirges. During the summer, melancholy causes a +2 to resist frenzy from any source, while any rolls to resist gaining Derangements suffer from a -2 penalty.

Autumn brings the Celebration of Pluto. Autumn is the celebration of summer's end, bringing longer nights. The celebration also addresses the mortal harvest, as this time is a fruitful time when the kine can afford to drink and otherwise put themselves into the hands of predators. The festival is thus celebrated in a vast olive grove in the Punta della Campanella region. Attendees are expected to bring vessels, as feeding is an all-night affair. All feeding rolls gain a +2 bonus, while every Kindred loses one additional vitae upon awakening.

Lastly is the Winter Saturnalia, the highest of celebrations. During Saturnalia, etiquette reverses: Master becomes slave, and slave becomes master. Napoli winters are interesting times. The festival consists of a ceremonial reversal of roles; neonates are awarded with Court positions, while Court members are expected to perform the legwork of organizing, entertaining and keeping the peace. As part of the tradition, the party is held in the courtyard at the Cathedral of Naples. Not only is this a

direct affront to many of the Lancea Sanctum, it's a place under much attention.

The Kindred walk the line of Masquerade every year for this celebration. The Traditions temporarily lose the bite of their mechanical disadvantages. Kindred need not spend Willpower to give reflections. Embracing costs only a temporary Willpower point. Amaranth doesn't impose an automatic loss of Humanity, but instead must be rolled for. The disadvantage is equally as fierce. Any roll to resist degeneration loses the 10-again quality, and 1s subtract from successes. Kindred degenerate for sins two levels higher than their own. For example, a Humanity 3 Kindred must roll to resist degeneration for committing arson.

## *The Board Meeting*

New York's premier representatives of the First Estate meet monthly in the boardroom at the Four Seasons Hotel. Exactly thirteen Kindred receive invitations to any such meeting, determined two weeks prior. This is of particular note, because the Big Apple supports no fewer than fifty Invictus these nights.

This isn't a meeting of the same group every month. Rising stars, new Embraces or even whelps needing to learn a lesson receive invitations. The meeting has no set agenda; for four hours, the vampires in that room discuss everything from covenant issues to profitable music business trends. The rule is, what begins in the room stays in the room. Members are allowed using the discussions of the Board Meeting to influence their future actions, but they are never allowed to give credit or blame to a Board Meeting discussion.

These meetings are often more lighthearted than expected, and typically take the form of sounding boards and advice columns. A given vampire might bring up an issue, only to have it solved by another's wisdom, experience or resources. Favors are exchanged within that room that can make a young vampire's career or guarantee a liege's continued power. None speak of those favors, but they're held to the strict, unwritten code of the Board Meeting. Due to the rules of order for these Board Meetings, being spoken to is a favor in and of itself.

The chosen thirteen are the talk of the covenant for the next month. For the powerful involved, they're spoken of like idols. For the weaker involved, rumors fly as to their forced ascensions to power or their final warnings before execution. Regardless, involvement in the Board Meeting puts a name on the tip of everyone's tongue. For the next month, any vampire involved is one level higher in Invictus Status, and allowed to purchase that dot permanently at half the normal experience cost (if the Invictus performs an action or composes herself in such a way to earn the increase).

### *The Princes*

The thirteen receive invitations somehow. That "somehow" is the work of the Princes (plural *principes*). This position is integral to the Board Meeting, and integral to the Invictus of New York. Princes are selected by the Invictus of the city by annual vote, with Lords and Ladies with official city titles permitted two votes each. Voting for Princes is an anonymous affair; the election is proctored by the previous Princes at a mandatory annual meeting. A Princeps is often voted in to prevent participation in the Board Meetings, since Princes aren't allowed the same speaking privileges as others.

The responsibility of the Princeps is to organize these events and to submit invitations. The Princeps has full authority to invite or disallow whomever he or she wishes, but that authority is often overshadowed by the influence of the city's Kindred. Monthly, she invites thirteen Kindred, and she takes the fourteenth seat to maintain order during the Board Meetings.

### *Riehart's Rules of Order*

The Board Meeting follows set rules for who is allowed speaking when. These collective rules are referred to as Riehart's Rules of Order, named after an influential Ventrue responsible for the first push into the New World.

Each vampire starts the conversation with a small bowl. The bowl contains thirteen marbles, and each vampire's marbles are a different color. The Princeps carries a stopwatch. In the center of the table is a large bowl. At the beginning of the meeting, the Princeps introduces each attendant Kindred.





From that point on, no vampires are allowed talking without first invoking a Rule. Then, a single vampire is expected to contribute eight marbles to the center bowl for the right to speak first. Her introductory speech can take up to thirteen minutes. That vampire has full authority to allow any other member of the table to speak. Requests are often made with raised hands, and permission given with a clear nod.

From that point forward, time is bid on. A vampire tosses a marble into the bowl to bid for the right to speak once the first speaker is done. Other vampires can toss in marbles afterwards, negating previous bids. At the end of the thirteen minutes, the last marble in the bowl determines the next speaker. That speaker receives seven minutes of talk time, and the same procedure determines the following one.

Speakers can be interrupted by a collective investment of eight marbles. Once eight marbles are contributed, the final contributor is considered the next speaker, effective immediately.

Theoretically, participants could run out of marbles. To this night, this has never happened. Typically, the vampires are quite conservative with their marbles. When vendettas come to fore, two or three Kindred run out of marbles and then are incapable of further speech. Some have expressed dislike for the Rules, but for over two hundred years, they've worked seamlessly. If some have spoken against it, they were never invited back.

### *The Indoctrination Party*

The Carthian Movement of Berlin has a disproportionately higher number of elder members compared to the rest of the covenant worldwide. This is not a fluke. The Berliners, as the local Movement calls itself, are experts at subversive recruitment. Thanks to war and famine, Berlin has an alarming torpid population in and around its city limits. Hans Schäfer, a Mekhet of the Berliners, has developed a Devotion that allows him to find torpid Kindred (see p. 60 for more on this Devotion).

When the Berliners locate a torpid elder, they home in. They secure the body at any cost. They study the vampire, and the more scholarly of the Movement discern when she should awaken.

The body is protected, and a gathering is planned around the awakening. The party is full of fanfare, centered on the ideals of revolution, change and other concepts core to the Movement. When they awaken the elder, it's amidst this indoctrination party, where the collective Berliners tell stories and manipulate the forgetful monster into joining the Movement. If she refuses, they handle that hurdle when it comes.

Prior to its demolition, the parties were held at the Palast der Republik, the old home of the East German Parliament. Now, any given Carthian can host these parties if she has access to a large enough location.

### *Welcoming Committee*

The welcoming committee is a group of Berliners who have studied the torpid vampire's history, and have collaboratively invented a handful of stories about her past exploits. The stories involve members of the Berliners, and always add a sense of belonging. The goal is to convince the newly awoken vampire that she was an asset to the Berliners prior to sleeping, and that they value her contributions greatly. Most of these stories also put the vampire in debt to the Berliner collective for various reasons. Of course, those stories aren't particularly difficult to establish, since the Berliners *clearly* protected her body from Final Death.

### *The Two-Minutes Hate*

The centerpoint of the event is a rally where the Berliner Movement goes through a litany of the covenant's enemies, relaying moving anecdotes about their crimes against freedom and progress. All Carthians are expected to participate, telling their own renditions of their struggles. Discussions of the nature of exploitation, alienation, materialism and the social productions of existence find a home here. All the while, the subject of the party is featured, with biting stories about enemies' past transgressions against her.

### *Indoctrination*

If the party is a success, the Berliner Movement is one step closer to a rabid and dedicated member, often stronger than the core members of the collective. The oddest phenomenon of these parties

is that indoctrinated members are involved in later indoctrination parties, and are often even told what happened to recruit them.

A few times, the awakened vampire remembered a bit more than expected and resisted indoctrination. Thus far, none of those anomalies have been allowed to leave the party. They're never killed, but they are beaten back into torpor for later indoctrination efforts.

The indoctrination effort is represented with two teamwork rolls (for more on teamwork rolls, see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p.134). The first occurs during the Welcoming Committee segment of the party. A leader is chosen to anchor the roll, and the other members in attendance roll Presence + Persuasion. Successes add dice to the leader's own Presence + Persuasion roll. All rolls are penalized by the higher of the subject's Intelligence or Wits. If this roll fails, the vampire resists. If the roll is a dramatic failure, the vampire immediately enters frenzy.

The second roll is accomplished during the Two Minutes Hate portion of the party. All speakers roll Presence + Expression, adding dice to the anchor's roll of Manipulation + Politics. The anchor's roll reflects the formal introduction into the covenant. Again, failure causes resistance, and dramatic failure causes frenzy.

Degrees of success depend on the total successes accumulated by the two rolls. Fewer than five successes reflect a reluctant convert, one likely to join another covenant after a bit of exploration. Five to nine successes generate a moderately loyal member. Ten or more successes mean a member who is loyal. In fact, any further efforts to coerce her away from the Movement suffer a -3 penalty, as the loyalty deeply imprints onto her newly-awakened psyche.

## *The Monster Ball*

In Philadelphia, the Ordo Dracul takes its studies seriously. The covenant is well-known for its advancements in Dracula's ways, and most modern groups follow a tradition called the Philadelphian Rite. In Philly, there's no such thing as half-way Dragons. The Ordo hold parties that specifically test their Kindred limits. The Monster Ball is arguably the most intense of those tests.

The Monster Ball has all attending Dragons battle frenzy all night. They stand at the edge of the Beast's leash, similar to Riding the Wave of frenzy. Inevitably, some will lose control. Security agents summarily remove these Kindred.

## *Security and Location*

For the Monster Ball, the Philadelphian Ordo secures a warehouse in a run-down part of South Philly. The location is important, as it rests on a Wyrms Nest – the power of the Wyrms Nest allows for the ritual that structures the chaos. Security is a top concern; a cadre of the Axe Sworn attends specifically as guards. They're armed with stakes, restraints, nets and other tools to stop raging Kindred. The building itself is boarded up from the inside.

## *The Ritual*

At the formal beginning of the gathering, everyone gathers at the heart of the building. A single ranking occultist leads the group in a guided meditation, directing the participants to find a calm center, a place of power and self-control deep within. The power of the Wyrms Nest fuels the meditation, taking the power of the meditation to a new level.

At the conclusion of the full hour of meditation, each Dragon is faced with his Beast. Each Dragon must spend a point of Willpower, and make a Resolve + Composure roll to Ride the Wave (per **Vampire the Requiem**, p. 181.) If successful, the vampire enters a completely controlled frenzy. He enjoys all the benefits of frenzy, while maintaining the ability to reason, speak and remain nonviolent. This doesn't prevent further provocation from bringing on uncontrolled frenzies. An important aside is that if a vampire has used the Coil of the Beast power Exhausting the Beast, she's unable to benefit from this ritual as her Beast has been chastised into submission. A Dragon of that mastery is expected to serve security.

## *The Games Monsters Play*

The nature of the ritual means that the vampires in attendance could just enjoy the night, riding their Beasts with minimal risk. That'd ruin the point of the party, though. The Philadelphian Dragons developed a handful of games that test the Beast, that tease it and provoke it.



**Warpaint:** Prior to the party, some of the Dragons procure blood bags from various sources. Mostly, they're the write-off blood donations that services can't use for bureaucratic reasons. Near the beginning of the event, the Dragons strip down for the first event of the night.

The event is called Warpaint, and it was designed to test the most base of Kindred frenzies, the hunger. Each Dragon finds a partner. The partner and she share a bag, and the two decorate one another with the fluid. Some toy with occult symbols. Some mark each other with elaborate tribal designs. Some write haiku. Regardless, every Dragon involved is from that point forward covered in blood.

For the remainder of the night, all rolls to resist frenzy suffer a -2 penalty.

**Playing the Ego:** The second event is a game called Playing the Ego. It tests the Beast in times of anger. The entire covenant stands in a large circle. One by one, every vampire takes a turn standing in the middle of the circle. A vampire in the center confesses as to something she's done that might shame her or displease the covenant. While the confession renders her unable to be punished for the sin, the covenant is then allowed to verbally ridicule her for five minutes.

This does three things for the covenant. First, it allows for absolution – very few rituals allow for such things in the rigid Ordo. Secondly, it brings a sense of togetherness to the chapter – members learn things about one another they would have otherwise never heard. There's a shared sense of humility. Lastly, the Beast is forced to the surface, and the vampire at the center (and often wronged vampires in the circle,) must fight against that abandon.

The player of the vampire in the center of the circle must make an extended Resolve + Composure roll to resist frenzy, with between five to ten successes needed, depending on the degree of the ridicule. Do note the -2 penalty from earlier.

**Fight Fire:** Fight Fire tests Röttschreck, the third and most dangerous type of frenzy. Real fire is used; this is not a safe game by any stretch of the imagination. In the center of the building (carefully chosen for its ventilation), the Dragons start a bonfire. The security staff is armed with fire extinguishers, and

immense attention is paid through the entire event. Only one participant acts at a time, this one Dragon is blindfolded and set to stand twenty or more feet from the fire. She's expected to pace slowly towards the fire. The Dragon who gets the closest to the fire without catching ablaze herself, and who manages to stand still in that position wins the contest.

A participating vampire's player must roll Resolve + Composure to resist Röttschreck. Each success represents two safe feet the Dragon steps towards the flame. Failure sends the vampire immediately into Röttschreck. Once twenty are accumulated, the Dragon has come as close to the flame as is safe. At that point, a roll of Dexterity + Composure determines how close she safely gets. Failure results in injury, as the vampire falls into the fire. Compared successes can determine which vampire was closest at the end of all turns.

After the festivities, Dragons are able to increase their mastery of the Coil of Beast by a single tier as if it were an in-clan Discipline (New Rating times 5 instead of times 7.)

## *The Blood Bath*

When a member of the Lance attains an official title, ritual solidifies that position. One of the most popular of these rituals is the Blood Bath. This ritual is most commonly used for rising Bishops. Unlike the Catholic procession, this ritual almost always focuses on a single clergy member, due to the relatively small population of the Lance. This means the vampire receives far more attention than a human bishop, but it means that all eyes are on him. Mistakes stay on the tongues of the Sanctified for years.

This is an example of a Blood Bath. Kindred, even in the Lancea Sanctum, aren't as tied to canonical ritual as some might think. The particulars change from city to city, from vampire to vampire. In San Diego, the Blood Bath takes on a personality of its own. This is San Diego's version of the ritual.

## *The Event*

The ordination ritual takes place during a standard Midnight Mass. All Sanctified are expected to attend, and all other interested parties have open invitation. Aside from the ritual itself, the





entertainment comes in the form of fruit. Indeed, this fruit has drawn non-Sanctified participants to multiple such gatherings. A Sanctified monk called Brother Didacus has cultivated these odd plants in the San Diego region for almost a century and a half. He's never released a hint of how he does it, but he's designed a Kindred-palatable half-blood, half-wine concoction from these grapefruits. Some intuitive members of the Circle of the Crone realize that the fruits are Mandragora, plants fed with Kindred vitae, but they can't wrap their heads around the possible recipe.

The wine frames the night well. The Sanctum bring a nigh-endless supply; it keeps the attendees calm and entertained while the clergy participate in an odd rite.

Those who drink the wine are subject to vitae addiction, with mechanics identical to those found in **Vampire: the Requiem**. Drinkers find themselves pleasantly inebriated. They are subject to all the effects of traditional alcohol inebriation (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 177.) Most importantly, the nature of the drought al-

lows the imbiber to experience what can only be described as orgasm. It comes later in the night at a random time, but is so overwhelming that most that experience it aren't satisfied and try for more. Sure, this is terribly sinful. But sometimes, the pious must use a little sin to bring new blood into the fold. It's been successful – not an insignificant number of Kindred have joined thanks to their miracle wine.

### *The Ritual*

The ritual doesn't take all night. The Sanctified would be absurd to think that non-members would want to spend their entire night at church. Especially once they're drunk and hoping to enjoy the ecstasy of the wine in more suitable surroundings.

The Bishop-to-be gives his first official sermon that evening, to show his worthiness. Then at the conclusion, he strips down to nudity. Assistants bring out a metal basin for him to stand in. Seven vampires then come to him, offering him token temptations to the seven deadly sins while the officiating Bishop, Archbishop or Cardinal guides



prayer. The attendees approach with bloodied hands. He is expected to resist each temptation. As he resists temptation, the attendee ordains the nude Bishop with a bit of blood, the body part ordained dependent on the temptation but wholly a decision of the attendee. The Bishop doesn't always resist the temptation; it doesn't prevent the ordination, but it does look somewhat bad on the incoming Bishop. It's no coincidence that those attendees who have forced a Bishop's hand into temptation are always quickly promoted to better positions within the local church.

## *Variety Is the Spice of Unlife*

Similar to the previous section, this one shows examples of Kindred gatherings. However, each a very specific instance, an anecdote or testimony from a character attending such a gathering.

### *In Memoriam*

*When Kindred die, it reminds other Kindred how misleading the word "immortal" actually is. Funerals amongst the Damned are intense affairs, either very drab or very celebratory. Jack Ketch's funeral was testament to his life, through the filter of people who wanted to pretend they liked him. Devon made a statue. Earlier in the year, he was trying to kick Jack out of the Carthian Movement. Katie brought tears to the crowd with a song she wrote for him. Six months ago, she staked Jack and left him for the sun. I don't know if there's a science to it, but when vampires die, they become either saints or demons.*

*Jack became a saint.*

*The last funeral I remember was Priscus Conway's. He dedicated his Requiem to finding equality amongst the Kindred of Austin. His death was unexpected; he ran afoul of some government-funded vampire hunters. When he died, he went from the spokesperson for the disenfranchised to the worst thing to happen to vampires. Half of the city spat on his*

*ashes. Maybe it's a political thing; he who controls the past controls the future. A little spin can turn a Kennedy into a Nixon.*

- Anna Joe, Agoniste Archivist

## *Family Matters*

*We've done this thing every year I've been around. The word is that it's happened every year since the time of Christ. Nobody still active in the family remembers back that far, but who knows? We spend about three days and two whole nights, one of the older members puts us all up at a nice cabin in Aspen.*

*The important thing, at least as far as I'm concerned, is that everyone has to participate; everyone has to speak. We're expected to discuss any breakthroughs or observations we've made in regards to The Nemesis. My piece is on the principle that killing in self-defense affects our fragile psyches the same way killing for fun or profit does. I've posed the theory that sin as we know it is a construct deeply ingrained in what it means to be Kindred on a metaphysical level, not a spiritual level. If this speech goes well, next year's will relate to Western morality, and why Eastern vampires are still subject to it. If not, I might go into the possible chicken-and-egg scenario of human morality. Maybe, just maybe, vampiric ethics played into the formation of human morality.*

*Being held to high standards by my family is difficult, but it's rewarding. Not many Kindred families gather like this. I think we all are better for it... although, I'd be just as comfortable with a conference call.*

- Sonia Delgado, Castigatoro

## *Scavenger Hunt*

*Other vampires of the Church talk about being the world's ultimate predators. Philly's diocese takes it seriously.*

*We hold a short sermon near the beginning of the night. Bishop Castillo describes a person to us. He gives us a*

hair color, complexion, sometimes something about their clothes and sometimes even a name. The congregation breaks, we all go our separate ways, and we look for that person.

We look for the person. We hunt. We feed. If we're good, we document. This is mostly a thing for the younger Kindred, so we have cellphone cameras to snap pictures of the victims. Usually, those victims are unconscious and the picture is taken before we seal the bite wounds. If we get a good picture, we report back to Bishop Castillo. He judges each entry, and the winner is rewarded with first communion next week. More importantly, it builds a bit of reputation amongst the young Lance members.

I think this is a great thing. It helps us with our hunting skills, it breeds friendly competition, and it builds camaraderie amongst the congregation.

- Sebastian Terry, Pious Soldier

## Bacchanalia

Other vampires have parties. We have blow-outs. The difference between them and us is, they're doing it with something else in mind. For us, the party's the thing. We party for the sake of the party. If someone gets fucked that night, we've done our job.

Sure, there's more to it than that. But everything we want to accomplish comes from the party itself. We get people together. We get them talking about things. We cause a little chaos. Most importantly, a good party tears down the status quo. Dallas is a hardcore fascist oligarchy, and there's nothing that upsets oligarchies more than free love. The Carthians talk about changing things; we're actively doing it. We're not doing it through political revolution, though ours is more a sexual revolution.

You see, the Lance hates sex. They hate it because that's passion and love that could be better invested in their hilarious little religion.

When someone has a good lay, their mind opens and they realize that there's more to life than Big Brother Longinus. It gets minds off the mystical phallus, and gets them thinking about the other genital options.

So now, when we hold our parties, the Lance shows up in droves. They say they're keeping an eye on us. They say they're making sure we don't raise devils or something. I wonder if their leaders even think that's true anymore? I wonder if we're responsible for most of their confessions.

How do we do it? That's simple. A few hard drugs and a half dozen humans. We've killed a few, but we're talking about people the world wouldn't miss anyway. Bankers, stockbrokers and such; the kind of people who have a high tolerance for coke. We provide refreshments. Then we provide music. Drumming helps get the juices flowing. For a human, that means 120 beat-per-minute pop songs. Vampire hearts don't beat like that. Ninety beat marches get them going a lot better. Add a few nude dancers, and you've turned a boring party into an orgy. Voila.

Revolution's as simple as that. Really. We don't even need a philosophy. We just give people what they want but refuse to admit. They serve our gods without even knowing it. It's quite poetic, really.

- Hyacinth, Priestess

## Drumming Out

Jason screwed up. I don't think anyone argues that. The Movement decided that its political position benefited more from his removal than his continued service. That's a shame. So the least we can do for the bloke is usher him out in style. He knows it's nothing personal, but I know it still stings.

Thing is, we can't be associated with him right now; he got caught. That's the biggest crime in the London Movement. He was caught planning to



subvert the power structure. The Lady of London decided to let him live, which was damned fair of her. But we couldn't let it be known that we supported his insurrection plans.

Everyone's supposed to say something. Jason's got a lot of reputation, almost everyone has something positive to talk about. If they don't know him well enough, they'll probably just belt out the same drivel you expect from young Carthians. We'll have a couple of guys who just don't get it, who will point fingers and talk about how we're just as bad as the tyrants in charge. But there will be Carthians from other nearby cities, so this is a big deal. That means these speeches are kind of like recommendation letters if he decides to move away.

The last part is just plain worthless, if you ask me, but they like it. It's a chess competition. The winner gets to play Jason. Of course, that means Jason loses. I think it's supposed to be symbolic. I think it's just pretentious. The end result's the same; Jason's gone. We're without. The Movement loses again.

- Marcus Wilkinson, Myrmidon

## *The Dinner Party*

Mortals are power. This mantra is more than just a string of words. In order to tap that

power, we must walk amongst them. Humans are a stubborn species; we should know this, having come from it. A human is far more likely to obey another human, than something it's deathly afraid of.

Do understand that there is much wisdom in the very principle of the Masquerade. Beyond simple survival, it puts power in our hands. We must act as humans, but that doesn't mean we must act as peasants and paupers. We are the status quo. The herd doesn't need to understand our true motivations, only our directives and desires.

You! Which fork should you use for the pheasant on your plate?

Childe! The lady to your left is standing. What should you do?

A dinner party is a microcosm of human leadership. It represents all the unnecessary propriety that separates the elite from the chaff. If you can't behave well at dinner, you eat with pigs. If you wish to be a ruler of pigs, you can do it outside of the First Estate. Swine do not hold power.

Learn these things. They'll serve you well. Some Invictus swear by the sword. The fork is where the true power is. It's the tool of the leader.

- Donna Marcella, Guildmistress

## Chapter Two

# Hottest Spot in Town

Parties don't occur in vacuums. A great party in a terrible location falls flat. This chapter offers six examples of places Kindred get together. Each features points of interest, logistical considerations, story hooks and mechanical systems. As well, there are suggestions for how the Kindred behave in such a place; important locations influence societies.

### *The Lost City*

Early in the twentieth century, a massive earthquake shook the foundations of the city to the ground. More precisely, it shook the foundations of the city far underground. The people of the city needed new homes and businesses, it was easier to build atop the old than to unearth and renovate. That's just what they did. Now, a century later, the city as 99% of its residents know it exists atop a dead city, a commercial graveyard, a necropolis.

The few locals in the know call it The Lost City. The Lost City is a vampire's paradise. A nuclear weapon detonated on the surface wouldn't let the sunlight in here. If a human finds way beneath the city, she's likely to die from any number of the naturally-occurring threats. If she makes it all the way, she's either the type who wouldn't be missed, or the type who would make an excellent ghoul.

Every year, few dozen people disappear and are never found. Law enforcement officials instinctively know that they'd find bodies in The Lost City, but they also would prefer to keep their own names off the list of those missing.

Now, the Kindred of the city are all allowed haven within. Not only are they allowed, they're encouraged. It puts less strain on the Masquerade, and keeps proverbial enemies near. The undercity is quite large, and can more than accommodate every Kindred that calls the city her home. Even those who do live under

the city proper still maintain holdings above ground, if only to maintain appearances as functional humans. Even amongst those who choose to live above, most major Kindred functions occur in its safe halls.

Some see this as a utopia. Some see it as a travesty and crime against nature. Most agree that the Damned are better off for it.

#### NEW MERIT: TUNNEL RAT (• TO •••)

This Merit was originally printed in *World of Darkness: Chicago*, p. 54. Characters may add their dots in this Merit to Survival dice pools made within The Lost City, in addition to the effects described below.

- The character has ventured into the tunnels once or twice. He's safe so long as he stays on the biggest and busiest passageways. Getting from one place to another strictly through the city ruins may take up to twice as long as it would on the surface. Penalties to dice pools for navigation and survival in The Lost City are reduced by one (e.g., from -3 to -2).
- The character has a solid, but imperfect, understanding of The Lost City tunnels. Traveling from one place to another through The Lost City is no more time-consuming than surface travel. Penalties to dice pools for navigation and survival in The Lost City are reduced by two (e.g., from -3 to -1).
- The character knows The Lost City in an up-close and personal way. She has personally explored dozens of tunnels down to the smallest service conduit and probably spends most of her active time down in The Lost City. She can tell her location in the tunnels by one or two subtle landmarks and knows the fastest routes to get anywhere. A character with this level of knowledge need never fear getting lost in the Undercity and cuts travel time by 25% when traveling between any two points in Chicago via the tunnels. Penalties to dice pools for navigation and survival in the Undercity are reduced by three (e.g., from -3 to 0).





### *A Visitor's Guide*

The Lost City is a step out of time, a morbid homage to the first part of the twentieth century. Many of the various establishments that fell are complete anachronisms never found on the surface. They typically surprise a modern vampire. Butcher shops, dairies, stables, governess placement agencies, tailors, pressing services and other similar services have all but faded from modern commerce, or have been replaced by minor services performed by specialty shops.

A disproportionate amount of The Lost City comes from what was old Chinatown. Poor immigrants cheaply made these buildings. The immigrants were more concerned with the daily bread than with architectural soundness. When they fell, the cheap buildings were so close together, they actually held one another somewhat erect. Curio shops and other tourist traps heavily influence the overall aesthetic of the necropolis. Conveniently, many art pieces survived, due to the fortitude of shipping crates. This has led to an over-saturation of these items as decorations.

### *Chutes and Ladders*

When the city fell, it was a violent, chaotic event. Very few buildings remained functional, most collapsed under their own weight. A small percentage of the total city holds up the entire area. This area consists of mostly stronger buildings: state houses, theaters and the like. Most buildings have some stable areas, but many more that have fallen in on themselves.

The Lost City has settled. There's very little that's still dangerously unstable. What's left is a city of refuse, a haven of wreckage. Getting from one point to another is far more complicated than walking down Baker Street and turning onto Turner. Some areas are inaccessible from the rest of the necropolis, and require paths across the upper city streets. Some are very well-hidden, and can only be reached from bolt-holes or catwalks. Linear travel is nearly impossible. This deters most humans, but the perceptive vampire with the right mentors can learn routes that are quicker than equivalent ground paths. These routes might involve climbing, jumping, crawling or even swimming. For many, this is a worthy payoff for efficiency.



## *Forgotten Places*

The Lost City is a tattered quilt made from the fabric of a bygone era. It's a crypt, housing the remains of a nearly forgotten people. While most of the buildings and attractions that fell were destroyed in the process, some were preserved far better than if they had still been on the surface level. These places comprise the almost-city the vampires have cultivated.

### *The Jin Fang Theater*

The Jin Fang Theater was an entertainment hub for the early Chinese settlers in the region. It housed dramas, musicals, flea markets and other festivities. It's quite appropriate that now the city's vampires use it similarly. It's been considered Elysium since the vampiric population first moved under the streets. Nightly, it's a hangout spot, a place for Kindred commerce, discussion and interaction. It also houses larger meetings like the Prince's bi-weekly Court.

It's easily the most open building in the under-city. Beyond that, the already impressive acoustics have been amplified by the particulars of its resting place. Voices carry; even the mousiest and reserved presenter can make a topic majestic with little ef-

fort. Now, Jin Fang is synonymous with politics. A would-be Harpy had better dedicate a significant amount of her time at the theater if she wishes to be taken seriously. A vampire looking to change policy need not look for more than a week at the theater for someone who could help him.

### *The Maple Avenue Ossuary*

The local Sanctified have an indisputable power base in the Maple Avenue Ossuary. It's so named because of its current location, directly under what's now Maple Avenue. It's not an ossuary proper; the structure is a church. But the earthquake occurred on a Sunday, and the entire congregation were trapped within the building. Ironically, the building itself is in relatively good condition, despite having caused the deaths of a few dozen people.

After uncovering the location, the Sanctified went to great effort to honor the dead. Each has been given a more-or-less proper burial beneath the city. In gratitude, the Lancea Sanctum identified each casualty and made memorial stones for him or her. After all, the Lance has those dead to thank for their place of worship. The memorial stones were placed in the church's main hall, and are often used for seating during worship.





Each Sunday, the Sanctified hold mass in the ossuary. All Kindred are invited, but very few outside the Lance attend. Most Kindred refuse, if only because of the macabre decorum. Others do because the darkness doesn't end there. Often, the priests preach about the earthquake, insisting that "those sinners amongst sinners" caused the initial catastrophe, and that the next would inevitably annihilate the city's Kindred who don't belong in the burial grounds of a city.

### *The McCafferty Tunnel*

The McCafferty Tunnel is a bogeyman (or bogey-place) amongst the city's Kindred. It's public knowledge that Belial's Brood make a home there. Prior to the quake, it was a tunnel under a hill settled by the wealthy. After the collapse, it became an out-of-the-way extension of the undercity. Though connected to the rest, it's still far away from the places Kindred meet. Twenty years after the quake, coterie reported many of the telltale signs of Brood activity on the surface world around the tunnel. Cults, sacrifices, arson and Masquerade problems persisted. The city has tried running them out, but the Brood meets efforts with harsh counteroffensives.

The city leadership has since determined that efforts to eliminate the Brood only stretch the Masquerade thinner; Kindred are encouraged to avoid that part of town. Lately, younger Kindred have used the tunnels as a sort of coming of age ceremony. New licks are dared or even coerced into traveling into the tunnels, where they must take pictures of signs or otherwise prove their exploits. So far, this hasn't resulted in a single death, or even Brood reprisal. Some vampires

hypothesize that the Brood relish these excursions, and are considering their potential for recruitment. Cynics suggest that some of the Kindred who have taken these trips are possible Brood plants.

## *Life Underground*

The undercity is a sound place for Kindred. They can do things they otherwise couldn't, like live openly. With this freedom, some responsibility comes. The city's leadership has adopted a few simple but important rules to maintain the integrity of The Lost City. These rules aren't published or quoted verbatim; they're just understood.

- **Don't bring harm to the city.**

This rule is the one broken least, but the one punished most harshly. Causing damage to the structures of the undercity could cause massive problems, exploding into a domino effect. Kindred who fool with destructive tools, fire or explosives are not given second chances.

- **Humans do not belong here.**

This is likely the most frequently broken, because of interpretation. Some Kindred feel that ghouls are an obvious exception to this rule. Some feel the rule is rendered unnecessary in the face of a skilled practitioner of Dominate. Nevertheless, the sanctity of this city is shaky; a single curious soul could destroy it forever.

- **Territory must be granted by the leadership.**

This is the most ignored of the rules, and the hardest to enforce. It's supposed to curb conflict that could risk the city's security. So far, it's just added a layer of favoritism to an already unfair system. Power-

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## STORY HOOKS

- The Lost City is falling. A couple of important buildings have collapsed as minor earthquakes caused further damage. The leadership makes a lucrative offer to the group who can find a solution. Will they bring humans into the city? Will they ghoul engineers?
- The Belial's Brood left a telling message at the haven of a ranking Kindred. They've abducted him. They may have killed him. His haven wasn't well known, and their message suggests that they were told. An inquisition breeds instability. How do the Kindred find the vampire who would sell them all out?
- The Lost City might sound like a paradise, but it's not. Living in a cave breeds depression beyond that normally caused by not seeing the sun. Vampires become hermits. They become more monstrous as they separate themselves from humanity. How do more empathic Kindred maintain their sensibilities while not ousting themselves as outsiders?

ful Kindred are given rights of territory over important passageways and buildings; this causes others to openly violate those grants. Groups exist that lobby to eradicate this law, claiming that a city of vampires should be owned by all vampires equally.

## *Biblioteca della Vita Meravigliosa*

Almost two hundred years ago, the city's Kindred conflicted with some monster hunters. This is bound to happen, considering that vampires are prime prey for hunters. Biblioteca della Vita Meravigliosa is a story of vampire hunters that failed.

The local Kindred came to realize that the hunters used a mansion as their base of operations, and eventually learned of a soiree the lot of the organization was holding at said mansion. The Kindred collectively made the decision to crash that party, permanently. Halfway through the night, almost all members of the group showed up. Thirty-some vampires confronted twenty-some human hunters. The outcome was not pleasant. A couple of vampires met their Final Deaths, but the hunters were outclassed, surprised and outnumbered. No survivors escaped.

Since the pogrom, the local Kindred have laid claim to the mansion, declaring it Elysium. It serves as a social center for Kindred activity and the most common location for Kindred events. Part of local custom involves respecting and protecting the building, because it stands for the solidarity and perseverance of the city's vampire population. One Invictus, Sir Thomas Kipling, has charged himself with keeping the place secure. He has a small coterie of security agents that take turns policing the grounds.

Recently, there have been signs that the hunters are returning to reclaim the building. Although the group was all but eradicated, its entire membership wasn't present during the eradication. Remnants wisely waited for revenge. They grew their numbers, training and hiding for nearly two centuries. It seems they've learned tactics from their undead enemies.

## *The Biblioteca*

The architects who made the mansion didn't intend for the building to house many people—quite the contrary. The primary function of the building





is to serve as a vast library. It's split into two primary wings; each of those is divided by the intended functions and contents of its rooms. In addition, there's an underground archive, somewhat like a crypt. Each of the two main wings has a central library, but most rooms have bookshelves, even if they're not meant to serve in that function.

### *The Vegoia Wing*

The western wing was designed for "daytime pursuits." This wing has all the things one would expect of a mansion. It has a kitchen, ballrooms, a small library and all the other day-to-day necessities of the former inhabitants. It's the section mundane guests would be invited to.

### *The Turan Athenaeum*

This is the "mundane" library. The walls are three stories high, forty yards long and covered in books thick. The tomes come from all over the world, spanning most of the second millennium AD. These books are decidedly false, at least to the occult-minded. The collection is still historically impressive and could facilitate lifetimes of research. Ninety percent of the books require a ladder to reach. Frescoes of Etruscan myths adorn the ceilings.

The rule is that none can remove books from the library, but Kindred patrons are allowed as much access as they so desire. This library is a point of pride for the Prince. One vampire, Janus Jones, spends most of his waking time there. He's made it a point to learn the complex system the hunters used to document the place, and he's gone to great lengths to expand the library's contents beyond the eighteenth century. Some say he's just as much a fixture of the library as the frescoes are.

### *The Tinia Ballroom*

This is a room made to celebrate the destruction of vampires. It's a beautiful ballroom; one could never guess its true purpose with the exception of the small cage in the center of the room and its beautiful skylight ceiling. Now, it's the central gathering room for Kindred functions. The room has high ceilings, and is decorated with red silk panels and paintings of the various members of the old hunting group. A grand piano has kept well

and serves as well as it did that fated night when its owners died before it.

### *The Tyfluns Boardinghouse*

Off the ballroom area, there's a hall of eighteen bedrooms. This section was made to accommodate guests and it still does so. In the years following the building's seizure, the Kindred have prepared these rooms to house vampires. They've been sun-proofed, the doors have been fixed with strong inner locks to prevent unwanted outside attention, and to hold in possible frenzies.

Some Mekhet have reported signs of haunting in these halls, but none have followed through with detailed investigations.

### *The Tages Wing*

The eastern Tages wing was designed as the more practical segment of the mansion. It contains all the accoutrements its owners used for the purpose of hunting monsters. The doors all have strong locks to deter curious wanderers.

### *The Thalna Athenaeum*

This is the occult side of the library, mostly taken from past hunts. It's a fourth of the size of the Turan Athenaeum, and far less flashy. About half of the contents are actually books. There are also a number of relics and artifacts taken from monsters over the years. Some of these items date as far back as the sixth century AD. While their exploits weren't well documented, descriptions and reports of the items' owners are filed away in the library. Some of these stories are quite telling if they're true, the group went back a very long time.

The Prince doesn't allow access to this library without a scheduled appointment with an attendee she's assigned to the task. Part of this is fear of the items getting out; part is that she's unaware of the scope of what's contained inside. No Kindred in the city has the degree of knowledge necessary to identify all the artifacts, and to rule out their danger.

### *The Vanth Depository*

This room is half-museum, half-arsenal. It's full of antiquated weaponry, armor, traps and other

devices made to cause harm to the supernatural. Kindred have argued that having these weapons lying around is asking for trouble; so far, it's not resounded in the ears of anyone in power. The ruling class sees this arsenal as a trophy, iconic of their victory over the well-armed hunters.

### *Tinia's Hall*

This small room is something of a "war room." It has a scale model of the city in the center table. Hunters in the past used small flags to denote areas influenced by the various monsters they discovered. From time to time, Kindred update the model. They haven't bothered to map influence, but the model itself is a rather interesting piece of art the city-minded vampires find fascinating.

### *The Leinth Wing*

This is the crypt. It was built beneath the rest of the Biblioteca. It's the dumping grounds for the remains of the hunters' victims primarily. Secondly, it's a fully functional bomb shelter with a strong vault door to protect from intrusion.

The crypt is not small. City officials have investigated much of it, but not all. Thus far, they've not found viable Kindred remains. There are some makeshift urns and boxes containing Kindred ashes. It appears that the hunters were knowledgeable enough to eliminate their enemies.

There are rumors that a few bodies have gone missing. The bodies weren't Kindred bodies, but other unidentifiably supernatural bodies.

## *The Bottom*

The Bottom has had a number of names and themes. It's a bar, a nightclub, a speakeasy. It's a staple in the city; it's been for a very long time. A cop might score a fix there, or meet with an informant, but on-the-clock business is out of the question.

The Bottom is a vampire club.

Humanity isn't aware, per se. But something, somewhere inside everyone in the city knows that The Bottom is a place of death and the dead. Conservative groups rally to have the "den of sin" shut down. They've succeeded a couple of times. Violence has burned it to the ground three times in the past century. Like a filth-ridden phoenix, it always rises anew. It may have a new building, a new owner and a new name, but everyone knows it's the same old bar.

### *The Décor and Management*

The Bottom is a creature that evolves frequently. What's true today might not be true tomorrow. It certainly wasn't yesterday. This is as true for the management as it is for the décor.

The current manager is a Daeva named Madison; it's a member of the Ordo Dracul currently experimenting with androgyny. Soon, it'll fall out of popularity, and someone else will jump in to fill the role. It's a time-honored tradition. Running this club is a young lick's fifteen minutes of fame. Sometimes, the unpopular fight the trend but it never works. In the end, they're just going out of style without grace.

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### STORY HOOKS

- During a salon, a human shows up and makes it through security. She pulls the characters aside. She explains that she's acquainted with the Biblioteca della Vita Meravigliosa, and that she can't handle the brutality of their hunts. She throws herself at their mercy, insisting that she wishes to be Kindred.
  - A player character owes a Storyteller character a favor. He calls in this favor by demanding the character liberate a mysterious dagger from the Thalna Athenaeum. Getting caught could cause massive repercussions. What's worse, upon touching the dagger, the character hears the voice of a person, apparently trapped within the dagger, begging for help to get out.
  - The Prince makes the decision to hold a hunt in parody of the original owners. The Biblioteca serves as the base for this excursion, but every participating Kindred is charged with finding a remaining member of the long-hidden vampire-hunting organization. The vampire who brings back a member is rewarded with the honor of calling the Biblioteca her territory for a year and a day, with full access to its resources.
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Decorations are extravagant, colorful and very artificial. The whole ensemble looks as if a kitsch, bubblegum Japanese robot exploded all over the walls. Pieces of metal blend with pieces of plastic, none of which make sense past a certain degree of abstract, transhuman aesthetic.

This will all change. Take a picture, it'll last longer.

### *The Dance Floor*

The dance floor accommodates dancers. One could argue that it's the simplest philosophy in nightclub owning. Really though, it's remarkably complicated. There are two major concerns a manager has to address: First, a good nightclub has a line. A line means that the club's attendance should be in a perpetual state of maximum capacity. This means the floor can't be too big. Second, a good nightclub needs to be ready and able to accept large entourages with no notice. Sometimes, celebrities show up. Not having room means losing hype. Losing hype means losing demand. Losing demand means losing blood. This means the club's management can't pack it to capacity at any given time, but should still make it look as if it's crowded.

### *The Good Drinks*

Customers on the main dance floor have choice of any trendy drink imaginable. Bartenders are well-versed in all sorts of interesting techniques to make glowing, neon drinks of multiple colors. They serve drinks in squeeze bottles. Jello shots are a staple. Regional drinks come and go. The bartenders pour drinks in complex, flashy ways to maximize attention and therefore tips. Many visitors come just for the bartenders' skills.

It's important to note that many of these bartenders have been working here through numerous regimes. They'll change hair and dress, sometimes even changing their names, and adapt to the new style. These bartenders are exposed to more weirdness than the majority of the World of Darkness, and for the right prices, they're willing to talk about it.

Functionally-speaking, they can serve as remarkably useful Contacts, but they're Contacts for *all* of the city's hipper Kindred, so the information flows both ways.

### *The VIP Room*

The VIP room, as it's called, is where most of the supernatural activity occurs. It's upstairs, overlooking the dance floor through glass walls. While most

recognized vampires of the city are welcome within, it's not an exclusive spot. Humans are still found within. The oddness of the VIP room comes from the thinness of the Masquerade. Feeding happens in the VIP room. Sex happens in the VIP room. Murders have occurred in the VIP room. The unwritten rule is that what happens in VIP stays in VIP. The rule has done well to enforce itself. The Kindred of the city like having a playground where they can be themselves so a handful of them make great efforts to maintain the sanctity of the dive.

### *The Better Drinks*

Despite all logic, The Bottom serves blood. It's terribly cliché, and it makes absolutely no sense to the local Kindred. Madison's served it throughout his short tenure. The blood is served warm in red wine glasses. It keeps very well, offering full sustenance for at least a couple of hours. A glass costs \$100 in cash, up front. The city trades rumors as to the source of the mysterious blood. Some postulate that it's the result of a Crúac ritual; some say it's the gift of a rare bloodline. When a local Harpy asked Madison, he winked and told her that it's synthetic. It's a popular drink, and there's no sign it's caused any adverse effects in drinkers thus far.

### *Meeting Rooms*

The bar has four meeting rooms available: three smaller conference spaces and one full dining room. All are offered at ludicrous prices, by the hour. The spaces are reserved specifically for special customers.

Special in this case refers to those who need privacy and plausible deniability. Often this means Kindred, but the meeting rooms also appeal to various criminal elements. Mobsters rent the rooms for anonymity in a popular place, while prostitution rings take advantage of the high-profile clientele available. Private groups will sometimes hold bachelor parties there, but intense scrutiny is paid to those types, as the bar has to maintain its edgy, illicit reputation. These rooms, while not decorated as garishly as the rest of the bar, are made with client interests in mind. The walls are reinforced, the doors are steel-lined, and the locks are nigh-impenetrable. Even if they weren't soundproofed, none outside could hear what went on inside, due to the intense, pounding music in the main areas.

### *Everyone Else*

Humans can't point at The Bottom and say, "Here are vampires." Humans aren't the only things in the World of Darkness, though. Most of the city's supernatural denizens quickly learn that if they need to enlist the help of a vampire, The Bottom is the obvious place to look. This is a long-standing fact, vaguely tolerated by the leaderships of the various creatures of the city. There exist some usually unwise werewolves and mages that make a point of spending at least some of their free time at The Bottom. It's a great place to find opportunity. It's also a great place to disappear. But sometimes, the prize outweighs the risk.

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### STORY HOOKS

- Madison's fifteen minutes of fame are coming up quickly. The city is unofficially determining who will be the next owner, and one of the players' characters is selected. This would be fine, except for the fact that he's recently done some very questionable things, and ownership would put him under much-unwanted scrutiny. Was this turn of events manufactured? Can he gracefully decline? Can he take The Bottom for all it's worth while keeping prying eyes off his affairs?
  - While the police keep their eyes off The Bottom, other interests don't. The characters catch wind that federal authorities might be looking into the bar as the site of a number of potential murders. Worse still, rumor has it that the federal authorities are aware of the supernatural influence on the place and are trying to root it out.
  - A scion of a covenant is coming into town. One of the characters is tasked with throwing a party; the scion has chosen The Bottom as the location of choice. Not only that, the scion has been there before, and insists on having the best party ever thrown there. How does the character top the average night in a place that pushes boundaries with its regular existence?
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## *The Barther House*

The Ordo Dracul of the city located a house that serves well for Kindred gatherings. It's centrally-located, large, soundproof, and in an area with good hunting. Better yet, no mortal in his right mind would come in; it's haunted.

The Barther House is a throwback to an older time, the architecture is dated and archaic compared to the houses that surround it. It could be a glorious example of Victorian art, but it's not. The house hasn't been home to an ounce of love in almost a century. Instead, it houses a number of rumors and ghost stories, and for good reason.

Back in the sixties, the Barther House was the hub of a prostitution ring centered around an odd religious cult. Federal authorities were preparing to conduct a sting operation, and somehow the cult heard what was happening. Instead of moving away or facing federal charges, the leaders boarded up the building and released a combination of toxic gasses while most of the cultists slept. Federal files reported no survivors. Casualties were reported at over thirty dead.



Since the massacre, people have stayed away. The house fell to foreclosure, and tax liens kept potential purchasers from buying it. Mystique grew around it, and soon it became the source of most local urban legends. The city has its own version of the Bloody Mary story, centered around the Barther House's bathroom and one of the whores. Teenagers would sneak in for parties, and now there are more than a few stories of teenagers disappearing during these excursions. During the paranormal kick of the 80s, a few television crews braved the house but found nothing. In the past two decades, it's become little more than a silly story. But it's a silly story that people are still not dumb enough to risk.

Now, the Prince has declared it Elysium. Due to the way it deters humans, it's an ideal location. And besides, what self-respecting vampire would be afraid of a little ghost problem?

### *In the House*

There's a strong argument that the Barther House was built to be labyrinthine. While it's large, it's hardly the biggest house in the city. If a casual visitor doesn't pay attention though, it's easy to get lost. The house has twelve-odd bedrooms and a greater number of well-concealed wardrobes, closets, cupboards and pantries. There are three entrances to a loft above it all, but one of those exits is cut off from the rest with some aftermarket walls. The basement is finished, but there's an unfinished sub-basement below it, where the majority of the late residents died in their sleep. It's nothing more than dirt floor and makeshift cots with an old rusty wood stove.

The house is very good at masking noises. A curious listener might hear vaguely what's being said on an adjacent floor, but not without effort. The basements are all but soundproof,



and the house's walls prevent passers-by from being able to even hear the loudest sounds from within.

The house is still furnished, but the furniture is in various states of rot and decay. Decades of moisture with no maintenance have warped the wood and peeled the wallpaper. Cobwebs grow faster than bamboo. Housecats, raccoons and opossums make nests within the walls alongside rats nearly their size.

### *The Dead Walking*

The house is haunted. This is not a rumor. Most Mekhet can see signs of the ghosts if they look hard enough. For the most part though, the ghosts leave the Kindred alone. This might be because the Kindred are dead and don't register as outsiders to the shades. It might be because the ghosts are themselves afraid. Sometimes though, the Kindred have had interactions. Most are relatively mundane, ghosts manifesting briefly or leaving vague messages scrawled in the dust. But sometimes the ghosts lash out. This hasn't caused any lasting harm, but the chandelier once fell at an inopportune time and a

couple of vampires have fallen inexplicably down the stairs.

Some Kindred have studied the ghosts, and have identified a few recurring personalities. At least one of the organizers of the prostitution ring resides there still. There's something of a house matron, and a handful of young girls. While they don't appear frequently, some seem willing to communicate, if barely able to. The girls leave messages in various Asian languages; the ring was mostly illegal immigrants. Most don't seem distraught with their situations; the girls mostly appear to seek companionship. The organizers though are hateful, harsh souls. They don't communicate, they just cause whatever trouble they can.

The ghosts do well to keep intruders out. While Kindred have no trouble entering, mortals are not so capable. Coming near the house breeds a deep fear. Often when police have been called to the spot, they'll stop, then fabricate their reports to avoid having to enter. To enter, a human must achieve five successes on an extended Resolve + Composure roll. If the character fails before attaining the required number of successes, he cannot enter of his own free will.





## STORY HOOKS

- The Prince makes a declaration that he's going to allow an Embrace, but it will be granted by contest. The vampire that presents the bravest mortal will be granted the right. While the characters are considering the issue, they notice a group of teens trying to break into the Barther House. A few exhibit signs of being particularly brave; the coterie could easily follow and discern which is the most ideal candidate by testing them and watching their behavior.
- During an Elysium gathering, the coterie holds a meeting with rivals in one of the bedrooms of the Barther House. After the meeting, the groups step out into an empty hall. Every door they open puts them back in the same meeting room. There appears to be no way out. Additionally, both the hallway and the meeting room have inconveniently-located windows. Will the rivals take advantage of this oddity and eliminate the others, or will they work together to solve the riddle of their displacement?
- During a party, attendees hear a few odd noises. Chains rattle and vague moans come from the walls. With a little investigation, it appears that two fraternity boys found a secret entrance into the walls, and have been partying inside, 'haunting' the halls. Not only this, but they've overheard far more than they can safely know. However, confronted, they openly admit that a handful of their fraternity brothers know where they are, so there would be questions if they disappeared.

### *Frequency Breeds Familiarity*

Yes, the house is haunted. Yes, the Kindred know this. But if the hauntings caused regular, invasive problems, who would ever gather there? The hauntings are typically subtle. Most simply add a mysterious if somewhat eerie charm to the place. The more forceful of the encounters are still only minor inconveniences at most.

As a Storyteller, this is an essential thing to note. When it comes down to it, a major haunting should come as a surprise. In fact, if you use minor hauntings to calm the characters' nerves, to work them into complacency, there's even more shock when the situation does become dire.

### *Around the Campfire*

Young people tell stories about the house; they blend legends with truth and come up with new, hybrid tales. Because of the concentration of ghosts, some of these myths take spectral form. Once a story has found its place in the collective subconscious, the Barther House ghosts gain the power to take on the relevant aspects of the story. This is not limited to ghost stories. So long as the story is supernatural in nature and evolves to involve the Barther House, the ghosts can emulate the specifics of the yarn.

Everyone's familiar with the story of the deadly prom dress. This city has a variant: One of the girls that died in the Barther House had a beautiful dress, which causes the death of the wearer. More than

once, groups of teenagers have braved the house for small parties, where they dare each other to commit silly and risky acts in the more intimidating rooms. More than once, a girl has found a beautiful vintage dress during her stay. Each of these times, the amused crowd of teens dared her to wear the dress to a school function. Every time, the girl died within one week of the event.

The truth is, Herman Shineland, one of the men responsible for the prostitution ring, used the power of the story to temporarily escape the Barther House and wreck havoc on the outside world. In game terms, the ghosts of the Barther House are able to manifest items and forms indicated in these urban legends. The legend becomes the ghost's anchor and fetter. So long as the ghost manipulates circumstances to align with the legend, it has a strong link to the material world.

Thus far, the ghosts have yet to take advantage of this phenomenon with the Kindred of the city. That's bound to change eventually.

## *The State House*

While Kindred never really control the world, they sometimes manage impressive influence. Often, though, Kindred go to lengths to simply emulate the trappings of mastery. In this case, it's gone far beyond simple decorum and impersonation. The vampires of the city gather in the basement of the state house, close to the center of town.



It's in the public eye, so the Kindred must look the part and do their best to divert excessive attention. They enter through the back, let in by a ghouléd caretaker. The basement is set up as a sound stage for press meetings, decked out with state and federal flags, a podium and a competent PA system. All risks aside, it's a wonderful place for formal announcements.

### *Calling the Shots*

The state house is the place for local politics. Everyone with real local power has dealings in this building. For this reason, risks are higher, but rewards are commensurate. Because of the risks, the Prince has demanded express permission before exercising supernatural influence over the people with dealings inside. For this reason, there's a sharp sense of competition here. All activities are ultimately acts of posturing and political positioning; the Prince's favor is at a premium.

### *Finger on the Pulse*

Being so close to mortal politics, the Kindred of the city are much closer to their mortal counterparts than in some cities. In fact, human politics directly influence the Prince's decisions. Most of her policy decisions relate directly to the closest equivalent

human legislation. For this reason, some Kindred have gone so far as to make efforts to influence human politics, in hope that it'd turn the Prince's decision-making in their favor.

### *The Sanguine Caucus*

Because of the Prince's emulation of human politics, she encourages the Kindred to resolve issues through traditional debate. In a given conflict, she breaks up the attendance into two distinct parties, dependent on their personal views in the issue. The two groups are expected to come to a conclusion; at the point the dispute is considered over.

In practice, this typically leads to a heavily weighted popularity contest. Members reveal their sides in the argument, a disproportionate number side with the more popular vampire. In most of these debates, the smaller side loses quickly. Ironically, the system is supposed to offer healthy discourse but instead supports a status quo in a formal sense.

### *They Love You Today*

Kindred gathering in the state house are likely to draw attention. This is countered by the fact that so many scandalous and attention-getting things occur there, nothing is remembered for long. In game terms, any rolls to notice characters at the state house benefit from a +2 modifier, while rolls to remember specifics about these encounters suffer a -2 penalty. While characters become highly visible, they're far less memorable when surrounded by monsters arguably more atrocious than they.

### *The Hiroshima Club*

Have you ever walked around the city late at night and gotten lost? Did you find yourself in an alley with an out-of-place door? Did you wander in, hoping for directions or a public restroom, only to find that it was its own little culture, and you weren't invited? That's The Hiroshima Club.

The Hiroshima Club isn't the type of place that needs hype or attention to sustain itself. It doesn't advertise. Everyone who should know about it does. If you needed to know about it, you would. The Hiroshima Club is better than you. Ask anyone inside.

To the person wandering in, it's a quiet little coffee shop that happens to sell liquor and showcase local street performers. Poets, jugglers, musicians



## STORY HOOKS

- The meeting runs late. The Prince's announcements breed discussion, and the collective loses track of time. By the time the meeting calls to a close, protestors have gathered by the entrances and exits. The sun will come up in little over an hour, and direct attention will almost certainly result in confrontations with the protestors. Worse still, city officials plan to use the basement for an early morning press conference.
- While attending a gathering, the characters wander a bit. During their wandering, they run into a powerful politician in an incriminating sexual encounter with an intern. They could take advantage of the situation, risking the politician's ire and scrutiny; he's well-known for his ruthless background checks and personal attacks.
- Due to budget cuts, city officials are considering renting out the state house and moving their operations to a more modern and affordable office complex. If the city's Kindred are going to continue their tradition, they'll have to either influence the officials to reconsider, or they'll have to move to a building with much tighter security and regulation.

and magicians are welcome on stage. There's a lot of talent inside, but no popular entertainer ever got her humble start on that stage; The Hiroshima Club is a place for dead ends and lost souls.

At a closer look, the club is very diverse. Some of the patrons are clearly and obviously wealthy, while some might be homeless. Some are locals, while many hail from every which corner of the world. It's less a nightclub, and more a melting pot.

To those who look deeper, it's much more. It's the black, throbbing heart of the city's underbelly. The basement, off-limits to strangers, is an opium den and more. Big-ticket buyers of everything restricted by the law can find what they want down there. While any regular with demonstrable access to impressive illicit resources receives an invite, the basement isn't for the light of heart. More than a few overdoses, disagreements and mistakes have resulted in bodies being brought to the incinerator.

### *Naughty Things*

As laws change, The Hiroshima Club changes to suit. As laws pass prohibiting the import of certain liquors, it stocks up. As authorities crack down on human trafficking, The Hiroshima Club increases output to fill the void. The Hiroshima Club protects the status quo of crime in the city. It acts as an insurance policy on the things people do, but aren't supposed to. It's not a power player in any specific field, but it guarantees that if something is in short supply, the deviants of the world won't go hungry.

The drug trade is easily the most marketable of The Hiroshima Club's dealings. But to maintain

the one-stop shopping environment, the club has to allow less profitable, more illicit activities. Vendors only get one chance, though; the club doesn't provide security assistance and misbehaving is not acceptable. Fights are answered with sharp, strict justice.

### *The Security*

Bouncers at The Hiroshima Club are at a premium. The club only accepts the best, because they can't afford mistakes. Most of the bouncers have military backgrounds. They're paid well, in cash, and under the table. It's a lucrative job for the select few that can handle it. The management doesn't tell new hires what happened to those before them. They're being paid to not ask questions. There are usually at least two on duty: one obvious and one undercover. If characters come into conflict with the bouncers, use the statistics for the SWAT officer from **The World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 206, but remove the Status Merit.

### *Darker Things*

With all the terrible things going on at the club, it's almost gratuitous to say that Kindred find the place to be remarkably comforting. It reminds them that sometimes they're not the worst things in the world. The nature of The Hiroshima Club is very friendly to Kindred needs. It's only open at night, it doesn't get public attention and it accommodates all manner of odd taste. Do you prefer to feed from young Korean boys or well-to-do pagan cultists? The Hiroshima Club can handle your needs.

For these and many other reasons, The Hiroshima Club is the default gathering place for Kindred who don't want the world's attention. Often, corners of the bar and basement serve as impromptu coterie and covenant meeting places. About once a year, the Prince's most vocal opposition reserves the basement for a rally. More interesting though, the Lancea Sanctum uses the bar for what they call a "midnight revival." See below for more on this event.

Officially, the Daeva claim Kindred authority over the club. Nevertheless, the Hiroshima Club lets in whoever fits the basic requirements for entrance. It's equal opportunity sin. The atmosphere is addicting; it's been the moral downfall for a number of otherwise reasonable vampires. Many of the vendors dealing in more taboo items will offer discounts or freebies for those on the fence about purchases. It's a far more dramatic form of "the first hit's free."

### *Thank You, The Management*

Nobody knows who runs The Hiroshima Club. Bartenders aren't forthcoming; those questioned intensely will admit that they don't even know. They received the job offer by letter and receive their payments in cash, left in anonymous postal boxes. While this has raised some eyebrows, the location has a strong reputation for silence. If whoever is running the place has bad intentions, those intentions don't seem to have caused problems in the many years the place has been open. Some joke (or hypothesize) that the owner is the Devil himself, keeping the bar open to keep the damned lazy.

### *Midnight Revival*

So far, the Lancea Sanctum have held four of these events. They don't clear the place out, and they don't reserve it. In fact, they want as many people as possible present. The Sanctified swarm the bar and basement. They raise hell. They tempt all those within. They test the extent of the sin in each. The Kindred compare notes, determining who they collectively deem the greatest sinner.

They find the greatest sinner, and they guarantee his damnation.

### THE FIRST HIT'S FREE

Many items in The Hiroshima Club break local, state or international laws. Slavery is likely the least creative of these things. Snuff shows, torture play and extreme forms of prostitution are all acceptable within the basement walls. Clearly, not many people would openly purchase these things, even if asked. Salespeople have to make do, so they offer samples.

In game terms, this allows for things a character might not have such easy access to, at a cost of moral standing. A character accepting a free gift trades Humanity for Merit dots. Instead of making the roll to resist Degeneration for an act, the player opts not to, sacrificing the Humanity with no roll. The roll to resist Derangement is made at -2. In exchange, the player has access to a number of experience points to immediately purchase relevant Merits. The number of experience gained is equal to the amount of experience that would usually be required to purchase the dot lost. For example, sacrificing the fourth dot of Humanity would afford twelve experience points. These points must be immediately spent—any in excess are lost. The player may choose to spend any unspent experience to defray additional costs.

The Merits purchased must relate to the items in question. This usually but doesn't always mean Social Merits, such as Resources and Retainer. Carthian and Invictus covenant advantages do not apply to their costs.

The Lance also chooses the member in their ranks who has the most penance to undergo. That member offers the Embrace as a service to the Church, undergoing the rites of penance despite his being forced to commit the heinous act.

The collective gives the would-be vampire the choice of death or the Embrace. Thus far, every one has chosen the Embrace. The new vampire is considered a ward of the Church, under the responsibility of all its membership.

### *Making the Place*

Sometimes a party isn't really that interesting, but the location is. Sometimes the location is like a supporting character. If you're designing a location that has the personality of a character, you have to put more attention to it than you would a



## STORY HOOKS

- A creature claiming to be a werewolf approaches the coterie. He requests their assistance in petitioning the vampiric court for membership. He's come into conflict with the others of his kind, and needs to belong to fulfill his pack instincts.
- The Prince's power is waning. Very few Kindred still respect him, and he's not much more than a figurehead at this point. An anarchist fringe is gaining prominence, and The Hiroshima Club is the heart of this movement. Members of the fringe are openly hiring non-Kindred killers in the club to take out city figures.
- A hotshot Daeva has decided to open The Hiroshima Club to a trendy new audience. This means synthetic drugs, immaturity and the types of people who are just not used to the criminal element. He's throwing his weight around, trying to change the scope of the place, risking the Kindred livelihood and Masquerade.

character, since you have to specifically attend to the complexity of making it stand out.

### *Iconic Anchors*

Think about your location. Think about the types of things that would appear exclusively in said location. Identify a couple that really speak to the type of space. Beautiful afghans, oriental rugs, postmodern sculptures, card tables and paintings of dogs playing poker are all items that evoke images of where they might be. This is good. Take it to another level. Personalize the items. A Ming vase is evocative, but if the vase is adorned with a purple dragon wreathed in cherry blossoms, being confronted on all sides by soldiers, it speaks volumes more and can silently tell a story about the owner. If the characters are flanked by lion statues, it speaks about the location. If the lions have larger than realistic teeth, and are perched over disembodied heads of curly-haired Roman centurions, it tells more still.

When designing the location, design at least a couple of anchor items, smaller things that represent the whole of the location. The items should evoke a mood for the location, even if you haven't yet described the rest of the location. Dig deep; symbols and metaphors work well, but only if they're robust and aren't cliché.

### *Exceptions to Rules*

Generic descriptions have their place. In fact, they're very useful. "Similar in design to Dave's house," works well. If everyone knows how Dave's house is laid out, they can immediately draw mental images and focus on putting their characters into the setting. Indeed, this is part of the beauty of the

World of Darkness; it's so very similar to our familiar world. It's easy to focus on a familiar location such as a local library or museum, then determine what things are distinctly different. This not only makes the location memorable, but it helps it to stand out. It allows the players to dissociate the spot from what is likely a relatively safe location in the real world. For example, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, there's a well-known statue of Rocky Balboa outside on the steps. In the World of Darkness, that statue is missing its head, since it was stolen by a group of militant anti-government protestors insisting that their tax dollars could be better used.

### *Drive Around a Neighborhood*

While locations are important independently, their contexts are just as important. While many players can envision locations easily, the honest truth is that they're just making assumptions based on stereotypes of location types. Find a location like the one you're setting your game in. Drive around it slowly. Get out and look around. Take a walk. Look around, note the things that stand out and really make the area interesting and unique. Spend a paragraph describing the bodega and produce stand. Did one of the letters of the neon beer sign burn out? Are the steps of the glorious hotel cracked? Does the paint in the boardroom still vaguely stink? Can you see hints of bloodstains under that new paint?

Sure, that's a lot of work for a game, but it helps and it gets you out a bit. If that's not convincing, don't do it. The Internet can give you a relatively strong facsimile without leaving your comfy com-

puter chair. Google lets you virtually walk the streets of many major cities. You can find 3D renderings of many major buildings, and many popular places have virtual tours.

Better still, you can use these as play aides. Sometimes, pictures of your location make the job of describing that much easier. A handout or presentation showcasing the location might remind the players that while they're playing vampires, the places these vampires inhabit are ultimately human establishments.

## *Use It*

If there's a gun hanging in the wall in chapter one, use it in the last. This is an old literary staple. Never add anything without purpose. All the symbolism in the world won't help in a game where your players expect to be told what's important in their setting. If something is important, it must be introduced early on. Otherwise, it reeks of railroad-ing; players will be disappointed and feel like their decisions were devalued.

That said, it's almost as damaging to present only the important items, immediately telling the players what will ultimately play part in the story from the beginning. When designing a location, list the things that must be presented to the players. If at all possible, introduce these things during the first scenes of the chapter. Add a few other things that could potentially be important, but aren't integral to your story. Give your players some wiggle room, but present only things with dramatic value.

## *History*

Locations don't exist in a vacuum. For the most part, gathering places aren't designed with the

### STORY HOOK: MY SIRE THE HOSTEL

An ancient European vampire awakens after fifty years in torpor. After the initial reintroductions to the city, he begins to form a kinship with a local hostel. He waxes nostalgic about how the building has played a substantial part in his life over the centuries. He remembers all the various owners, from when it was a medieval boarding house to when the current ownership converted it to a hostel shortly after WWII.

Shortly thereafter, his attitude towards the building becomes more intense. He refers to the hostel as the sire he never had. He harps on the nature of the building, how its inhabitants have changed and thus his herd has, while neither he nor the building actually changed. He says for this reason, he and the building have shared the changes they've undergone.

As the monster's attachment increases, the characters come to realize that the ownership has again shifted, the family owning the building has sold it to a corporation dead set on tearing it down. Do they intervene?

express and exclusive purpose of serving vampire parties. Certainly it does sometimes happen, but it's rare. Most locations have histories, stories and even agendas.

There's a clear parallel between buildings and Kindred; both are static, both can have remarkably long histories. This can be a strong dramatic device; buildings are usually older than any of the Kindred inhabitants in a city. Some Kindred even feel kinship with architecture. They watch structures change, decay and be rebuilt and modified. It's much like the soul of a successful vampire.



## Chapter Three

# Being Talked About

Five people don't make a good party. This is true in the human and Kindred worlds alike. In a typical game of **Vampire**, three to five players portray three to five characters, and the Storyteller fills in the gaps. This chapter offers Storytelling advice and play variants to make the task of running a gathering easier. It addresses the nature of vampire society at its core, and how to develop new organizations for your chronicle. It also includes some new traits to flesh out characters.

### *Framing the Gathering*

The first consideration for planning a game set at a party is what purpose you wish it to serve. Just like the in-character side, a Storyteller doesn't have to show that purpose from the start. A game set at a party without a purpose is logistically complex without reason. Below are a few archetypal examples of possible purposes for gathering-based games.

### *Character*

A setting can serve as a character in its own right. A strong setting has personality, can contain declarative messages and can influence the actions of an entire city. Instead of presenting the theories and principles behind this philosophy, this section will apply some elements of **Vampire** characters to the framing of a party. Some of the aspects will offer minor mechanical advantages to better emphasize those concepts in game. As we progress, we'll provide an example of "character creation" for a party.

### *Concept*

The concept of a party works similarly to that of a character. Use a few words to sum up what's going on. Make it pointed. Make it communicative. "Promotion Party" isn't very evocative, but "Debutante

ball for the Prince's spurned childe" says quite a bit more, despite potentially being the same party.

### *Clan and Covenant*

This may not be as obvious as it could be. Most gatherings allow for multiple clans and covenants. The clan and covenant distinction of a party reflects more the bias of the event. This sort of bias isn't the kind that's spoken of; it's the kind that's *known*. It's where the attention is paid; it's where those in the know are watching. Your party doesn't need both a clan and covenant, but at least one is typical.

The Prince is in the Circle of the Crone. Her childe is technically as well. However, her childe has been courted by the Invictus for some time now. This party could make or break her potential career with the First Estate. She's Daeva, so that's definitely the focus.

### *Virtue and Vice*

These, like the clan and covenant, don't necessarily reflect the host, but rather reflect the tenor of the event. Vice is likely to play a more prominent role in your average party, but Virtue can take the show if played right. Consider the rally thrown by neonates after the unjust killing of one of their own. Consider the possibilities of a Pride-driven event. It and Wrath are easy to picture. Picture the same event framed with Envy. Justice is an obvious choice for a Virtue, but look at less direct choices such as Faith and Hope. These simple choices can add depth and complexity to otherwise straightforward events.

One approach is to present the party's Virtue and Vice to the players beforehand, and let them know that experience point rewards will be given for bringing those traits to life. In addition to the normal mechanics for Virtue and Vice, characters

who fulfill the party's Virtue or Vice receive an extra experience point at the end of the night.

For example, the Ball is all about Veronica's potential defection from the Acolytes to the Invictus. Tonight's Virtue is Prudence. While she loves the idea of defecting, she's having difficulty risking her sire's wrath. The Vice is Greed, reflecting Veronica's temptation to the power the Invictus offers her.

### *Attributes*

Party Attributes aren't necessary, but can add interesting flair. Look at your concept for the party, and choose one Attribute that applies the best. It encompasses the intended direction of the night's events. Using the Debutante Ball example from before, consider how it could be framed with Manipulation. Then twist things a bit. Consider how it could be framed with Composure. To take it in a different direction entirely, consider Stamina. The Prince's childe Veronica feels spurned. She feels frustrated. She feels tense. The only way to get her mind off these problems is to dance until her feet hurt, and she's going to take everyone through that gauntlet with her. During the party, any action using the specified Attribute benefits from the 9-again quality.

### *Skills*

So far, most everything has focused on the theme and mood of the party. In selecting a Skill for the event, look to what will grab attention. Look to what would ultimately bring the story arc into a different direction. That Skill is the party's. If it occurs successfully, the practitioner gains a bonus die to all Social actions for the remainder of the night. For example, this event is about Persuasion. The Invictus are trying to seduce Veronica into their fold, but the Circle of the Crone are trying to protect their asset by convincing Veronica to stay. After any successful Persuasion action, a vampire gains the bonus die for the night.

### *Merits*

Merits serve a slightly different function in the party-as-character model. While the previous traits described the party itself, a party's Merit reflects what's at stake. In bigger events, City Status is an easy answer. Vampires get together, and the most

prominent and notorious see alterations in their reputations. This is reflected with subjective judgment on behalf of the Storyteller. The vampire who performed best enjoys the chance to raise the chosen Merit at half cost, while the vampire who was most derided loses a dot of that Merit (if they possess it at all). Choose a Merit that makes sense, but offers a quantifiable incentive to add a competitive edge to the gathering. Remember, everything is about competition, everything is about hierarchy.

In our example, Covenant Status is the reward. Before the night is through, Veronica's Covenant Status will change. But the party itself is focused on those who are pulling strings, pushing buttons and making plays. A member of any covenant could impress her peers or earn their derision.

### *Disciplines*

Unlike the benefits of other traits, the party's Discipline is more of a liability, a drawback. Because it's a Kindred gathering, there's a certain expectation that Disciplines will see use. However, most are brash and gauche if noticeable. In this setting, most Kindred are looking for those signs. For that reason, the most obviously functional Discipline sees a penalty due to the scrutiny placed upon it. Most commonly, Dominate and Majesty would fit the bill. Obfuscate is a common choice for secretive meetings. All uses of the Discipline in question lose the 10-again quality for the evening.

In the case of the Debutante Ball, it's Auspex. The power plays are more subtle than usual, and every Mekhet in the house will be trying to discern motives to direct allies properly.

### *Challenge*

Why does a party have to be the night's game? A party might have a single, focused goal for your story. In these cases, frame the party as a challenge. A good model is the SAS format (see Chapter Four for examples of SAS scenes.) Determine a basic action to sum up the evening, a die roll to encompass it, then the Failure, Success, and Exceptional Success terms. Parties are shallow; sometimes it's fine to treat them that way. A quick breeze-through serves pacing far better than a boring scene that accomplishes nothing.



The opposite side of this fence is to use the party as a Storyteller character's challenge against a player's character. Frame the event around a single action taken—a single effort to affect the character or her coterie. In these cases, you should expect and plan for retaliation. Give the players a chance for a contested defense against said action, then allowing for a follow-up action to comprise the scene.

It's important, though, that you center the scene around the main actions. Like a real party, it's over before it starts, leaving participants wishing they did more and different things.

### STORY HOOK - SMASH AND GRAB

Harpy Sascha Bauer holds her annual summerset party in public; she likes surrounding herself with humans. This year, she's holding it at Axis, the new, hippest club in town. A number of Kindred are expected to attend; nobody with standing would miss her party. The characters realized though that the Sheriff has it out for her, and intends to crash her party to bring her to justice for a crime she didn't commit. The characters have to get her out of the party as quickly and cleanly as possible. Nothing will convince her that leaving her party is a good idea. Dragging Sascha out without too much attention requires a Strength + Socialize roll, with a -2 penalty due to the massive crowd.

## Setting

The opposite end of the spectrum from focusing on the nature of the party is to present the party as a setting. There's no fault in this. In the basest sense, that's all a party really is. The décor and feel influence the partygoers. If you overlook the chance to evoke mood with the location, you've dropped the ball.

Symbolism and descriptions are your strongest tools in this situation. Choose a message. Wrap it up in atmosphere and in metaphor. Is a character feeling the weight of eternity? Broken grandfather clocks and sundials set in shadow emphasize that. Did a character just lose a loved one? Empty spaces, dark rooms and quiet people will highlight that sentiment.

### STORY HOOK - FOX HUNT

This is a chance to offer contrast with your set dressing. A group of Kindred of the city hold a "fox hunt" annually. The vampires find a mortal the world won't miss, but one with a strong will to survive and hide; usually a street kid. The hunt is held at a country club. The human is Dominated, and told he has an hour to hide, and that he's not allowed to leave by the gate around the golf course. For six hours, the group hunts. Each Kindred is given a razor blade. When one finds the mortal, his goal is to carve his initials onto the person's body, then release him. That vampire must give the mortal a ten minute head start before pursuing again. If any vampire kills the human, that vampire is disqualified. An hour before dawn, the group counts the initials, the vampire with the most wins. The human is not allowed to live, and is buried on country club grounds.

## Accolade

A party is a commodity. It's a group of vampires set in one place, with attention given to a single subject. Considering the potential value in that fact, it's not surprising that sometimes Kindred gatherings are handed out as accolades. The permutations on this possibility are infinite. Here, we'll instead address the Storyteller using the party as a reward for character actions, as opposed to a Storyteller character using the party as a reward.

Constant struggle can be a bore. It gets irritating, frustrating and just doesn't make for a strong story. Stories need an arc, and at the end of the arc is a cooldown. You don't even need success to offer a little reward, you can reward struggle for struggle's sake. In fact, the nature of the reward can make failure worth it.

For example, a Nosferatu has dedicated her life to making a player's character suffer. He's killed her retainers. He's framed her for various offenses. Everywhere she goes, he's found a way to ruin things. She made an effort to stifle him, but in the end, it fell flat, and he prevailed. The failure was bitter and a little sweetness could help. So the Storyteller sets up a party with the express intention of giving the player a chance to turn the tables, to end on a high note despite the negative tone of events. While

## STORY HOOK - TAKING THE MIC

Ashley was murdered. The Bishop has evidence it was Belial's Brood. His congregation even hunted down the pack of Brood for extermination. The players' characters were friends of Ashley's, and have done investigation on the event. The Bishop called a gathering to announce his findings. The characters find out at the last minute that the Bishop was responsible, procuring undeniable evidence. If they rush, they can crash the party, just in time to interrupt, take the mic, and give their great reveal.

it doesn't resurrect the dead retainers and fix her reputation, being able to slap him in public has a fulfilling edge to it.

### *Playing the Room*

The players in a game of **Vampire: The Requiem** traditionally play one character each, while the Storyteller fills the roles of every other person in the story. This is a very traditional approach to gaming for a number of good reasons. However, running a party is challenging. Toggling between fifty personalities is rough, even for the best actors out there. Nevertheless, it's not as rough as it seems, if you keep a few tricks in mind.

### *Focus on the Players*

The players' characters are the core of the game. Even when a party's focus is technically on a Storyteller character, the story should still be told through the lens of the players' characters and how that Storyteller character's affairs affect their lives. Keep speeches and scenes the players' characters witness to a minimum. If their characters aren't active participants, you should reconsider the nature of those activities.

Look at it in this way: If you were to remove the event that the players' characters must witness, how would it directly alter their stories? If the answer is none to very little, consider removing the event entirely. If the answer is more than a very little, ask yourself how you could include them. Interaction invests the players in the event. It's the appeal of a video game; players want to have control, they want to make choices, they want to take responsibility for the consequences. It's most certainly a major appeal of a storytelling game like **Vampire**.

### *Focus on the Goal*

Parties are business. The first step of making a successful business is to focus on a strong business proposal. Purpose and goal have been touched on periodically throughout this product, and it's no coincidence. Keeping on task is important for pacing, to maintain energy levels and keep motivation high. A story that drones on with no interaction falls flat. Eventually, you'll lose momentum and getting it back is far more difficult than getting it in the first place.

In a fight scene, do you divert mid-stroke so characters can debate the strengths of their political philosophies? If you can pull that off, kudos. For the other 99% of Storytellers, we need to stay on the target. Mind you, this doesn't mean that you should ignore character goals—if players wish to accomplish things, by all means let them. But the worst thing you can do is approach a large gathering with no direction.

### *Showcase Storyteller Characters*

Fifty Kindred enter the room. The first is Don Martin. The second is the Daeva Priscus Shelly Caldwell. The third is Alejandro Cadonera. ... The fiftieth is...

There might be fifty vampires in the room. Resist the temptation to introduce each. All the wonderful world-building you muster can't maintain player attention for that long. Players want to get to the meat of the story. Showcase a small handful of characters only, those who will play active parts in the story. Introduce them with words or actions, but introduce them well. Highlight them with something memorable. The Harpy Benjamin who approaches shyly and kisses the coterie leader's hand is memorable. Bob the Gangrel isn't. It comes down to a little



wordplay; players will cling to your emphasis, and if done with just a little bit of finesse, it won't feel like they're being forced into specific actions.

A solid direction to take with this is to define Storyteller characters by their motivations. Bob the Gangrel from earlier might not be compelling as stated, but with a motivation such as, "He wants to see how Darlene reacts when she's in over her head," he quickly gains quirks; his behaviors begin to dictate themselves. Define a Storyteller character by her motivations, and you'll be well-served during such a gathering.

## *Representatives of Groups*

This chapter has discussed the idea of viewing the party as a character. That view can help at other levels, too. For example, viewing small groups as a single character is a fantastic way to use that Storytelling technique. Instead of focusing on giving the group a bunch of new traits, look to a single "spokesperson," and assume she has access to the various strengths of the group. You can give a brief description of the other members, but focus more on the group's reputation and strengths when presenting it to the players.

This way, the group has its resources available, while you as a Storyteller can focus on a single voice and temperament. Do this for major groups (covenants being the most obvious, but bloodlines, clans or other subdivisions work fine,) and this can turn fifty Kindred into five with little trouble.

## *Predator's Taint*

A new vampire walks into a New York Elysium. It's a large-scale event and the only hope he has of meeting with the Prince. There are over 100 vampires present. Even with a remarkably high Resolve + Composure score, and the positive modifiers for expecting to meet Kindred and being on Elysium, he will almost certainly fail at least one of the 100 rolls he has to make. And in the 100 rolls that have to be made to resist his Beast, a number of Kindred are bound to lose control.

How do we make this work? How do we reflect the brutal honesty of Predator's Taint, while avoiding futile situations like these? There are a few solid

options. These rules supplement or replace the normal Predator's Taint rules found on page 168 of *Vampire the Requiem*.

## *The Group Is the Beast*

When a Kindred finds herself in a situation with a number of new Kindred, his player should make two rolls: one against those vampires with superior Blood Potency scores to her, and one against those with equal or smaller scores. Those rolls suffer a -1 penalty for each ten applicable vampires present, to a maximum -5 penalty. This penalty is calculated after the various bonuses for expectation and location are factored.

If she fails either, her Beast chooses a prime candidate for the source of the frenzy. If she loses herself to a greater Beast, she flees the presence of the most likely target, usually the most potent in the room, but sometimes the Kindred best showing off his primal nature. If she loses herself against an equal or smaller Beast, her rage is focused on the target she'd perceive as the most pathetic. Often this means a low-potency vampire, but not always.

In this particular model, the first Protean power, Aspect of the Predator, grants a unique advantage. Kindred possessing said power need only make a single resistance against their Beasts, as all vampires appear of equal or lower potency to her. Also note that the subject of a vampire failing resistance will never be one donning Obfuscate's Mask of Tranquility.

On the other hand, vampires in the congregation need not resist Predator's Taint because they've seen the newcomer. Because of their social contracts, they're far less likely to lose control. However, at the first sign of direct tension with the newcomer, they must make resistance rolls as usual.

## *First Impressions*

Vampires are social monsters. The Beast knows this; the Beast pushes this to a new level. In this variant, the Beast influences the social dynamics of a gathering. Ignore the normal rules for Predator's Taint. Instead, characters resist their Beasts upon their first social interaction. This might be a direct confrontation, an accident or even a planned introduction.



Instead of the traditional responses, the vampires move to dominate one another socially. The lesser vampire takes defensive posture; his hand might wander to defend his heart, he might move to place a physical barrier between him and his superior, tensing and refusing eye contact. The greater vampire becomes offensive in posturing; her voice lowers and intensifies, she demands eye contact, she points and leans in to speak.

When they interact for the first time, the meeting vampires' players compare their characters' Blood Potency scores exactly as in the normal rules, and each roll Resolve + Composure. Note that the normal bonuses and penalties for Predator's Taint rolls do apply.

If the vampire with the lower Blood Potency fails the roll, for the remainder of the night, she must use Willpower in any contested or resisted efforts to defend herself from the actions of the more potent monster.

If the vampire with higher Blood Potency fails the roll, for the remainder of the night, he is required to spend Willpower in any social actions that could affect the inferior vampire.

If the rolls are successful, there are no mechanical effects.

## *A Time and a Place*

In this variant, characters don't need to roll to resist Predator's Taint if at an established Kindred gathering. Kindred gather to foster civility, and imposed incivility breaks that expectation. This works well to speed the process of introducing new characters to a city or group as it prevents the dice from adding unexpected complication to intended scenes. The Predator's Taint doesn't cease to exist, and characters should still be played to reflect the tension of their Beasts' confrontation; there's just no legitimate risk of frenzy.

Be careful with this option, as it's bound to devalue a strong element of the setting. The best way to address this variant is to not assume it a universal truth. It works in some particularly larger events. It shouldn't be a set standard, though. Otherwise, why would Kindred even worry about the issue? Kindred are not ignorant; they'd catch on quickly. Simply meeting in large gatherings would prevent any risk of Predator's Taint.

If using this variant, one suggestion is to use other scenes to emphasize the personal horror of Predator's Taint in other situations. Throw a scene in where a character meets another in a dark al-



ley. Raise the tension. Describe the power and fear inherent in the Beast. Any rolls made should be made with a penalty, as the Beast has grown complacent for having not been sated with shows of dominance.

## *Storyteller Characters*

When designing antagonists and other Storyteller characters for a social encounter, certain considerations exist that aren't taken into account for general antagonists or for those used in other types of scenarios. Here is a bit of advice on how to design characters for social settings that stand out and capture the attention of your players.

### *Social Capabilities*

In a focused game, characters will likely use more focused statistics in their endeavors. When designing Storyteller characters for social settings, look to the traits of the players' characters and use them as a baseline for how the Storyteller characters should compare.

It's very easy to fall into the trap of building these characters as social powerhouses. A character can compete in the social arena without remarkable statistics, though. A character driven to succeed in social encounters is bound to use Willpower, for example. Some Merits can take the place of raw Attribute and Skill points, and there are always the bonuses from traits such as Striking Looks and Status.

Would you throw a Strength 5, Brawl 5 Gangrel at your players' characters in a fight? It's similar to the Presence 5, Expression 5 Daeva. The characters are likely to be unable to compete if you overwhelm them. Sure, some characters should be overwhelming, but it gets old quickly if the characters just can't compete. Remember, a roleplaying game is all about choices. If all possible choices result in overwhelming failure, the value of the choice is lost.

### *Motivation*

In a social setting, Storyteller characters often act with motivations that are relatively abstract. Your average Gangrel on the streets might be motivated to dominate the drug industry. A character at a party might be looking to remember an emotion, to connect with another soul or to drown out

the pain of a past experience. In a social setting, character motivation is arguably more important than any other part of the character. It drives all her actions and gives an immediately relevant sense of identity.

### *Personal Story*

Every Kindred is an unwritten history book. This doesn't mean you should write history books, but jotting down a few historical anecdotes from a character's perspective can really help give the character a sense of life. Don't just scan Wikipedia for facts; dig deep and make opinions. Perspective sells a character, so fill those anecdotes with personality and subjective thoughts.

One effective approach is to write a handful of these anecdotes, and offer each of these a vague trigger. This way, a character has a collection of short pieces that can help develop the players' characters' experience and perspective of that character over time. For example, "During the revolution, the story you never heard was how dirty the peasants were. You always hear about the oppression. Did you ever consider that maybe we didn't want to interact with them because they stunk?" The trigger for this bit might be any discussion of class or cleanliness.

### *Example Storyteller Character: Madeline West*

**Quote:** Sure, you could do it that way. Or you could pay attention to history and realize that no matter how much it's been tried, it's failed.

**Background:** Madeline was a child of the French Revolution. She was a poor girl, daughter of a nursemaid and a cobbler. When her father died, the family had no choice but to bring her into prostitution. She wasn't clever or manipulative; she was just a victim of circumstance. She had the "luck" of serving a number of the bourgeoisie, which drew the attention of her sire. Her sire became obsessed with her looks and knew that she'd be a wonderful piece of leverage against his political opponents.

She wasn't. She didn't have the heart. Quickly, her lack of compliance ruined what patience her sire possessed. He abandoned her, leaving her to her own devices. After a bit of travel and soul searching, she found herself losing touch with the modern

world. It sped by around her, and she couldn't stand it. She joined the Ordo Dracul to help keep herself evolving, and moved to the New World to stay up on human trends.

**Description:** She was chosen for her looks. She finds it a shame, but she doesn't dwell on it. She has creamy skin and pristine brunette hair. She's thin, tall for her original era and wears anything as if it were made for her. Her eyes are a deep jade, and her expression is always welcoming and inviting, no matter what she's doing or saying. Her sense of fashion is impeccable, it's one thing she has no trouble with keeping up-to-date.

**Storytelling Hints:** Madeline is a very competent Harpy. She's older than most if not all of the city, but she tries not to play that up. In fact, she typically gets along better with younger Kindred. She works well as a part-time mentor, offering tidbits of advice to younger vampires in exchange for insight on how the world is changing around her.

She has a burning desire to be modern. She's fascinated with computers, cars, cellphones and all the gadgets of the young. She might not be remarkably competent with them, but she's interested. She gravitates towards more modern-minded Kindred, and eschews the feudal ways of the Invictus, since they mirror the oppressors of her mortal life. She's generous in behavior, and doesn't give up on those willing to help her.

Madeline isn't remarkable, at least statistically speaking. She's very old, but she's not immensely powerful. Her focus has been keeping up with the times, not being the most potent monster in her city. In fact, her lack of attachment to the trappings of life has left her at a distinct disadvantage when compared to other elders around her. But she's still a respected voice in the city structure.

**Clan:** Daeva

**Covenant:** Ordo Dracul

**Embrace:** 1793

**Apparent Age:** About 17, but she's quite good with makeup and can look anywhere between about 15 and 28.

**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 3





**Skills:** Academics 1, Computer 1 (Basic Functionality), Crafts 1, Politics 1, Athletics 1, Drive 2 (Showing Off), Firearms 1, Stealth 1, Survival 3 (Urban), Weaponry 1, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 3, Socialize 3 (Fitting In), Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Haven Location 3, Haven Security 2, Haven Size 1, Herd 3, Resources 3, Striking Looks 2, Status (City) 2, Status (Daeva) 3, Status (Murder, see p. 21 sidebar) 4, Status (Ordo Dracul) 2

**Willpower:** 7

**Humanity:** 5

**Virtue:** Conviction. Madeline believes in human advancement. She stands by developments that push the boundaries of human capability.

**Vice:** Sloth. While she's driven to learn more about modern conveniences, they're just that: conveniences.

**Initiative:** 6

**Defense:** 2

**Speed:** 10

**Blood Potency:** 5

**Vitae/Per Turn:** 14/2

**Health:** 7

**Disciplines:** Celerity 3, Vigor 2, Majesty 2, Coil of Beast 1, Coil of Blood 2

**Anecdotes/Triggers:**

"Kid, do you know how hard it was for us? We had to sleep around for bread. We weren't even the destitute; we were average. I know that the President is doing things he shouldn't. But trust me, it's not the end of the world. It could be worse." Triggered any time she overhears someone complaining about a current political climate.

"You know, in our time, cross-dressing happened. We all knew it; we openly accepted it in some performances. Homosexuality was just a part of everyday existence. I can't believe we haven't progressed further. In fact, in a number of ways, we've regressed." Triggered during any discussion of sex or gender issues.

"You know, this rap music isn't really that new. Our troubadours slung fast-paced rhymes to strong rhythms. It's very similar and interesting. Where do you say it comes from?" Triggered whenever modern music is brought up.

## *New Devotions*

Here are a handful of new Devotions to flesh out characters and help them in societal affairs. Some address new approaches to traditional Discipline concepts, for more impact in a social arena.

### *Blasé*

*(Majesty •, Resilience •)*

When you're the best, you're the best. Anything else is boring. The Daeva who developed this Devotion embodied this mentality, letting the force of her Majesty stand against that which would shake her.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** This power requires no roll to invoke.

**Action:** Reflexive

Both Awe and Resilience must be active in order to use this Devotion. Upon activation, the character receives a bonus to her Composure score equal to her dots in Majesty for a single turn. These dots add to derived traits and all rolls as normal Composure dots would, but does not give temporary Willpower points, only temporary Willpower dots.

This power costs 8 experience points to learn.

### *Heart of the Dominant*

*(Dominate •••, Animalism •••)*

Dominate brings sentient beings to the Lord's will, while Animalism does the same for the other creatures of nature. It's not surprising that despite the aloofness that comes from such dominance, Ventrue are remarkably forceful with any interactions. Ventrue that have developed this Devotion are almost impossible to resist, between their force of personality, their mental dominance and their mastery over the Beast.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower point

**Dice Pool:** Resolve + Animal Ken + Dominate

**Action:** Instant

Once this power is active, the Ventrue's force of will is enhanced greatly. For the remainder of the scene, those interacting with her become far less capable of resisting her demands. In a social challenge, the player of a character attempting to resist the vampire must spend a point of Willpower before attempting any contested roll. If the character suc-



ceeds, he becomes immune to this effect for the remainder of the night. If he fails, further attempts require similar Willpower expenditure.

Rolls that would normally require Willpower are the exception. Since a character cannot use multiple Willpower points in a turn, this power does not entirely prevent those resistances.

This power costs 18 experience points to learn.

### *Killer Instinct*

(*Protean* ●, *Vigor* ●)

Daeva convince you to like them. Ventrue insist you obey. When dealing with a Gangrel, their Beast speaks to yours. You never know when it'll strike. They raise the stakes of every conversation with their intensity and unpredictability.

This Devotion takes that to another level: The character's Beast moves to the forefront, putting all those she converses with on the defensive. Characters trying to move against the Gangrel socially find themselves unable to invest full attention to their efforts, shaken by the monster before them.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** This power requires no roll to invoke.

**Action:** Instant

When active, this power enhances the effects of Aspect of Predator. Her Protean dots add to her Blood Potency score for the purposes of determining the Predator's Taint of those characters meeting her. After the addition is considered, characters that would be considered lower Blood Potency than the user cannot spend Willpower points in any social actions that target her. Use of this power lasts for the current scene.

This power costs 7 experience points to learn.

### *Seeking the Silent*

(*Auspex* ●●●●, *Protean* ●)

Schäfer's trick was discovered by accident back in 1956. He was attempting to expand his consciousness through Twilight while projecting a strong presence to witnesses. What occurred though surprised him. As his mind scanned the region at near-light speeds, his Beast flared and the projection ended. After recovering from frenzy and cleaning his demolished haven, he studied the results and attempted to replicate them. After laborious effort,



he discovered that he could project his Beast to some small degree, and this Devotion is the result of that peculiarity. Its development revolutionized the Berliner Movement, allowing Schäfer to hunt torpid elders for recruitment.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower point and 1 Vitae

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Investigation + Auspex – the nearest torpid vampire’s Resolve

**Action:** Instant

Upon activating the power, the character sinks into a trance, similar to Twilight Projection. However, the vampire’s consciousness does not project as normal. Instead, his mind seeks out the nearest torpid Kindred, allowing the user to pinpoint her location. The power scans an entire metropolitan area for the nearest vampire, or scans a radius of ten miles per dot of the user’s Blood Potency outside of a city.

If the user has never met the torpid vampire he’s located, he must immediately resist Predator’s Taint as if he met her in person. If the resistance fails, he falls to frenzy and loses any memory of the location. This doesn’t prevent him from using the power again, but makes the initial activation useless.

This power costs 21 experience points to learn.

### *Stutter*

*(Nightmare ●●●, Celerity ●)*

Typically, interruption is considered gauche. Sometimes it’s necessary. With this Devotion, the Nosferatu is able to interrupt conversation without outing himself. A simple glance and the subject halts mid-sentence. Her mind subconsciously associates the line of discussion with abhorrent, frightening things she can’t put to words, preventing her from speaking about it. She doesn’t need to meet eye contact with the Nosferatu—the Nosferatu simply needs to be able to see her when she is speaking about the topic in question.

**Cost:** 1 Vitae

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

**Action:** Contested, resistance is reflexive

If the roll is successful and the user’s player rolls more successes than the subject’s, the subject im-

mediately ceases her line of thought. She receives a very brief glimpse of horrors untold; nothing sticks in her conscious memory, but the dreadful sensation lasts for the remainder of the scene. If the subject attempts to speak about the topic, she can do so for a single turn by spending a point of Willpower and succeeding in a reflexive Composure roll.

This power costs 12 experience points to learn.

### *Subliminal Messages*

*(Celerity ●, Obfuscate ●)*

Sometimes a speaker needs to convey a message, but doesn’t want to deal with the immediate ramifications of his words. This Devotion facilitates that need. The vampire speaks rapidly, using the attention-diverting capabilities of Obfuscate to veil a part of his message for future consumption.

Subliminal Messages is a powerful tool for politically minded Kindred who wish to make controversial statements but not deal with the immediate fallout and dissent. Often, a group of calm listeners is all a policy needs to carry lasting respect and credence.

**Cost:** None

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Subterfuge + Obfuscate – the highest Resolve of all listeners.

**Action:** Instant

The vampire must make the veiled statement during discussion of similar topics. For example, “Prince Williams declares the blood hunt on James Kittering,” might be brought up during a discussion of Prince Williams’s declarations of feeding rights. The statement must be a single sentence. If the conversation doesn’t blend well, listeners are bound to put two and two together.

If the roll is successful, listeners do not immediately remember the statement. It’s in the back of their minds, but isn’t recalled until the next scene. If the veiled topic is mentioned later during that scene, the effect ends on the listener, and she immediately remembers the statement as made.

Most importantly, listeners have no reason to believe anything odd has happened. Clearly, the statement was just overlooked in the midst of other discussion. This power can be pierced with sensory powers in the same way Obfuscate powers are.

This power costs 6 experience points to learn.

## *Talk of the Town*

(*Auspex* ●●●●, *Majesty* ●)

Typically, a vampire using the Telepathy power of *Auspex* must concentrate intently on a specific subject to hear surface thoughts. Sometimes though, she's trying to hear something specific in a crowd and doesn't know who's thinking it. This Devotion attempts to alleviate that. The self-centered nature of *Majesty*, when coupled with Telepathy allows the vampire to hear any time somebody in her immediate vicinity is thinking about her. Usually if a Kindred wishes to hear the thoughts of numerous other Kindred, she's out of luck due to the massive investment of will required. This partially alleviates that issue.

**Cost:** 1 Willpower point

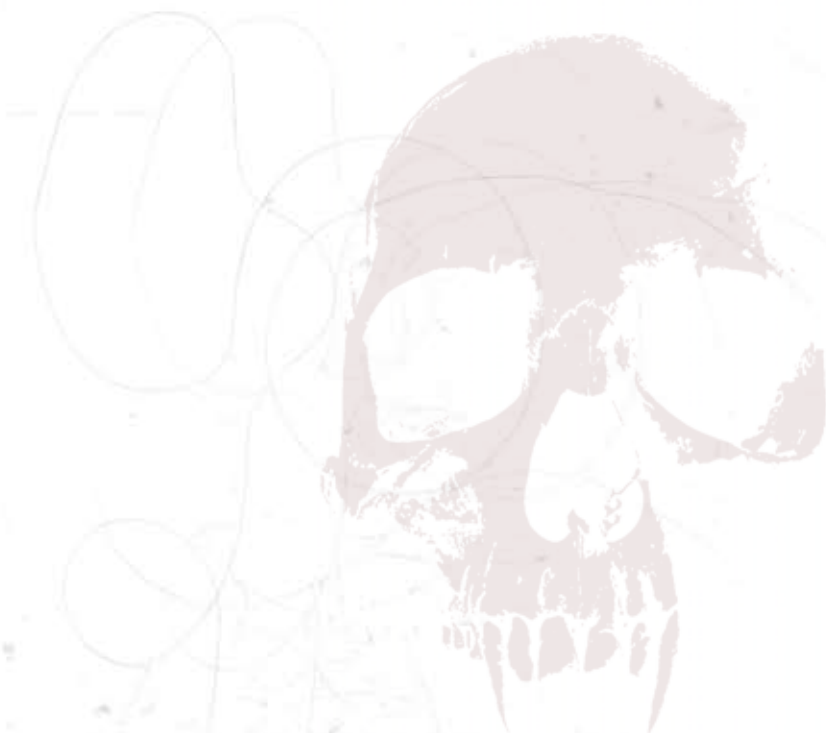
**Dice Pool:** Wits + Empathy + *Auspex* – 1 for every ten people in the room, to a maximum penalty of -5.

**Action:** Instant

Once she's activated this power, for the remainder of the scene the character hears all thoughts about her. The area of effect is limited to characters she can see. The power's effects extend to thoughts about groups she belongs to, but only in the context of her (either by name or image). For example, the vampire Daphne couldn't hear thoughts about, "The Lillian Coven," but she could hear about, "Daphne's coven of witches."

If multiple characters within eye contact are thinking about her, the Storyteller might call for a Wits + Composure roll to discern particular voices amongst the cacophony. This roll should suffer the same penalties as the initial power activation.

This power costs 15 experience points to learn.





## Chapter Four

# *The Center of Attention*

This chapter offers five scenes in SAS format, ready to use in your chronicle. Each has a basic setting that's generic enough to be inserted into a game, or could make the basis of a one-shot session. The action is centered around one suggested challenge, with dice rolls, modifiers and recommended results. Lastly, each includes a Storyteller character integral to the story.

Storyteller character names, aside from the showcased character, are intentionally omitted. These individuals are particularly generic for easier adaptation into your chronicle. The locations for these scenes are not set. The rest of this book affords a number of sample locations and gatherings that these scenes can be inserted into.

## *A Harpy's Ire*

*Mental* ●●

*Physical* ●

*Social* ●●●●

### *Overview*

A Harpy is a bad enemy to have. In this scenario, a Harpy decides that one of the players' characters is a new enemy. Mostly, this is because she thinks she can put the character in his place, increasing her relative standing. The characters have little choice but to face off against someone with more reputation than they have: someone rather capable and someone who happens to be in a very sore mood.

### *Description*

*"Look at what cheap 90s fashion dragged in... Be careful, if we feed it, it might think it's relevant and stick around." Denise dismissively waves as you walk by. A handful of Kindred look, a couple snicker. "Or did someone not give you the memo? We're supposed to respect the Prince, not the Fresh Prince."*

*While most of the older Kindred don't understand, the younger vampires in the room know that a line has been drawn in the sand.*

### *Storyteller Goals*

The goal here is to present an enemy the characters *want* to punch, but can't. Denise Showater is an up-and-coming Harpy, and the only way she can elevate in rank is through belittling and bolstering the reputations of others. Arbitrarily, she's chosen one of the players' characters. This is a good way to get a player out of a social shell and to force some defensive interaction. Make an enemy that, due to the fact that she only operates publicly, must be handled on her own turf.

Reward creativity. Most of this scene can be relegated to dice rolls, but if your players choose to take an active part, give them benefits. Let the dice guide the story, not dictate it. As well, this is a chance to remind the players that in **Vampire**, war is not always traditional. In fact, humor and snark have their places in Kindred society.

### *Character Goals*

In **Vampire**, reputation is currency. This is the chance for the characters to earn a bit of reputation, and to gain a foothold in the social arena. If they perform well enough, they might turn Denise into an ally or at least gain other allies in the process of defending against her slander.

## Turning the Tables

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Expression versus Denise's Wits + Expression (6)

**Action:** Extended. Each roll represents one minute of banter.

Denise starts off the verbal assault. Assuming the character takes the bait, he can return with retorts of his own. The two spar, earning favor from the crowd and bringing derision to the other. If anyone else jumps in on the side of one of the two participants, the participant suffers a penalty to his or her efforts, as ganging up in this affair looks weak. After the first Wits + Expression roll, the characters must switch up their tactics or suffer a penalty. As the Storyteller, explain this to the players after levying such a penalty. In game terms, this means they must use a different Attribute + Skill combination for each turn, or suffer a penalty.

**Hindrances:** Using an Attribute already used this scene (-2), using a Skill already used in this scene (-2), each person coming to the verbal aid of a participant (-2), the character failed last turn's roll (-1)

**Help:** The player offers a particularly entertaining or challenging statement (+1 to +3, depending), the character vocally refuses assistance (+2), the opponent made a clearly erroneous personal attack last turn (+2)

### ROLL RESULTS

**Dramatic Failure:** A dramatic failure on either side guarantees the other's victory due to an immense faux pas. The speaker went too far. In addition, the character immediately loses a point of City Status.

**Failure:** The character fails to achieve any successes. The character was playing it too defensively, or made a comment that fell flat on the listeners. Timing is everything; the character just didn't have it.

**Success:** Add successes. The target number is equal to five plus the opponent's Composure and City Status combined (For Denise, the target number is 10). In a turn where successes were achieved, the character makes headway towards tearing down the opponent. He or she manages to catch the attention of onlookers.

**Exceptional Success:** With an Exceptional Success, the character makes astounding progress towards destroying the opponent's credibility. Not only that, but the character's statement lingers on the lips of the city for months to follow. If the player of the attacking character so wishes, the opponent immediately loses a point of City Status. If the exceptional success comes from the player's side, and the player opts to not remove Denise's City Status, she'll instead act as a free two point Ally since the character chose to win gracefully.

## Consequences

The short conflict ends in one clear victor. Due to the public nature of this, it helps the victor's reputation. Her player can purchase a single dot of City Status at half cost. If Denise is the victor, she'll continue to gloat and antagonize the character until otherwise motivated not to. If the player's character is the victor, Denise will play it conservatively around that character in the coming months. She may even try to ally with him, as he's become something of a rising name.

## Denise Showater, Social Opportunist

**Quotes:** You know, you could just close your mouth. There'd be less shit to clean up afterwards.

*Who was your sire again? I'd love to kiss him for providing such beautiful comic relief.*

*Why, aren't you just a bunch of terrible clichés all thrown into one... Let me guess, you used to feed from rats because you couldn't stand being such a monster? Don't worry, you're not a very good monster.*

**Virtue:** Charity. Despite her typical behavior, she does sometimes like to throw the disadvantaged a bone. This is a rare behavior for her though; it's certainly not one she'd like to let anyone know about.

**Vice:** Envy. She cannot stand those better off than she is. In all her actions, she's considering how to somehow make someone less privileged than she. If this is pointed out, that person becomes her new target.





**Background:** Denise is a child of the eighties. She lived through enough of them to really grasp onto the excess and willful ignorance espoused by the era, and enough of the early nineties to truly understand shallow flashiness. She was a child of privilege, when she wasn't given what she needed; she learned well how to take it. Her parents were a doctor and a lawyer, so she never really had the chance to understand those less fortunate. Her Embrace was as shallow as the rest of her life, a passing interest from a seductive young Daeva. He was put to death for his indiscretion; she sniveled her way into the Invictus because it was the closest thing she could find to her mortal existence.

Now, she's lower on the totem pole than she'd like to be. She's getting bored with being on the low end, and wants to take a quick ride to the top. Her limited experience has told her that the path involves stepping on anyone at your level, showing dominance to your so-called peers.

**Description:** Denise was a fling. She's just pretty enough to catch eyes, but not so pretty that it carries her through everything she's inferior at. She has a cheerleader's body; she was Embraced right before college. Every night, she has different hair. She struggles with her plain, natural brunette look, trying to always exist on the cutting edge. She refuses to wear the same clothes twice in public, and dresses far outside of her own league.

**Storytelling Hints:** Denise is the epitome of overconfident. She's quite young, but thinks she should be Prince. She's not very talented, but thinks everyone should pay constant attention to her, showering her with flattery. The most important note for storytelling Denise is that no matter who you are speaking to, you are better than they are. You try to hide it, but you're not very good at it. Her self-importance may get her in trouble eventually, but for now, many older Kindred find it oddly charming.

Even though she's the enemy, she should otherwise behave as a friend—an inferior friend, mind you. In fact, if the characters meet her again, she'll act as if they never had their little tiff. The fact is, she feels she can best stab someone close to her. So she tries to let people close for that very reason.

**Name:** Denise Showater

**Concept:** Social Opportunist

**Virtue:** Charity

**Vice:** Envy

**Clan:** Daeva

**Covenant:** Invictus

**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

**Skills:** Academics 1, Medicine 1, Politics 2, Athletics 3, Drive 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Empathy 1, Expression 2 (Cheap Shots), Intimidation 1, Persuasion 3 (Swaying a Crowd), Socialize 2 (One-Upmanship), Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Allies (Invictus) 1, City Status 2, Contacts 1, Daeva Status 2, Haven Location 4, Haven Security 1, Haven Size 1, Herd 3, Invictus Status 1, Resources 3

**Health:** 7

**Willpower:** 5

**Morality:** 6

**Blood Potency:** 1

**Vitae/Turn:** 10/1

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 9

**Defense:** 2

**Initiative:** 5

# The Execution Spectacle

Mental ●●●●

Physical ●

Social ●●●

## Overview

The Prince has decided to execute a criminal publicly, to set an example for some and to entertain others. However, it appears the criminal was framed. If the characters are interested in saving his life, they have limited time to solve the crime and call out the culprits, as the execution is happening in the immediate.

This scene works well if you have a Storyteller character in your game that's the type to murder a Kindred and then frame another, particularly if the victim of the frame has drawn the ire of the players' characters in the past.

## Description

*The gathered Kindred fall quiet. Two large vampires drag Alan Price into the center of the collective. Alan isn't a big man; he's a rather unimposing young Mekhet. You've met him in passing before, but never given him second notice. They throw him to the ground, hands bound. The Prince stands, demanding attention.*

*"Alan Price, you are here tonight to face charges of murder. Credible witnesses place you at the location of Lydia's murder. Murdering another of the Blood carries a sentence of Final Death. How do you face your charges?"*

*Alan, desperate, turns to the crowd, not the Prince. "I'm innocent. I got a call telling me to show up. It sounded like the voice of my sire."*

*"Silence!" The Prince bellows. "You confess that you were at the scene. We've heard what we need to. Do you have any last words, criminal?"*

*He looks to the crowd again, then to the Prince. "I didn't do it. Someone in here knows it. Someone in here is hiding something. I can feel it." His look is inquisitive and pleading.*

## Storyteller Goals

Someone is lying. Someone knows that Alan is innocent, and wants Alan killed for their sins. If you have an existing character that could fit the bill, use him. Otherwise, the noncombatant Yvonne Fournier listed below will serve.

The characters can discern Yvonne's guilt through a number of methods. They might question the attendees, they might already have some incriminating information or they might ask Alan for details about the event. The challenge below assumes the characters will try to intuitively pinpoint the guilty party out of the crowd.

The ideal goal is to give characters a chance to turn the tables, ousting the culprit and earning a favor from Alan. They get to be the detectives in the crime drama, giving the reveal at the end. As a Storyteller, your job is to facilitate challenges and give hurdles for the characters to jump, depending on the method they choose.

## Character Goals

The characters are likely to want to help Alan. If the culprit is an established character, it should be one they have a vested interest in harming, and Alan will owe them if they save his life. It's also possible they could blackmail the culprit if Alan loses his life due to her lies.

## Pointing Out the Guilty Party

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Empathy

**Action:** Contested with Resolve + Subterfuge. If using Yvonne, that is 5 dice.

The characters glance around, looking for who could have possibly framed Alan. It's difficult since everyone present is whispering, gossiping and otherwise acting as if they have a stake in the results.

**Hindrances:** -2 for the number of suspects present, -2 if the characters have reason to trust



the culprit.

**Help:** +2 if the characters first question the crowd, +2 if the characters questioned Alan, +1 if a character utilizes Auspex in the scan.

## ROLL RESULTS

**Dramatic Failure:** The characters receive a false positive. They believe an innocent person framed Alan.

**Failure:** Either no successes are achieved, or the culprit's successes match the characters'. The signs are too vague, and it's impossible to pinpoint a single guilty party.

**Success:** The characters attain more successes than the culprit. They're able to pick her guilty behavior out of the crowd.

**Exceptional Success:** Not only does the character point out the target successfully, but pinpoints an integral element in Alan's story that irrefutably shows his innocence. The most likely is a glaring inaccuracy in the method of the victim's destruction, one completely contrary to the real manner of death.

## Consequences

If the characters pinpoint the guilty party, they have two distinct choices. They can intervene or stay silent.

If they intervene, they still aren't guaranteed to save Alan. They have to overcome the Prince's preconceived notions, making a clear and convincing argument that Alan is in fact innocent, and that he was framed. Alan will attempt to help, acting as a teamwork participant in any rolls, but due to his circumstances he suffers a -2 penalty. If this is the case, Alan will openly owe the characters his life. He'll serve as a 2-dot Ally the players need not spend experience points on.

If they choose to let him die, they can blackmail the culprit. This is clearly a risky situation. If the chosen culprit is sufficiently capable, she might threaten them into silence. If Yvonne is used, she'll first pretend that she doesn't care, and that the information isn't damning enough. If that doesn't dissuade the characters, she'll offer regular bribes equivalent to Resources 2 so long as the characters stay silent. If she's threatened into more, she'll with-

draw her bribes and begin attacking the characters' credibility instead. Letting Alan die is a sin against Humanity for any character with more than four dots of Humanity.

If they fail to pinpoint the guilty party, Alan dies. The societal consequences aren't steep for the characters, they don't benefit but they aren't harmed. However, there's nothing stopping the characters from investigating further, which could make an entire story of its own.

## *Yvonne Fournier, Guilty Manipulator*

Yvonne wanted to be a Harpy, Alan was a roadblock who couldn't keep his mouth shut. He was notoriously good at pointing out the absurdity in her every statement. So long as his wit remained, her standing would never get to where she wanted it. So she needed him dead. Conveniently, Alan wasn't the only one she needed dead. Yvonne was good at making enemies, so she and two of her ghouls cornered and killed another enemy. She called Alan, claiming to be his sire, insisting he meet her at the scene of the crime. Conveniently, she set up the crime where she knew numerous Kindred would be. Alan was caught near the pile of ash.

Yvonne isn't as powerful an enemy as she'd like to be. Ultimately, she's cowardly and will do anything to survive and succeed.

**Storytelling Hints:** Most of Yvonne's "screen time" should be spent outraged by the characters' trying to defend Alan. If they can't identify her through the challenge, they may be able to identify her through her behavior. If Alan dies for her sin, she gets off scott-free—or so she believes. Every minute he spends alive is a moment when she's at risk. She can't tolerate that.

## COMMON ACTIONS

**Poker Face** (5 dice): A good killer can watch the accused stand trial for her crimes. Yvonne isn't quite skilled at this, but she's a natural.

**Little White Lies** (6 dice): Yvonne never speaks without some deception, it's a pride of hers. Most of the city knows this, but they don't know how to pick out the lies from the truth.

**Distraction** (7 Dice): Yvonne's real strength is in making people forget why they cared. She's an expert at flattery and seduction, if only to prevent deductive thought.

## *Alan Price, Unfortunate Patsy*

**Quotes:** *You know I didn't do it, right? Please, just help me out; I'll make it worth your time.*

*Look, I don't know who did it. I wasn't there when it happened. I walked in and found a pile of ash. If I knew what happened, don't you think I'd be telling you?*

*Yeah, just like this fucking city. You've got nothing on me, and you're ready to kill an innocent lick. At least your petty status quo isn't hurt, right?*

**Virtue:** Faith. Alan will never go down without a fight, when things are down and he knows he's in the right. He refuses to die on his knees.

**Vice:** Wrath. All concept of right and wrong aside, Alan doesn't like being told he's wrong. He's not subtle. He's not quiet. He'll spit in the faces of his accusers without hesitation.

**Background:** Alan's young. He doesn't know his sire; rumor has it she's some half-bird monster. Either way, she bailed almost immediately. Prior to the Embrace, he was a message boy for the local mafia. He was a survivor. He knew how to get out of almost any situation.

He's done well these past ten years. He's been an underdog in the city's hierarchy, but his quick wit has earned him a bit of a reputation. For about half of the city, that reputation is great; he's a necessary bit of levity at court. For the other half that he's teased and made fun of during court, he's a bitter enemy. He doesn't even realize how they feel, he hasn't grasped that breaking balls is a way to get a vampire killed.

Last week, he got a call from what he believed was his sire. She demanded he meet her in a specific alley downtown. He insisted on finally meeting her, so he went without hesitation. When he arrived, he found only a pile of ash. As he stepped from the alley, he was confronted by a number of the city's Kindred, claiming that he was responsible for the murder of a citizen.

**Description:** Alan fits in well. He's very average; it's a part of his skill as a survivor. His hair is sandy blonde, and could probably be made to look good if he cared to. He has no clear ethnic origin; he's as American as they get. At the trial, he's wearing an old green sweater and khakis. He's shaky, nervous and clearly holding back anger.

**Storytelling Hints:** Alan's a nice guy; he just likes to poke a little fun. In fact, even in the face of certain death, he's bound to crack a joke or two. Sometimes he doesn't know what jokes are appropriate, and his occasional offensiveness is part of his charm. Between jokes, he snaps. Yelling at his accusers a bit is his way of holding back the Beast, which he's remarkably good at. In this scene, Alan's scrambling for his life. He's a survivor, he always has been. He'll promise anyone the world to save him.

**Name:** Alan Price

**Concept:** Unfortunate Patsy

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Wrath

**Clan:** Gangrel

**Covenant:** Carthian Movement

**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

**Skills:** Academics 1, Medicine 1, Politics 2 (Anarchist Theory), Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival 3 (Urban), Weaponry 1, Animal Ken 3 (Dogs), Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3 (Getting Things)

**Merits:** Allies (Street) 3, Contacts 1, Carthian Status 1, Haven Security 1, Haven Size 2, Haven Location 1

**Disciplines:** Animalism 1, Protean 1, Resilience 2

**Health:** 8

**Willpower:** 8

**Morality:** 6

**Blood Potency:** 1

**Vitae/Turn:** 10/1

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 9

**Defense:** 2

**Initiative:** 6



# Strange Philosophies

*Mental* ●●●

*Physical* ●

*Social* ●●●

## Overview

In this scene, an eccentric elder calls into question many of the basic truths of Kindred existence. He highlights the Traditions, debating their practical relevance. Do the characters play the safe route, defending the status quo, or do they debate with someone who could be a powerful mentor and patron?

## Description

“Why do we enforce the Traditions? Surely, there is wisdom in each of them. Yet each polices itself. Are we not interfering with our natural order by intervening?”

Alessandro Calogera glances to those paying attention. As a neonate hesitantly stands to walk away, Calogera addresses him. “You. Damon. Are you walking away because the topic disinterests you, or because you’ve bought into a system contrary to your very instincts and nature?”

The neonate thinks and sits back down.

“The Masquerade is in place to prevent the world from learning of our existences, being angry and wielding torches against our homes. Do you honestly think Kindred, in these millennia, have not made a single egregious mistake? Do you think that we’re so capable as to cover up every single infraction? That’s silly at best, dangerous at worst. The Masquerade manages itself. If one makes too heady a mistake, he dies. It’s a time-honored tradition, and one we need not enforce ourselves. The world does it for us.”

Half the crowd looks to him with curiosity, the other half clearly think he’s out of his mind.

“The Progeny is just as absurd. Sire another at the peril of yourself and your

progeny. If you create a childe, the weight is your own to bear. The wording is clear, if you sire progeny, you shoulder the burden and that you’re likely to go through hell in the process. We all know these things. Why do we govern this, then? I’ll tell you why. It’s because control over population shifts gives a decided political power to a status quo.”

A few of the camp dismissing him as silly have since paid closer attention.

“Amaranth, as we all know, is a terrible thing. The Beast calls to your blood. Your soul disintegrates. You become an animal. You are put down like an animal. In our society, it’s such a taboo that I find it almost redundant to state. We all know it’s wrong, yet I doubt the penalty has deterred any of those so inclined. Those who wish to will, or will die trying. The slope is slick; those who have done so will do so again. And they will be killed. I’ve seen this before. Even amongst those the tradition is not taught to, they will protect themselves and their peers.”

A few attendees have since become alienated. But most are listening curiously.

“So what do you say? Am I not correct in these assessments?”

## Storyteller Goals

This is an interesting way to play with expectations about what it means to be Kindred. If the players’ characters have developed particularly interesting views on the matter, this is your chance to let them shine. If the characters have been looking for mentorship, you can use this scene to initiate that, while guaranteeing a certain amount of risk and baggage to show that no relationship is altogether positive.

## Character Goals

There are two clear goals that can be accomplished in this scene. The first, safer option is to defend orthodoxy, shut down the elder's discussion points, and defend the status quo. This is an easy way to butter up some of the city's leadership, because it's a clear exhibition of respect for their authority. The second—the one the below challenge addresses—is to debate with the creature and wax philosophical. This may earn the characters an elder patron, but also looks questionable to the leadership. While espousing unpopular ideas isn't necessarily a punishable offense in Kindred society, it's known to be the first step towards rebellion.

## Debate Philosophy

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Academics

**Action:** Instant

The characters rebut or otherwise debate Calogera's points. In this, they risk censure from city leadership. If they perform well though, Calogera takes an interest in them.

**Hindrances:** The characters insert insults into the debate (-2), they show clear derision for his views or exhibit close-mindedness (-1)

**Help:** The characters show clear sympathy for his views (+1), the characters have conducted research specifically on the topic they speak of (+3), the characters shut down or ignore a dismissive viewpoint from another Kindred (+2)

## ROLL RESULTS

**Dramatic Failure:** Not only does the character fail to impress Calogera, she manages to push a particular button of a city leader. That leader will make it a point of inconveniencing the character at every opportunity until amends are made.

**Failure:** The character's argument fails to impress Calogera. However, she doesn't earn excessive ire from city leadership. There might be some distaste, but no vendettas occur as a result.

**Success:** The character's argument impresses Calogera. He'll attempt to speak with the character at a later time, and will share his philosophies with her.

**Exceptional Success:** The character's argument is exquisitely phrased. Calogera is immensely impressed, and will immediately act on the character's behalf. He'll serve as a two-point Mentor the player needs not spend experience points for. If she chooses, she can increase the Mentor rating to reflect a closer relationship with him.

## Consequences

Aside from the strict mechanical benefits from the Mentor merit as mentioned above, the characters open the opportunity to make friends and enemies quickly during this conversation. If city members have been looking for an excuse to move against the characters, this is a solid opportunity.

If the characters take the opposite path and uphold the status quo, Calogera will turn an eye to the characters. At some later time when they're in distress, he'll make an appearance if only to show his disdain for their "bourgeois," "banal" methodologies.

## Alessandro Calogera, Philosophical Revolutionary



**Quotes:** *That's a good point, well taken. Now, is that just theory, or have you seen it in practice? I'm curious about the practical applications of it.*

*Now, that would apply swimmingly, if it weren't for the fact that it's founded on a falsehood. Let's approach it from a different direction, objectively.*

*I understand that it doesn't work well with the religious beliefs of some, but we're very scientific. Most everything we do fits into patterns and rules. We've just not approached enough of those patterns and rules yet.*



**Virtue:** Faith. Calogera finds a greater meaning in science and reason. He feels that everything can be explained, and should be explained. To not do so is to be lazy.

**Vice:** Lust. While he's not an unethical thinker, he has a tendency to act more "sinful" around those he considers prudish or oppressive. This, coupled with his Daeva blood, has led him to be quite debauched.

**Background:** Alessandro Calogera has led a rich unlife. He was born in Florence during the Renaissance, lived through the revolution in France and saw most of the development of the Americas. He approached all of his existence with the eyes of a scientist and the spirit of a libertine. Understanding was never enough, Alessandro had to experience everything.

His past century has been spent trying to empirically understand the nuances of the Kindred soul. He's trying to learn what happens when Kindred degenerate, and why. He's a strong member of the Carthian Movement, as he feels they're the only organization that truly keeps their minds open. He considered the Ordo Dracul strongly, but found that their rituals were too inhibiting.

**Description:** Alessandro was Embraced from pure Florentine stock. He was the dark-haired, olive-skinned scion of a banking family. Now his Humanity is reflected in an inhumanly clean complexion, a honey trap that could tempt most women. Because of the era he's from, he's slightly shorter than most contemporary Kindred are, but the force of personality about him makes it so very few even notice the size difference. He dresses well, not the most modern but also not archaic; his sense of fashion is timeless. He prefers shades of purple and soft fabrics. He was Embraced at sixteen, and while that was less a problem in seventeenth-century Florence, his youthful face sometimes causes complications.

**Storytelling Hints:** Calogera has existed for a very long time, and while his mind is open, he tends to have a dismissive attitude towards most Kindred. He feels that they're far too stuck in their ways to look at their condition objectively. Those with closed minds have nothing to offer him. However, those with the spark of creativity and curiosity feed him.

He's an utter pacifist, and believes that there's always a way to solve a problem without violence. In fact, that's the primary motivation for his advanced development of Majesty.

Also, know that in the back of his mind, all vampires could theoretically be food. At this point, he needs to feed off of Kindred, so even if he's a useful mentor, he may have other motivations driving him. Ironically, his feeding restriction has done well to maintain his Humanity, as he's not had to prey on humans in quite some time. If a member of the coterie seems willing, he'll lean on that member as a sort of vampiric herd.

**Name:** Alessandro Calogera

**Concept:** Philosophical Revolutionary

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Lust

**Clan:** Daeva

**Covenant:** Carthian Movement

**Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Skills:** Academics 4 (Philosophy), Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 3 (Kindred), Occult 3 (Metaphysics), Politics 2, Science 2, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2, Weaponry 2 (Fencing), Empathy 2, Expression 3 (Spoken), Intimidation 1, Persuasion 3 (Indoctrination), Socialize 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Allies (Academia) 3, Haven Security 4, Haven Size 3, Resources 4, Status (Carthian) 4, Status (City) 1, Status (Daeva) 3, Striking Looks 2

**Disciplines:** Auspex 1, Celerity 3, Majesty 5, Resilience 1, Vigor 2

**Devotions:** Blasé (p. 59)

**Health:** 7

**Willpower:** 6

**Morality:** 8

**Blood Potency:** 7

**Vitae/Turn:** 20/5

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 10

**Defense:** 3

**Initiative:** 6

# Crashing the Party

*Mental* ●●

*Physical* ●●

*Social* ●●●

## Overview

Sometimes, a party isn't what the characters want it to be, especially when they're not wanted. In this scene, the characters are trying to make the situation less comfortable for those inside, and to make life less comfortable for the party's host.

If your players' characters already have a logical target in mind, the Storyteller character Victoria can easily be replaced with their specific adversary.

## Description

*You've come right at the height of the party. Everyone has gotten over their initial shyness and is bantering amongst each other. Cliques have formed; everyone has found the groups with which they'll spend most of the night.*

*Every face has a look that communicates that its owner feels superior to you. As you enter, bodies turn to show that you're not welcome. You see Victoria Frost, the host tonight. Her stare communicates a world of displeasure. You're already unwelcome; do you really want to make things worse?*

## Storyteller Goals

The goal in this scene is to offer barriers to break down, mountains to climb and dispositions to ruin. Add cynics. Add critics. But no matter what you do, make success worth their time. Make it gratifying. Crashing a party should be presented as a big risk, and big risks can bring big rewards.

The specific action below reflects the characters making spectacles of themselves. This may or may not be effective. It may just make them look immature, but it may reflect terribly on Victoria.

## Character Goals

The goal is to cause harm. This is more political than direct; direct attacks look gauche and

show desperation. An ideal situation is liable to send Victoria into frenzy, making her look that much worse. If the characters are savvy, they can deflect the attention from their behaviors onto Angelica. Since the characters' goal is destructive, not constructive, they don't stand to benefit directly from this scene, but it works well to tear down a rival.

## Wrecking the Ambience

**Dice Pool:** Presence + Socialize, resisted with Angelica's City Status (3)

**Action:** Extended, each roll represents one hour of the four hour party.

The characters do whatever is necessary to ruin everyone's good time, hopefully making Victoria look bad. They might "accidentally" bump into people, making them knock over artwork. They might spread disgusting and juvenile rumors. They might talk over nearby partygoers. Either way, the goal is to prevent attendees from enjoying themselves.

**Hindrances:** The characters resort to violence (-3), the characters directly insult Angelica (-2), the characters were invited (-1)

**Help:** The characters were not invited (-2), they convince Victoria to reprimand them publicly first (+1), the characters use a particularly creative and memorable method to ruin the party (+1 - +3), the characters manage to entertain the guests while making Angelica look bad (+4)

## ROLL RESULTS

**Dramatic Failure:** The characters fail to make Victoria look bad. In fact, they make their sabotage look obvious, helping Victoria's position. If after their effort, Victoria manages to remove them, she gains a dot of City Status and they gain a powerful enemy.

**Failure:** The characters fail to impress the audience, and fail to make Victoria look bad. No successes are added to the total.

**Success:** Successes are added to the total. The characters draw negative attention to Victoria in such a way that doesn't yet implicate them.



**Exceptional Success:** The characters make great headway. Not only are the successes added to the total, but Victoria must resist frenzy because of the embarrassment. Roll her Resolve + Composure with a -2 penalty. She will spend every available Willpower point to maintain herself. If she fails before accumulating seven successes, she enters frenzy and immediately rushes the characters.

If the characters accumulate no successes by the end of the night, they each lose a dot of City Status, as the city is not impressed with their shenanigans.

If the characters muster between one and four successes, the city is slightly amused but there are no overwhelming consequences.

If the characters achieve between five and nine successes, the city looks poorly upon Victoria. While there are no direct mechanical effects, the characters have made headway and can take further steps to injure her reputation.

If the characters manage to achieve ten or more successes, the city snubs Victoria. She reacts fiercely, lashing out against the characters. Because of her impropriety, she loses a dot of City Status.

## *Consequences*

Beyond the results above, the characters may very well change a good portion of the city's political dynamic if they play their behavior well. At the very least, they shake up the establishment, offering cracks they can grow in.

If they fail, it will be dramatic. A number of vampires will be sorely displeased with them. On the other hand, polarizing much of the city against them has its advantages. Some Kindred really do believe that the enemy of their enemy is their friend. Smart characters can take advantage of this fact.

## *Victoria Frost, Queen Bee*

**Quotes:** *Why yes. You know, I've always been enamored with the Sanctified. It's just not the place for me. But please, continue. It fascinates me.*

*Oh stop! You know I can't stand flattery.*

*Oh well. Everyone has to be invited to a party some time, right? I thought I'd do them a favor.*



**Virtue:** Prudence. Victoria is a competent manipulator. She doesn't take a course of action unless she feels it's a guaranteed chance of success. Getting her to act on impulse requires monumental effort.

**Vice:** Sloth. Sometimes, she feels that a threat is better addressed by waiting it out. This often works, but occasionally comes back to bite her.

**Background:** Victoria has just under fifty years under her belt. Most of the city has recognized her as a respected ancilla, but some of the more conservative vampires still see her as a child. She worries about hitting a plateau in her social standing, and is trying to bring more attention to her abilities.

In her human life, she was a product of the stronger end of the women's liberation movement. She saw first-hand the power of violent protest. She saw power in destruction, and this drew the attention of her sire, a notable Acolyte. She wasn't everything her sire hoped; she was often too lazy to bring forth the power predicted of her.

She fell to a slump. She didn't have the drive to master Crúac, and was hardly a capable spiritual leader. She was far more interested in bouncing from party to party, from lover to lover. The Ventrue gained respect for her, as she inadvertently built a strong reputation for herself.

**Description:** Victoria is a face you wouldn't kick out of bed, but one you wouldn't brag about either.

She was once a very pleasant person, but the years prior to her Embrace were harsh, freezing something of a perpetual scowl on her face. She hides it well; she has a way of charming those she meets with. Now, she dresses for the occasion, but her sense of style is just a bit out-of-date, and is far more conservative than most of her covenant-mates would appreciate.

**Storytelling Hints:** Don't say anything risky or controversial. If there's a choice between a risky path that could result in great benefit, and a safe route, take the safe route. She wouldn't mind being everyone's friend, but she doesn't have the attention span for it. Sometimes, she'll wander off mid-sentence, just because she wants to address everyone present.

**Name:** Victoria Frost

**Concept:** Queen Bee

**Virtue:** Prudence

**Vice:** Sloth

**Clan:** Ventrue

**Covenant:** Circle of the Crone

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

Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

**Skills:** Academics 1, Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 2, Athletics 2, Drive 1, Survival 1, Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Expression 3 (Smalltalk), Intimidation 2 (Commanding), Persuasion 2 (Guilt-Tripping), Socialize 3 (Superficial Friendships), Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Herd 3, Resources 2, Status (Circle of the Crone) 1, Status (City) 3, Status (Ventrue) 3

**Disciplines:** Cruac 1, Animalism 1, Dominate 2, Resilience 2

**Health:** 7

**Willpower:** 6

**Morality:** 4

**Blood Potency:** 2

**Vitae/Turn:** 11/1

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 9

**Defense:** 2

**Initiative:** 5

**Notes:** Narcissism Derangement on Humanity 4



# Keeping the Party from Being Crashed

*Mental* ●●●

*Physical* ●●●

*Social* ●●●

## Overview

Unwelcome guests have made their way in. They're going to wreck the evening for everyone they can. If the characters don't want this to happen, they'll need to intervene. Little do they know, the unwelcome guests are more than they bargained for.

## Description

A coterie of unknown vampires managed to move through security. They don't belong. They're bumping passers-by with their shoulders. They're making lewd gestures at any who stare. They mean trouble, and they're not too subtle about that fact.

You hear one of the wretches call their leader by name. They call him Adonis. He's a tall, lanky man with short, disheveled black hair. As you notice him, he places his hand on the forehead of a young Mekhet named Cassie, pushing her back dismissively. The coterie laughs, feeding his already harsh attitude.

## Storyteller Goals

The vampires of the coterie aren't just disgruntled Kindred; they're Belial's Brood. One wrong move and the characters could escalate the situation far beyond their control. If the characters throw a party, this is a good way to mix things up. This way, the responsibility is more in their hands.

Adonis' game statistics are listed below. You can use the statistics for the Belial's Brood Fanatic from p. 228 of **Vampire: The Requiem** to round out the rest of the pack. Reasonably, about one fanatic for each of the players' characters should work fine. They need solid numbers to breed intimidation, any one of them alone would be putty in the hands of a Kindred competent in Majesty or Dominate.

The pack of Brood doesn't intend to start a fight—they just want to start some entertaining

chaos. If the characters push them close to frenzy, though, they will resort to violence.

Additionally, Adonis has a unique power called Find the Pain. It identifies one person the character is most close to. He will use this power to levy bluffing threats or to negotiate his release.

## Character Goals

The characters' goal is to prevent chaos from overtaking the event. Ideally, they'll be able to talk their way out of further confrontation. While the Brood members are being gutsy, they have survival instincts and won't overstay their own safeties.

## Deterring the Storm

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Persuasion versus Adonis's Wits + Composure (5)

**Action:** Contested, resistance is reflexive.

This debate is the opposite of a hostage negotiation. The character has to convince Adonis that his pack is in immense danger, and if they do not leave quickly that they will be destroyed. This may or may not be a bluff.

**Hindrances:** The character has brought past action against the Belial's Brood (-3), the character tries "playing nice" (-2), the character offers a fair exchange (-1)

**Help:** The character is Humanity 4 or lower (+2), the character is Blood Potency 4 or higher (+3), the character directly mentions violence (+2)

## ROLL RESULTS

**Dramatic Failure:** The character makes a mistake that escalates the situation. The pack immediately enters frenzy, attacking the character and any nearby partygoers.

**Failure:** The pack refuses to leave, dismissively ignoring the character and moving on to greater acts of chaos.

**Success:** The pack leaves, but on their way out, they abduct the weakest-looking Kindred near the exit.

**Exceptional Success:** The pack fears the character. They hesitate briefly, then leave without further complications. They may cause later problems, but not at the party directly.

## *Consequences*

The scene can end with a number of results, as detailed below. Either way, if the characters confront the Brood, the pack will eventually come back to cause more problems. This is a solid introduction for a longer-running plot with the Brood, particularly if the characters are unaware of the pack's identity. When later problems come to head, the city might defer to the experience of the characters who had successfully deterred the pack prior.

## *Adonis, Eye of the Storm*

**Quotes:** *I tell you what. You get the fuck out of my face, and I don't show you what your little friend's liver looks like.*

*What a cute little Harpy. You should come home with us tonight, we'd break you right in half and you'd love it.*

*You know, I have a friend that has Sheila's address. Wouldn't you hate to see her Embraced?*

**Virtue:** Faith. Adonis doesn't let wrongs against his pack go unpunished. He puts them above all other things, including his own unlife.

**Vice:** Wrath. He's a cruel monster, and if given the opportunity to cause harm, he will. In a decision, he will almost always choose the one most painful for the subject.

**Background:** Adonis cannot remember his past beyond the ten years he's been with his pack. No amount of Dominate will repair those memories.

He calls himself the Ductus of the pack, and he's very proud of the position. He guides his members spiritually and martially, keeping them fit and ready to act.

**Description:** He's tall and lanky. His hair is a black rats' nest; his clothes don't fit, they stink, and they're covered with what is probably dried blood. He walks heavily, combat boots slamming into the ground with every step.

**Storytelling Hints:** He cannot stand being bored. He's often fidgety, and will act on impulse if only because he prefers situations where he cannot expect an outcome. He's loud, forceful and relentless. He moves about as if nothing stands in his way. He'd rather take the path of most resistance, walking through or over those less driven.

**Name:** Adonis

**Concept:** Eye of the Storm

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Wrath

**Clan:** Nosferatu

**Covenant:** Belial's Brood

**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Presence 4, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

**Skills:** Medicine 2 (Torture), Occult 3, Athletics 3, Brawl 3 (Bite), Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Survival 4 (Tracking), Weaponry 1, Animal Ken 2, Intimidation 3 (Threats), Persuasion 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

**Merits:** Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 3, Fresh Start 1, Herd 2, Iron Stamina 3

**Disciplines:** Nightmare 3, Obfuscate 1, Resilience 3, Vigor 3

**Health:** 9

**Willpower:** 4

**Morality:** 3

**Blood Potency:** 4

**Vitae/Turn:** 13/2





**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 14

**Defense:** 3

**Initiative:** 7

**Adonis's Trick – Find the Pain**

With a single glance, he can identify the person a target is closest to – a person not currently present

(unless everyone the target is closest to is visible, in which case one is chosen at the Storyteller's discretion). Roll Adonis's Wits + Occult (6) - the target's Resolve score. A single success is all he needs to discover a subject's name and whether or not the subject is human. This power only works once on a given target.



63

SCENE: *A Harpy's Ire*

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ••• OTHER

HINDRANCES

Using an Attribute already used this scene (-2)  
Using a Skill already used in this scene (-2)  
Each person coming to the verbal aid of a participant (-2)  
The character failed last turn's roll (-1)

HELP

The player offers a particularly entertaining or challenging statement (+1 to +3, depending)  
The character vocally refuses assistance (+2)  
The opponent made a clearly erroneous personal attack last turn (+2)

OTHER

STs

Present an enemy the players want to punch, but can't. Reward creativity.

PCs

This is the chance for the characters to earn a bit of reputation, and to gain a foothold in the social arena.

66

SCENE: *The Execution Spectacle*

MENTAL ••• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL •• OTHER

HINDRANCES

-2 for the number of suspects present, -2 if the characters have reason to trust the culprit.

HELP

+2 if the characters first question the crowd  
+2 if the characters questioned Alan  
+1 if a character utilizes Auspex in the scan.

OTHER

STs

Give characters a chance to turn the tables, ousting the culprit and earning a favor from Alan.

PCs

Help Alan, either out of friendship or to hold it over him later.

69

SCENE: *Strange Philosophies*

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL • SOCIAL ••• OTHER

HINDRANCES

The characters insert insults into the debate (-2),  
They show clear derision for his views or exhibit close-mindedness (-1)

HELP

The characters show clear sympathy for his views (+1)  
The characters have conducted research specifically on the topic they speak of (+3)  
The characters shut down or ignore a dismissive viewpoint from another Kindred (+2)

OTHER

STs

This is an interesting way to play with expectations about what it means to be Kindred.

PCs

Defend orthodoxy or debate with the creature and wax philosophical.

72

SCENE: *Crashing the Party*

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL •• SOCIAL ••• OTHER

HINDRANCES

The characters resort to violence (-3)  
The characters directly insult Angelica (-2)  
The characters were invited (-1)

HELP

The characters were not invited (-2)  
They convince Victoria to reprimand them publicly first (+1)  
The characters use a particularly creative and memorable method to ruin the party (+1 - +3)  
The characters manage to entertain the guests while making Angelica look bad (+4)

OTHER

STs

Offer barriers to break down, mountains to climb and dispositions to ruin.

PCs

Cause harm.



SCENE: *Keeping the Party from Being Crashed* (75)

MENTAL ...	PHYSICAL ...	SOCIAL ...	OTHER
HINDRANCES	HELP		
The character has brought past action against the Belial's Brood (-3) The character tries "playing nice" (-2) The character offers a fair exchange (-1)	The character is Humanity 4 or lower (+2) The character is Blood Potency 4 or higher (+3) The character directly mentions violence (+2)		
STs	The vampires of the coterie aren't just disgruntled Kindred; they're Belial's Brood. If the characters throw a party, this is a good way to mix things up.		
PCs	Prevent chaos from overtaking the event.		

SCENE:

MENTAL	PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	OTHER
HINDRANCES	HELP		
STs			
PCs			

SCENE:

MENTAL	PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	OTHER
HINDRANCES	HELP		
STs			
PCs			

SCENE:

MENTAL	PHYSICAL	SOCIAL	OTHER
HINDRANCES	HELP		
STs			
PCs			

## Appendix

# Barbed Words

Below are a highly abbreviated version of the social combat rules that will be presented in **Danse Macabre**. As these rules are appropriate for **Invite Only**, they are reproduced here for convenience.

### *Social Combat Summary*

#### STEP ONE: Calculate Social Advantages

- Dominance Modifier*, or “Social Initiative” (Presence + Manipulation)
- Guile*, or “Social Defense” (Lower of Wits or Manipulation)
- Nerve*, or “Social Health” (Composure + Highest Social Skill)

#### STEP TWO: Social Combat

a. *Determine Intent*: Everybody in the scene of Social Combat has an intention, a purpose. Determine what it is for your character.

b. *Determine Dominance*: Figure out which character is the Socially dominant, which determines who is the “attacker.” (This matters less than Initiative in a Physical combat situation, but still counts in terms of roleplaying and outcome. To make this more impactful, allow the character with the highest outcome on Dominance to gain the difference between his Dominance and the opponent’s Dominance in bonus dice, to a maximum of +5)

c. *Attack*: Determine your character’s choice of Social attack (some special maneuvers will be provided in **Danse Macabre**). The default Social attack roll is: **Social Attribute + Social Skill – target’s Guile +/- other modifiers**. The defending character gets to make the same roll.

#### STEP THREE: Resolution

a. *Resolution of Each Turn*: At the end of a turn, the character with the highest number of successes during this scene “wins” that turn. The losing

character(s) suffer a loss of Nerve points equal to the attacker’s successes—and the attacker *gains* that many points of Nerve. On a tie, the win goes to the character with the highest Dominance Modifier (*not* the highest Dominance for the scene). If that still results in a tie, then nobody is considered to have won the round, and all Nerve points remain the same. Turns continue like this until...

b. *Resolution of Scene*: Social combat ends for any participant who loses all Nerve. A character who loses Nerve succumbs to the effects of zero Nerve. A character who loses in a Social combat to an attacker must comply with the intent of that attacker (see earlier in Step Two: Determine Intent). That said, unless the Storyteller declares it possible, a character may not be made to:

- Physically harm himself
- Physically harm another
- Do something entirely counter to his character (“I want him to burn his favorite book”)
- Do something entirely counter to his well-being (“I want to convince him to go up to the Prince and thumb that fucker right in the eye”)
- Perform an impossible action (“I want her to disappear”)

A character can deny the intent of another by spending one point of Willpower and, in addition, losing his Guile against other Social attacks for the remainder of the night.

Also note that a character can attempt to prematurely exit the Social combat before losing all Nerve, but doing so is only contingent upon the attacker relinquishing her attack.

#### STEP FOUR: Who Has the Edge?

The *winner* of the Social combat has the Edge. The winner of the combat is the one who won the



most turns by the end of combat and still has Nerve points in her pool. If a target prematurely exits a Social combat, he automatically gives the Edge to his attacker provided that attacker gives up the fight. If the combat features multiple participants, the “last character standing” is the one with the Edge.

### *Social Combat Modifiers*

Below are a number of potential modifiers that you might invoke to affect Social combat. These are in addition to any modifiers you choose to use from the **World of Darkness Rulebook** (“Social Skills,” pp. 78-87).

- +3 Character has the Edge
- +2 Target is character’s ghoul or thrall
- +1 to +5 Appropriate Social equipment (brandishing a weapon for Intimidation, offering a bribe for Persuasion, giving a gift to seduce, showing fake evidence to confirm a Subterfuge attempt, etc.)
- +1 Target is “family” (within two Embrace “steps” of character)
- +1 Character wears convincing clothing (a nice suit for a salesman, a sexy

*haute couture* outfit for a seducer, a rough biker’s outfit for threats of ass-kicking).

- +1 Character possesses higher Blood Potency than the target
- 1 Target possesses higher Blood Potency than the character
- 1 Either vampire is hungry
- 1 For every mild derangement possessed by opponent (derangements aren’t helpful to those who possess them, but they can hinder attempts to convince or unnerve such individuals)
- 1 Character wears inappropriate clothing (golf outfit for threatening, a frumpy frock for seducing)
- 2 Either vampire is starving
- 2 For every severe derangement possessed by opponent
- 4 Language barrier (character doesn’t speak the same language, must rely on body language)

