

A SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE

GEHENNA WAR

VAMPIRE
THE MASQUERADE



THE ETERNAL STRUGGLE AT YOUR DOORSTEP

From incessant intrigue to blazing action! *Gehenna War* brings the machinations of the elders and secret societies to your chronicle. Hunt the elders who were supposedly Beckoned away. Do you fight for the will of an ancient, a chance at the forbidden sin of Diablerie, or to protect what truly matters to you?

Gehenna War provides material both for players and Storytellers to make the game sing, focusing on fast-paced action scenes and how those scenes can be woven into stories and chronicles.

Gehenna War contains:

- An overview of the Gehenna War and its impact on the Kindred sects
- 7 Methuselahs active in the Gehenna War
- Rules for creating action-focused characters for action chronicles
- New combat options and equipment
- Player- and Storyteller-focused overview of action chronicles
- 14 distinct factions fighting in the Gehenna War
- 4 pre-written stories to drop into any chronicle
- Advice for using Bestial Failures and Messy Criticals in any chronicle
- 3 Loresheets
- 9 new Advantages and Flaws
- 19 new Discipline Powers, Rituals, Ceremonies, and Formulae

Gehenna War is a sourcebook for **Vampire: The Masquerade**, a Storytelling Game of Personal and Political Horror



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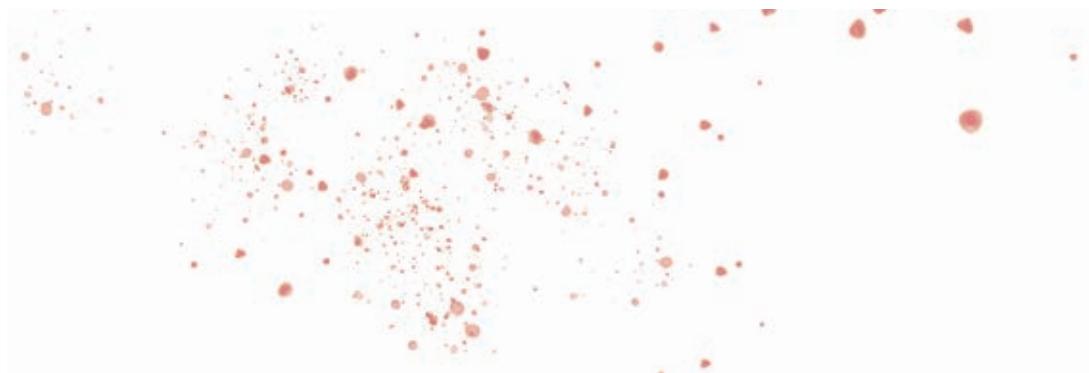
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A Sourcebook for
Vampire: The Masquerade



VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

GEHENNA WAR

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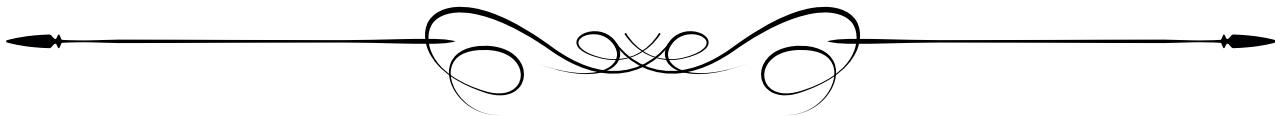


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INTRODUCTION



For millennia, the prophets and seers among the Kindred have spoken of Gehenna, the end times when the Antediluvians would rise and usher in an apocalypse of blood.

The seers of modern nights no longer have to prophecy. According to many of them, the end times are here, now. The question is, what does that mean?

For many among the Kindred, the Gehenna War is a self-fulfilling idea. The ancient methuselahs rise, believing that they have to settle their scores now or never. The Sabbat incites a crusade unparalleled in its brutality and viciousness even among the Cainites. The Princes of the Camarilla and the leaders of every fanatical Kindred faction out there decide that now is the time to make their mark. That is enough to create so much death and destruction it might as well be the end of the world.

Is Gehenna really here? Is this the end?

There's no one among the Kindred able to give a qualified answer, although many offer their views and beliefs anyway. What is true is that if you get caught in the Gehenna War and find yourself huddling behind the scant cover provided by a burning car as the screaming monstrosities of the Sabbat come down on you, this is your personal end of the world.

MATURE CONTENT WARNING

Vampire: The Masquerade deals with mature themes and story elements, centering games on personal and political horror. In this game, you portray a blood-sucking monster in a world resembling our own. Characters typically experience (and participate in) activities you see in other vampire fiction: violence, seduction, lying, murder, and exploitation. These are story elements and themes for collaborative play.

This book in particular centers the themes of war and combat, and involves sensitive topics such as body horror, injuries, and wounds, cults and blood cults, explosions, gang violence, kidnapping, mass murder and serial killers, mob mentality and riots, and violent and graphic imagery in both descriptions and illustrations.

Be sure to check out Advice for Considerate Play in **Vampire: The Masquerade**, p. 421.



I didn't see them at first. We were underground, BLAM BLAM BLAM, guns firing, the sound compressing the air until my head was ringing.

People ask me, why the shotgun? That is a stupid-ass question. We're vampires. A small bullet goes clean through, with minimal damage. A shotgun slug tears a hole. Works much better. Range is limited but with the Sabbat, you're always destroying them in some dank hole anyway. You don't need range.

The noise still staggers me after all these years. They say mortals can go deaf from fighting like this. I wouldn't know. It's been a while since that was a concern for me.

This breed of Sabbat is even worse than the usual kind. We're all monsters, I know that. What separates scum like them from us is that some of us are trying to redeem ourselves.

Only thing is, somehow finding that redemption always feels like it's happening to the sound of BLAM BLAM BLAM and the stench of blood on the floor and the walls.

After a while, my hearing returned, and I realized the skittering had stopped. That clicking sound some of these Sabbat vampires make. I don't know why. I don't know a lot of things about why they do the things they do.

I was looking around with my flashlight and that's when I saw the mortals, or what remained of them. They were hunched in a corner, rotting and yet still somehow alive. I knelt to check if something could be done.

They had gaping holes in their abdomens, where some Sabbat creature had removed organs. The liver, or the spleen, or the intestine. An old man and a teenage girl with these cavities in their bodies, open to the air. They were too weak to move, barely able to plead with me to save them or kill them.

My first thought was a stupid one. I thought, what's the point? If you changed a human body like this, it was not viable. They were dying. If a person is to survive, those organs got to be on the inside.

Then I remembered: With the Sabbat of the Gehenna War, you go mad if you try to understand what's the point. Maybe they were making experiments, or it was cruelty for the sake of cruelty. I don't know.

I ended their suffering.

There's a line from some movie that I think about when I see shit like that. The only winning move is not to play.

I suppose that's true for a lot of Kindred politics. But nowhere is it more true than in the Gehenna War. If you don't lose the fight, you lose yourself. You seek redemption and end up in a dusty basement killing mutilated, whimpering mortals. And even as you do it, you feel the scent of their blood in your nostrils.

I didn't drink from them.

In the Gehenna War, the only winning move is not to play. Unfortunately, you don't get a choice.

-From an unfinished letter by Theo Bell

Your Gehenna War

What role does the Gehenna War play in your chronicle? That's up to you, your troupe and Storyteller.

If you want desperate firefights, daring escapes across rooftops and the all-encompassing horrors of war, this is the book for you. It details a specific kind of play style, one focused on action horror. It sets the personal horror of **Vampire: The Masquerade** against the backdrop of a secret war, ancient in its origins and apocalyptic in the way its fires light up the night. Even if ancient, globe-spanning warfare is not your troupe's thing, *Gehenna War* also offers options for more grounded action chronicles and gritty, street-level action.

As a setting, the Gehenna War is wide-ranging enough to provide a host of alternative options. Your Gehenna War chronicle could be:

- **The Pros:** A well-trained military unit specially Embraced and trained by a Camarilla Justicar to take the fight to the Sabbat. During play, they discover that their patron is actually a mere puppet controlled by a methuselah who plans to drown the world in blood.
- **The Rebels:** Whispers among the Anarchs suggest that many of the Camarilla luminaries are being distracted by some kind of an invisible war. The Beckoning took away many of the elders and now the rest seem focused on something beyond what you can see from the street. What's a better opportunity for a revolution? Unfortunately, once the domain is in Anarch hands, it turns out the enemy distracting the Camarilla was entirely real.
- **The Infiltrators:** All of the characters have lost something in the horrifying raids of the Sabbat. They've banded together for one purpose: revenge. The plan is suicidal, but the payoff could be huge. At the cost of their own Humanity, the players' characters try to infiltrate the Sabbat and survive long enough to betray them to their ancient enemies. Unfortunately, once they're deep in the belly of the beast, they discover that the Sabbat are so far gone, imitating them may destroy

the sense and sanity of the characters before they can accomplish their mission.

- **The Opportunists:** The haven of a local elder is destroyed in a bizarre, shockingly violent attack. As the characters escape from inevitable attention from Second Inquisition agencies, they realize that there is a secret war going on, a war with enough casualties that it creates a power vacuum. How do they exploit it? By creating their own autarky, an independent domain? By becoming war profiteers? Or perhaps even by trying to redeem their Humanity by mitigating the carnage? Unfortunately, the war has a way of tarnishing even those who enter it with the best of intentions.
- **The Chosen:** For a unique Gehenna War chronicle, you can choose to play true believers in one of the factions (see Chapter Five), Kindred groups who believe that they can achieve their ends if they make the right moves in the war. Vampires tend to think in the long term, but the War forces their hand. The time to act is now, and that means that many apocalyptic factions are now prowling the night. Of course, it's possible that as the characters fulfill the bloody dreams of their leaders, they encounter information causing them to question their cause.

Whether you choose to approach Gehenna War from the perspective of ordinary Kindred caught up in events beyond their comprehension or top-level experts (or fanatics) seeking to make their move now that the time is right, the war provides just the setting: The story, its events, all of that belongs to you and your troupe.

The story, its events, all of that belongs to you and your troupe.

TYPES OF CHRONICLES

Gehenna War has relevant material for all action chronicles even if your blood gods are safely in torpor. The book supports three types of chronicles.

Gehenna War: Chronicles about combat-capable vampires fighting in the Gehenna War. Trying to survive a blood god's rampage in a collapsing temple somewhere in the mountains of Turkmenistan. Fighting Sabbat cultists across the rooftops of Mexico City. Taking out packs of ghouls with military ordnance in a Middle Eastern combat zone.

Action Chronicle: Action-packed stories in the baseline *Vampire: The Masquerade* milieu. Car chases with FIRSTLIGHT agents through the streets of New York. A grand melee with a pack of Sabbat shovelheads. Taking on a lupine in single combat... and maybe even winning.

Street Level: Gritty stories in a more mortal context. A knock-down drag-out fight with someone who refuses to be mere prey. A shootout with the cops after something went horribly, horribly wrong. A showdown with a rival coterie creeping on your domain, with tire irons, fangs, and claws, and the taste of Blood in your mouth.

Table 1: Chronicle Types

Chapter	Gehenna War	Action Chronicle	Street Level
One: Fearful Awakening	✓		
Two: We Who are Already Dead...	✓	✓	✓
Three: Never Stay Still	✓	✓	✓
Four: Faces of Evil	✓		
Five: Dogs of War	✓		
Six: War Stories	✓		
Appendix I: Rolling for It	✓	✓	✓
Appendix II: Loresheets	✓	✓	✓

Chapters

Gehenna War has been organized in two broad sections. Chapters One, Two and Three are meant for both players and Storytellers interested in a Gehenna War chronicle. Chapters Four, Five and Six as well as the two appendices are for Storyteller use.

Chapter One: Fearful Awakening looks at the Gehenna War from the viewpoint of a player's character involved in the conflict. Since this is a secret war, it's a collection of different viewpoints as no single vampire can know everything.

Chapter Two: We Who Are Already Dead... is all about how to create characters for a Gehenna War chronicle. It provides more tools for making more experienced characters, as well as characters who function well in an action horror story. It looks at combat and provides new options for gear to get the job done. It also provides a selection of new traits to be used for characters in action stories, from Discipline powers to Advantages and Flaws.

Chapter Three: Never Stay Still examines action as a genre in the context of *Vampire*. What does it mean to play action stories in a horror game? What kind of things do vampires fight for?

Chapter Four: Faces of Evil looks at the Gehenna War from the perspective of the Storyteller. It details some of the secrets of the ancients for use in your chronicles, explains setting elements like the Beckoning and provides a selection of action scene templates to demonstrate how to make dynamic scenes interesting.

Chapter Five: Dogs of War presents a selection of factions fighting the Gehenna War. The ancient dead may drive the war, but for many younger Kindred, it presents an opportunity to fulfill their own goals.

Chapter Six: War Stories has a selection of stories from the trenches of the Gehenna War. You can use them as they are or slot them into your chronicle, depending on your needs.

Appendix I: Rolling for It examines how tests work in *Vampire* and how you can use them to the best effect in running your chronicle.

Appendix II: Loreshheets features a selection of new Loreshheets. ■

THE BLOODY WARS OF THE KINDRED

The world of the Kindred is shaped by many conflicts and war is sometimes a metaphor, sometimes a bloody reality. The three primary conflicts afflicting them are thus:

Gehenna War: An increasingly global conflict with an epicenter somewhere east of Europe, thought to be driven by Methuselahs—possibly even Antediluvians—rising to meet the end times.

War of Ages: The ancient struggle between elder and younger vampires, the former seeking to hold on to their power while the latter wish to claim some for themselves.

Eternal Struggle: The age-old battles between ancient vampires, manipulating younger ones as their expendable pawns. The phrase is often used to rationalize the conflict between all vampires, everywhere.





Chapter One:

FEARFUL AWAKENING



The majority of the Kindred in the world have no idea that the Gehenna War is raging. It's a secret war, masked and hidden by mortal violence. The Gehenna War's most intense hotspots tend to occur in war zones and areas where violence and terror has already flared up, so that a dozen more deaths don't stand out amidst the general destruction.

The intelligence agencies comprising what vampires call the Second Inquisition are aware of some of the War's less discreet manifestations, but they've yet to connect the dots. It's hard to grasp the idea of an ancient methuselah when you're still theorizing that blankbody gangs like the Toreador and the Camarilla sometimes fight each other.

It's even possible for a thin-blood courier or a recently Embraced Nosferatu to miss the War when it comes to their city. They're just too insignificant for the War's factions to notice.

The secret nature of the War is also why different Kindred hold radically different views about it. One might describe it as a war between the Camarilla and the Sabbat while another says that the Antediluvians have awoken and are using their childer as proxies in a final showdown. Ascertaining the truth of such

statements is close to impossible.

Yet something is happening in the shadows. Ancient blood gods seem to be preparing to meet the end times, creating their own domains of blood and terror. They manipulate Kindred factions big and small to achieve their own ends and sometimes even appear in person.

Sometimes such events even leave a witness to spread the story.

Gehenna

The concept of Gehenna, long prophesied among the Kindred, is central to the Gehenna War. Descriptions of Gehenna tend to agree that it refers to the end of the world for the Kindred, but beyond that, there are vast discrepancies between different sources.

For many of the factions fighting the Gehenna War, under the streets of your city it's an article of faith that Gehenna is now. It's happening, and it looks like the world as it currently stands. Many of them argue that given how world events are progressing, it's not difficult to say that these are literally the end times, with monsters in charge and both mortal and Kindred society being

BECKETT: I'm glad to see you, Agata.

AGATA STAREK: What?

BECKETT: Times such as these make for strange bedfellows.

AGATA STAREK: Are you hitting on me?

BECKETT: Please. This is no time for levity. You can play your little games of intimidation and fear after the war has washed over the domain and we have counted the survivors.

AGATA STAREK: What do you mean, 'little games'? I've killed people for less.

BECKETT: I'm certain that is true. You have to decide now if you wish to spend your nights dealing with such petty concerns. Or you may look at the signs of power being exercised.

AGATA STAREK: What power?

BECKETT: Neither of us resides in this domain. We're but visitors. I'm used to deciphering ancient texts and forgotten artifacts but that doesn't mean I don't understand the significance when there's an explosion on the waterfront, violence at the Museum of Natural History and all of the remaining Camarilla elders have vanished into their most secure hiding places.

AGATA STAREK: Fuck. Something big is coming.

BECKETT: Good girl. You're getting it. You're seeing the signs.

AGATA STAREK: Did you just call me a 'good girl'?

BECKETT: Yes.

AGATA STAREK: Fucking hell.

— A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE BRUJAH AGATA
STAREK AND THE GANGREL BECKETT

shaken to pieces.

The question of Gehenna is complicated by a simple question: How do you know if Gehenna is happening?

A maximalist Gehenna would be obvious, of course. If the skies turn red and fires burn through the land as the blood gods rise to devour the living and the undead, surely you'd notice? Then again, there have been massive, destructive wildfires in California, Australia, and other places and they say that the blood gods are indeed rising.

If instead we believe that Gehenna is about the Kindred, how could we tell if the Antediluvians were calling their progeny to the slaughter? Well, the Beckoning is already happening, so...

Some, especially among more recently Embraced Kindred, dismiss stories of Gehenna as fairy tales and myth. Many thin-bloods have never even heard about it. Still, belief in the end times has been enough to motivate an entire sect of monsters and countless smaller Kindred factions.

How do you know if Gehenna is happening?

The Origins of the War

The question of how the Gehenna War came to be is a contentious subject among those in the know. Typically, members of the different Kindred factions fighting the War have their own explanations, conveniently lining up with their own goals.

The Anarchs: Most Anarch gangs who become aware of the Gehenna War see it from such a lowly vantage point that any ideas they might have about its origins are pure speculation.

The Camarilla: The average Camarilla vampire doesn't have any more of an idea of the war's origins than do the Anarchs but some are able to access more information. To these Camarilla members, the explanation that makes most sense is that this is when the methuselahs, the ancient blood gods awaken, perhaps starting with one who then prompts

the rise of the others. After all, elders coming back from torpor to reassert themselves is not an entirely unknown phenomenon among the Camarilla. After a few of the ancients begin to stir, centuries-old contingency plans are triggered and boons incurred in ancient Rome called in.

The Noddists: The Red Star. The Week of Nightmares. The thinning of the blood and the emergence of the Duskborn. The signs and portents of Gehenna have been known for a millennia. The truth can be found in the Book of Nod! There has been endless debate among Noddists about whether any particular event counts as the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy to herald the end times, whether Gehenna has actually arrived and if the Gehenna War is the same as the Gehenna foreseen so long ago.

The Church of Caine: Caine is the instigator of everything that has happened among the Kindred. Caine was there in the beginning and Caine will be there in the end. There's some dissension among the Church over whether Caine favors any particular faction in the Gehenna War or just shows up in the end to judge everybody. Nevertheless, the timing is directly or obliquely usually attributed to the will of the Dark Father or at least his struggles with the Curse.

The Sabbat: It's difficult for an outsider to understand what any particular member of the Sabbat might believe but there's an impression nevertheless that some among the sect believe they instigated the Gehenna War. It's happening now because the Sabbat started it now. Perhaps in response to the rising of a particular methuselah, or just because they felt the time for the Gehenna Crusade to start was right now.

All of the sects and other factions circle around the question of whether the War started because of the actions of a vampire, whether a Noddist graverobber, a ravening methuselah or even Caine himself. Or, if there's some larger supernatural cause. The end of the world, the will of God, fate... Something to give meaning to it all!

Of course, you could always go to a risen blood god and ask why they woke up at this particular moment. The trouble is, few can do that and survive.

Where?

Vampires are secretive creatures, even when they're fighting in the end times. While the Gehenna War may erupt anywhere in the world, it's most often fought in countries, cities, and neighborhoods with a lot of history and where there's already a lot of violence among the mortals. Such places have a supply of potential thralls with the skills and equipment needed for violence. If there's a shootout, an explosion, or worse, it gets ascribed to the ongoing mortal conflict. History provides the catacombs, tombs and ancient monuments from under which undead horrors may emerge.

Cities torn by war, battlefields strewn with the dead, neighborhoods regularly raided by SWAT teams and districts so poor, nobody in power much cares what happens. These are all potential staging grounds for the Gehenna War. The Gehenna War seems to have started somewhere east of Europe in the lands where the first known human empires rose but has since spread considerably.

For individual chronicles, the Gehenna War can be where you need it to be. If you want to use it as an element in an ongoing chronicle, it can come to the city you're using as a setting for your game. If you're playing a Gehenna War chronicle, you can choose to set it somewhere that feels appropriate.

If you're using a real-life warzone, you should discuss it together with your troupe to make sure that the choice works for everyone. Areas where a war is currently being fought may be emotionally fraught and involve resonances that stop the game from working for individual players. As with most things, this is best resolved through discussion and by listening to any of concerns your troupe has.

The Beckoning

Older vampires of potent blood are being called away by a mysterious force. The usual theory is that they're being summoned to fight the Gehenna War, perhaps in service of sleeping ancients. Maybe even the Antediluvians themselves.

As a result of the Beckoning, there are specific areas in the world where the Gehenna War is raging at fever pitch with a historically high concentration of old Kindred. It's not always apparent that they themselves properly understand what's happening to them and some wonder whether the Beckoning proves that the Sabbat is right, that the Antediluvians genuinely do control their descendants.

It should be noted that while many Kindred casually assume their progenitors sleep under the sands in the Middle East because that's the cradle of some of the earliest human civilizations, it doesn't seem that the Beckoning specifically calls elders to Saudi-Arabia or Iraq any more than to other places in the general easterly direction Beckoned Kindred in the U.S. and Europe generally go to. Even if certain Noddist scholars are correct and Caine indeed walked along the shore of the Euphrates, the methuselahs travelled far and wide in their youth, choosing places like London, Carthage, Constantinople, and later even Chicago.

As phenomena among the Kindred tend to be, the Beckoning is more complicated than it appears at first sight. There are many theories about it and even simple things like its timeline are disputed. Some argue that it started as late as the turn of the millennium while others suggest the first cases occurred in the Eighties.

Here are a few phenomena that get lumped together as the Beckoning:

- **Elders voluntarily traveling to fight in the Gehenna War:** Sometimes elders don't have to be forced. They travel to the war zone on purpose to defend the interests of their sires and lineages, to revel in the bloody mayhem, and to settle ancient scores.

- **Ancilla pretending to be elders:** “Oh, I’m totally feeling the pull of the Beckoning! Did I tell you I’m really 500 years old?” Vampires lie all the time, and some lie about the Beckoning to sound important and powerful. A few go so far as to travel to war zones to make the lie more plausible.
- **Kindred settling scores and blaming the Beckoning:** When you assassinate an elder, it may be easier to concoct a story about how they were Beckoned rather than tell the truth and risk the vengeance of their allies.
- **Elders in hiding:** Some elders saw the writing on the wall long before the rest of Kindred society, whether they were believers in the Noddist stories of Gehenna, saw the rise of thin-bloods and other portents, joined the Inconnu, forged a new mask as an Anarch or Autarch, or just felt their own blood beginning to stir. These elders never really left, but simply cut ties to hide deeper in the shadows of the cities they call home or forged a new domain for themselves nearby.
And finally:
- **Sometimes elders really do get Beckoned:** The Beckoning is real. Something is calling to elders and methuselahs and pulling them away from their domains to the dangerous battlefields of the Gehenna War. The most common theory is that this is because their progenitors, either Antediluvians or fourth-generation methuselahs, are calling to everyone of their own bloodline to fight for them. This effect is most powerful in those closest in blood to the summoning ancients. There’s also a theory that eventually this effect is going to spread to all vampires, even Duskborn, although to date no thin-bloods or Caitiff have been Beckoned.
If you decide to do a Gehenna War chronicle, you can choose to set it in a domain that attracts Beckoned elders. In that case, there’d be an unusual concentration of old vampires present.



Diablerie

**WATCH YOUR OWN CHILDER:
ON THE LIPS OF ALL IS THE
HONEY-TASTE OF DIABLERIE**

—THE BOOK OF NOD

The chief crime of all Kindred looms large in many stories involving elders and methuselahs. Young childer may be tempted to steal the vast powers of the elders in a race to the power of Caine. Those of potent Blood find their own bodies begin to reject mortal blood, hungering for the vitae of their own kind. The Duskborn seek it out to join the ranks of true Kindred while neonates and methuselahs alike seek to thicken their blood and solidify their power.

Many action stories, especially Gehenna War stories, may feature Diablerie either as an element of the plot or the dark secret of a player’s character. Diablerie isn’t easy to prove, and many Tremere or other practitioners of Blood Sorcery (for example, with A Taste for Blood) or Auspex (Scry the Soul) may be called upon to attempt to adjudicate accusations of the crime.

Among the troupe, Diablerie can lead to perceived or real imbalances within the game. Because of this, players and Storytellers may want to discuss their understanding of Diablerie and its ramifications for the chronicle in a session zero or when the topic comes up during a chronicle. The act of Diablerie itself is difficult (even when there's a test you can use Willpower or a Blood Surge on). It's easy to take a break and talk about a weighty decision among the troupe before you make it. Of course, with the right troupe, it's also fun to live with the consequences of a rash decision.

For those wishing to lean into Diablerie stories, some of the options in Appendix II may be exciting, as well as the Agata Starek Loreshet (*Anarch*, p. 191) and the Amaranthans cult (*Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 114) along with their Loreshet (*Children of the Blood*, p. 104)

Who?

The Gehenna War is not fought between two clearly distinct sides. Rather, it's a terrifying free-for-all between a bewildering array of factions and individuals. Nobody, not even the most ancient methuselahs, has a good overview of the war. That leaves room for surprising situations where you thought you were fighting one enemy, while in fact you were fighting a completely different one. Or even an ally.

The Sabbat

You could say the Sabbat really made the Gehenna War what it is now. There's a theory that in their hunt for the Antediluvians, they made a number of the most ancient methuselahs feel threatened in a way they haven't been threatened before, causing them to stir into activity they have not displayed for centuries, all at once. Because the Sabbat believes that the time is now, they've chosen to act in a way that's brought Gehenna into being.

It's difficult to say if that's really true. What is clear is that the Sabbat is rampaging their way across domains, seeking the resting places of the

Antediluvians or any other ancient Kindred with the goal of destroying them. In the process, they fight the Camarilla, the Ashirra, and others who seek to protect their domains from this vile horde.

The Sabbat seem to behave as if they had information that nobody else does. They have a sense of urgency, taking risks and sacrificing their members to achieve their goals. Unfortunately, even basic communication with Sabbat members is extremely hard and carries the risk of being destroyed, mutilated, or driven mad. As such, few members of the other sects even attempt it.

The vehemence and fanaticism of the Sabbat has played a key role in motivating some of the minor Kindred factions into joining the Gehenna War. The Sabbat draws so much attention to itself, it makes it possible for other Kindred to discreetly make their own moves. Of course, this is a risky plan because if the Sabbat turns its attention to you, quick destruction is usually the best you can hope for.

Extensive information on the Sabbat can be found in *Sabbat: The Black Hand*.

The Sabbat really made the Gehenna War what it is now.

The Camarilla & the Ashirra

In terms of the Gehenna War, the Camarilla and the Ashirra are fairly well united. They're both ancient sects operating on the principle of individual domains joined together in a loose network designed to protect power and privilege. Most of those with power in both sects would love to be able to ignore the Gehenna War. A typical Camarilla Prince has no stake in the conflict. For them, it's a calamity making their domain into an ungovernable catastrophe.

Even when drawn into the conflict, the reaction of a typical Prince is to keep the domain in the dark about what's happening. Lies, obfuscation and secrecy come naturally to the Kindred and a Prince may fear that the prospect of the Gehenna War would weaken their rule if their subjects knew about it.



Of course, this means that sometimes the War's existence comes as an explosive surprise to a neonate Brujah or Ventrite who have been minding their own business, unaware of what's happening.

Despite this reticence, the fact is that many domains simply cannot escape the War. The Sabbat believes that there could be ancients sleeping under the streets of your city, and so they come. At that point, the domain is forced to go onto war footing whether they understand the logic of the War or not. Because this is just one reason why the Sabbat may be laying siege to a domain, its inhabitants may not even know that their travails are connected to the Gehenna War. In those areas most affected by the War, entire domains have become blasted war zones, no concept of normalcy surviving among the local Kindred. The Camarilla and the Ashirra do their best to survive while the Sabbat comes at them with full force.

Of course, the most dangerous enemy a vampire can face is almost always another vampire, Sabbat or not. Camarilla and Ashirra Kindred backstab each other as much as they're able while maintaining the facade of the alliance created through the Vermilion Wedding.

THE WAR COMES TO YOU

The dangers posed by the Gehenna War to an average domain are innumerable. Examples of events that may impact domains and Kindred who nominally have nothing to do with the War include:

Dramatic Violence: Explosions, mass murder and shootings, often inexplicable. You may not know why all of this is happening, but clearly something terrible is going on. These events are often perplexing to mortal authorities who struggle to fit labels like "terrorism" onto facts that don't quite fit together.

Disappearances: Kindred just disappear, especially among the most powerful. This can be a cause to celebrate for younger vampires but the more cautious may wonder what's so terrible that it can make the Prince suddenly vanish.

Erratic Behavior: A reclusive member of the Primogen suddenly hosts a reception where they introduce their supposed allies and clanmates to the domain. These new Kindred appear barely able to keep up the pretense required of their new identities.

Bizarrely Motivated Acquisitions: An important Tremere vampire comes to the domain to look for paraphernalia involved in Thin-Blood Alchemy. A group of ghouls become convinced that the secrets to their liberation lie in an obscure translation of the Book of Nod or a handwritten version of the Carthaginian Manuscript in the original Punic.

Extreme Moves: The domain's usually staid Church of Caine suddenly declares that the methuselah Tiamat is the one true vampire God, surpassing all others in power and antiquity. The entire Primogen seek shelter from a neighboring domain, without mentioning the imminent Sabbat incursion to anyone else.

One core aspect of the Gehenna War is that it causes usually conservative Kindred to act in extreme ways. Even if the War is not at the core of the chronicle, you can use it to shake up the status quo.

The Anarchs

Of the major sects, the Anarchs are the least affected by the Gehenna War. The ancient rivalries and prophetic visions often simply pass by the youngest Kindred with Blood furthest away in generation from Caine. This can be a mixed blessing. For those who never encounter the War, it's a good thing. But for those Anarchs unfortunate enough to be caught up in its many upheavals, the experience can be especially terrifying because they have no idea what's going on.

Up until tonight, the oldest vampire you'd ever met was Embraced in the Sixties. Now you're standing in the cargo hold of a massive, creaking ship witnessing how an entity thousands of years old rises from its sarcophagus, its eyes glinting with alien hunger. How can you seek to survive such an encounter when you don't have any framework for what you're seeing?

That said, sometimes the War does provide opportunities for an enterprising Anarch. The losses sustained by other factions can be exploited, domains captured, and Camarilla vampires destroyed or expelled because their attention is directed elsewhere. And of course, sometimes it's an Anarch who feels the presence of something old beyond mortal reckoning, whispering the promises of eternal rewards in return for loyal service.

Inconnu

A rumored sect of non-interventionist elders, the Inconnu have surely suffered at the hands of the Gehenna War. Still, whether this is true most Kindred would never know. The Inconnu thrive in secrecy and may even take perverse delight in their anonymity and discretion, their power felt only rarely. Because of the age of its members, the sect has most likely been ravaged by the Beckoning before the Gehenna War began.

In the Gehenna War, younger Kindred might see members of the Inconnu as sages or sources of knowledge concerning local threats. The few known

monitors of the sect are eagerly sought out for their information, which they seem to be loath to give given their non-interventionist stance.

Autarkis

The autarkis are all those who refuse to affiliate with any sect, even the Anarchs. Because of this, it's difficult to say anything of the autarkis as a whole. Individual autarks and autarkies are threatened by new fronts in the Gehenna War, and they must deal with such problems themselves. Despite their plans, individual autarks and whole autarkies can be drawn in by the machinations of a single elder, much less a methuselah. Most autarks simply wish to continue on their own, but the Gehenna War is not something they can hide from or wish away. They're likely to be forced to reach out for assistance from any neighbors they have, possibly joining a sect against their better judgment for protection from the forces arrayed against them.

Other Factions

There are countless Kindred factions in the world, local groups, domains and bloodlines with their own ideas of how the world works. Some have dedicated themselves to the Gehenna War, while others are opportunists using the violence as a cover to fulfill their own goals. You can read more about these in Chapter Five.

The factions described in this book actively engaged in the Gehenna War are:

- **The Cartographers:** Nosferatu, a decentralized network of information brokers.
- **Cohort of Wepwawet:** Fanatics seeking to purge the Ministry of non-Setites.
- **The Dead Lions:** A gathering army to oppose the methuselahs.
- **Garrote Vil:** Camarilla agents suppressing knowledge of the Antediluvians.
- **Moon's Army:** Sabbat hit squads hunting Tremere and Salubri agents.

- **The Servitors of Irad:** Aspiring servants of the Antediluvians.
- **The Shepherds of Ur-Shulgi:** Fanatical followers of the Banu Haqim methuselah. The factions which easily resort to violence and which exploit the Gehenna War are:
 - **The Boule:** An autarky, a Kindred bank hoarding money and Noddist lore.
 - **The Circulatory System Board of Trust:** The leadership of a crime syndicate, a worldwide network of blood smugglers.
 - **Los Hijos de Si:** Blood cult following a mysterious moon goddess.
 - **Mora's Death Seers:** Hecata who reject the unification of the clan's many bloodlines.
 - **Oradea League:** An ancient society of Kindred with designs on supplanting the Camarilla.
 - **Oswobodziciele:** A ghoul liberation organization.
 - **Throne's Keepers:** Autarky. Followers of a figure called "the Goddess."

Blood Gods

There are Kindred who argue that it doesn't matter whether Gehenna is real if ancient methuselahs like Kemintiri and Enkidu act as if it is. They say that at the core of the Gehenna War is a perception that the time to act is now. If you want to reshape the world in your image, you have to make your move. Kindred, especially ancilla and older, are used to waiting out their rivals. That no longer works, or at least those who believe in Gehenna think it doesn't.

According to the legends cherished by the Church of Caine and other collectors of Kindred myth, the clans are the bloodlines of the Antediluvians, the third generation of vampires. Each Antediluvian Embraced progeny, and those progeny share traits. Some of the first among these fourth generation Kindred still exist, having walked the earth for many thousands of years.

The methuselahs are often worshipped among the Kindred, stories about them and their exploits spreading as vampire fables. Are they true? That's impossible for anyone to say.

What separates the current era from past ages is that an unusual number of these methuselahs have awoken from torpor. Many of those fighting the Gehenna War believe that these ancients control and direct the factions involved. It's common to assume that your own faction is fighting bravely for noble principles while your enemies are unwitting dupes in the thrall of an ancient blood god.

And who knows, it might be true!

The methuselahs are often worshipped among the Kindred.

ANTEDILUVIANS

A common story of Gehenna describes the Antediluvians, the progenitors of the great clans of the Kindred, waking up and rising to devour their children. They summon their progeny and drink them dry as they walk the earth like great gods of blood and destruction.

It's a quirk of vampire faith that few Kindred actually worship the Antediluvians. There are many cults who hold individual methuselahs as sacred, and Caine enjoys the devotion of an entire Church as well as the Sabbat. Not so those who have given the most distinct vampire bloodlines their identities. There's a fear pervading the stories of even those clans who still have old stories of their origin, such as the Banu Haqim.

THE TREMERE CHARLATAN AND LIAR RYOSUKE YAMAZAKI SPEAKS OF THE ANTEDILUVIANS:
OUR ELDERS ALWAYS LIE, THAT'S A GIVEN. THAT'S WHY THE ONLY INFORMATION YOU CAN REALLY TRUST IS THAT WHICH YOU STOLE. IF THEY TRIED TO HIDE IT, IT MUST BE TRUE. I'VE SEEN THE CAMARILLA IN MANY DOMAINS FLAT OUT DENY THE EXISTENCE OF THE ANTEDILUVIANS! THEY DENY IT SO ADAMANTLY THAT IT MUST SURELY BE TRUE. THERE'S SOMETHING SEDUCTIVE ABOUT IT. YOU START TO WONDER IF THEY'RE STILL OUT THERE, SOMEWHERE. IF YOU COULD FIND THEM, WAKE THEM, RECEIVE UNTOLD POWER FROM THEM.
OR JUST TAKE IT. DRINK THEIR BLOOD. MAKE IT YOURS.
YOU WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST. I HEARD OUR ELDERS SPEAK OF THE PROGENITOR OF THE BRUJAH CLAN, SUBJECTED TO THE DIABLERIE BY THEIR ONLY CHILDE, TROILE. STILL, THE BRUJAH DON'T GET CALLED USUPERS THE WAY WE IN THE TREMERE DO. I WONDER WHY IS THAT? WAS SAVLOT, THE ANTEDILUVIAN OF THE EXTINGUISHED SALUBRI, SO ADORED THAT WHEN OUR OWN PROGENITOR, TREMERE, DRANK HIS BLOOD, THE CRIME COULD NEVER BE FORGOTTEN?
MAYBE THAT'S THE REAL REASON STORIES OF THE ANTEDILUVIANS ARE SUPPRESSED. THEY CONTAIN TOO MANY MENTION OF DIABLERIE TO BE COMFORTABLE FOR THOSE WITH BLOOD OF IMMENSE AGE AND POTENCY.

METHUSELAH CULTS

There are many methuselah cults, especially in the Camarilla, worshiping the ancients. For them, the idea of their god actually appearing in their midst can cause wildly divergent reactions.

For some, the rumor that their god has awoken is confirmation that everything they've believed is now validated. The sacred ancestor is among them once more! Kindred reacting like this tend to be more fanatical and reckless, taking massive risks as they seek to serve their unfathomable god.

For others, this is a catastrophe. As long as the methuselah sleeps in some unknown grave, the leaders of the cult can shape its direction as they wish. In reality, the cult serves their needs. If the god actually appears, they lose a lot of the power they've become accustomed to. This is why they often argue that the stories of the Gehenna War and the risen ancients are lies, fictions spread to confuse.

You can read more about vampire cults in *Camarilla* (see p. 30) and throughout *Cults of the Blood Gods*.





CERI

Clan: Toreador, 4th generation

Reputation: Those who have heard of Ceri are typically Camarilla members in good standing, enmeshed deep enough in the sect to hear exclusive secrets and rumors. They say that she has been sighted in Paris or Berlin, old European domains where she has appeared as a power behind the throne. A ghost whispering in the ear of a powerful, old Prince. Alarmingly, they say that sometimes she has even appeared among the Anarchs, young Kindred who don't understand what they're interacting with.

To those who know of her, she often represents co-opting the most powerful existing Kindred power structures to serve the ends of unfathomable blood gods.

Description: Stories describe Ceri as a tall, emaciated woman with pale skin and white hair, almost more of a spirit than a physical being. She dresses in diaphanous fabrics, or sometimes not at all, her long fingers gently touching the cheek of a Prince renowned for their age, power and wisdom. Sometimes she's also rumored to take on a disguise pretending to be a hapless fledgling until she reveals her true identity to the person she wants under her thrall.

I believe in power. I trust I have demonstrated that sufficiently.

Specifically, political power.

Among our kind, there are those who trust in their Blood and supernatural might. I have found that such tools only get you so far. You have to be able to manipulate the kine to achieve a real impact on the world. And by extension, our secret world too.

Some of the old Camarilla princes fail to understand this. They believe they can just flail around with the powers of their Blood to force everyone to serve them.

What folly.

Yet, I too am guilty of folly. I at least believed that those Princes would be able to sustain their own independence. They couldn't rule a modern metropolis, but at least they'd have the power to control their court.

I saw her with my own eyes. She was like a spider made of bone, a beautiful stick figure, her pale hair falling onto the Prince's shoulder as she gently leaned in to drink his blood.

In full view of the court!

I was there as an emissary. Looking at the glassy eyes of the Kindred there, I realized there was no future for this domain. It had succumbed to the Gehenna War. To Ceri and her malign influence.

There's always a silver lining. I believe a few years of doing her bidding in the Gehenna War is going to deplete any lingering mortal influence those Kindred still have. Once they're used up, we'll move in.

We just have to hope she has moved on by that point.

Fiorenza Savona

Rumors

- **The Prince is under the control of a methuselah:** In almost every domain where there's a Prince, there are rumors that the Prince is under the control of some evil force. Some who know of Ceri identify her as that force, but it's rare for this information to be firsthand.
- **A servant of the Antediluvians:** According to a rumor, Ceri still loves the Antediluvian who Embraced her, seeking to make the world perfect for their arrival. Others question such legends, pointing out that love is not an emotion which

tends to survive through the centuries as Kindred age. In the stories of Ceri, she doesn't come across as particularly humane.

- **Ceri is literally a monstrous bone spider:** Sometimes metaphorical language is taken literally as stories are told and retold. In these depictions, Ceri is a white, long-limbed spider made of bone, scuttling in the dustiest catacombs of ancient European domains.



ENKIDU

Clan: Gangrel, 4th Generation

Reputation: Stories about Enkidu are not rare among Kindred interested in myths of their kind.

They tell of a methuselah given a task by the Gangrel Antediluvian to preserve the rare and the unusual, the perishing and the dying among the animal kingdom. According to these stories, Enkidu holds an ancient animal called the Typhonian Beast, the last of its kind, in its body.

The story of the Typhonian Beast is sometimes taken as a metaphor for the struggle all Kindred face, the Hunger inside them driving them to monstrous acts. For the methuselah-worshippers who revere Enkidu, the ancient's story is interesting because he's almost entirely bestial with little connection to

human civilization, yet still struggles to hold onto a greater purpose beyond just succumbing to the Hunger.

Enkidu is an animal and should be a wight, yet something inside him refuses to succumb to the Typhonian Beast. Or so the story goes.

Description: Enkidu appears to be entirely inhuman. Descriptions vary, but they always tend to give him a selection of animal characteristics, like a medieval manuscript describing a mythical beast: Sometimes, he has the wings of a bat and the head of a boar, or the hands of a monkey and the teeth of a tiger. Sometimes, it's suggested that he can also be a swarm.

A diatribe by Lina Meier, Gangrel neonate and former methuselah cultist:

What you have to understand is that the stories told of Enkidu are lies. He's not a metaphor for the inner desire of all Kindred to do better or some shit like that. He's a monstrosity, a destructive urge, a prehistoric plague come to bedevil us. They told us this story of how he struggled with the Typhonian Beast who's supposedly somehow worse than the regular Beast the rest of us have, making the struggle all the more noble. I don't know. What I do know is that when we were doing our ritual of worship in a forest glade in Poland, we were overwhelmed by a swarm of wild animals, wolves, bears, deer, trampling, biting, tearing us apart.

I don't think they spared me on purpose. I just hid underneath a pickup truck and hoped they'd pass me by. Playing dead is easier when you're a vampire but have you ever tried not to move when something is gnawing at your thigh, ripping off chunks of flesh to see if you're edible?

We prayed and he answered. That's what I believe happened.

If that was Enkidu, the methuselah, he sure isn't about the noble impulses to be found in nature. He's the vengeance of a prehistoric time, come to eradicate all the illusions and lies built by us. Including the ones we've created in his honor.

Rumors

- **Enkidu is present in all animals:** Every single animal in the world watches with the eyes of Enkidu and he may manifest from all of them. You are never alone, and your sins will always be witnessed, if only by the tiniest insect!
- **Enkidu has reached Golconda:** By foregoing mortal contact and focusing on the purity of animal instinct, Enkidu reached Golconda, finally destroying the Typhonian Beast!

- **Enkidu was destroyed:** There are fanatics within the Camarilla and in the service of the Justicars focused on destroying ancient monstrosities threatening all Kindred. Such agents are said to have destroyed Enkidu, only to have him be reborn in the vast host of the animal kingdom.



KEMINTIRI

Clan: Ministry, 4th Generation

Reputation: Kemintiri is a trickster figure with a legend focusing on feats of deceit, seduction, and manipulation. Stories of her many feats include a stint as the lover of the Venttrue methuselah Mithras in antiquity, setting up a hedonistic cult in Victorian London, and masquerading as a Justicar for years. Her motivations and end goals tend to appear opaque, as if she was striving towards a purpose that somehow required lies and destruction.

Most of the modern stories involving the blood gods suggest that they've been awakened recently in response to the Gehenna War. Kemintiri is something of an exception as she has enjoyed a role as a mythical enemy in many European Camarilla domains since they first joined the sect, being

personally responsible for why such domains established Red Lists of their worst enemies in the first place.

In recent nights, there have been increasing voices in different Camarilla domains calling for the removal of methuselahs from the various Red Lists kept by different Princes or even abolishing the institution altogether. The argument is that placing a blood god onto a list of official enemies is presumptuous, arrogant and may be catastrophic if the methuselah in question takes notice.

Because Kemintiri is famous for taking on different masks and identities, pretending to be different Kindred and even mortals through the centuries, she also has plenty of imitators. Ambitious Kindred may decide to "reveal" that they're actually

The Anarch activist Rudi talks about his experiences with Kemintiri:

There was this girl who came to us in Copenhagen. She looked lost and needed a haven where she could stay and get her bearings. We get a lot of strays like her, and I've made it a point to try to help all of them.

We had a squat going, a good building that attracted a lot of mortal strays too. I tried to hold onto the principle that we never feed to excess from them, but vampire fledglings are hard to control. Sometimes self-control comes with experience.

That wasn't the case with this girl, though. She was North African, and very much into punk. She dressed the part, breaking a few hearts along the way. I admit that she had a vulnerability that made me care for her even though I really should have known better.

Some among us argue that we should turn away more of the Kindred who come to us to join the Anarchs and to seek shelter because we could be infiltrated. I've said that this is nonsense because Camarilla vampires are nowhere near as good at infiltration as they imagine. The ancilla are too out of touch with modern mortal culture and the neonates we just flip to our side.

This one was perfect. Not only did all of us believe her story, we became invested. When she finally dumped her mortal boyfriend, we celebrated because we thought she had started to realize how powerful she really was. She didn't need nobody to belittle and exploit her.

Well, it was all bullshit. I know that now. It wasn't even about us. She just wanted a credible backstory for her actual goals elsewhere. I learned by accident that four months after she'd left us, she'd revealed herself to be Kemintiri.

I guess I should be thankful that she didn't really care about us. With a creature like that, the best you can do is minimize the damage. Some of the more heterosexual boys around here are still pining for her. Somehow, they convinced themselves that what she did was a heroic act of resistance to the Camarilla. They're fools, but it takes a lot to resist a blood god.

her for the infamy such a claim brings. This means that of the vast panoply of Kemintiri stories, most are probably untrue.

Description: Descriptions of Kemintiri vary tremendously, although there's some consensus that in her true form, she's an Egyptian woman of indeterminate age, long, straight black hair and eyes with vertical pupils like a snake. Stories about Kemintiri tend to highlight the idea that she can be anyone, anywhere. The Prince can be her, as can be that Nosferatu who always wears a mask. Stories about her tend to engender paranoia among the easily influenced.

Rumors

- **The local Camarilla's leaders are in the thrall of Kemintiri and must be destroyed:** Accusing your enemies of associating with Kemintiri is a classic, oft-used tactic in the war of narratives among the Kindred.
- **Kemintiri is misunderstood:** The Camarilla's elders hate Kemintiri because she reveals them for the power-hungry monsters they are. She is a true hero of the people, the mythical original rebel!
- **Kemintiri takes your soul but also lets you experience wondrous delights:** There's a reason why she's able to get everyone to do her bidding. She has mystical abilities which grant access to an unknown world of sensuous pleasure and wisdom.



PLAGUE-BRIDE

Clan: Malkavian, 4th Generation

Reputation: A mythical methuselah, the Malkavian Plague-Bride is associated with love, care, self-sacrifice, virulence, disease, and contagion. She is often portrayed as a martyr who was Embraced by the Malkavian Antediluvian because she gave him relief in his suffering. He saw something beautiful in her spirit and wanted to preserve it.

According to legend, wherever the Bride goes, disease follows. Mortal populations weaken and die, and the Kindred lose their sustenance, previously healthy blood turning into ashes.

More cynical, or perhaps realistic, vampires have described Plague-Bride as a fitting image for all

Kindred who imagine themselves still capable of doing good: Even as they move among the people they want to help, they just cause pain and suffering by their very nature. A vampiric predator who wants to be close to mortals or even others of its own kind only invites more hurt.

Description: Depictions of the Plague-Bride tend to be fanciful and follow the fashions of the time. She's often portrayed in a wedding dress, with a veil obscuring her emaciated, corpselike features. She tends to be pictured obviously dead in appearance, already rotten, ravaged by disease. Some have argued that she must be Hecata instead of Malkavian just based on her reputed appearance.

From a letter by the Anarch Theo Bell:

Sometimes people's misery is so overwhelming, the violence of combat comes as a relief. I was at a small town in Romania. It was a poor, miserable place at the best of times, but the Sabbat was there, intent on dredging something up from a mountain lake. Maybe they believed that one of the ancients they hunt was there. I don't know.

I spent a week in the region. It was the fall and the weather turned cold and damp. There was a lot of wind at night, howling between buildings as if it had a human voice.

I know that sounds florid but it's true. The family I rented a room from remarked upon it. I was pretending to be an American hobbyist interested in communist history.

One night I woke up and the mortals were coughing blood. I was thirsty but there was something wrong, as if the blood felt rancid even while it was inside their living veins.

I found Sabbat too, that night. I'd prepared assiduously for the fight, making sure I had everything I needed to destroy them.

Someone had done it for me. There was a boat drifting on the still waters of the lake. When I stepped aboard, my weight caused it to list to one side and the dust of dead vampires fell to the water.

I thought I saw a figure on the shore, a woman dressed in white staring at me with dead eyes. Perhaps it was her whom the Sabbat had tried to find. They were successful, although that was cold comfort.

Rumors

- **As the Plague-Bride walks the earth, disease follows until all of humanity is consumed:**
As mortals die of the plague, Kindred turn on each other in a desperate search for the last bits of sustenance.
- **The disease brought by the Bride is a blessing, a sign of her love:** Even a vampire can be thus blessed, carrying a blood disease which eventually destroys them. In the final moments of their

wasting, they catch a glimpse of the Bride, ushering them to Golconda.

- **The Bride was twice cursed, first by the Hunger and second by the plague:**
The Kindred of the third generation, the Antediluvians, could not stand the purity and sacrifice of the Bride and wanted to punish their brother, the Malkavian progenitor, for Embracing her. Thus, they cursed her to bring illness wherever she went.



SHALIM

Clan: Assumed to be Lasombra, perhaps of the 4th Generation

Reputation: Shalim is mostly known to the Cult of Shalim (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 86), a nihilist faith with a focus on the death of meaning. Descriptions of Shalim itself vary, but usually involve a black void instilling an enlightenment in the form of a total lack of meaning or purpose as something desirable. Cult members tend to believe that Shalim is a fourth generation Lasombra, although some argue that it is a more primordial entity, a void god of some sort.

Description: Surprisingly, many members of the Cult of Shalim describe actually meeting their god, or at least communicating with it in some way. These stories tend to involve extreme mental states such as attempts at self-annihilation leading to a sudden perception of the void and a figure within. These descriptions are rarely corroborated, but indicate a closer relationship between the god and its followers than with most other methuselah cults.

FROM A LETTER BY VERONICA ORTEGA, A CULT OF SHALIM APOSTATE:

I KNOW I CUT ALL TIES WHEN I JOINED THE CULT OF SHALIM. I TOLD YOU THAT YOU'D NEVER HEAR FROM ME AGAIN AND THAT ONLY WEAKNESS STOPPED ME FROM DESTROYING YOU.

I'M GLAD OF THAT WEAKNESS, NOW.

WHEN YOU JOIN THE CULT, THEY DO THEIR BEST TO ERODE EVERYTHING YOU'VE EVER LOVED OR APPRECIATED. THAT APPEALED TO ME BECAUSE THE EMBRACE AND WHAT HAPPENED AFTER HAD ALREADY DONE A GOOD JOB OF THAT. I FELT LIKE I HAD NOTHING, AND THE CULT GAVE ME A PLACE WHERE THAT MADE SENSE.

SOME OF THE OLDER MEMBERS TOLD ME THEY'D SEEN SHALIM. A BLACK SHAPE GRANTING THE WISDOM OF NOTHINGNESS. I REMEMBER WALKING FROM THE FOREST TO THE SHORE. PINE TREES, A STIFF WIND BLOWING FROM THE DARKNESS. I WAS LATE. THE OTHERS WERE HOLDING THE CEREMONY BY THE SEA BECAUSE ONE OF THEM BELIEVED HE HAD WITNESSED SHALIM SOMEWHERE IN THE DEPTHS, A LONG TIME AGO.

I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S TRUE.

WHEN I CAME TO THE SHORE, I SAW THE BODIES OF THE OTHERS, ROTTEN OR SKELETAL DEPENDING ON THEIR AGE. ALL DESTROYED EXCEPT FOR ME. I WAS SAVED BY A TRAFFIC STOP ON THE HIGHWAY. THE BODIES LOOKED STRANGE, AS IF A VOID HAD APPEARED INSIDE THEM, THEIR FACES, THROATS, CHESTS, AND PULLED INWARDS. FLESH SHRUNKEN, BONES CRACKED.

I REMEMBER LOOKING UP. THE SEA WAS DARK, BLACK BUT THEN I SAW IT. THE WIND GOING STILL, THE SEABIRDS QUIET. A SHAPE OVER THE WATER, OR WHERE I IMAGINED THE WATER TO BE. IT WAS SILENT BUT I UNDERSTOOD. IT ASKED ME TO FOLLOW. NOT A COMMAND, NOT A DICTATE. AN INVITATION. TO CONSIDER AND THEN RETURN TO THE SHORE ON A MOONLESS NIGHT.

I'M WRITING TO YOU BECAUSE I WANTED SOMEONE TO KNOW BEFORE I DECIDE. I KNOW THAT TO ACCEPT THE INVITATION IS OBLIVION, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING I WORRY ABOUT EVEN MORE: WHAT IF IT'S NOT? WHAT IF IT REALLY NEEDS ME FOR SOMETHING?

WHAT IF THERE IS A PURPOSE?

Rumors

- **Shalim is not a methuselah but a demon of the void:** Think about it! Nothing about Shalim indicates that it's a vampire. No, it makes much more sense that it's a demon or something even more worrying: An alien being descending from the depths of space.
- **The first of the blood gods to awaken to the Gehenna War, Shalim personally invites every member of its cult:** To be Kindred is to lose everything. This means that eventually, Shalim is all that's going to exist in the ruins of the Camarilla, the Anarchs, and even the Sabbat.

▪ **You can always find Shalim in the depths:** Go deep into the sewers or dive far under the waves and eventually you'll find darkness so profound, it'll speak to you.



TIAMAT

Clan: Assumed to be Venttrue, perhaps of the 4th Generation

Reputation: Tiamat is a legendary methuselah, often said to be older than recorded history. She's sometimes venerated by methuselah cults, but also often presented as a nemesis or an opponent to a supposedly more worthy ancient, such as the Venttrue Mithras.

The most common type of story involving Tiamat is about a long-lost gravesite or a mausoleum supposedly containing her torpid body. These stories have motivated many to seek to find her, to serve her, to destroy her or even to subject her to diablerie.

Myths about Tiamat say that she struggles with a demonic force. It purportedly takes over her body, forcing her to do horrifying, violent deeds. This is typically interpreted as a metaphor for the Hunger which similarly compels Kindred to horrific acts, showing how their nightly struggles are reflected in the legend of the methuselah.

Description: Tiamat is often depicted as a strong, regal but inhuman woman staring into eternity. She's often associated with graves and resting places, portrayed as sleeping with sunken cheeks, dust and cobwebs covering her.

From a letter by the Malkavian scholar Aristotle de Laurent:

The stories of Tiamat are contradictory, as if describing two different people. It is my belief that this exemplifies the essential duality of our kind. We have an intellect which may surpass that of the most gifted mortal but are also cursed with a thirst which eternally seeks to reduce us to base animals. From the literature I've been able to review, I was unable to determine whether Tiamat was a symbol for this dichotomy or an actual, existing methuselah. It has been my experience that more of our ancient myths are true than we'd perhaps wish, but some skepticism is still warranted especially when a high level of symbolism is involved.

Well, I can now put this debate to rest for something happened that you know I have no taste for. I'm not an adventurer and I don't wish to soil myself in some dusty catacomb. I much prefer the court of my Prince.

And indeed, that is where I saw Tiamat. Or more precisely, I saw a sarcophagus where she was supposed to be lying. It had been brought to Prince Villon's court at great expense to be opened in full view of the assembled Kindred. The Prince's courtiers treated it as a social event, something to alleviate the boredom we all occasionally suffer from.

After all, despite the fanciful stories of Kindred graverobbers, these sarcophagi rarely if ever actually contain the ancient that's supposed to lie inside. Usually, it's just a mummified corpse or a pile of bones.

This time... What happened? None at the court now remember and most pretend that the mortals we were imbibing from had just had too much to drink.

Yet unlike some of the courtiers, I knew how to decipher the markings carved on the stone. I know what they said, what they warned of. I still remember those words speaking of her, of Tiamat, of a goddess given physical form. A destroyer of villages and towns, the end of cities and empires.

There are others at the court more strong-willed than I, yet none admit to seeing what actually arose out of the stone sarcophagus. Many suppose that it was empty all along.

But I... I know it wasn't. She was there.

Rumors

- **Tiamat is going to end all sects:** The death of empires, Tiamat works to bring her destructive blessings to the world of the Kindred, decimating all the sects such as the Camarilla, the Anarchs, the Ashirra and the Sabbat.
- **Inside Tiamat, there is still something good and pure struggling to regain control:** All vampires can be redeemed. Golconda is possible!

Tiamat is just misunderstood. She isn't the queen of destruction she's always portrayed as, but rather a tortured, noble soul.

- **Tiamat is not just a vampire who became known by the name of a goddess, but the actual divinity:** How can something so powerful be one of the Kindred? She can't! She's one of the gods of old, come to take her vengeance.



UR-SHULGI

Clan: Banu Haqim, 4th Generation

Reputation: Among the Banu Haqim, Ur-Shulgi is something of a bogeyman, a monstrous figure haunting the younger and more modern members of the clan. It's usually assumed that Ur-Shulgi is the oldest existing progeny of the clan founder. There's a faction in the clan called The Shepherds of Ur-Shulgi (see p. 113) who argue that clan tradition says that the eldest is in charge, and the eldest is him. Furthermore, they claim that all allegiances to anyone else are false, especially including sects like the Camarilla and the Ashirra, as well as mortal religions.

Description: In the stories about Ur-Shulgi, he's typically depicted as a severely burnt young man with black fissures crossing his skin. Blood weeps out of these cracks, with glimpses of bone visible in the joints. He has no eyes as these too have been boiled away. It sounds like the ancient has been subjected to something no vampire should be able to survive, yet still exists, attempting to bring its bloodline back to how things were at the dawn of recorded history.

From remarks made by the Banu Haqim elder Tegyrius:

Some believe that as you follow your bloodline back generation by generation, you find wisdom. You see that those who were present at the first nights saw things clearly and the centuries have only muddied their wisdom.

Indeed, many among the Banu Haqim hold such beliefs.

They are lies. To understand this, you don't have to do anything more than gaze into the sightless eyes of a monster demanding allegiance with nothing but promises of a reign of blood and terror.

I'm old and the days when I could watch the sun rise are so far gone, they're hard for me to remember. I can understand why someone Embraced more recently would fail to see the difference between me and Ur-Shulgi, the oldest of my clan known to be awake.

I saw him once, when I was but a fledgling myself. He was awake sometimes in those nights, hunting, destroying, raving before falling back to the sweet embrace of torpor. There's a temptation to dismiss him as a mere beast, powerful but incapable of reaching out to a higher sphere of understanding. This is a mistake. He understands. It's just that he has discarded any semblance of mortal morality so long ago, he doesn't even remember the loss.

Ur-Shulgi is a blood god in the truest sense of the word. He already was in those ancient nights when I saw him move through a crowd of mortals, drinking, drawing their blood to him, draining entire villages to sustain a need so powerful, the entire world is not enough to sate it.

He left behind footprints of blood and ash. I remember kneeling to touch them after he had passed, wondering that a creature so ancient could have touched that same sand.

Some would say that I too am ancient now, having survived the long centuries, made the choices that allowed my clan to flourish among the great sects. I even tell myself that I may have some tenuous connection to humanity left, although my Blood-Wedded wife Victoria makes fun of such claims.

Still, compared to Ur-Shulgi, I'm the same as I was that night when I saw him move through the kine: A fledgling.

Rumors

- **Ur-Shulgi is the Banu Haqim Antediluvian:** Stories of Haqim are later inventions and the rise of the blood god has put the lie to them. Ur-Shulgi is not followed because he's the oldest son. No, he's followed because he's the progenitor.
- **The Blood from Ur-Shulgi's wounds brings Kindred closer to Caine:** Ur-Shulgi weeps Blood from the burnt fissures on his skin. Sometimes this Blood sticks to the floor as he walks past. Licking this Blood is akin to performing diablerie on an elder, granting your Blood a newfound potency.
- **Ur-Shulgi was there in the beginning:** All

the methuselahs are ancient. That's what the word means. Still, Ur-Shulgi is the first among them, and he was present in the nights when the Antediluvians and Caine himself still walked the earth. He's a witness to the true origins of the Kindred. He must be followed because his path of blood and destruction hails from what vampires were always meant to be, before they were corrupted by mortal concerns. ■



Chapter Two:

WE WHO ARE ALREADY DEAD...

Conflict is as natural to vampires as feeding, and nowhere is this truer than in the Gehenna War. Those thrust into the war's jaws encounter dire battles, world-shattering revelations, and opportunities for greater power.

This chapter prepares troupes for the conflict ahead. It provides archetypes suitable for a Gehenna War-focused chronicle, an optional rule system for playing more combat capable characters, an examination and expansion of **Vampire**'s conflict rules, and unique weapons.

Archetypes

These archetypes are a few of the Kindred found amid the Gehenna War. Each comes with suggestions on how to build and play your own take on the archetype, whether as a character or as a supporting character.

The General

Who They Are: The General is a master of manipulation over Kindred and kine. In the Gehenna War, Generals are leaders and tacticians, guiding their coteries, domains, or even entire sects

to victory. Their decisions make the difference between unlife and Final Death on the battlefield.

Where They Came From: Some Generals were Embraced into the position, a replacement for someone looking for a way out of the war. Others rose into the position after years of planning and patience. A few were thrust into the role, either because no one else wanted to be a leader, or because the would-be General was the only person left standing after the battle.

How to Play Them: The General keeps their eyes on the present and their mind in the future. No matter how close they are to their allies, they see them as the rank-and-file first and comrades second. Still, they know that every asset is precious and winning with heavy sacrifices is worse than losing.

Mechanical Advice: Generals focus on Charisma, Intelligence and Resolve. Their best skills are often Awareness, Intimidation, and Leadership. They often have Allies, Influence, and some amount of Status in a relevant faction. They might have a Descendant Loreshow, or a Loreshow connecting them to a specific figure in the vampire community. They might have a Dark Secret involving Kindred they've sacrificed for victory in the past.

From a letter by the former Archon Theo Bell:

You asked how can I join forces with someone like Agata Starek? You even took the trouble to list some of her many sins: She has committed diablerie, destroyed countless Kindred and sought to topple domains everywhere she has gone. She has inspired some of the most nihilistic Anarchs in the modern nights as they try to emulate her antics.

All true. In addition, I find her personally abrasive.

Still.

Sometimes you have to prioritize.

We were in Belfast, in one of those basements where you find a hatch and stone stairs leading deeper underground. I've been in this business long enough to know that nothing good ever comes from walking down those stairs.

But of course we did. She was running her mouth in her usual fashion, trying to get a rise out of me. I was starting to get annoyed. Anybody would. Damn it, she's like a one-woman laboratory for finding ways to fuck with you.

She went quiet. There was the smell of old blood in the air, already dried on the stones in odd splotches as if someone had been banging a wound against the sides of the corridor. Suddenly, we emerged into an open space and saw the source of the blood.

A woman, older. In her sixties. Not Kindred. She had been banging her head from side to side, with wide open gashes oozing blood although she didn't have much left. She had lied there for a while. Other bodies strewn around the cave, a natural formation it looked like.

We were early, hoping to catch them still sleeping just after sundown. We thought we'd made it and Agata took out a stake but just at that moment everyone except the bleeding old woman moved in unison, as if controlled by a single mind.

I destroyed my share, shooting and stabbing as required. I'm used to it.

Against enemies who can fight back Agata is not the same cool, sneering badass she always makes herself out to be. She's clearly afraid. She doesn't want to be destroyed. But she fights like an absolute maniac, screaming her fear and rage as she tears into them with the stake, a gun, her teeth, a knife, whatever at hand. As if the very thought that the enemy is trying to destroy her was so insulting, it made her go berserk. She's elbow deep in the dust of crumbling Kindred bodies, her face spattered with their blood, tearing out organs and intestines with her prodigious strength and speed.

That's what I want from someone who fights beside me. She's foolhardy enough to walk down those stone stairs and she wants to survive badly enough that she'll climb them back up.

The Negotiator

Who They Are: War is a continuation of policy by other means. The Negotiator knows that better than anyone. In a world where individual grudges can last for millennia or where an Elysium is more dangerous than a war zone, the Negotiator's armaments are quick wit and a sharp tongue.

Where They Came From: Some Negotiators were natural-born manipulators and slid into the position in unlife. Others became Negotiators after spending years existing in the shadow of their sire, resorting to soft power as a path to prominence. A few took up the role because between braving a social lion's den or getting destroyed on a street thousands of miles from home, the former was the logical conclusion.

How to Play Them: The Negotiator chooses their words carefully, even when among allies. Many have a public persona and a private persona, the latter of which they only reveal to their Touchstones and those who have proved their worth.

Mechanical Advice: Negotiators focus on Charisma, Manipulation, and Wits. Their best skills are often Etiquette, Persuasion, and Politics. They often have Contacts, some amount of Fame, and might have some Boons ready to cash in (*Vampire*, p. 193.). They might have a Loresheet connecting them to the factions in their domain, or one connected to an important event in history.

The Recruit

Who They Are: The Recruit was brought into a war that was never theirs and fights it all the same. They're often the first in a war zone and the last to leave. Still, those that adapt and survive have everything to gain. In a war with a heavy turnover, there's nowhere to go but up.

Where They Came From: Anywhere and everywhere. Recruits are usually fledglings Embraced as cannon fodder, or one of a sire's childer that hasn't yet made the cut for public life. Fighting in the war might be the only way to gain their sire's, and by extension the domain's respect. There are

also Recruits with a personal stake in the war and joined to see it through.

How to Play Them: The Recruit might think they know what they're in for, but they don't. They're often open-hearted and sometimes they're cheerful about their lot. Even if they're jaded with ordinary unlife, fighting in the Gehenna War might be seen as a fresh start.

Mechanical Advice: Recruits are a mechanical wildcard, and can focus on any Attribute, Skill, or Advantage that they'd like. They probably have some Allies, Contacts, and a small Haven. While most have no Loresheet at all, a few might belong to a Bloodline, or are the unknowing descendant of a powerful vampire.

The Spy

Who They Are: Intelligence is a vital aspect of any war, even one involving ancient vampires. The Spy gathers information for their respective side, whether it's through covert operations or long-term infiltration of an enemy sect. They spend their nights behind enemy lines, sometimes literally.

Where They Came From: Some Spies are assigned their role by a greater authority because their qualities of observation or deception are too useful to pass up. Others are defectors from another sect, still keeping tabs on their former allies to gain their current faction's trust, and perhaps even find redemption in doing so. A few were made into Spies against their will, either by intimidation, incentive, or decades-long manipulation.

How to Play Them: A Spy never knows who to trust, even among their allies. The coterie and their handler are often the only stable social contacts they have. They're keen-eyed and excellent listeners, both skills they need to continue their existence.

Mechanical Advice: Spies focus on Dexterity, Manipulation and Composure. Their best skills are often Finance (tracking money is a great means of amassing intelligence), Stealth, and Subterfuge. They often have Contacts, one or more Masks, and

Status both in their own sect and the sect they're infiltrating. They might have a Loreshow dedicated to an enemy faction or a connection to a vampire with deep connections of their own.

The Veteran

Who They Are: The Veteran's been fighting since before most of their comrades were Embraced. Perhaps they watched the Sect War of the 1990s transition into the Gehenna War of modern nights with barely a pause in the middle. Maybe they've fought in human wars of the past or present and bring their knowledge into unlif. They bring an expertise few can match, even if it means their soul is in tatters.

Where They Came From: Some Veterans were once Recruits (p. 39) of their time, battle-hardened into something more and less than what they were. Others were combat experts in life Embraced for their skills. A few are the cockroaches of the Gehenna War, resourceful grunts not yet ready to face Final Death.

How to Play Them: The Veteran's seen it all, and they're exhausted. They're still in the fight, but they feel their humanity (and maybe even Humanity) sapping away from them every night. Being in a coterie gives them stability, especially if their coterie mates are willing to listen to the same war story for the fifteenth time this month. They lean on their experiences as a form of authority, sometimes to their detriment.



Mechanical Advice: Veterans focus on a physical Attribute (Strength, Dexterity, or Stamina), Composure, and Wits. Their best skills are often a combat skill of some type (i.e. Brawl, Firearms, or Melee), Insight, and Medicine. They often have an established Haven, a decently sized Herd, and some degree of Status among their peers. They might have a Loresheet dedicated to their field of expertise, or a major aspect of Kindred unlife.

The Zealot

Who They Are: The Zealot is drawn to the Gehenna War for a higher cause than power, clout, or survival. Perhaps they worship the ancients or believe that destroying the Antediluvians creates a better future for Kindred everywhere. They might not care about the creatures at the center of the war, and instead focus on eliminating a sect they find morally distasteful. What's important is that the Zealot fights for their cause, and they're willing to face the Final Death for it.

Where They Came From: Some Zealots brought their beliefs into unlife, ready to fight for their cause for eternity. Others developed their cause after experiencing a mystical revelation, or meeting someone with an unshakable faith and coming away inspired. A few fell in with the many blood cults within Kindred society and took the faith with them to the battlefield.

How to Play Them: The Zealot believes in their cause to a near slavish degree. Every battle is an opportunity to demonstrate why their beliefs are right, and how easily crushed their enemies' beliefs are. They don't expect the same degree of passion from their coterie mates but aren't afraid of enlightening them should the chance arise.

Mechanical Advice: Zealots focus on Charisma, Wits, and Resolve. Their best skills are often Performance, Persuasion, and Occult. They often have Resources, a Mawla who encourages their beliefs, and perhaps even Retainers who learn the cause from them. They might have a Loresheet

dedicated to a blood cult they follow, or membership related to a sect ideology that they either admire or despise.

Playing With Power

Gehenna War and action chronicles are often combat heavy. While the standard character creation system is perfectly capable of creating characters ready for any kind of combat, it can be fun to create and play more powerful characters at the start of the chronicle. A powerful character tends to allow for more dramatic action scenes while a street-level chronicle works best with the standard character creation system.

You create more powerful characters simply by granting them additional experience points right at the start of the chronicle. While the Storyteller may grant any amount of experience points they see fit, the guidelines in the Additional Experience Points table may help them dial exactly how much of an additional edge they'd like the troupe to have.

Table 2: Additional Experience Points

Touch-Up	10 Experience Points
Established Kindred	30 Experience Points
Major Player	50 Experience Points
Potential Legend	70 Experience Points

While creating a character for an action chronicle, it's a good idea to consider whether you have enough dots in specific Skills such as Firearms and Athletics to make sure you can keep up. It's no fun if you have to watch from the sidelines as other characters strut their stuff because your character concept didn't jibe with the chronicle's concept sufficiently well.

To make sure that every character has a functional role in an action story, you can use the focused specializations below, building each character to the chosen archetype.

Focused Specializations

Each specialization contains a description of the role the character plays in the coterie, as well as suggestions for how to spend the points you have available at character creation. Using the specializations is purely optional. Their purpose is to guide you to create functional characters for action stories and make sure each character has something they're good at. They work best when combined with your own character concept.

Brawler

The Brawler focuses on unarmed attacks, depending on their fists and feet to get out of violent situations. They hone their bodies into deadly weapons, keep aware of their surroundings, and know how to patch themselves up after the inevitable injuries. Brawlers are street fighters, martial artists, boxers, and anyone willing to jump into a fight with only the clothes on their back and immense confidence.

Attributes: Strength and Stamina

Skills: Athletics, Brawl, Intimidation, Awareness, Medicine

Disciplines: Celerity, Fortitude, Potence

Ritual, Ceremony or Formula Theme: Choices to the body or enhance unarmed blows

Advantages: Retainers to help out in the aftermath of a brawl are always useful

Diplomat

The Diplomat understands that words are the greatest weapon. They specialize in social combat, getting things done in a single conversation that could take even the deadliest coterie years to accomplish. Some specialize in having a honeyed tongue, others find ways to drive fear into even the hardest hearts, and most hone their skills to maintain an even balance between the two. Diplomats are often the faces of their coterie, presenting other options besides combat to the other side, and negotiate terms of surrender should the enemy fail to heed their words.

Attributes: Charisma and Manipulation

Skills: Etiquette, Insight, Intimidation, Persuasion, Subterfuge

Disciplines: Auspex, Dominate, Presence

Ritual or Formula Theme: Choices to analyze or manipulate the minds of others

Advantages: Contacts and Allies work but Status can be particularly effective

Driver

The Driver uses their vehicle as a getaway car, a mobile command center, and a weapon if necessary. They push their vehicles to the absolute limits, have a near-photographic memory of their local streets, and know how to repair almost anything on wheels. Despite the name, this specialization can be used for the operators of any kind of vehicle, such as pilots and boaters.

Attributes: Composure and Wits

Skills: Craft, Drive, Larceny, Streetwise, Technology

Disciplines: Auspex, Fortitude, Presence

Ritual, Ceremony or Formula Theme: Options to increase focus or enhances awareness

Advantages: Resources to give options with vehicle selection and maintenance

Engineer

Engineers, among any other technological expertise they might have, are experts in using heavy weapons, demolitions, experimental weaponry, or any other kind of offensive technology that's more complex to operate than "point and shoot." They know how to optimize a weapon for maximum efficiency, know the best way to prepare an explosive with whatever's on hand, and isn't afraid of a project literally blowing up in their face. This specialization can also cover experts in electronic warfare.

Attributes: Intelligence and Resolve

Skills: Craft, Larceny, Academics, Science, Technology



Disciplines: Auspex, Dominate, Protean

Ritual, Ceremony or Formula Theme: Options to interact with technology or cause explosive harm

Advantages: Contacts so that if you don't have what you need, you can always find it

Marksman

The Marksman specializes in standard ranged weaponry, from the bow and arrow to rifles used on modern battlefields. Their keen eyes, steady hands, and focus carry the night for their coterie. Plus, one of the perks of being a vampire with a gun is that you don't have to worry about any pesky breathing getting in the way of long-distance shots. Any ranged weapon short of heavy weapons is their expertise. Marksmen are archers, light infantry, riflemen, skirmishers, snipers, or anyone who spends a lot of time training with a personal firearm for self-defense.

Attributes: Dexterity and Composure

Skills: Craft, Firearms, Insight, Streetwise, Awareness

Disciplines: Celerity, Fortitude, Protean

Ritual, Ceremony or Formula Theme: Options to attack or manipulate targets from a distance

Advantages: Mawla, for the old soldier or experienced veteran who taught you what you know

Professional

The Professional is a specialist, seeking to succeed in specific, technical methods for removing the opposition. In a fair fight, you might not be at your best, but if you have time to prepare you can be very effective. Sometimes you may also train with specific weapons, achieving master and finesse far beyond an ordinary brawler. Used well, you can inflict tremendous damage, but in improvisational situations you're not at your best.

Attributes: Intelligence and Dexterity

Skills: Awareness, Craft, Firearms, Stealth, Technology

Disciplines: Auspex, Obfuscate, Celerity

Ritual, Ceremony or Formula Theme:

Options to increase tactical options and information gathering

Advantages: Allies and Retainers are always useful for the specialist who's good at that one thing

Shadow

The Shadow isn't anywhere to be found when the firefight starts, but that doesn't mean they're not there. Shadows are stealthy and patient, waiting for the right moment to ambush the enemy and bring victory to the coterie. They're easily unnoticed, capable of staying put in the harshest environments, and easily improvise ways out of being caught. Shadows are covert actors, hidden recon forces, and anyone willing to engage in unorthodox tactics in battle.

Attributes: Dexterity and Stamina

Skills: Athletics, Stealth, Survival, Streetwise, Medicine

Disciplines: Animalism, Auspex, Obfuscate

Ritual, Ceremony or Formula Theme: Rituals or Formulae that repel others or keep people and objects hidden

Advantages: Perhaps paradoxically, a solid Mask can be very helpful

Advantages & Flaws

This section provides a selection of new Traits that can be used to give your characters that Gehenna War flair, starting with Advantages and Flaws. All of the mechanics here should only be used at the discretion of the Storyteller. They may not fit a different kind of a *Vampire* game.

Bonding

●●● **Bonds of Fealty:** (*Requires Dominate*) Your powers of Dominate do not require a target's eye contact so long as the target is blood bound to you. You still need to be able to communicate your instructions to them, though you do not need to be physically present.

● **Enduring Bond:** Your bonds last longer than those of other Kindred. Complete and partial blood bonds only weaken every other month, not every month.

Blood Ties

Every Kindred has blood ties to their own sire, even if that sire's identity is unknown, and these Advantages model various expressions of those ties. Storytellers and players should work closely together to develop the types of stories that may arise from selecting these Advantages, as some questions normally unanswered may arise in play, notably tracking familial trees for various characters.

Disturbingly, some redworkers claim they can induce these properties in the Blood, though any Ritual or Formulae that alters the Blood in this way would be a closely guarded secret.

Note: For these Advantages, Caitiff and Duskborn have ancestors and descendants, but they are not true clans: their weakened bloodlines do not form a cohesive group for the purposes of these Advantages.

●● **Consanguineous Sense:** Your Blood calls out to your close relations, whether ancestors or descendants. You instinctively recognize those in your direct bloodline when you get within a few paces from them. A Resolve + Awareness test at Difficulty 3 lets you determine if a Kindred within about 3 meters of you shares your bloodline. You only learn that they share your bloodline, not the exact distance from your in terms of Generation.

●● **Consanguineous Influence:** Some find the powers of their Blood are more effective on those of the same bloodline. When you use a mental Discipline against a member of your own clan or a direct ancestor or descendant, you gain one bonus die to do so, or 2 bonus dice if the character is only one or two generations removed from you (e.g. your grandsire or grandchilde or closer).

●● or ●●● **Sins of the Fathers:** After committing diablerie upon a direct descendant — or ancestor — you do not show any telltale signs of the crime. Powers such as Scry the Soul or A Taste for Blood do not detect your crime. As a three-dot Merit, this works when committing diablerie upon any member of your own clan. Caitiff and Duskborn cannot take this as a three-dot merit.

Looks

Flaw (●●) Unblinking Visage: Your dead body has forgotten the basics: blinking, breathing, and automatic reflexes. You count your Humanity as two levels lower (To a minimum of zero) for the purpose of Blush of Life and similar life-mimicking activities, such as mortal intercourse or food consumption.

Mawla

Flaw (●) Secret Master: (*Requires Mawla 1+*) Your Mawla has a hold over you, and once per story requires you to do a minor task (equivalent to a minor boon) which cannot become public. If you fail to complete this task, next story it increases from the equivalent of a minor boon to a major boon. If the task is still left unresolved, this flaw is forfeited and should be replaced by 2 or more combined dots of other flaws, such as Shunned or an Adversary.

Diablerie Flaws

Diablerie is a hazardous practice, not only because of the dire social consequences if discovered. The diablerist often finds that the Blood of the victim puts up a fight long after the act is consummated, and this inner rebellion can express itself in any number of ways. A Storyteller may allow these Flaws to be selected as normal, or impose them upon players' characters as the consequence of a Messy Critical, Bestial Failure, or win at a cost result on a test involving Diablerie.

Flaw (●) Blatant Diablerist: The telltale signs of diablerie are always noticeable to those who have the ability to sense it. Discipline Powers or Merits that reveal past evidence of diablerie, such as Scry the Soul (Auspex 3) or A Taste for Blood (Blood Sorcery 1) always reveal diablerie, even if the test would otherwise fail or fail to reveal other information. You can only take this Flaw at character creation if your character has a history of having committed diablerie at least once.

Flaw (●●) Inherited Bane: You gain another clan's bane in addition to your own. Tremere may select this Flaw to gain the Salubri clan bane (*Vampire Players Guide*, p. 47) without having committed Diablerie.

Table 6 collects some existing Flaws which may be considered Diablerie Flaws as well.

Table 6: Additional Diablerie Flaws

Flaw	Source
Bondslave	<i>Vampire</i> , p. 180
Bond Junkie	<i>Vampire</i> , p. 181
Clan Curse (Caitiff Only)	<i>Players Guide</i> , p. 127
Folkloric Bane	<i>Vampire</i> , p. 182
Folkloric Block	<i>Vampire</i> , p. 182
Knowledge Hungry	<i>Players Guide</i> , p. 121
Long Bond	<i>Vampire</i> , p. 181
Methuselah's Thirst	<i>Vampire</i> , p. 181
Obvious Predator	<i>Vampire</i> , p. 189
Starving Decay	<i>Players Guide</i> , p. 120
Twice-Cursed	<i>Players Guide</i> , p. 121
Two Masters	<i>Blood-Stained Love</i> , p. 151

Disciplines

Animalism

Level 5

SPIRIT WALK

Prerequisite: Subsume the Spirit

The Kindred further masters their ability to inhabit the body of a beast, journeying from one form to another without retreating to their own body.

Cost: None, though the cost for Subsume the Spirit remains

System: When using Subsume the Spirit, the duration is always indefinite as though a Critical result was obtained. Furthermore the Kindred can activate Subsume the Spirit even while inhabiting an animal's form, transferring their consciousness to beast after beast.

Celerity

Level 1

FLUENT SWIFTNESS

The vampire is able to call upon their supernatural speed effortlessly, and rarely tempt their Hunger when doing so.

Cost: None

System: Whenever the vampire uses a Blood Surge to augment a Dexterity or Celerity test, they may reroll the Rouse Check.

Dominate

Level 5

LETHE'S CALL

Prerequisite: Cloud Memory or The Forgetful Mind

The memories of others are a plaything to the vampire, who is able to blank out large swaths with but a glance.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Manipulation + Dominate vs Intelligence + Resolve

System: The user tests Manipulation + Dominate vs a target's Intelligence + Resolve, though unprepared mortals cannot resist this power. Each success in the margin allows the user to wipe up to an entire week's worth of memories from the target. This use of Dominate does not require any verbal instructions, but will in this case simply blank the remembered time from the victim indiscriminately. With the addition of a verbal command, the Kindred can instead simply erase all knowledge of one individual or event from the same time, including the user themselves.

The user may choose to simply leave the target's memory blank or leave the victim with a generic sense of time having passed and the assumption that the time passed about as expected, though the latter quickly reveals inconsistencies if the victim is pressed for details later.

Duration: Indefinitely

Fortitude

Level 1

FLUENT ENDURANCE

The vampire is able to call upon their supernatural resilience effortlessly, and rarely tempt their Hunger when doing so.

Cost: None

System: Whenever the vampire uses a Blood Surge to augment a Stamina or Fortitude test, they may reroll the Rouse Check.

Obfuscate

Level 1

ENSCONCE

The vampire is able to supernaturally conceal small objects in their hands or on their person. The power doesn't make visible objects invisible. Rather, it makes a searcher ignore them when they'd otherwise notice.

Cost: None

System: The Kindred can hide a number of small, hand-held objects in their hands or on their person equal to their Obscure rating. Mortals ignore dangerous or out-of-place objects that the user is enshrouding or miss them in a search. Kindred with Sense the Unseen or others with supernatural senses can attempt to notice them as usual. Objects in plain view cannot be hidden by this power, nor can animate creatures.

Duration: One scene

Level 2

CACHE

Prerequisite: Ensconce

The vampire may use this power to hide objects and make them difficult to find just by touching them.

Cost: One Rouse Check

System: Objects affected by Ensconce need merely be touched, not held or carried by the Kindred. Furthermore, the user need not maintain physical contact with the object. The effect lasts for a scene. The user may make an additional Rouse Check to extend the duration for the remainder of the night. In that case, the enshrouded object remains hidden until dawn.

Duration: One scene or until dawn

Potence

Level 1

FLUENT STRENGTH

The vampire is able to call upon their supernatural strength effortlessly, and rarely tempt their Hunger when doing so.

Cost: None

System: Whenever the vampire uses a Blood Surge to augment a Strength or Potence test, they may reroll the Rouse Check.

Protean

Level 5

BLOODFORM

Amalgam: Blood Sorcery 2

This rare power lets the vampire take the form of an amorphous mass of blood, or to turn only part of their form to animate vitae.

Cost: One Rouse Check

System: The user transforms themselves into a liquid. In this form, they cannot be harmed by most conventional weapons (including stakes), though sunlight and fire still affect them as normal. The user can squeeze through small cracks, and even flow cleanly up walls or across ceilings. While in bloodform (or partially in bloodform), the user can perform general actions such as pushing and pulling, but the difficulty of fine manipulation of electronic devices or liquids increases by two if manipulating them as Blood.

The user may use Disciplines as normal, provided they do not need to make eye contact or speak, though they can make a Rouse Check to partially reform eyes, a vocal tract, limbs, or head.

The Kindred can transform only part of the body, such as a finger or leg, as desired, though it still needs to remain in touch with the main body. If part of the mass is separated (or entirely consumed) the user's consciousness goes with the largest portion of Blood and the user reforms with one additional level of Hunger for each limb (or equivalent body mass) lost. If a portion of the user is consumed, it creates Blood Bonds as normal but the user cannot control their Blood after its been ingested by another.

Duration: One scene or until the user ends the transformation

MASTER OF FORMS

Prerequisite: Shapechange

While most users of Protean can assume one or two animal forms, masters of Protean have a vastly extended repertoire.

Cost: None

System: The user is no longer limited to choosing one animal form when using Shapechange or Metamorphosis. Rather, they can take on the form of any creature that falls within the limits of those abilities, different each time if they so wish. Each time they choose a beast form, such as a wolf, owl, or bat, they assume the same specific form, which may be recognized by witnesses. Thus, if the character turns into a swan on multiple nights, it always looks like that specific swan.

All other limitations of Shapechange and Metamorphosis still apply.

Duration: As Shapechange or Metamorphosis

Blood Sorcery

Level 2

BLOOD'S CURSE

The vampire temporarily thickens an adversary's Blood, amplifying their clan Bane.

Cost: One Rouse Check

Dice Pools: Intelligence + Blood Sorcery vs Stamina + Occult or Fortitude

System: The user targets another vampire or ghoul. On a win, add two (or four on a critical win) to the victim's Blood Potency for purposes of Bane severity and feeding penalty (for vampires) only. When targeting a ghoul, Caitiff, or thin-blood, the target gains a clan Bane based on the clan of the vampire they most recently fed from or their own ancestry, as determined by the Storyteller.

Duration: Until dawn

Blood Sorcery Rituals

Level 1

BLOOD TO WATER

The Kindred pours purified water through their bloody fingers, transmuting all spilled blood in the area into water.

Ingredients: Pure water, whether from a natural spring or purified mechanically.

Process: The ritualist smears their own Blood on their hands, pours water through their fingers, and splatters it about the room.

System: If the ritual is successful, blood (including the performer's spilled Blood) exposed to the air is transmuted into water, leaving no traces behind. The ritual affects a space roughly the size of a living room. Larger spaces require repeated performances to cleanse.

REVEALING THE CRIMSON TRAIL

The ritual allows a vampire to easily spot traces of spilled blood, no matter how insignificant or old.

Ingredients: A needle with an eye.

Process: The Kindred ritually prepares the needle by stabbing themselves in one eye with it, and must then peer through its eye.

System: If the ritual is successful, the vampire can clearly see any spilled blood, dried or not, as long as they keep looking through the eye of the needle. Exceptionally old or minute traces can require a Resolve + Awareness or Investigation test to spot, as determined by the Storyteller. The ritual lasts for the rest of the scene.

Level 4

INNOCENCE'S VEIL

The ritual allows the vampire to temporarily make any trace of diablerie on their part undetectable.

Ingredients: A silver knife, a white candle, a mortal victim

Process: The ritualist stokes their Hunger (usually through fasting or bloodletting) until they are at the verge of frenzy (Hunger 5), then slakes their Hunger on a mortal, draining them completely.

System: If the ritual is successful, signs of diablerie on the user cease to manifest. Powers such as A Taste for Blood or Scry the Soul do not detect any evidence the ritualist has committed diablerie in the past.

Duration: Until the ritualist slakes their Hunger again.

Note: Depending on Chronicle Tenets, performing the Ritual can merit stains.

Level 5

ATROCITY'S RELEASE

This rare Ritual allows the Blood Sorcerer to extract the stolen Blood and power from a diablerist, effectively reversing the effect of their latest diablerie.

Ingredients: Human reproductive organs thinly sliced, moss or a sea sponge, and scrapings of bezoar.

Process: The performer must first create a number of poultices from the ingredients, something that takes at least one night to prepare, disregarding the time it takes to procure the components. Then, the sorcerer presses the ritually prepared poultices to a series of deep cuts on their target's body, drawing out the stolen Blood. The Blood-soaked poultices are then burnt, their ashes left exposed to the sunrise.

System: An unwilling target may resist with Resolve + Blood Potency, the Ritual's Difficulty counting as the greater of the target's successes or the standard difficulty. If successful, The Ritual reverses the most recent instance of diablerie that the target has committed, including changes to Blood Potency, Disciplines, or personality, though not Humanity.

Even if the ritual is successful, the spirit of the previous victim of the diablerie remains destroyed. On a total failure, the target's essence is destroyed instead, the victim becoming effectively possessed by their latest diablerie victim.

REAWAKENED VIGOR

Vampires awakening from torpor often lose the potency of their Blood, particularly in cases of extended dormancy. This Ritual allows the awakened vampire to regain their power quicker, though it is a closely guarded secret supposedly passed around by the Tremere and a few Inconnu.

Ingredients: 5 or more Rouse Checks worth of the sorcerer's vitae, a finely crafted ceramic receptacle, molten lead

Process: The sorcerer pours their vitae into the receptacle, stoppers it with lead and bloody sigils, and buries it in a place of power.

System: The Sorcerer places at least 5 Rouse Checks worth of Blood into the receptacle. They may stop to feed while enacting this Ritual, but the ritual fails if interrupted for more than an hour, meaning any vessels needed to slake Hunger must be kept close at hand. On completing the task, the vampire crafts a rust-colored orb containing a small amount of their concentrated vitae. If this vitae is consumed (and on a successful ritual test), it restores one point of Blood Potency lost due to Torpor. For each success in the margin, another lost point of Blood Potency can be restored. If no Blood Potence has been lost to torpor, the ritual has no effect on the user.

Any vampire other than the ritualist drinking the essence must test Stamina + Blood Sorcery or Fortitude against a difficulty of 6. For each point of margin of failure, they suffer one Aggravated Health damage.

A sorcerer can only have one active use of this ritual cast at a time, and it loses potency at dawn once unearthed.

Oblivion Ceremony

Level 3

THE SHALLOW SLUMBER

Prerequisite: Passion Feast or Touch of Oblivion
By temporarily dimming the vitality of their Blood, this ceremony can shorten a vampire's time spent in torpor. Some even prepare themselves with this Ceremony, in anticipation of future misfortune.

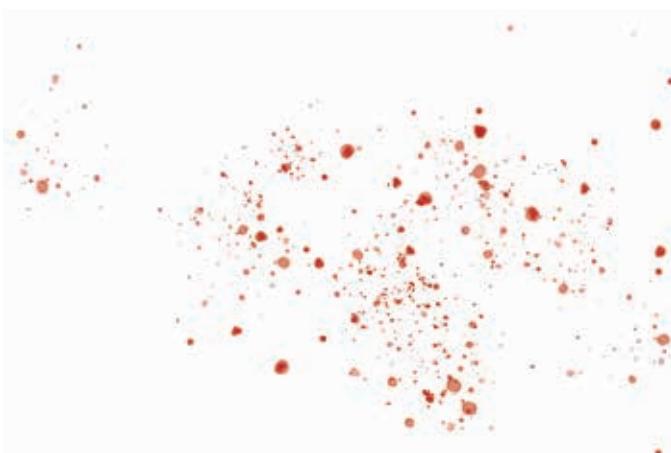
Ingredients: Charcoal and one Rouse Check of the user's vitae.

Process: The performer carefully writes a series of sigils on themselves or another vampire, while cursing the names of various gods or saints responsible for good health.

System: So long as the sigils remain on the target's body, for each success in the margin on the ceremony test, their Blood Potency counts as one lower for the purpose of torpor duration and premature awakening. Likewise, their Humanity counts as a similar number of dots higher but only for purposes of torpor duration. A total failure on the Ritual test extends the torpor instead, as if the subject had another dot more in Blood Potence and a dot less in Humanity. Only one attempt per subject per torpor can be made.

A vampire can use this ceremony on themselves or another vampire, even if the subject has not yet fallen into torpor. The sigils stay on the subject's body until they are washed away, marred by injury, or intentionally defaced, though rarely longer than a week due to natural abrasion.

Duration: Indefinite, so long as the sigils remain.



Thin-Blood Alchemy

AJ'S TEST KITCHEN

WELCOME TO THE GEHENNA WAR, OR CAINEPOCALYPSE AS THE KIDS LIKE TO CALL IT. THESE BLOOD BREWS ARE YOUR UNDERGROUND GUIDE FOR COOKING UP THE GOOD STUFF TO KEEP YOU ON YOUR FEET WHEN THE DOOMSDAY RODEO TRIES TO KNOCK YOU DOWN.

IF YOU LISTEN TO THE OLD-TIMERS, YOU KNOW THE ONES GETTING A LITTLE LONG IN THE FANG, THEY'LL TELL YOU IT USED TO BE QUIETER TIMES. NIGHT TO NIGHT UNLIFE WAS MORE LIKE A SAD GOTH TEA PARTY. ALL YOU HAD TO DO WAS BUMP INTO A LONE LUPINE OR SABBAT SCOUTING PARTY, AND BAM, YOU HAD YOURSELF A DECADE'S WORTH OF WATER-COOLER CHAT FOR YOUR MONTHLY DRAC YAK.

FLASH FORWARD TO NOW, AND YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN YOU'LL HAVE TO GO TOE-TOE WITH A FINAL BOSS WITH BIG ASS FANGS AND NO SAVE POINT IN SIGHT. BUT DON'T WORRY. AUNTIE AJ HAS YOU COVERED. LET'S JUST SAY IT'S A GOOD TIME TO BE A CHEMIST. WITH THESE, IF YOU GET A METHUSLAH DROPPED ON YOUR DOORSTEP, YOU CAN CRACK OPEN YOUR KIT AND START CRANKING OUT THE JUICE BOXES. CAUSE THE WAR IS BIG BUSINESS. AND SO LONG AS THERE'S BLOOD IN THE STREETS, THE DUSKBORN ARE CHIEF EXECUTING OFFICERS.

Level 2

RECENTLY, US DUSKBORN COOKERS HAVE FOUND OURSELVES IN HIGH DEMAND WITH THE VARIOUS GEHENNA WAR FACTIONS. WE'RE LIKE BLOODHOUNDS FOR HIRE SINCE I WHIPPED UP THIS SPECIAL ALCHEMICAL FORMULA THAT LETS US SNIFF OUT THE MOST POTENT BLOOD IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

WHIFF-ITS

Some Kindred are rumored to be able to sniff out a particular resonance. Among the Duskborn, others have learned to sniff out the resonance (or lack thereof) of true Kindred and distinguish the most potent among them.

Ingredients: The alchemist's vitae, phlegmatic or sanguine human blood, cologne or perfume, fresh compost, ammonia, crushed fingernails from an animal

Activation Cost: One Rouse Check

System: When used, the potion grants the alchemist heightened olfactory abilities. For the next night, the alchemist can catch the scent of the Kindred with the highest Blood Potency in the area (as determined by the Storyteller). If there are multiple Kindred who share the same Blood Potency in the area, success on a subsequent Resolve + Awareness test at Difficulty 3 allows the alchemist to distinguish between individual Kindred and follow their trail. Kindred sealed in containers might likewise require a similar test to detect, with a Difficulty determined by the Storyteller.

Duration: Until dawn

Level 4

NECESSITY HAS ONCE AGAIN PROVED TO BE THE MOTHER OF INVENTION, AND I HAVE FOUND A WAY TO PASS ON THE BENEFITS OF A POTION TO ANY FULL-BLOODED FUCKO THAT WANTS IN ON IT. AND BEFORE YOU GET YOUR PANTIES IN A TWIST ABOUT SHARING THE ALCHEMICAL LOVE, FIRST, YOU DO YOU. YOU WANT TO KEEP IT TO YOURSELF? THAT'S YOUR CHOICE. I, ON THE OTHER HAND, LIKE TO COLLECT FAT BOONS AND LUXURIATE IN THE COMFORTABLE PERKS OF INFLUENTIAL CLIENTELE.

JUICE BOX

More than a few Kindred of lower generations have longed for the ability to make use of Thin-Blood Alchemy Formulae. Juice Box gives them the option to do so without excessive risk of harm or the need to keep the Mercurian around long, though it can be argued that the requirement of methuselah Blood shifts that risk onto the alchemist. For a similar formula that shifts the element of risk to the imbiber, see *Blood Sigils*, p. 80.

Ingredients: The ingredients required for the original formula, methuselah vitae, and an empty juice box, complete with traces of concentrated fruit juice.

Activation Cost: One Rouse Check

System: The alchemist distills the target formula as normal, but includes methuselah vitae in the concoction before performing additional treatment to it. Once distilled, the brew must rest in the juice box for 24 hours before activation. The result allows any Duskborn or Kindred to benefit from the brew created by the alchemist. All activation costs, dice pools, and duration apply per the original blood alchemy formula.

Duration: As target formula

Level 5

LOOK, A LOT OF US CAN COUNTERFEIT A CLAN'S ABILITIES, BUT WE'VE ALWAYS FALLEN JUST A SMIDGEN SHORT OF THE REAL HEAVY-HITTING GIFTS. UNTIL NOW. THIS IS THE GAME CHANGER THAT LETS US DUSKBORN REALLY THROW DOWN. FORGET SURVIVAL MODE. WE'VE UNLOCKED 'BEAST MODE'.

BEAST MODE

Every Duskborn knows that their vampiric powers are weaker than those of a true Kindred. This formula allows a thin-blooded vampire to temporarily gain the physical acumen of a far older vampire, assuming they can gain access to that vampire's Blood.

Ingredients: The alchemist's vitae, choleric or sanguine human blood, vitae of Blood Potency 4+, phenylcyclohexyl piperidine, adrenaline injector, spoiled two percent milk, sodium bicarbonate

Activation Cost: One Rouse Check

System: Beast Mode imbues the alchemist with access to a single level 5 power from the Disciplines of Celerity, Fortitude, or Potence, counting that Discipline rating as 5 for the duration of the formula. When consumed, the alchemist must succeed on a Willpower test (Difficulty 2) to avoid frenzy. The Kindred whose vitae was used in the distillation must possess the power's associated Discipline at level 5 or the brew fails.

Duration: One scene

Rules of Engagement

War is a machine of many components. Logistics, supply lines, tactics, negotiation, all of these are vital aspects to any major conflict. The component most visible and most plentiful, however, is actual combat. Generals plan on maps, home front workers toil in factories, diplomats reach across the aisle, but the true driving forces are the moments when the guns fire, artillery lights up the night sky, and soldiers bleed.

The same is true for the Gehenna War. A chronicle set in its midst will have moments where the coterie marks off zones of control on well-hidden digital maps or easily destroyed print-outs, tap into their resources for the strength they need, and spend time in dingy parlors with uneasy allies, but what truly defines this kind of chronicle is the moment when the guns and claws come out.

This section serves as a quick reintroduction to *Vampire*'s conflict system, summarizing its base combat system and some advanced combat modules most appropriate for fighting the Gehenna War and playing other action-horror style chronicles. It also provides new combat modules to cover certain events that might occur in a Gehenna War chronicle.

A Reintroduction to Combat

Conflict in *Vampire* has two forms: basic combat and advanced combat. Together, they form a kind of narrative telescope. Basic combat shows the wide scope of the combat and how it affects the narrative, with each module of advanced conflict “zooming in” on the parts of a fight the troupe want to play out in detail.

Basic Combat Summary

Basic combat is a simple contest, the root of all further permutations of the combat system. It eschews depicting individual blow-by-blows or specific segments of time for its turns. Combat turns take as much time in-fiction as they need to get the result of the contest.

For example, a single turn of firearms combat isn't one individual shot versus another, but a simple mechanical representation of an entire segment of a gunfight. It represents the character running into a room, taking a few shots at an enemy, diving into cover, then firing blind from cover, getting a few hits on the way in the form of points of damage. In social combat, it's a portion of an increasingly tense argument, hitting a dramatic point upon which someone takes points of damage.

In play, a turn of basic combat consists of these phases:

- **Intention:** The Storyteller asks the players what they want to accomplish this turn. The Storyteller responds by declaring what the supporting characters involved in the conflict are doing and tells the players what dice pools to build. The player may make a Rouse Check to mend any wounds during this phase, as well as to activate or uphold Discipline powers.
- **Conflict Pool Construction:** The players and Storyteller build their dice pools. If a player wants to make a Blood Surge, it must be done now, before dice are rolled in the execution phase.
- **Execution:** The players and Storytellers roll their dice. All damage sustained after a Contest in this turn is immediately applied after basic considerations such as halving Superficial damage where applicable, armor ratings, Discipline powers, and any other damage-altering abilities. All tests in this phase are Contests, executed in the order of the following arenas:
 - *Surprise:* Any characters who successfully snuck up on someone, has entered combat undetected, or has some other narrative means of striking unnoticed, acts first, no matter what arena of combat they fight in (see the sidebar Who Goes First? in *Vampire*, p. 125).
 - *Currently engaged physical combat:* If any players' characters and supporting characters were already involved in a brawl or in a melee combat in the previous turn, these combatants act first.

- *Ranged combat:* Any characters using firearms, a Discipline that acts from a distance, or any other means of attacking outside of a person's reach act next.
 - *Newly engaged physical combat:* Any characters intending to engage in a new brawl or melee fight against another character may now act.
 - *All other actions:* Any actions that aren't engaging in any kind of active physical or ranged combat but do require a roll act last. This includes acts of larceny, hacking, commanding animals in a non-combat manner, and any non-aggressive use of vehicles. Any characters trying social means of ending the physical combat or are involved in a full Social combat act in this arena as well.
- **Resolution:** The troupe reviews the state of the combat after the turn and chooses whether to continue the conflict or move on to the next scene. If the conflict continues, a new turn begins at the Intention phase. If not, the troupe moves to the next scene or finds a quick resolution to whatever conflict remains in-fiction. If a player has not yet rolled a Rouse Check to heal any wounds, they may do so in this phase.
- Has one side of the conflict clearly won over the other in some way, whether through Incapacitating much of the other side or other means?
 - Has one side clearly achieved the objective of this conflict in a way that any other side cannot hinder or obtain in a way that can be done in this scene?
 - Is the conflict still dramatically appropriate to play out? If this is the end of the third turn of a Three Turns and Out format conflict, is it necessary to play out any further turns?
- A full description of basic combat, including common conflict pools, applying damage and actions characters can take such as dodging or engaging multiple combatants at once is in **Vampire**, p. 123.



Advanced Combat Summary

Advanced combat is not an entire system unto itself, but rather a set of modules inserted into the framework of basic combat. Troupes may pull elements of advanced combat in and out of basic combat as needed. A troupe might need Initiative for a combat where all participants would fit into one arena in the Execution phase to keep actions tidy but ignores it for other combat scenes.

Full explanations of every advanced conflict module are in **Vampire**, pp. 295–305. This summary focuses on modules most relevant to physical combat, describing when they're best used and where they fit into the basic combat phases.

The most common modules used for physical combat are:

- **Initiative:** Initiative ratings are best used when the coterie focuses around an aspect of combat that would be active on the same part of the execution phase, such as a group of marksmen or a street brawl. Organizing initiative ratings and breaking ties is done at the Intention phase.

- **Minor Actions:** Minor actions are best used for troupes that desire greater mechanical significance to the finer details of a fight. Certain additional combat actions, such as movement and reloading, are modeled as Minor Actions. Minor Actions related to movement, such as diving for cover or moving to a separate location in the fight, are best declared during the Intention phase. All other Minor Actions are best declared at the very beginning of the Execution phase, before going through the order of actions.
- **Additional General Actions:** Maneuvers are best used for when players want to make complex tactical decisions that basic combat options can't cover, or when a player wants an attack itself to be narratively interesting. Blocks are best used when a player wants their attempts to impede a target to matter mechanically as well as narratively. All-Out Attacks are best used when a player wants to finish off a weaker opponent quickly or soften up a tougher opponent for their allies to follow through. All-Out Defenses are best for absolute survival, and for immunity to most ranged attacks when in cover. These general actions are declared during the Execution phase as the player's action for the turn. Attacks that require a Maneuver to occur first are resolved in two turns: the Maneuver itself in the first turn, and the attack in the second should the Maneuver succeed.
- **Surprise Attacks:** Surprise attacks are best used to determine who, if any, get to act in the surprise arena during the Execution phase after the first turn of combat, where surprises are set up narratively or through tests and contests before combat. All surprise attack attempts after the first turn are made in the player's relevant arena during the Execution phase. When the next turn begins, they act on the surprise arena.
- **Additional Close Combat Actions:** Grappling is best used when players need a target restrained for a Bite attack, a Discipline power, or to set up a future attack or Maneuver. It can also simply be used to prevent an enemy from leaving. It provides physical combat focused players with more options and narrative spotlight. Grappling is declared in either physical combat arenas during the Execution phase, depending on when the grapple occurs.
- **Additional Ranged Combat Actions:** Throwing weapons, ammunition management, engaging in hand-to-hand combat, and called shots provide ranged weapon users with more tactical options and narrative spotlight. They are declared during the ranged combat arena during the Execution phase.
- **Armor:** Armor is best used to increase the odds of survivability for mortals. Armor effects are applied whenever a mortal character takes damage in any part of the Execution phase.
- **Devastating Injuries:** Devastating injuries are best used to mechanically demonstrate the unpredictability and disastrous nature of violence. These can be used to great effect in an action-horror chronicle and might see plenty of use when characters fight the Gehenna War. Though they are presented in *Vampire* as an option for the ranged combat arena, an action-horror chronicle might apply them to physical combat as well.
- **Concessions:** Concessions are best used when a troupe feels like a combat has gone too long with little narrative benefit, but the outcome is still in doubt. It's also a great way to ease dire consequences should players put their characters in a fight with much worse consequences should there be no Concession. In a Gehenna War chronicle, consider using these if the coterie gets into fights with far stronger forces. Concessions are invoked during the Resolution phase.
- **Three-Turn Conflict:** Three-turn conflicts aren't technically an advanced combat module; it's recommended that all conflicts of any kind last for a maximum of three turns unless the troupe enjoys playing a conflict to its conclusion. However, troupes that regularly play extended combat sequences should consider using the

format for smaller-scale conflicts or conflicts where one side is more powerful than another. Turns are tracked during the Resolution phase.

- **One-Roll Conflict:** This option replaces the basic combat framework entirely. If all previous modules zoom in on an aspect of a conflict, One-Roll Conflict pulls back for a wider view. In addition to its already suggested uses for a conflict between smaller parties or one between many parties, it could also be used for mass combat or long-term traditional battles, which take place over days, weeks, or even months.

New Combat Options

The following combat options should be considered additional advanced combat modules. They “zoom in” on parts of the action that aren’t covered in previous modules.

Brutal Attacks

In conflicts involving large amounts of weaker combatants versus much stronger characters, a vampire can elect to loosen their hold on the Beast, inviting power at the potential price of Humanity.

When facing waves of mortal combatants, mindless corpses, or animals, the player can choose to pin one of their Hunger dice to a “10”, setting it aside with that face up before rolling the rest of their pool. This dramatically increases the odds of a messy critical, which should incur Stains based on chronicle Tenets as normal.

A physical Brutal attack might be a vampire tearing a person apart with their bare hands or slicing apart undead servitors with a broadsword. A ranged Brutal attack might be picking off human adherents of a blood cult to drive out its Kindred leader, or blind firing from cover regardless of who’s still on the battlefield.

Varying the Tests

One of the things that waters down play over time is if the characters need to build the same dice pool every time for the same task. To avoid this, Storytellers should vary the traits involved according to the situation, to keep things interesting and to curb players trying to optimize their pools. And while Storytellers are encouraged to have the players describe their approach to skill use, the Storyteller should ultimately decide on what pool applies. Below are examples of different pools to use and how you might set up these situations.

Table 4 lists common test pools for making an offensive action in combat, while alternatives and their set-ups are explored below. Storytellers have leeway to adjust the frequency they allow such alternate dice pools to be used, but putting one’s best dice pool forward is one way to allow characters to participate in action-focused chronicles without requiring them to focus extensively on Strength, Dexterity, or Composure.

In each alternative pool suggested below, there’s a set-up that needs to be in place for that pool to be used.

Table 4: Common Attack Test Pools

Weapon	Dice Pool
Punches, Fangs, and Claws	Strength + Brawl
One-handed Edged Weapons	Dexterity + Melee
Blunt or Two-handed Weapons	Strength + Melee
Guns	Composure + Firearms
Thrown Weapons	Dexterity + Athletics

DIRTY FIGHTING

Manipulation + Brawl, Firearms, or Melee

Set-Up: A totally unexpected attack mid-banter or a successful test of Wits + Insight or Composure + Streetwise might set up sucker punch. Subjects won’t fall for the same trick twice.

LAST STAND

Resolve + Brawl, Firearms, or Melee

Set-Up: The attacker has been reduced to their last Health level.

PANACHE

Charisma + Brawl, Firearms, or Melee

Set-Up: The character has an audience or access to the right prop. A successful Intelligence + Athletics or Performance test for preparedness (*Vampire*, p. 410) might help accomplish this set-up.

QUICK DRAW

Dexterity or Wits + Firearms

Set-Up: A situation where everyone is expecting a shoot-out. Possibly a Charisma + Persuasion or Manipulation + Subterfuge or even Wits + Insight test to convince someone of a duel.

SEIZE THE ADVANTAGE

Wits + Brawl, Firearms, or Melee

Set-Up: The character has spotted a weakness in their adversary. A prior successful test of Composure + Awareness helps to spot a flaw in the opponents' fighting style.

TARGET A WEAKNESS

Intelligence + Brawl, Firearms, or Melee

Set-Up: A prior successful Intelligence test researching weak points, or Manipulation + Subterfuge to trick an adversary into revealing their weak points.

Explosives

Troupes that prefer more detailed depictions of explosives in their chronicles can use the following rules:

- Thrown explosives such as dynamite or a grenade are resolved in the ranged combat arena.
- Setting off a planted explosive placed before the battle is an attack made in the newly engaged physical combat arena. If the explosive can release another payload after the first, it occurs in the currently

engaged physical combat arena. Setting a planted explosive during a battle occurs in two parts: a Maneuver using any dice pools to set the explosive on the first turn, and its activation on a newly engaged physical combat in a turn after the first.

- Unless the explosive already has a stated damage effect or bonus in its description, explosives inflict a weapon bonus on top of the margin of the win in damage. If the explosive is a concussive blast, it inflicts Superficial physical damage. If it's incendiary, it inflicts Aggravated physical damage. Explosions have three distances: the point of impact, within the blast zone, and at the edge of the blast zone. The intended target is usually at the point of impact, anyone in the arena with them is either within the blast zone or on the edge depending on previously known positions during the combat.

- Point of impact: +5
- Within the blast zone: +3
- At the edge of the blast zone: +1



Vehicular Action

Vehicle combat presents a challenge to the Storyteller in terms of how to keep the action varied and interesting without getting bogged down in details. With this in mind, you should run the scene the same as any other ranged combat with the added spice of the characters being in a moving vehicle.

Car Chase: A car chase can be resolved with a Composure + Driving contest. If the chase involves combat, apply the margin on the win as a penalty to the dice pool to the combatants in the losing car.

Ramming: The driver makes a Wits + Driving test against the target's Dexterity + Athletics (if target is on foot) or Wits + Driving (if targeting a driven vehicle). Treat the car as a weapon dealing superficial damage, with a damage bonus based on the size of the vehicle: +3 for a car, +4 for an SUV and +6 for a garbage truck. Unless the ramming car is already at full speed, the Storyteller should apply a generous dice bonus (2–4) to avoid the ram, assuming the target does nothing but try to stay out of the way.

Vehicle Damage: A vehicle has a variable number of Health boxes, ranging from 5 to 20 for most cars. (While there are plenty of vehicles with more Health in theory, tracking the Health of a bus or military APC becomes moot given the amount of turns it would take to deplete it.) All damage is considered superficial, but once the track is filled and the damage starts being converted into aggravated, reduce the dice pool of the driver for each aggravated point of damage. A critical win on an attack against a vehicle (even ones with “infinite” Health, see above) can result in additional consequences, such as tires blown out or fuel tanks punctured, at the Storyteller’s discretion.

Car Explosion: While the odds of car exploding from small arms fire is almost nonexistent in real life, Storytellers opting for a more cinematic approach can decide that a critical win on an attack against a vehicle triggers an explosion. See the rules for explosions, p. 56.

For the Storyteller, the best way to keep vehicular action interesting is to present a new complication every turn, changing the flavor of the scene. Typically, these scenes shouldn’t last longer than three turns, making for three complications.

Here are a few example complications:

Bystanders: Somebody’s in the way. The driver can choose to incur a Stain by simply driving them over. To swerve without crashing the car requires a Wits + Driving test at a Difficulty of 3.

Technical Issues: Something’s wrong with the car. Perhaps a bullet meant for the characters hit something else. The driver or a passenger needs to make a Wits + Technology test at Difficulty 3 to diagnose the problem and make a stopgap fix. If the test fails, the car stalls.

Stunt Opportunity: The environment presents an opportunity for a dangerous stunt, such as driving off a ramp to jump across a body of water. If the test is successful, the characters have escaped their enemies. If it fails, they have crashed the car.

One of the challenges in running a vehicular action scene is to make sure that all characters get to do something, not just the driver. With this in mind, here are a few example actions for those not gripping the wheel:

Attack: Passengers with ranged weapons can attack enemy vehicles and drivers as normal.

Distract: Throw trash at the windshield of a pursuing car. If there’s a plausible way for the character to distract an enemy vehicle, the player can make a Dexterity + Athletics test at a Difficulty of 3. If they succeed, future tests to evade pursuit are made at a Difficulty one lower than normal.

Zones

Zones are a way for troupes to measure distance and give narrative descriptions of the environment a mechanical function.

At any time before or during a conflict, the Storyteller can divide the current location into one or more Zones. Zones consist of:

- Up to three positive environmental aspects, granting a bonus of up to +3 dice to specific actions. Examples: a balcony that gives a +2 bonus to long ranged Firearms attacks, a gas leak that gives a +1 bonus to setting a fire.
- Up to three negative environmental aspects, granting a penalty of up to -3 dice to specific actions. Examples: muddy roads that inflicts a -2 penalty to Drive tests, a fiery room that inflicts a -3 penalty to Terror Frenzy tests.

Unless the scene encompasses a very small area, any number of characters can be in a Zone. Physical attacks can only be made on characters within the same zone as the attacker. Ranged attacks can be made up to three Zones away from the attacking character's Zone, depending on the range of the weapon.

Unless the scene encompasses a very large area, moving from one Zone to another is a 2-dice Minor Action, one for each Zone the character moves to if the zones are more than one zone apart.

Undead Armory

This section expands on the sample weapons list (*Vampire*, p. 304) with unique weaponry and vehicles ready for the fight. The weapons here are most likely obtained through hard-won fights, infiltrating Second Inquisition armories, gifts of mysterious patrons, or only available to those with appropriate Backgrounds.

Heavy Weaponry

As many of the Gehenna War's battlegrounds are human combat zones, it's possible that coteries may obtain military grade hardware. These are a small selection of what's seen in conflicts today. In

ordinary conditions, such weapons are very hard to acquire, often need to be mounted or deployed from a stationary position and are very conspicuous, likely to attract attention.

Table 5: Heavy Weapons

Name	Weapon Bonus
Anti-Materiel Sniper Rifle	+6 Superficial
Machine Gun	+4 Superficial
Portable Rocketry (Anti-Tank Weapons, Mortars, Rocket-Propelled Grenade Launchers)	+3 to +6 Aggravated

Legendary Weaponry

Rumors tell of old weapons pulled out of long-lost crypts by the servants of the Antediluvians. Superstitions form around modern-day symbols of change. These are some of the weapons Kindred talk about in hushed tones.

Blue Blood Blaster

The Kindred had their own "shot heard 'round the world" when Theo Bell murdered a suspected member of the Inner Circle at the Conclave of Prague. Supposedly, Theo tossed down his sawed-off shotgun in disgust when it was done, and the weapon itself was passed among the Anarchs ever since. This is probably not true; every Anarch Free State claims they have the actual Blue Blood Blaster in their armory. But one of them can't be lying, right?

Weapon Bonus: +0 Aggravated

Special: The Blue Blood Blaster is specially designed to function with Dragon's Breath Rounds (*Vampire*, p. 380). Unlike other guns with these rounds, it never jams on a total failure.

Scourge Blades

The second time Kindred met in Prague to settle out their differences, it ended in an even larger disaster.

Survivors never forget the carnage in the nights that followed, and perhaps the strongest memory they had was of Camarilla agents wielding serrated curved swords known as Scourge Blades. In the years since, these blades have been sought after by Camarilla members looking to scare the rabble.

Weapon Bonus: +3 Superficial

Special: A vampire harmed by Scourge Blades is unable to mend for the rest of the night.



Troile's Blade

Supposedly a reinforced stone blade that Troile, the methuselah turned Antediluvian, used to slay their sire. It's said to contain a fraction of the original Brujah Antediluvian's power. Its last known location is in a chasm on Mouth Athos. Some Kindred fund secret digs on the mountain, hoping to find the one weapon guaranteed to end the Gehenna War.

Weapon Bonus: +2 Aggravated

Special: Any attempts at surprise attacking the character, even by supernatural means, automatically fail while the character wields the sword.

Prototypes

While the Second Inquisition forces keep their special technology rare, some of its prototypes have leaked onto the streets, and might even reach Kindred hands.

Pressure Cooker

The Pressure Cooker is a hand grenade-sized explosive developed by Thin-Blood Alchemists

who went rogue. It might be a botched attempt to replicate one of the ultimate abilities of Blood Sorcery, but what's important is that it's portable, you can throw it, and it makes your enemies suffer. It's used to flush out enemy Kindred, particularly in situations where a Duskborn alchemist may wish to cause chaos and destruction at a Kindred gathering.

Weapon Bonus: +1–+3 Superficial

Special: The pressure cooker is a concussive explosive (p. 56) that creates a Zone (p. 57) equivalent to the size of the room it was detonated in, or a number of yards equal to the total successes of the roll. Every Kindred caught in the area of effect must immediately make three Rouse Checks as the cooker's explosion turns their Blood inert.

Sunbeam

The Sunbeam began life as a failed anti-drone rifle prototype. When FIRSTLIGHT picked it up, it became something more: a portable version of their infamous Sunrise Bombs. Now, they can take aim with the power of the simulated Sun... if they don't burn along with the vampire.

Weapon Bonus: + Bane Severity per turn

Aggravated

Special: A target hit with the Sunbeam experiences the effects of direct sunlight (*Vampire*, p. 221). For every turn the Sunbeam is active, its user receives one level of Aggravated damage from burns.

Xscope Rifle

The Xscope, a device capable of detecting vampires, is only getting smaller. This rifle, invented by the GRU, shrinks the technology down to a scope. It's starting to see use, and it won't be long before the rest of the world has them. Luckily, it can only be so small because of outdated hardware.

Weapon Bonus: +4 Superficial

Special: When the rifle's scope detects a vampire, its user receives a +2 dice bonus to any Firearms test against the target. An active Blush of Life fools the scope. ■



Chapter Three:

NEVER STAY STILL



In an action story, nobody walks. The main characters sprint toward their goal while facing insurmountable odds, rapid-fire conflict, and life-threatening danger. Between fight scenes, car chases, explosions, and more, action stories never let you take a breath. And in **Vampire**, every pulse-pounding moment happens against a backdrop of ancient grudges, clandestine politics, and insatiable hunger.

The Gehenna War raises the stakes for vampires, where every slash, every bite, and every drop of blood can mean the difference between unlife and final death. So, let's take a look at action and how you can use it to craft a story where no vampire can afford to stand still.

What Is an Action Story?

At its core, an action story uses a character's journey through chaos and motion as an exploration of the human psyche under extreme stress. Action stories are more than spectacles of violence. They reveal what makes us tick when the clock is running out

and there's no room for error. They reflect our innate drive to survive, to overcome, and to push through barriers using sheer will and determination.

Action stories are primal, with a clear sense of danger. Themes like heroism, sacrifice, survival, and perseverance feature prominently. And action genre narratives are often a metaphor for the challenges people face, including how life's unpredictable turns push people to rise to the occasion or fall back on their worst instincts. They teach us about mental and emotional resilience using physical conflict as a stand-in. And when we experience an action story, we subconsciously confront our deepest fears, while the thrill provides a sense of catharsis.

Whether you're a Storyteller planning a chronicle or a player working on a character's backstory, vampire action provides a unique opportunity for plotlines that shake up the typical business of the Masquerade, nightly predation, and sect politics. Imagine a centuries-old feud suddenly erupts and triggers a race against time, resulting in a high-speed chase through the city and its alleyways. Or consider how action might change the course of a character's story. For example, a Ventrite forced to get their hands dirty, a Nosferatu becoming a spy and

THE ANARCH LEADER RUDI AND THE FORMER ARCHON THEO BELL
DISCUSS TACTICS:

RUDI: No! You're not staying here. There are mortals here. This is a squat, with real people.

THEO BELL: You don't understand what this is going to be, Rudi.

RUDI: I understand perfectly well. You're going to have a firefight. Sabbat are going to...

THEO BELL: Not Sabbat. These are followers of the Banu Haqim methuselah Ur-Shulgi.

RUDI: I don't care! You can't destroy this place.

THEO BELL: Listen to me, Rudi. I'm being patient. They're going to destroy everything you have. That's not in question. Everything you've built here will be gone by tomorrow morning. The question is, is anyone going to survive?

RUDI: I... Oh god.

THEO BELL: That's right. Now, let's booby trap these entrances.

saboteur out of necessity, or a Gangrel who discovers a knack for leadership when they turn the tide of a street brawl. Action can also lead to snap decisions that force characters to reckon with their Beast, their humanity, and the thin line that separates the two.

Action stories are primal, with a clear sense of danger.

THE STRUCTURE OF A STORY

Understanding basic narrative structure can help Storytellers develop an action-centric Vampire story. Narrative beats provide a backbone to the story, so events unfold coherently and keep players engaged. The essential beats are the Hook, Rising Action, Midpoint, Climax, and Resolution.

Hook: Instantly grips the players with an incident that thrusts their characters into danger, demanding swift action and quick thinking.

Rising Action: The characters tackle what they perceive as the main threat, overcome hurdles, and race toward an inevitable showdown.

Midpoint: Just when the players think their characters have conquered the threat, the midpoint adds a twist. The real danger is bigger and badder than they first assumed.

Climax: Against overwhelming odds, the characters rally, strategize, and face off against the antagonist. They must come out of the fight victorious or face potential doom.

Resolution: The characters learn the consequences of their choices, celebrate victories, mourn losses, and reflect on the experience.

By creating a scene around each of these narrative beats, a Storyteller can map out a plotline that keeps players on their toes while amplifying tension, deepening character development, and guaranteeing action-packed sessions.

Action in Genre

Action and horror can sometimes pull in opposite directions. Action pulses with immediacy and confronts threats head-on, while horror thrives on looming dread and the unknown. However, sometimes these genres come together synergistically. Like a chase scene through a fog-drenched forest, they combine to create a greater sense of danger and drama. Yet, when incorporating action into **Vampire** stories, Storytellers face unique challenges.

The Masquerade, for example, makes action hard. Fast roping from a helicopter into a rival's haven Special Forces-style is likely to earn a phone call to the police from the neighborhood watch. A six-block shootout probably results in cops swarming the area. And cruising down the highway on your motorcycle at breakneck speeds with sunglasses on and a katana strapped to your back might seem a little odd to a patrol officer. Then a Second Inquisition agency gets involved, and while that can be its own interesting story, it can quickly become something that doesn't feel like **Vampire** anymore.

When players sit down to roleplay in the World of Darkness, they have certain expectations. Two of those primary expectations are personal horror and political intrigue. Action tropes can clash with the "character first" focus of personal horror and the moral dilemmas of political intrigue. When every scene is hack and slash or when violence serves no purpose other than as spectacle, the experience can feel empty. The goal is to use action genre elements as inspiration while respecting the core tenets of the World of Darkness. And some action genres do that better than others.



Action-Adventure

Central to action-adventure stories are journeys and quests that often feature intense physical challenges and exotic locations. Think of characters like Indiana Jones, Lara Croft, and Nathan Drake. Action-adventure melds the energy of action with the exploration and discovery of adventure tales. From dense jungles and vast deserts to ancient temples and modern-day cities, these stories lean into exotic travel and settings as the characters search for an important object, person, or place. A Questari coterie hunting for the Blood of an ancient Kindred or the ruins of the city of Enoch, for example.

The Gehenna War is fertile ground for action-adventure narratives with its prophecies, competing agendas, factions, and conspiracies. A Kindred relic could surface that alters a coterie's understanding of their place in the Gehenna War, forcing them into a race against a rival faction to acquire it. They might travel the world—from one war-torn city to the next—doing battle in foreign locales and chasing (or fleeing from) the methuselah's minions. The story could culminate in inadvertently unlocking the tomb of the sleeping methuselah.

All the while they're aware that each time they leave the safety of a city, they risk being destroyed by the dangers of the open road or paranoid, unknown Kindred domains.

To maintain the mood and atmosphere of horror, the characters might have terrifying visions, nightmares, and hallucinations stemming from the mind or influence of the methuselah. Strange symbols and foreboding prophecies might haunt them during their search for the relic. While a typical action-adventure story might take place in the jungles of the Amazon, a vampire action-adventure could lead to a perfectly pristine and modern underground chamber watched over by an army of ghouls.

Crime

The crime genre, while varied, has a few quintessential elements. They often blur the line between right and wrong. Protagonists become vigilantes operating outside the law, and antagonists frequently have sympathetic motivations. This moral ambiguity works well with the flexible ethics of **Vampire** characters, as does solving mysteries, hunting down criminals, and urban settings.

Every clan and sect has members who dabble in the criminal underworld. Brujah often roll with organized crime and street gangs. Toreador connections to art and high society can lead to theft, forgery, and fraud. Clan Malkavian's prowess with Auspex and the insights their curse provides make them natural detectives and terrifying perpetrators. And with a setting like the Gehenna War, the stakes and consequences of vampire crime intensify.

Players' characters could find themselves tasked with discovering the identity of a hitman who assassinated a Kindred VIP. A clue points them toward the city's underworld where they must navigate the different criminal groups (i.e. the mob, black market dealers, outlaw motorcycle gangs, cartels). Eventually, they can stumble on a Gehenna faction that's using assassination, kidnapping, and sabotage to create a power vacuum they can exploit. Gritty realism, a feature of crime action, can add a sense of danger and paranoia while sudden spikes of violence build tension as the characters hunt down the hitman.

Espionage

When we think about spies, we think of James Bond, Modesty Blaise, Mata Hari. Even though flying across the world, blowing up international crime syndicates while occasionally playing a round of baccarat makes for great cinema, espionage in the World of Darkness requires a more subtle approach. Kindred move at a slower pace and keep watch on their enemies over the course of decades. They deploy ghouls and other vampires to gather blackmail on their rivals, conduct deep

cover infiltrations, root out moles, and sabotage their enemies' agendas. Their plans have to take into account the fact that their enemies may well be capable of reading minds and subverting wills.

Intelligence is as prized in the espionage genre as it is in vampire society. It's a commodity to hoard, trade, buy, and kill for. And when paired with the Gehenna War, the value of that intelligence could increase tenfold, and potentially test the boundaries of the Masquerade. When the demise of an entire bloodline hangs in the balance, worrying about who might hear automatic fire at a ski chalet might be the least of a Kindred's concern. However, it isn't ideal for the personal horror of most vampire sessions.

Incorporating spy themes into the Gehenna War doesn't mean shunning action entirely, but rather amplifying the paranoia of betrayal. Sometimes the

deadliest threats aren't just the enemies you know, but the friends you trust. A reliable informant could turn double-agent, feeding false information to characters, or worse, painting a target on them. Every clandestine rendezvous should be fraught with unseen foes and hidden daggers waiting for the perfect back to stab.

Key to making it work is to play with the compressed time span of the Gehenna War compared to old-school Kindred plots. The Gehenna War is happening right now, and the methuselahs who act as instigators seem to view it as something immediate that cannot be postponed the way Kindred often do. This is why things that might ordinarily occur slowly instead demand a breakneck pace.



Survival

Hunting a Sabbat pack is an interesting story, but doing it in the middle of a raging hurricane is a memorable one. With blinding rain, howling winds, and mortals hunkered in their homes, the players' characters must face the environmental dangers of the storm and a scarcity of blood. Mother Nature is a formidable adversary. No one can stop an earthquake or a tsunami. Wildfires have become frequent, yearly occurrences. A vampire could awaken from their day-sleep buried beneath a mountain of rubble or covered in ash.

That said, when thinking about a disaster or survival story, keep in mind, the horror isn't the events themselves. It's the feelings of insignificance and hopelessness they induce. When a methuselah rises from torpor, no longer is the greatest threat to a vampire's unlife a rival Anarch gang or a Camarilla Prince. Those concerns are laughably insignificant when standing in the shadow of an eldritch terror with incomprehensible power. For vampires who have lived for centuries believing in their eternal immortality and status as apex predators, the cosmic horror of the Gehenna War can shatter their sense of safety.

Thriller

The main plot of most thrillers is a mystery, though it's not always a murder mystery. A thriller focuses on the fear of a future crime rather than one that's already been committed. The main character isn't necessarily playing the role of a detective like Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot, piecing clues together to learn whodunit. However, they could be. Take Detectives Somerset and Mills in *Se7en*. They start out investigating the murder of a morbidly obese man when they quickly learn that the "mystery" is about to get so much worse.

Which leads to a palpable sense of dread. Thrillers make for good vampire stories because both tap into our most primal fears—death, dark, and loneliness. It's the lurking shadow in the alleyway, the feeling of being watched, the fear that comes with knowing something terrible is about to happen and there's no one around to help you. A good vampire thriller turns the hunter into the hunted. The Gehenna War offers plenty of opportunities to pit terrifying Kindred against the players' characters or the characters' Touchstones. For example, the coterie could investigate a strange message one of their Touchstones receives. As the story continues the villain targets more of the Touchstones and forces the coterie to make choices between who lives and who dies.

The storyline of "losing what you love" dovetails seamlessly with the personal horror of *Vampire*. What would you do if someone or something threatened your family? What choices would you make? What lines would you cross? Now, imagine having the power and reach of a vampire.

"JIMMY THE ACTION ZERO" BY DEE

GET COMFY, AND LET ME REGALE YOU WITH THE SHORT, COMBUSTIBLE UNLIFE OF JIMMY THE BRUJAH. YEAH, I KNOW, EVEN HIS NAME SOUNDS VANILLA. POOR GUY THOUGHT HE WAS IN A FUCKIN' SUPERHERO MOVIE AND LET ME TELL YOU—REALITY BITES HARDER THAN A HECATA.

AND BEFORE YOU GET ON YOUR SOAPBOX OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE SOME SANCTIMONIOUS MINISTRY HUCKSTER TRYING TO MINDF**K ME INTO SUBMISSION WITH HIS "VIOLENCE IS THE LAST BASTION OF THE FAILED SEDUCER" BULLSHIT, I GET IT. MOST OF THE BRUJAH CLAN, MY CLAN, AREN'T UNFAMILIAR WITH THE WHOLE ACTION LIFESTYLE. HELL, A LOT OF THEM LIVE FOR THE FIGHT, STANDING UP FOR PRINCIPLES AND STUFF. BUT LEMME BE CLEAR—I AIN'T ONE OF THEM. I'M A PROUD COWARD, OKAY? NO SHAME IN ADMITTING IT. WHILE SOME OF MY BRUJAH BROTHERS AND SISTERS ARE OUT THROWING FISTS FOR FREEDOM, I'M MORE INTERESTED IN SITTING BACK AND SIPPING ON A CHALICE OF SWEET, SWEET VENTRUE BLOOD. BUT THEN THERE WAS JIMMY... LIGHTS, CAMERA, DELUSION.

JIMMY WAS FRESH MEAT, A NATE WITH BARELY A NIGHT TO HIS NAME AND EYES BRIGHT AS HOLLYWOOD, THINKING HE'S THE KEANU REEVES OF THE UNDEAD. KID WALKS INTO A TASTE OF L.A. WEARING A CUSTOM, BLACK TRENCH COAT—DON'T ASK—AND WAS LIKE, "SHIT UP! I'M HERE TO KICK SOME ASS AND TAKE SOME NAMES!"

AT FIRST, IT WAS KINDA CUTE, YOU KNOW? LIKE WATCHING A KID PLAY SUPERHERO. BUT THEN IT GOT SAD. REAL SAD. HE'D INTERRUPT SERIOUS MEETINGS BETWEEN ANARCHS, STRIKING POSES AND OFFERING TO "TAKE ON" RIVAL GANGS. THE OLDER ANARCHS, HELL, EVEN SOME YOUNGER ONES, WERE EMBARRASSED FOR HIM.

SO A COUPLE OF US—OLDER, WISER, AND INFINITELY MORE JADED—DECIDED TO GIVE JIMMY BOY SOME FREE UNLIFE LESSONS AT THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS.

"LISTEN, KID," SAID MY PAL MARIA, A GANGREL GOOD AT SMELLING TROUBLE. "THIS ISN'T A MOVIE. YOU CAN'T JUST BURST IN ON THE HABBAT AND EXPECT TO WALK OUT UNSCATCHED. I'VE SEEN A LOTTA GOOD-HEARTED GUYS LIKE YOU END UP DUST. DON'T BE AN IDIOT. KEEP YOUR HEAD LOW."

Did Jimmy listen? Nah. He had that glint in his eye, that "I'M-THE-HERO-OF-THIS-STORY" vibe. Idiot.

So, Jimmy got wind of some Camarilla suits messin' around in what was clearly Anarch territory. And our boy decided it was his divine mission to "TAKE THEM DOWN." He sneaks up on the spot, ready to throw down, and he burst into their meeting doing cartwheels. Yes, actual. Fucking. Cartwheels. He yelled, "TIME TO MEET YOUR MAKER, CAMMIE SCUM!"

Now, here's the thing. These Cammies weren't your run-of-the-mill pencil pushers. They were some hard Ventrue and Toreador. And before Jimmy could even finish his superhero landing, they had him. And do you know what they did?

They laughed. Laughed so hard, I bet they almost felt alive.

Apparently, one of them asked, "Should we waste him?"

"Nah," said another. "Let's give him a chance. He's clearly new."

And they let him go. You'd think the boy learned his lesson. But nope. He pulled a wooden stake from his coat and lunged at them. Fool's courage. You guessed it. That stake never found its mark, and Jimmy was a rotting corpse.

So, what's the moral of the story? Don't be a Jimmy. We aren't heroes or villains. We're just trying to survive the night. Being a vampire means coming to terms with what you are. You're a predator. Not a caped crusader. The sooner you accept that, the less likely you are to end up as an inanimate body, or worse, a cautionary tale told by yours truly.

The heart wants what it wants, sure, but it won't want anything if it's dead dead. So, find out what you're really about, and, for the love of night, listen when wiser heads talk.

Til next time, freaks, stay smart, stay thirsty.

Adrenaline After Dark

If step one of developing an engaging action chronicle starts with using a genre as inspiration, step two is ensuring the characters (both players' and supporting) complement the story. At first, it might seem like a combat-oriented coterie is a natural fit. Of course, it can be, but the goal of action is to push characters beyond their comfort levels. And some of the best action stories are about people who are the least likely to succeed. School teachers, librarians, historians, novelists, garbage collectors, accountants, and gas station clerks are all viable concepts. You just have to find the right key to turn the character's action engine on.

Characters on the Edge

In the Gehenna War setting, whether fighting on the front lines or unearthing clues regarding it, stagnation is a death sentence even for the most powerful methuselah. No amount of resources, backgrounds, or Disciplines can save the complacent. To ensure a chronicle has a palpable sense of danger and suspense, it's important to keep the characters always on the move.

Ambitions and Desires can shape more than the character's arc, they can help keep the stakes and tension high in an action story. Characters need a vital mission, purpose, or urgent objective so pivotal that failure ends their unlife. Perhaps it's a Tremere racing against time to uncover a hidden grimoire with the power to overthrow the Chantry leadership, a Brujah out for revenge after a sibling's brutal betrayal, or a Toreador caught in a deadly web of love and passion. These aren't just ordinary nights; consider plotlines and character goals where every decision, every step, could change their fate forever. For a character's Ambition and Desire ask:

- Does the Ambition push the character to act urgently, even if it's a long-term goal?
- To achieve their Ambition, what extreme lengths is the character willing to go to? What do they stand to lose if they don't take risks?

- Does the Ambition place the character at the epicenter of action, conflict, and turmoil?
- What imminent threat or opportunity makes the character's Desire a pressing concern for tonight?
- How does pursuing their Desire lead to explosive interactions or confrontations with other characters?
- Is there a moral line the character might cross to fulfill this Desire?

The Pace of Blood

In *Vampire*, Predator Types act as a reflection of a vampire's innate approach to survival, power, and conflict. The way a vampire hunts can ignite territorial wars and spark personal vendettas.

Imagine a Bagger's reliance on stored blood leading to a full-blown blood bank heist, a Blood Leech on the run setting the scene for a thrilling chase, an Osiris's deification escalating to a war between cults, or a Siren's spurned lover turning the predator into prey. A vampire's thirst for blood can set the pace of an action story. For a character's Predator Type ask:

- How could this feeding style inadvertently draw attention, unwanted or otherwise, from mortals or other Kindred?
- What does the Predator Type reveal about a character's vulnerability, and how can it create a confrontation?
- How does the inherent risk of a specific feeding style ramp up the urgency and tension in the chronicle?
- Does this Predator Type make the character a target by being seen as a threat, an asset, or an anomaly?
- Can the chosen Predator Type create dramatic irony, where the character's actions have unforeseen consequences that heighten the stakes?

Setting the Stage

Territories, turf wars, and the nature of coteries are as integral to Kindred existence as the blood that sustains them. The type of coterie the characters form and the domain they claim sets the stage for drama. Different Coterie Types can have unique challenges like Cerberuses defending a museum or vault with their unlives, Fang Gangs turning warehouses and alleyways into battlefields, or Maréchals securing a ballroom after an assassination attempt on the Prince. And Domain isn't just where a coterie conducts nightly business; it's a valuable resource vital to their safety. The choice of Coterie Type and Domain traits can shape the narrative, making every inch of ground a line in the sand. For Coterie Type and Domain ask:

- Who or what poses the most immediate danger to the coterie due to its nature or goals?
- What obligations come with being this type of coterie, and how can failing to meet these responsibilities lead to action or conflict?
- What territory, artifacts, or information is crucial for this coterie type, and who else might covet them?
- How does the mortal population density of a coterie's Domain add to the tension or complications of the story?
- Does the coterie's Domain have specific technology or infrastructure (like a subway system, surveillance network, or underground warrens) that might play into action sequences?

Action Needs a Villain

Action works best when there is an antagonist, rival, or competitor pushing against the players' characters. There is no John McClane without Hans Gruber. And as a Storyteller, one of the most difficult aspects of planning a chronicle is creating Storyteller characters that can challenge the coterie. Often, players throw dice, combat ensues, and even though they defeat the villain, the victory feels hollow. Sometimes that's because success comes too easily, but more often it's because the emotional payoff doesn't match the moment.

BUILDING AN UNFORGETTABLE VILLAIN

Building a convincing antagonist can be difficult, even for an experienced storyteller. Use these tips to capture your players' attention with a memorable adversary.

Create a connection: Tie your villain to the players' characters directly and emotionally. Use your chronicle's Relationship Map (Vampire, p. 338) to find common connections between the players' characters. Does someone on the map make a perfect rival? Is there an unlisted character that might have an emotional investment in the coterie's failure?

Write a compelling backstory: Few people are adversarial without cause. Tragedy, pain, and loss can push someone into villainy. What happened in the character's past that shattered their world? How did the players' characters contribute to their pain and loss even if it was inadvertent? Is there a way to put the players' characters in your antagonist's shoes?

Choose mechanics thoughtfully: When creating the character, choose attributes, skills, Disciplines, and backgrounds uniquely suited to hurting the players' character physically and emotionally. But also, be careful not to make them so overpowered (or underpowered) that the coterie finds them more frustrating than fun. Does the character have physical strength, intelligence, political sway, social status, or a seemingly infinite amount of resources to draw on? How can the character's mechanical advantages exploit the coterie's blind spots?

Use vivid description: Strong, vivid details make for standout villains. Decide how they walk, talk, and behave. Then describe those features with notable, specific details. What strange habits or tics do they exhibit? Do they have an exaggerated personality trait? How do they smell? Is there a physical trait that resulted from their personal tragedy?

Watch your language: When your antagonist speaks and writes, they should sound like a product of their time and environment. How old is the character? Where did they grow up? Where were they Embraced? Are they speaking their first or second language? What words and phrases help them fit in with their surroundings?

No One Sees Themselves as the Villain

In a world of bloodsucking vampires, everyone is a villain. So, instead of focusing on what makes the antagonist “bad,” consider what makes the character “right.” Even if it’s only in their own mind, your antagonist needs to believe they’re doing what’s best, that they’re serving an important purpose, and that their goal solves a problem. How they go about reaching that goal and the collateral damage they cause along the way can be what makes them a villain worth defeating. Consider the underlying reasons for their actions.

- What memories inform their perspective?
- What trauma have they suffered?
- What unhealed mental, physical, or emotional wound haunts their choices?
- What decisions were they forced to make to survive in a cutthroat environment?

Once you have some insight into their perspective, look for opportunities to connect the players’ characters to it. Ideally, the players’ characters should be directly responsible for the antagonist’s current situation. Perhaps they inadvertently played a part in the antagonist’s fall from grace or unknowingly thwarted a plan of theirs in the past. Maybe a decision made by the coterie led to the antagonist suffering a loss or humiliation.

And when that direct responsibility isn’t available, think about other reasons why the antagonist is invested in the coterie’s failure. It could stem from a past encounter or shared history. The antagonist might see the players’ characters as representing everything they despise or as a symbol of a system they want to overthrow. The point is to search for a grievance that might be, at least in part, justified.

Then, turn the antagonist’s pain and frustration into a plan. Lay out what the character is going to do

about it and determine how they’ll make the players’ characters pay for it. Here is a progressive 3-step formula to guide you:

- **Hands-Off Approach:** Initially, let the antagonist operate from the shadows. They should value discretion over direct confrontation. This could be as simple as spreading rumors about the coterie hoping to tarnish their reputation, or the antagonist could pull from strings on their mortal influences. The choice should give the players’ characters a hook to investigate and a taste for what may be in store for them.
- **Power of Minions:** As the story advances, elevate the threat level. The antagonist, growing impatient, dispatches their trusted minions, lieutenants, or allies to challenge the coterie. These encounters should gradually reveal the bigger picture and provide hints about the antagonist’s goal. This should also illustrate the scale of the threat.
- **Hands-on Involvement:** At the climax of the story, either out of desperation, overconfidence, or sheer malice, the antagonist emerges from the shadows to confront the players’ characters directly. This confrontation should be a culmination of their backstory and grievances. While it can certainly be a physical combat, it can also be a social showdown, an emotional conflict, or a combination of the three.

When the antagonist’s plan comes into contact with the players’ characters, it needs to do so on a personal, visceral level. This may not be obvious in the beginning, but slowly, as the story unfolds, the players’ characters need to realize the stakes are much higher than originally thought. The more personal the plan strikes, the more profound and satisfying the resolution will be for the players.

Personal is Provocative

Every player's character has a network of relationships. This includes a sire, childer, mortal family, ghouls, Touchstones, and friends, each of whom play a significant role in the character's backstory. If one of these ties is in danger, it should matter to the player and inspire them to act on their feelings. For instance, if a Touchstone on a character sheet is nothing more than a name (Claire) and an occupation (nurse), when an antagonist kidnaps her, it has little emotional impact. But if Claire is a short, young woman with a wicked sense of humor, struggles with student debt, and fosters stray kittens, then when she's kidnapped, her loss feels more personal and real. The more developed these side characters are, the more the characters (and players) care about what happens to them.

And like actual people, player's characters are complex, with a variety of contradictory loyalties, agendas, and beliefs. Contradictions create conflict, and conflict is the key ingredient for drama. When tough choices test a character's value system, it drives the story forward. Take a Brujah whose sire mysteriously dies, and after investigating discovers her best friend, a Toreador, is responsible. When the Brujah confronts the Toreador, the Toreador openly confesses to the crime and explains that the dead sire was actually a Sabbat spy. In that moment, the Brujah must weigh the loyalty they had for their sire, the fidelity they have for their best friend, and their general hatred of the Sabbat. Whatever conclusion the character reaches, the internal conflict pushing the Brujah to make a tough decision, and results in a more defined character.

What We Fight Over

Every Kindred has their own reasons to fight but there are some commonalities.

Blood

As spoken by Anjali "AJ" Singh, Thin-Blood Alchemist

You hear a lot of grand talk among the clans about blood being power and the eternal connection that binds us all. But while they babble about lineage and prophecy, we Duskblood have a different perspective. Our fight isn't for thrones or titles. It's for the right to exist. Our precarious state makes us targets. But it also makes us dangerous. Nobody is more resourceful than someone with everything to lose.

Duskblood can't just go around forcing people into submission, so we adapt, we learn, and we exploit every drop of vitae for what it's worth. That's why I'm a Cooker. Cookers squeeze every bit of utility out of blood, eking out an advantage. Basically, I'm the gal you need when you want to get more bang for your bloody buck. And what I cook in my labs? That's the democratization of power. Every drop is a revolt, every pint a war, and every gulp a tiny revolution. What I bring to the table is an escape route for the underdogs. Unlike the fuckos who burn in the sun, we don't have the luxury of daddy's trust fund of potent vitae. We're down here with our DIY kits, making moonshine magic from spit and scraps. I can mix a concoction that makes you wild-eyed and unpredictable, or I can give you a pinch of Nosferatu, and boom, you're slinking in shadows, unseen but never unfelt. See, for us Duskblood, blood isn't tradition, it's innovation. It's the reason your sire warned you about us, and the reason those Camarilla asshats would rather see us branded or dead.

Now, let's talk action. Why fight over a substance that's technically abundant? Hell, why did I have to fend off three Brujah goons last week just to score a pint of A-negative? Simple: blood is more than a drink. It's violence in liquid form. When we fight for it, we're not just tussling for a meal, we're fighting for leverage, advantage, and survival.

We're the fresh blood in an old game, and we're not going anywhere. So yeah, we're scrappy, we're messy, but we're also brilliant. We are the future of Kindred society. And in the end, it'll be the Duskblood who inherit the night.

Anjali "AJ" Singh, signing off. Keep your beakers full and your enemies guessing.

Territory

As recorded by Roger de Camden, Prince of Edinburgh, Pater of the Cult of Mithras, Wearer of the Death's Head Mask

Guard your territory with a general's eye. Allow no transgressions, no matter how minor they appear. The fall of London taught me the brutal lesson that the only response to territorial infringement is swift, decisive action. To fight over territory is not merely a contest of prowess or acumen, it's a brutal discourse on the values we uphold and allegiances we value. The objective remains sacrosanct: to hold the ground that is so much more than ground, to govern a kingdom that is so much more than a kingdom.

As a Hecata and a devotee of the tenets of Mithras, I have learned the lessons of power through knowledge, strength through sacrifice, and dominion through both. Violence, when required, can be a tool in service of higher knowledge, but it is a necessity in the preservation of territorial integrity. A precisely executed act of aggression can reinforce the sanctity of your dominion. It sends a clear message: tread carefully, for you walk upon my sacred ground.

Lose your domain, and you're as vulnerable as a newborn. Even the grandest cities, like the most ancient of Kindred, can be consigned to the annals of history. This loss isn't just forfeited land or reduced influence, it calls into question your worth, your capabilities, and your very place in the hierarchy. You see, to lose ground is to suffer a diminishment of the self. It whispers doubts into the ears of your allies, sews discord among your subordinates, and inflames the smug satisfaction of your enemies.

Conversely, to triumph is a consecration of your beliefs and strengthens the bonds of trust and loyalty of those who share in your victory. But remember, the emotional toll of violence can be both intoxicating and poisonous. Win or lose, the fight leaves an indelible imprint on our psyche, shaping our future actions and coloring our relationships. We may grow callous, burdened by the weight of victories hard won. Or we may become desperate and reckless, spurred by the hollow ache of our defeats. Ignore the costs, and you risk becoming a puppet prince of a meaningless domain.

So, you see, the stakes go far beyond the mere drawing of maps or shifting of borders. We yearn, we strive, we bleed, and in so doing, our decisions necessitate ruthless calculus. I have survived this long by understanding the value of territory. It's a lesson paid for in blood — both mine and others. Disregard it at your own peril.

Touchstones

By Edie Trust, Malkavian Herald

You bite into enough kine over a long enough timeline, and it becomes really easy to stop thinking of them as people. After a while, those forgettable faces become like walking, talking, blood vending machines. You only care about pushing the right button and giving them a shake when they don't drop a treat. You forget that, just like you, they have a name, and a past, and a life. Or unlife, rather. They have dreams and hopes and stumble through their day, struggling to be heard and understood. And just like you, they want to be part of the world, and unique to it, at the same time.

We feed on these strangers, but do we ever see the pictures of their kids in their wallets? Or notice the rings on their fingers? Were they rushing home to a loved one or headed to bed after a shitty day at work? Nah, we block all that out. Easier to see them as ambulatory juice boxes. One-way tickets to Satisfaction Town, population: us.

And that's what it so fucked up. Because we feed on these people, on these strangers, five or six times a week, and then on the weekends we check in on our nephews playing at the park. We search for the guy who works at the music store because he reminds us of a boy we used to date. We drive by our childhood home even when it's occupied by total strangers. We cling to these people — to these lingering phantoms of our mortal lives — because they remind us that we're more than fangs and hunger.

And we do everything we can to protect them. We encircle their homes with a wall of bodies. Because if we lose them, if they die, if some other vampire asshole takes them from us, we'd lose the last vestiges of who we are. Who we were.

I've seen what happens to Kindred with no mortal ties. They get real mean, and ultimately, get put down. They end up in the dirt or sun baked into cinders. Loving the mortals who surround us... that's not weakness. That's an act of survival. And the sooner you realize that the sooner your unlife gets a whole lot easier. But just to be clear, the people in your life, the ones who touch your soul, don't you ever tell anyone about them. Not ever. Not even your sire.



Caine

From an early morning rant by the Anarch murderer Agata Starek

I once told a priest in the Church of Caine that I would find that precious Dark Father of theirs and suck him dry, take all of his precious Blood until he and his legacy were nothing but ashes. I was funny. The priest was so offended but also so scared, worried that I'd destroy him. He told me I shouldn't joke about such matters.

I wonder... Was I joking?

You see a lot of little fuckers fighting the Gehenna War to find Caine, each in their own way. Some to commit diablerie and strengthen their Blood, try to match him in power. Or at least get a bit closer.

Other are literally trying to find him, thinking that if the methuselahs are awakening, the Antediluvians can't be far behind. And after them, the old vegetable gardener himself.

Me, I don't give a fuck. But I'm like that, I'm not good at caring about things I can't see or touch. For some of these losers, Caine represents something they've always been yearning for. Completion, I guess. They think that when they find him, all their questions will be answered.

I guess I'm curious too, even if I don't really believe you'll find Caine driving a taxi in LA or some such shit. Vampires exist, since I'm one. What other stories are true?

Complications Come with Fangs

Nothing slows the momentum of a game session like a turn of combat that takes three hours to play, an ill-timed frenzy that sidetracks the game, or a messy critical spiraling into chaos. At the end of the night, *Vampire: The Masquerade* is a roleplaying game. Games should be fun. And sometimes, mechanics

and rules get in the way of a good time. Luckily for *Vampire*, there is no “wrong way to play it.” If the only thing you want to do is tell a kickass story about vampires living in the shadows of methuselahs, with zero dice rolls, that’s entirely your prerogative. Rulebooks and lore are tools. They’re there to spark creativity, inspire plot ideas, help tell a story, and introduce the element of chance.

Many storytelling systems lean on rules and dice rolls to introduce chance. Unpredictability and the possibility of failure can make a story more thrilling. Knowing you can fail a test often increases the tension, suspense, and satisfaction of the game session. That said, the system can’t account for every situation, nor can it predict every choice a character will make. It’s up to the Storyteller and players to adapt the rules (or throw them out) when they no longer serve the narrative.

All Rolls, All the Time

Action is important, and should be challenging, but rolling all the time can quickly sap the unlife out of a scene, transforming the session into a grind. Generally speaking, *Vampire* is built on the slow burn of political intrigue. The moves of Kindred society are deliberate and calculated, like pushing pieces across a chessboard. And much like chess, long stretches of plotting explode in dramatic spikes of bloody violence. The violence is meant to be fast and deadly, and then everyone is supposed to go back to their secret agendas.

Action stories are the opposite. Action tells you to buckle up, Buckaroo, because the speed won’t stop until someone hits a wall. Instead of long stretches of tension punctuated by activity, action narratives rely on consistent momentum punctuated by occasional patches of quiet. In order to maintain that momentum while avoiding roll fatigue, dice-detailed play may not be the best choice. Consider adapting the rules to your group’s preference or check out Modes of Play in *Vampire*, p. 291. It details ways you can use freeform play to maintain the excitement of action scenes.

Rousing the Beast

Blood fuels every Discipline, blush of life, and sassy trick a vampire can pull, including waking up for the night. This use of blood comes with the chance that they'll stir the ravenous monster within them. **Vampire** simulates this by having a player roll a Rouse Check (*Vampire*, p. 211). In action-packed stories, these checks can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they create suspense. Will the vampire hold their Hunger back or will the Beast push them over the edge? On the other hand, consequences of Hunger can slow things down, especially when the pace of the narrative should be at a breakneck speed.

The players might be in the middle of a car chase or combat, and what starts as an intensely suspenseful scene risks becoming a grind because they're sidetracked by the mechanical technicalities of Hunger with every action they take. Or the characters make it halfway through the heist before Hunger gets the better of them, and what was supposed to be a story about the theft of a coveted journal turns into a mass casualty event. Some players might find that fun, and others not so much.

Here are a couple of different ways you can scale the number of Rouse Checks down:

Buy Now, Pay Later: Make a note every time something would cause a Rouse Check. At the end of the scene, make all Rouse Checks incurred during the scene at once and play out consequences before moving on to the next scene.

Set Increase: The Storyteller decrees that Hunger increases automatically by one each turn of the action scene regardless of what the characters do as long as they're engaging in the action. No Rouse Checks are made. Obviously, this alternative can make vampire characters more powerful as they are able to use Rouse-related abilities more freely.

The Beast Unleashed

Frenzy is the not-so-glam side of a vampire's eternal night. One push from the outside world, and it's showtime for the Beast. A vampire in Frenzy does whatever it takes to satisfy the urge to kill, eat, or flee from whatever triggered them. A provocation can be fire, sunlight, the smell of blood, tainted blood, a hunger for blood, violence, fear, panic, anger, humiliation, maybe someone said something mean about their shoes. The list is long. This complicates sessions for obvious reasons, like the constant presence of blood, violence, and threatening situations in action stories. But it also means having to test to resist Frenzy, which can become tedious.

Here are some methods to avoid the game being turned into a non-stop Frenzy:

Narrated Frenzy: As the Storyteller, instead of requiring a test, narrate a cinematic Frenzy in the same vein as Riding the Wave (*Vampire*, p. 219) when the provocation is most obvious and appropriate, like a starving vampire in a Hunger Frenzy or a vampire fleeing from an explosion or the sun.

One Test per Scene: Limit the number of Frenzy tests to one per scene (per player), and choose the moment to heighten, rather than hijack, tension. Once a Frenzy test is made, win or fail, no more tests of that kind are made for the scene.

Lower Difficulty: Lower the Difficulties of Frenzy tests by one or more. In theory, that should prevent multiple instances of Frenzy from derailing your chronicle.

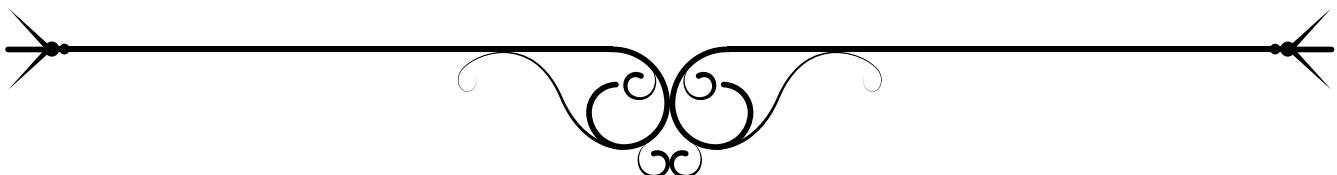
Using any of these methods changes the tenor of the game. They work best if used for the specific purpose of making sure every action scene doesn't end up with all characters frenzying willy-nilly. ■



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Chapter Four:

FACES OF EVIL



There are two challenges in Storytelling a Gehenna War game. How to use the Gehenna War as a setting and how to run an action-horror game? This chapter seeks to help Storytellers with both, providing information on how to use the ancient monsters driving a lot of the violence of the war as well as helping with Storyteller advice on how to run action scenes.

The Gehenna War is complicated and confusing. It involves dozens of different factions at various levels of power and influence, all with their own goals. In this sense, it resembles the politics Kindred always play, except with more gunshots, decapitations, and corpses.

War is hell and the shadow wars of the Kindred are no different. Although the undead tend to be more cynical than mortals, death and violence is often framed in the same basic terms: The goals of our side are justified while those of our enemies are monstrous. We have righteousness on our side while those we fight are uniquely evil. Our crimes can be excused in service of a greater purpose while those of our enemies are proof of their perfidy.

When it comes to vampires, such ideas are rarely incorrect when talking about your enemies. They become lies when a bloodsucking predator tries to portray themselves as good and kind. Yet many Kindred manage to hold onto such illusions about themselves, despite nightly evidence to the contrary.

Layers of Conflict

When you consider the Gehenna War as a setting for your game, you can think of it in terms of layers of conflict. The question is, which layer are the players' characters on? This colors their perception of the War.

Unwitting Participants: The players' characters have little idea of what's happening in the War. They get swept into it when the War comes to their domain, two or more of its factions duking it out with each other.

Opportunists: The characters know enough to be able to use the War to their own advantage, or at least they think they do. They can exploit power vacuums and get out of the way when the big boys roll in.

Witting Participants: The characters represent a faction fighting the war, such as those found in Chapter Five. They have allies and a goal they seek to fulfill. Note that this level also includes much of the Sabbat and well-informed members of the Camarilla and the Anarchs seeking to protect their domains from the War.

Once you know what's the viewpoint the characters have on the War, you'll have an easier time using elements like the factions, individual enemies and even the methuselahs for best effect.

From a letter by the Anarch Theo Bell:

Sometimes I wonder about their motivations. The methuselahs, I mean. Their minions are easier to grasp. They talk enough about their obsessions that you know why they're trying to destroy you. But these ancient Kindred pulling the strings, now that's a different matter.

I don't think there's anything human left in them. They're like the Sabbat, monstrous yet somehow still able to function in their own fashion. Not wights but something worse.

Why do they fight the Gehenna War? Why do they goad the sects and all these fucked-up cults into trying to destroy one another?

Sometimes you think you know. They do it for Blood, sustenance, power, territory. All these ordinary animal reasons.

But I don't know. When you're fighting the Gehenna War, you have to accept there are some things you'll never know.

You'll never get inside the head of a blood god.

Storytelling Action-Horror

A man follows a lead to an abandoned building and enters all alone. He knows this is a bad idea. He fears the flashlight and gun he brought won't be enough for what he's sure is inside. He also knows that he's the only person capable of ending this.

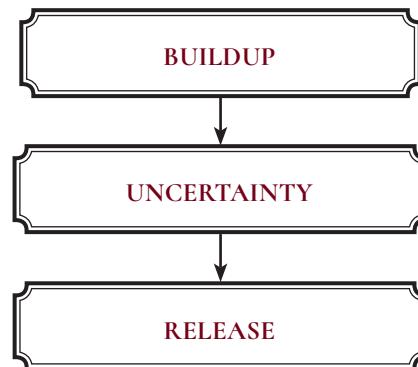
A killer lurks in the darkness behind him. She's biding her time to strike, and that time is now. She emerges from the shadows and plunges her knife into the man's shoulder. He elbows her in the face. It's enough to get her off him, and the knife comes out as she pulls away. It's not enough to stun her.

The man's eyes adjust to the darkness, and he sees his opponent rush him. He's a quick draw, but she's closer and faster. The knife slides into the side of his belly. The man, driven by anger and adrenaline, holds the woman close and rushes the two towards a wall. His gambit works; the back of her head meets solid brick. She lets go of the knife and the man has enough time to take a few steps back. He steadies his aim through the pain, and fires two shots. One grazes the woman's chest, and the other hits the wall beside her neck. It was supposed to be a double tap to the chest and head, but his shoulder wound got in the way. He sees her smile and hears others coming down the stairs. His heart sinks as he realizes that she's got backup, and he doesn't.

Was this an action sequence, or a horror scene? In an action-horror chronicle, it's both. While the two genres suggest wildly different clichés of the chisel-jawed hero mowing down the bad guys or the masked villain enforcing a bloody morality play (isn't it fascinating how those oversimplifications are mirror images of each other?), in truth they both play with the same dynamics of tension. There's a build-up, however brief, then a moment of uncertainty, and then a definitive release.

You can use these similarities for your chronicle. With the following guidelines in mind, you can turn an action scene from an exchange of dice rolls to impactful, terrifying moments that move the troupe's story forward.

Flow of Action Sequences.



Setting the Stage

Every fight in an action-horror chronicle is a set piece. There are no throwaway fights; each is a moment of life and death, with something to reveal either about the character, the world around them, or the enemy they face. The best way to get this across is by giving each action sequence its own setting.

When developing an action scene, whether as a pre-planned event or as an impromptu moment the characters stumbled their way into, make sure to provide the set piece's basic elements.

▪ The Action Scene's Physical Location:

There's no need to get into long and elaborate details about the world around the characters, but descriptions about where they are should include where and how far any opponents or obstacles are, environmental elements the characters can take advantage of, environmental elements the characters could be hindered by, and any possible exits.

- **A Clear Sense of What's at Stake:** While the characters might not know why they're about to enter this set piece, the players should have a very clear idea what success and failure means for them. While this is often done through dialogue, describing the environment can imply what the characters stand to lose. For example, no one needs to say a ship is sinking to begin a set piece where the characters survive it. Describing the explosion that the characters see and how the boat lurches after is enough to tell the players that they must act now.
- **Ways for the Characters to Act:** Confusion about what to do is something the characters should experience, not the players. In fights, it should be clear that the characters need to fight their way out. In a disaster area, the players should be aware that escape is possible, and perhaps even find ways to rescue others.

Once you have the three basic elements hammered out, you can add as much detail as desired. You can tailor this to your troupe's play styles. Players that like to interact with the world might want more environmental details. Players who focus on objectives might want more information on the situation. Players who value agency always appreciate learning about potential solutions and finding new ones.

Setting the stage is important to build-up the action. It establishes where the characters are now, the uncertainty that lies ahead of them, and potential ways the scene could resolve, with the only ideal ones being those the characters must work to achieve.

PHYSICAL COMBAT ALTERNATIVES

Even in an action-horror chronicle, the Storyteller should resist the temptation to throw characters into fight after fight. Overloading the players with constant combat risks making fights seem generic or even a diversion from the troupe's story.

When possible, present ways coteries can get out of fights. This is a great way to give players a feeling of agency, open the scene to new narrative paths, or to keep a scene viable when it becomes clear that any actual fight wouldn't be fun or scary. Some alternatives are:

- Shift physical conflict to social conflict. The coterie might find it more tense to talk down an enemy.
 - Shift a violent encounter into another competitive encounter such as a chase. The pack member, after posturing with a knife, decides to run for it when he sees the entire coterie.
 - Invoke an authority. If the coterie's on the verge of fighting an ostensibly allied force, getting a mutual boss to end the conflict could ease tensions, especially if the characters have an opportunity to sway the authority.
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Managing the Pace

Action sequences live and die by their pacing. There's no one universal pace for any kind of action sequence; an extended gunfight could be more thrilling than a quick but rote exchange of punches. In all forms of fiction, pacing is more art than science. This is especially true at a troupe's table. A thirty-second portion of a desperate escape from a hijacked car in the game's fiction could be a half-hour consisting of careful decision-making, table talk, and rules clarification.

While there is no formula for creating the perfect pace at the table, the Storyteller should consider a few ways to ensure an action scene lasts long enough to be effective but not long enough to outstay its welcome:

- **Be Aware of What Characters Are Capable Of:** A common pacing hindrance is when the troupe encounters a scenario that takes too long to resolve, either due to a misjudgment of appropriate Difficulties or through using pre-written material that doesn't quite fit the coterie's strengths. Keeping familiar with what's on your troupe's sheets helps you determine what's challenging but not time-consuming, and lets you confidently retune pre-written material to properly challenge the troupe.
- **Use the Tools Available to You:** This game's system provides multiple ways to manage a sequence's pace. Basic conflicts can summarize what would otherwise be a long, complex sequence. The Three Turns and Out system is a fantastic way to divide almost any action sequence into three digestible, impactful segments. If the current way of using the rules isn't providing the pace you desire, there's likely a mechanic in the game that will.
- **Mind the Real-World Time:** When an action sequence occurs during a session is often just as important as how it's designed. A big fight at the tail end of session might have to be cut short due to players needing to leave at the usual time, or jumping right into a car chase at the start of

a session might not have the impact it deserves without some prologue. In general, try to have extended action sequences in the middle of the session, and keep any action sequences at the tail end of the session short and dramatic.

- **Check-In with Your Players, Check-In with Yourself:** Perhaps the greatest factor for the pace of a scene is the troupe's energy. If one or more people at the table are lethargic due to events outside the table, they might not be able to keep up with a long action scene, even if they're otherwise enjoying it. If one of those people is the Storyteller, they might be tempted to bring the scene to an end even though the players want to do more. Make sure everyone's feeling ready to take on a dedicated action scene before it starts and be sure to ask if everyone still wants a scene to continue if it lasts longer than expected.
- **Remember That the Scene Isn't in a Vacuum:** One way that scenes can drag is if they're solely focused on the characters, any Storyteller characters, and how they're dealing with the situation at hand. The actual events may be exciting, but when all that changes are the lines on the Health box, the pace could hinder. Pepper in how the character's actions change the environment, how others that might be present react, or introduce the threat of a new obstacle.
- **Don't Be Afraid to Move On:** When all else fails, you can just bring the sequence to an end. If the outcome of the scene is now obvious, and there are no further ways to create uncertainty, it's time to resolve the scene. In an action-horror chronicle, the consequences of an action sequence inevitably lead to another one.

Flow of Control

One of the ways to create uncertainty in an action sequence is to see it not only as a linear series of events, but a back-and-forth sway of who is in control of the situation. This give-and-take between the sides keeps the action exciting.

Ideally, no one side in an action sequence should

be in total control for the entire event. If an action scene becomes a one-sided curb stomp, it should be a frightening event if it's happening to the characters, and a way for the characters to demonstrate their monstrousness "on screen." In either case, these kinds of scenes should be kept short.

The troupe can monitor who's in control of a scene in a few ways:

- **Overall Health:** In physical or social combat focused action scenes, the characters in better shape are the ones in control. This way of measuring control is the most dice-dependent of the three, and therefore most prone to hard swings between one side to another. While Incapacitation is a great way to know when a fight ends, remember that most people, vampires included, have very few things they find worth fighting to the bitter end. In most scenes where health determines flow of control, one side having the most damage is a great moment to bring the scene to a close.
- **Area Mastery:** In scenes where the characters are trying to occupy or conquer a physical location, such as a vampire's haven or the remote FIRSTLIGHT outpost, how much of the space the characters can safely roam determines who is in control. This is a great measure for troupes with visual aids, or for action sequences that need two or more scenes or even sessions to complete. In scenes where area mastery determines flow of control, one side having the most unchallenged territory is a good sign to close the scene.
- **Objective Progress:** In scenes with more abstract objectives, like having to take control of a speeding bus or reaching a trapped ally before the coterie's enemies do, the side closest to completing their objective determines who is in control. Opposing sides don't need to have the same overall objective during the scene, and most don't. For example, while the coterie might try to stop the bus, their enemies on board want to send the bus careening into a building. If the main objective has a clear division of goals to reach it, this is an excellent way to show the flow

of control through an in-character and out-of-character perspective.

Shifting Alliances

As the flow of control shifts in an action sequence, so can the alliances of those involved. The coterie may be bound to each other through a common purpose or for a kind of camaraderie, but that's not necessarily true for anyone they're fighting with. In chronicles where coteries aren't as tight-knit, that's even true for the coterie itself. Action sequences, where emotions and stress are running high, could be moments where a coterie's hidden enemy reveals itself.

The inverse is also possible. There's no guarantee that a coterie's enemies are any more loyal to each other than the coterie is. Some enemies are fighting for money or material goods rather than an ideal. Some combatants are just cowards who aren't afraid to hop onto the winning side.

Some moments where combatants could switch sides are:

- **When the flow of control shifts towards or away from the characters:** The coterie gaining or losing allies as the action scene rages on is a visible, even visceral sign of how well the scene is going for them. If the action scene has an unstable flow of control, this kind of alliance shift should only happen once during the scene. A character flipping sides multiple times in one scene could come off as too humorous, even if that fits the character's nature.
- **Just as the coterie reaches or obtains the objective:** Alliances shifting could be the final challenge the coterie faces before reaching their goal, or a clear sign that the coterie's come away victorious. As this sort of shift is most likely to happen near the end of an action scene, make sure there's either enough time and energy among the troupe to play out the consequences, or consider using it as a cliffhanger if it's at the end of the session.

- **When an ally or an enemy reaches their own objective:** If the coterie is working with a character that has their own objective in the action sequence, they might reveal their true intentions once they're sure their own goal is in sight. This could be a great mid-scene twist (p. 85), or another way to make the coterie earn their victory near the close of an action scene.
- **At the start of an action sequence:** Shifting alliances at the start of an action scene could be a way to surprise both characters and their players, or even be the inciting incident of the scene. A moment like this could be reserved for characters who've been against the coterie showing their true colors, or a deep cover ally tossing away the façade and coming to the coterie's rescue.
- **After a successful coercive action:** Vampires have access to a wide variety of ways to change people's minds at the worst time, from Social Disciplines to a sudden implication of blackmail. No matter how alliances shift, make sure that any double-crossing is true to the character as they've been depicted. If a character's true alliances were offscreen, let the players pick up on clues and hints toward them before or during the action scene. If the character shifting alliances belongs to a player, the Storyteller and player should work together to provide these hints and make certain that any in-character feelings of betrayal don't bleed into out-of-character feelings of betrayal.

Describing Damage

Injury, something that's always front and center on a character sheet, is instant feedback for how well an action scene is going for a character. Both to the character and to the player, taking damage should be more than just scrawling more lines on boxes. When describing damage to a player, consider these guidelines:

- **Keep It Short:** Even the most dramatic injury in an action scene happens in an instant. Where the narrative lingers is the consequences of a dramatic injury. Injuries are just transitory

moments between one narrative state and another. Treat them accordingly. This applies to both physical and social attacks; an insult might cut deep, but what invited it and the character's reaction after they process it is what matters.

- **Focus on Sensation:** All vampires feel pain, and all injuries cause pain. Using the overall Health boxes a character has, how much damage is going on the sheet, the character's in-fiction physical build and their personality, try to describe the injury how they'd comprehend it. The same 2 Superficial Physical damage punch might feel like a rough jab to the collarbone for a powerful character, and a devastating impact that hairline fractures their jaw for a frail character. The lack of sensation, such as when a vampire uses a Fortitude power that lessens incoming injury, is also important. This matters for social attacks as well. The Blush of Life allows for human reactions to embarrassment and anger, but the flashes of rage and fear the Beast causes outside of it are also sensations.
- **Take a Holistic View:** All injuries build on one another. Several turns of taking Superficial damage aren't just putting down diagonal lines until it's time to turn them into X's, it's a character getting their head slammed into a metal locker repeatedly. Between turns, take a moment to summarize the injuries they have, how that feels physically and emotionally, and ask players how the characters react to that, or let them correct you if that's not how their character would process the overall sensations. This makes the scene feel more intense and gives the players a narrative way to determine how far they should push their luck.

DAMAGE AND BODY HORROR

Even without the use of Disciplines, vampires have an incredible hardness. An action sequence can take advantage of this, both to show their power and the horror of the undead body.

If the divide between humanity and Kindred is a theme the Storyteller wants to emphasize in their chronicle, they can spice up their descriptions with how, even with minor injuries, a vampire body is still an ambulatory corpse. Bladed weapons dig into waxy skin; shotgun blasts burst open a vampire's face and it only makes them angry. Wounds do not bleed because there's nothing in a vampire's body to keep blood in motion. The lack of a beating heart might mean that the vampire body is in a state of constant yet invisible livor mortis.

Note: Make sure that your group isn't made uncomfortable (in a genuinely unpleasant way) by these depictions. While descriptions of blood and gore are inevitable in a game about vampires, depicting it in such an explicit way isn't something every player is prepared for.

Twists

All good action sequences have twists. They shift the flow of control, they introduce new objectives, or they give space to see characters in a brand-new light. In an action movie, even when you know the protagonist comes out on top for every scene, their sequences throw in twists to build uncertainty and tension.

Twists are always great ways of emphasizing the horror in action-horror. Unforeseen circumstances and collateral damage can scare a troupe, especially if they're caused by their characters succeeding.

A twist is best introduced at several possible points in an action scene:

- When a player fails a test, accepts a win with a cost, or wins with a Critical.
- When the Hunger dice change the result to a Messy Critical or Beastly Failure.

- Just as the characters gain control over the scene.
- When a Storyteller character's personality, ideology, goals, or supernatural coercion demands them to act in a way they never have before.
- When the Storyteller fails a contest or wins with a Critical.

Twists can work for or against the coterie. What matters is that they change the scene in a meaningful way. Some ideas for a twist in an action scene are:

- Details of the environment change, new details are revealed, or the scene shifts to a new location. A failed Firearms test blows a gas main and starts a fire, a character trying to escape a fight discovers a secret passageway, or a car chase races beyond city limits.
- The scene draws in a non-combatant, innocent bystander, or even a Touchstone. A failed Brawl test spurs a witness to protect a character in what they think is an ordinary street brawl, a Storyteller character convinces a crowd to stop the coterie from catching them, or a Touchstone recognizes a character in peril and attempts a rescue.
- An alliance shifts on either side (p. 83).
- A player's character or a Storyteller character encounters a Frenzy trigger.
- An objective changes or becomes impossible to achieve. A Messy Critical on a Larceny test causes a character to break off the lock leading into a guarded room, a Storyteller character shatters the priceless heirloom the characters were fighting for, or the coterie flees to a car and changes a fire fight into a chase.
- A stronger force threatens to join the scene. A failed Obscure power test doesn't hide a firearm which catches the eye of a security guard, reinforcements arrive to help a pack of Sabbat, an elder vampire awakes from torpor after a fleck of vitae touches their lips.

The Beast Rampant

Perhaps the greatest source of uncertainty, twists, and outright horror in an action-horror chronicle is the Beast itself. Always hungry, always vengeful, and always placing self-preservation first and foremost, the Beast changes an ordinary fistfight into a slaughter.

In an action sequence, Messy Criticals and Bestial Failures can take many forms. When thinking about how either of these occur in a scene, it's best to think about the kinds of Beast behavior likely to emerge. The following four behaviors aren't the only way the Beast could act but serve as broad archetypes the Storyteller and a player can further define and elaborate when the Hunger dice demand its entrance. They are:

- **The Furious Beast:** The furious Beast refuses to be made a fool. On a Messy Critical or a Bestial failure in an action scene, the character might damage or destroy an important object on its person, attacks an enemy without thinking about retaliation, or kills when the vampire intended to wound. Fury Frenzy is possible.
- **The Hungry Beast:** The hungry Beast needs more resources to keep up the fight. On a Messy Critical or Bestial Failure in an action scene, the character might attempt to feed from a human combatant which opens them to attack, feeds on a bystander without regard for the Masquerade, or tries to feed on a vampire combatant and risks falling under their influence. Hunger Frenzy is possible.
- **The Triumphant Beast:** The triumphant Beast is in control and wants its opponents to know it. On a Messy Critical or Bestial Failure in an action scene, the character might coax out an escalation instead of negotiation an end to the fight, inflict more grievous harm on an enemy to make a point, or kill an enemy when they intended to glean information from them. A triumphant Beast often acts without mercy and revels in the death and destruction it caused. If the flow of control shifts toward the enemy, the triumphant Beast shifts into the furious Beast if it can't regain control within a few turns.

- **The Wounded Beast:** The wounded Beast is in pain and needs to escape. On a Messy Critical or Bestial Failure in an action scene, the character might retreat into defense despite a clear opportunity for an attack, forgo any weapons they're skill at and make a melee attack, or stays in cover too long to assist an ally. If the vampire was wounded by fire or sunlight, Terror Frenzy is possible. This Beast behavior is the most short-lived, shifting into a furious Beast or a hungry Beast by the next turn. It might shift into a triumphant Beast if the scene quickly turns in its favor.

It's possible two or more Beast behaviors feel appropriate in a scene. In that case, choose the kind of behavior that tests the vampire's morality, creates a new problem for the coterie, or frightens onlookers most. When in doubt, choose what fits the scene's pace.

ACTION SCENES AND STAINS

Even in an action-horror chronicle, violence can still inflict Stains on a vampire's Humanity. While chronicle Tenets for an action-horror chronicle should allow leeway for combat, it should never give free reign to consequence-free violence. At the start of a chronicle with a heavy emphasis on combat, the troupe should make sure to have at least one Tenet that denotes how far is "too far" when it comes to violent acts. In general, savage violence or unrepentant acts upon non-combatants or the defenseless are highly likely to inflict Stains.

Putting it All Together: Example Action Scenes

These six action scenes show what kind of scenarios are possible when playing an action-horror chronicle. They range from tense duels in private places to all-out battles in public mortal spaces. They are stand-alone and can fit into any Gehenna War focused chronicle. They're ready to use as-is, but you can tailor them to better fit the story as you see fit.

Betrayal

Cast: One or more allies of the coterie, several belligerents equal to or slightly outnumbering the coterie (3/2 if they do not have any previously established capabilities.) While sudden betrayal can be dramatic in and of itself, the turncoat in this scene ideally has logical reasons for their actions, even if those are only clear in hindsight. While this scene is written for a temporary ally, it also works for a long-standing ally.

What Happened: At an abandoned warehouse outside of the city, the coterie and an ally get caught in an ambush. The ensuing fight is chaotic. Bullets fly, blades clash, and Disciplines ensure that combatants are hurling crates and moving at dizzying speeds. At first, it's no different from any other night the coterie faces. It's not the first time they've been caught off-guard, and it won't be the last.

Sometime after the fight starts, the coterie's ally switches sides. Perhaps they make a show of it, seemingly stopping the fight only to reveal their true allegiance. Maybe their former ally waits for the right opportunity and attacks a vulnerable coterie mate at the worst possible time. Sneakier traitors might be providing covering fire one moment, are gone the next, and then suddenly their gunfire is aimed right at the coterie. Using a method truest to the ally, they've betrayed the coterie and seek to bring them down.

Whether this comes as a shock or is a long-awaited event, the coterie's in trouble. There's now one extra combatant, one that might know their capabilities very well. There's also the potential emotional

fallout, but that comes later. For now, victory (or perhaps survival) is the coterie's top priority.

What Could Happen:

- The ally hasn't betrayed them of their own free will. Perhaps this is the result of an implanted command via Dominate, the influence of Presence, or even the strong pull of a deep Blood Bond with one of the combatants. It could just be good old-fashioned blackmail. If the coterie can overcome whatever caused this betrayal, they might be able to get their ally back on their side.
- This whole situation was a trap. The traitor holds a long-standing grudge with one or more of the coterie's members and leading them into a fight they might not win is the culmination of their long-term plan to get even with their enemy. For an additional twist, the traitor might betray the coterie, reveal their motives... only to find that the other belligerents aren't interested in letting them get away, either.
- The traitor was never who they said they were. Through combat, they reveal a secret or hidden ability that the coterie was never privy to. This could be as minor as an untold penchant for firearms, or something as dramatic as revealing that they're actually a member of a completely different clan or sect. Coteries that believe they knew their ally get a nasty surprise.

Possible Actions:

- **Seek Red Flags:** Keen characters might pick up on what's about to go down, perhaps even before the fight starts. A Wits + Insight test at Difficulty 4 could passively pick up signs that something isn't right with their ally. If a character has an active suspicion, a contested test of Intelligence + Insight vs. Manipulation + Subterfuge (or an Intelligence + Insight test at Difficulty 3) reveals their tells. Depending on the former ally's disposition and at the Storyteller's discretion, the Difficulty for these tests might decrease as the time to their betrayal grows closer.

- **Pull Them Back:** If the traitor isn't active of their own free will, or if the coterie needs them back on their side by any means necessary, they could attempt to strongarm the traitor back into being an ally. They could fight with fire, using their own Dominate or Presence abilities to nullify their enemies' effects. For mundane betrayals, a Charisma + Leadership or a Charisma + Intimidation test, each Difficulty 4 respectively, could apply to the former ally's better nature, or the world of hurt they'll be in if they keep acting this way.
- **Take A Hostage:** If the belligerents seem to have a strong attachment to the traitor, emotionally or otherwise, the coterie can turn the situation around by making them a hostage. Winning a contested test of Strength + Brawl versus Dexterity + Athletics (or a Strength + Brawl test at Difficulty 3) captures the traitor. A Charisma + Intimidation test at Difficulty 4 (Difficulty 3 if the character has a deadly weapon, Difficulty 2 if they've already used it on the traitor) extracts one concession from the belligerents, with one additional concession for every point of margin.

Attribute Focus: Physical, Social

Dishonest Duel

Cast: A rival (4/3), any number of Kindred witnesses, a Master of Elysium (4/2)

What Happened: It started as a simple disagreement with a coterie member's rival. Dispassionate words gave way to heated epithets, which soon gave way to hisses and snarls. The Master of Elysium, who knew exactly where this was going, stepped in and transformed a would-be brawl into a formal duel. The first to grievously injure the other wins the duel. The Master claims this'll end the debate like civilized beings, but the simmering excitement of the crowd makes it clear that this is just tonight's entertainment. Both sides are given a half-hour to prepare.



From the get-go, it's clear that the Master of Elysium isn't interested in a fair duel. They're nowhere to be found during the duel's preparation, and they've made no attempt to ensure the hastily cleared out dueling floor at the center of the ballroom gives each duelist an equal footing. The coterie member and their rival are provided swords as the city's ancient customs demand, but anyone could have tampered with them. Officially, neither party is supposed to use Disciplines to gain the upper hand, but chatter from the crowd makes it clear that everyone is willing to overlook that.

The rival uses every dirty trick at their disposal to ensure their victory. The coterie needs to do some dirty tricks of their own if they want their coterie mate to come away the winner.

What Could Happen:

- The Master of Elysium ups the ante on the duel just as it begins. It's no longer about determining who's right, it's about which of the two duelists gets to remain in the city. Supposedly, this new set of stakes is something the city's Prince signed off on in recent months, and it even extends to the rest of the losing duelist's coterie. The chances of a fair fight emerging from these circumstances has dropped close to zero.
- As the duel rages on, the rival unleashes their dirty tricks. They slip in a Discipline while the Master of Elysium pretends to look away. Their swordplay uses a lot more leg sweeps and elbow jabs than traditionally accepted forms. The coterie member must respond in kind to win the duel.
- Just as the coterie mate prepares to strike the final blow, the rival's coterie jumps in. The conflict is no longer a duel in any sense of the word, but the rest of the coterie has a chance to jump into the fight. The last combatant standing, no matter which coterie they belong to, will be declared the winner of the "duel."

Possible Actions:

- **Prep Work:** The best way to stop a cheater might be to cheat yourself. If the character gains access to the dueling swords before the fight, they could either sharpen their own blade or dull their opponents with the right tools and an Intelligence + Craft test at Difficulty 3. At the Storyteller's discretion, a Dexterity + Stealth test at Difficulty 4 lets the character enter the dueling area and alter it to their best advantage.
- **Situational Awareness:** A character with sharp senses can pick up on when and how their opponent cheats. At any time during the duel, a test of Wits + Awareness at Difficulty 1 (for blatant cheating), 2 (for subtle cheating), or 3 (for well-hidden cheating) detects a way in which the opponent cheated. Acting on this information reduces the Difficulty of the next test by 1.

- **Shift the Fight:** Though the duel is supposed to be a sword fight at the center of the Elysium meeting hall, the Master of Elysium prefers entertainment over tradition. A Resolve + Athletics test at Difficulty 3 allows the character to bait their rival into fighting in a new location with Elysium, one that either puts the duelists on even footing or a location more suitable to the character's fighting style.

Attribute Focus: Physical, Mental

Hot Pursuit

Cast: One or more fugitives (3/2), several mortal bystanders (2/1), and optionally several police officers ("Police Detective," *Vampire*, p. 371)

What Happened: While tracking a possible associate of a Methuselah in a crowded nightclub, the coterie's quarry either becomes suspicious or realizes they're being followed. At first, they try to keep it cool. It's obvious that the target's trying to blend into the crowd, or head down an alleyway, or generally trying to get the coterie off their tail.

Just as the coterie closes in, the quarry flees. They're faster than they look, and unless they give chase now, the characters are bound to lose them in the unaware crowd. They need to find a way to cut through the club and corner the target.

Another version of this scene could take place in the parking lot outside the club. Instead of the quarry fleeing on foot, they jump into their car and drive away at top speed. The coterie heads to their vehicle or commandeers the closest one and gives chase. Instead of trying to catch the target before they leave the nightclub, they're trying to catch their car before it hits the highway and flees the city.

What Could Happen:

- The quarry calls for help as they make their escape. Well-meaning bystanders block the coterie's path. Few of them are any match for their strength, but will that matter if it buys time the quarry needs to escape? In the vehicular version of this chase, the quarry, unintentionally or otherwise, drives onto a road from the wrong direction. The coterie must find an alternate route or avoid the cars headed straight for them.
- The quarry veers away from the club exit and into the staff rooms. The coterie must pursue them through winding hallways and perhaps even secret passages. Worse still, the quarry knows the layout of the club's administration area better than they do. In the vehicular version of this chase, the quarry slides off the main roads and leads the coterie through back streets and quiet suburban neighborhoods, ill-suited for high speeds.
- Plainclothes police officers on guard catch the quarry and the coterie in a chase. Suspicious, they start their own pursuit. Now the chase has three parties: the quarry that wants to escape the situation, the coterie that wants to capture the quarry, and officers that want to capture one or both parties. In the vehicular version of this scene, the quarry and coterie whiz past a speed trap. This escalates into a high-speed three-way chase in the city streets.

Possible Actions:

- **Flank Them:** Most quarries are so focused on keeping a clear space ahead and behind them that they don't think about what's beside them. The coterie can take advantage of this with a Dexterity + Athletics test at Difficulty 3 to position themselves to the side of the target. From there, a contested Strength + Brawl test or a test at Difficulty 3 takes them down. In a vehicular chase, this is achieved with an initial Wits + Drive test at Difficulty 3 to gain the position, then a contested Wits + Drive test (or a

test at Difficulty 4) to seal the deal.

- **Get Ahead:** If the coterie is familiar with the quarry from previous stories, or if they're easily read, it's possible they can guess where they'll run to. This gives the other coterie mates a chance to cut them off. An Intelligence + Insight test at Difficulty 3 reads the quarry's movements. At the Storyteller's discretion, Auspex's Premonition Power may give a character a glimpse into where the quarry's headed.
- **Distract Them:** A chase is easier to resolve if the quarry slows or stops. If they're in earshot, a contested Charisma + Persuasion or Intimidation versus Resolve + Composure (or a Charisma + Persuasion or Intimidation test at Difficulty 3) could convince them to slow down or stop them in their tracks with a threat. A Dexterity + Athletics or Intimidation test at Difficulty 3 could distract them with a thrown object or a warning shot from a weapon. In a vehicular chase, an Intelligence + Drive test at Difficulty 3 could force the quarry into terrain they can't handle, or roads they don't know.

Attribute Focus: Physical, Mental

Masks On

Cast: A crowd of mortal people (2/1), members of a rival coterie (4/2 if they do not have any previously established capabilities), and at least one police officer

What Happened: As the coterie makes their way through a crowded night market, they catch a glimpse of a rival coterie. Seeing an opportunity to get even, the rival coterie pulls out weapons and approaches the characters. Panic erupts in the crowd, but it's not enough to thwart the rivals. Once they're close enough to the coterie, they strike.

Soon, the night market is host to an outright brawl or a total firefight. Mortal witnesses are everywhere, even as they try their best to escape the

conflict. Perhaps this was the point of the surprise attack. The rival coterie might not be able to take the character's down in a fight with their Disciplines at their disposal, but that's not feasible with ordinary people everywhere. Sometimes, the Masquerade is a Kindred's deadliest weapon.

Caught in a frenzied crowd and with their enemies closing in, the coterie must fight their way out without risking a Masquerade Breach. Worse still, it sounds like the cops could arrive at any minute.

What Could Happen:

- The rival coterie isn't here to destroy the characters. They intend to capture the coterie in one piece. Attacking in public is a way to keep themselves safe from the coterie's powers of the Blood as well a method to manipulate vampires of higher Humanity into giving themselves up for the crowd's safety. The rivals promise that no harm will come to them if they comply, but they won't give up who they work for. If the coterie isn't careful, they might end up in the clutches of the Sabbat or worse.
- The rival coterie isn't willing to break the Masquerade, but everything short of that is fair game. They kill indiscriminately to get to the coterie, or they cause collateral damage during the fight. The coterie must fight smart if they want to take down the coterie without becoming the subject of the morning's news.
- The police arrive on the scene but consider the coterie, not their rivals, as the cause of the panic. This could be because the rivals successfully fled into the crowd once they arrived, or perhaps the police that answered the call are on their take. The coterie must escape or take them down quickly before the police call for backup.

Possible Actions:

- **Use the Environment:** The coterie could use the panic to turn the battle to their advantage. Flanking a member of the rival coterie using the stampeding crowd as a distraction is a Dexterity + Stealth test at Difficulty 3. Elements of the market can be used as obstacles or even provide

impromptu weaponry. Knocking over a market stall or a similar heavy object to impede a rival is a Strength + Athletics test at Difficulty 3. If dropped on a rival, these objects inflict +0 Superficial Physical Damage.

▪ **Sneak in Powers:** Not every aspect of the Blood is forbidden when trying to preserve the Masquerade. Disciplines capable of being a low Masquerade threat, such as Animalism (to sooth a rival), Auspex (to look for the perfect escape route) or Obfuscate (to prepare a sneak attack or evade a rival) may be used at the Storyteller's discretion.

▪ **Convince the Cops:** While the crowd is too unprepared and scared to deal with the rival coterie, the police might be willing to take them on with the right words. Giving off the impression that the coterie is harmless and trying to defend themselves is a Charisma + Persuasion test at Difficulty 3. Pulling this off after the cops have seen the coterie fight their rivals raises the Difficulty to 4. A Wits + Insight test at Difficulty 2 reads the police's intentions, such as whether they're on the rival coterie's side. If the police see the coterie as the main threat, a Manipulation + Persuasion or Intimidation test at Difficulty 3 could convince them to reconsider. Monetary incentives made by characters at Resources 3 or higher may also gain their aid.

Attribute Focus: Physical, Social

Steel Chariots

Cast: An escort (2/2), one to three experienced ghoul enemy drivers (4/3), with at least one gunner for each (3/2)

What Happened: The coterie, tasked with escorting an important Noddist scholar to a rendezvous point, drives down rain-slicked city streets. At an intersection downtown, a fleet of suspicious cars edges closer to the coterie's vehicle. Then, a black-tinted window rolls down just low enough for a gun's barrel to poke through.

The coterie's car is under attack, but the initial barrage of bullets hasn't yet disabled it. It's clear that their assailants want to give chase, and they have no qualms with a very public shootout. The characters must get their escort to their destination while fending off the relentless attack of an enemy fleet.

Though this scene is written as a combat addition to a car chase scene, it could work for any kind of vehicular combat scenario. It could be the coterie's armored truck versus an enemy fleet, or even a private plane versus a formation of mercenary jets. For an additional challenge, consider adding a narrative time limit for the scholar's arrival. Perhaps they have a plane to catch, a contact who won't wait forever, or maybe everyone needs to get to a haven before the sun rises.

What Could Happen:

- The vehicular battle careens into a public place. The coterie must either find a way to move the battle to a safer place or choose their shots carefully. Even if they're willing to hit innocents in the crossfire (which could grant Stains depending on chronicle Tenets), their escort might not be.
- The enemy vehicles get too close for comfort, revealing their motive. They're trying to blow open the doors of the coterie's vehicle, so they can kidnap the Noddist scholar. This is the perfect opportunity to get an accurate shot, or even for melee-focused characters to strike.
- Not long after it seems like the coterie has the upper hand, the combatants reveal that they're armed with more than just guns. They wield special weaponry like a grenade, a missile launcher, or even experimental weaponry fresh out of a Second Inquisition organization's R&D department.

Possible Actions:

- **Lose Them:** They can't hit what isn't there. Gaining enough speed to break away or finding a pathway to shake the assailants is a Wits + Drive

(to maintain control as the vehicle reaches high speeds) or an Intelligence + Drive (to discover the right way out) at Difficulty 4.

- **Hinder Them:** While hitting the driver and any passengers inside with a Dexterity or Composure + Firearms test is an effective way to stop the assailants, it's hard to get a good aim at them through the vehicle's black tinted glass. The Difficulty of the shot is 4. The coterie can shoot out tires with a called shot Firearms + Dexterity test, with a -1 die penalty. The same called shot test can disable an engine or a fuel line, but with a -3 success penalty instead.
- **Ram Them:** If all else fails, the coterie can see if their vehicle's stronger than their enemies' vehicle. The driver performs this dangerous maneuver with a Dexterity + Drive test at Difficulty 2. The impact inflicts 2 + margin Superficial Health damage to anyone inside. The coterie and the escort must make a Dexterity + Stamina test at Difficulty 3. Failing the test or not rolling the dice inflicts the same amount of Superficial Health damage the driver rolled.

Attribute Focus: Physical, Mental

Sudden Turbulence

Cast: Human passengers (2/2), several belligerents equal to the coterie's size (4/2), a pilot, co-pilot, and air marshal (all 3/2)

What Happened: Flying is dangerous for the Kindred. Even the most private jets need to leave some kind of record at the places they land or communicate with air traffic controllers. Then there's whether a vampire risks being shipped as cargo, or a history of last-minute red-eye flights catching up to them. Sometimes there's little choice. Air travel is fast, and a Gehenna warrior must make do. To reach another battleground in time, the coterie needs to catch this flight.

Whether the coterie is together as coffins in the cargo bay or living it up in first class, the problem starts when the plane is suddenly rocked by an explosion halfway through the flight. One of the plane's jet engines catch fire. The explosion was caused by a device secretly placed on the engine and caused by one of the passengers. The passenger's a member of a Sabbat pack, entrusted to make sure that the coterie's flight never arrives. They're willing and expect to be destroyed in the ensuing crash and throw the Masquerade to the wind. Horrified passengers watch as they drain a flight attendant before their eyes.

It soon becomes clear that they intend to commandeer the cockpit to prevent any emergency landing. The coterie must stop the pack, or at least buy the pilots enough time to safely land the crashing plane.

What Could Happen:

- There wasn't just one explosive device on the plane. The pack has two more ready to blow at a moment's notice. The first is a jet engine on the other side of the plane. The other is hidden in a pack member's carry-on luggage, located above their seats. The devices are activated by a pack member's cell phone. Restraining the vampire or disabling the cell phone could prevent further damage.
- The coterie could take advantage of the sudden Masquerade breach and unleash their full potential on the pack. The pack is likely to respond in kind, using any passengers within reach as fuel. This fight happens in full view of the mortal passengers. Should the coterie emerge victorious, they now face a new challenge: how to silence any witnesses.
- The worst has happened. The pack's broken into the cockpit and killed everyone inside. The plane is in freefall. In addition to stopping the pack, the coterie must either find a fellow passenger capable of taking control of the plane or do it themselves.

Possible Actions:

- **Manipulate Fellow Passengers:** The coterie can rally their fellow passengers to fight with them with a Presence power like Awe, or through a Charisma + Leadership test at Difficulty 4. Unless supernaturally motivated, passengers joining the coterie prioritize their own survival. The plane has an air marshal on-board, who carries a gun and a single pair of handcuffs.
- **Commandeer the Plane:** Using their intuition to get a basic idea of the controls is an Intelligence + Technology test at Difficulty 3. Unless the character has aviation experience or succeeded on a test to understand the plane's controls, bringing the plane to a safe landing is a Resolve + Drive test at Difficulty 5. Prior experience reduces the Difficulty to 3. Success at a Cost should always be an option. The coterie could also get in touch with air traffic control, who can guide them to safety as long as they're not under attack. No test is necessary, but the coterie may find themselves persons of interest should they hang around too long after the landing.
- **Escape the Plane:** Forcing open a plane exit door is a Strength + Athletics test at Difficulty 2. The plane is still very high in the air, so escaping immediately ensures a very long fall. Commercial airliners are not equipped with parachutes of any kind. At the Storyteller's discretion, Fortitude Powers such as Defy Bane and Flesh of Marble might be capable of surviving terminal velocity. In general, the closer the plane is to the ground, the more successful escaping the plane becomes.

Attribute Focus: Physical, Social

Using the Ancients

Chapter One describes a number of ancients, methuselahs so old they've become something akin to gods or saints among the Kindred. They have their bloodlines and even worshippers, vampires who hope to gain favor by supplicating them.

These methuselahs are immensely powerful and fundamentally unknowable. The general rule is that the blood gods are not enemies that can be vanquished in battle. They are too old and too powerful to be destroyed. They're like a force of nature that the characters can survive or redirect if they play their cards exceptionally well.

It should be noted that not all methuselahs exist quite at this level of power. The blood gods presented in this book are thousands of years old, the direct children of the Antediluvians. Someone like the methuselah Helena, residing in Chicago under the name Portia, is also extremely old and powerful but not quite at that level.

Then there are the elders, vampires who have existed for centuries and tend to be of potent Generation, but who still sometimes function as part of Kindred society. In a Gehenna War chronicle, they may be found more often than in a normal **Vampire** game because the Beckoning calls them to zones of conflict where they can be found as cautionary examples, quixotic knights fighting for causes they themselves don't always understand. The power of the Blood can be terrifying when the methuselahs and perhaps creatures more ancient still use it to compel their progeny.

Each of these types of ancient dead have their uses in a Gehenna War chronicle.

Blood Gods

The best way to use the blood gods is for dramatic effect at the conclusion of an action-horror story. They're mythical beings best kept off the stage for the majority of the action.

For example:

- **The Sleeper Is Awake:** The characters seek an ancient sarcophagus supposedly containing a sleeping ancient. When they finally discover it, they find out that the methuselah is already awake and at full power, presenting a clear and immediate threat to everything around it.
- **The Sabbat Makes a Mistake:** The Sabbat has come to the domain, seeking a methuselah they wish to destroy. They war on the Camarilla and the Anarchs, destroying Kindred and causing irreparable damage to the Masquerade before they finally succeed in their goal. Unfortunately, they misjudged their own abilities and get decimated by the methuselah who now becomes the problem of the Kindred in the domain.
- **Called by the Cult:** A faction serving a methuselah, whether knowingly or unknowingly, prepares the way for its arrival. At the climax of the story, the blood god rises. This is typically the moment the cult realizes they've made a terrible mistake.

Fighting a blood god is futile. How then can the players' characters be able to deal with one? Here are a few possible options:

- **Make an Offering:** The characters attempt to supplicate the ancient by giving it something it wants, such as a vampire of its own bloodline to devour.
- **Distraction:** The ancient seems intent on drinking the Blood of as many Kindred as possible so the characters trick an Anarch pack to get in its way. This buys time for the players' characters to escape.
- **Ancient vs. Ancient:** Through an amazing feat of trickery, the players' characters are able to get two blood gods into the same location, hoping they start fighting each other.

Whatever happens, the arrival of the methuselah is the moment to crank the horror up to the maximum. Mortals die by the dozen, Kindred find it difficult to control their own actions, and an ancient Hunger rules over all. In such circumstances, even survival requires immense sacrifices.

Methuselahs

These ancient Kindred are at least a thousand years old and usually of very potent generation. Their knowledge, experience and expertise are immense. They're useful if you want a methuselah still capable of presenting an approximation of a mortal mask.

For example:

- **Even Older Than I:** The characters finally discover the methuselah they've been seeking, only to find out that it's not the final threat they thought it was. It turns out even a vampire 2000 years in age is afraid of something older and darker still.
- **There's Something Strange About That Fledgling:** The characters hear rumors of a powerful methuselah even as they meet a meek Nosferatu fledgling wearing a simple mask. The fledgling seems oddly confused about matters of the modern world even as it grovels and scurries to carry the favor of the characters. It's only later they discover that the mask was not to hide a Nosferatu disfigurement, but a face first formed in antiquity, that of a methuselah only pretending to be young for its own purposes.
- **Blood Puppet:** An ancient awakens at the local domain, presenting a rare opportunity for Kindred to ask questions from someone who has seen the millenia pass. The methuselah is surprisingly personable and happy to talk with younger Kindred. Slowly it becomes apparent that they're not really in control of themselves anymore. They're just a sad husk, their former self a crumbling facade hiding a dark and malignant force.

These ancients are extremely powerful and hard to fight. They often work best as harbingers, so conflict might not be necessary at all as the players' characters get ready to face something even worse.

Elders

There used to be more elders, Kindred who are centuries old, of low Generation but still active in the Camarilla or other sects, at least to some degree.

Elders are usually defined as those who are older than 250 years and younger than 1000.

The Beckoning has changed a lot, calling many elders away to the Gehenna War, leaving their holdings up for grabs as younger Kindred fight for what was left behind. Elders may have several different uses.

For example:

- **A Cautionary Tale:** The elder demonstrates some aspect of the Kindred existence, a tragedy that has come to pass. They can be seen as ironic successes, vampires who got everything they ever wanted and still ended up as lonely monsters struggling to connect to anybody at all. They can also be tragic failures, Princes cast out from their domains because they couldn't hold onto the loyalty of their subjects or Anarch bosses grown too old to relate to the young fledglings around them.
- **Keepers of the Past:** If you want to know what really happened, you have to ask an elder. Of course, they have their own agendas and put their own spin on everything but what other options do you have? In a world where the Masquerade has been a fact for centuries, it's not like you can read a book.
- **Embodiments of Power:** Elders embody vampiric power, often combining supernatural force with a dangerously limited understanding of the world they inhabit. Does someone with immense powers of Presence and Dominate really need to know how a cell phone works when they can just compel a mortal to understand it for them? They represent power for its own sake, beyond morality or humanity.

In the Gehenna War, the elders often take the role of knights and generals, leaders and warriors who direct the course of dramatic engagements. The Beckoning called them to this fate and now they're performing their role as assigned. They can often appear both scary and lost, unable to explain even to themselves why they fight for a cause that only the Blood inside them seems to understand.

BECKONED

When an old vampire gets Beckoned away, they don't disappear from the world. They go somewhere. This means that in a Gehenna War story, you may well encounter an elder thought to be lost. Here are a few examples of what could happen with a Beckoned elder:

Servant of a Blood God: The elder is remembered as a fiercely independent, cantankerous autarkis who never allowed anyone to tell them what to do. This is why it's so shocking to see them now, as a simpering, broken servant of an ancient blood god.

In Denial: The elder denies even having been Beckoned. They say that they traveled to the war zone entirely voluntarily, to further their own agenda. And who's to say they didn't!

The Fanatic: The elder has become a religious fanatic, taking some aspect of Gehenna War to heart so profoundly that they now act very differently than ever before. A coward may have become a warrior, a power-hungry materialist a philosophical mystic.

Warlord: The elder is personally in charge of a faction fighting the Gehenna War. Perhaps they are being controlled by a methuselah or maybe they're genuinely independent. Whatever the case, they sit at the center of a faction composed of vampires and mortals, on war footing to fulfill their goals.

Traitor: The elder has joined the Sabbat, fighting the Gehenna Crusade to keep themselves free of the influence of the ancients. Whatever they were before, they're now an inhuman monstrosity impossible to understand or emphasize with.

Blood God Goals

What does an awakening blood god want? Although the ancients are hard to understand, it helps you as the Storyteller if you have an idea of what a methuselah who controls one or more of the factions in the Gehenna War actually wants. Here are some possible goals:

- **Devour Your Bloodline:** The methuselah wants to subject every single Kindred in its own bloodline to the diablerie, perhaps in the vain hope of gaining enough power to be able to challenge its own sire when the Antediluvian wakes.
- **Foil the Plans of an Enemy:** The methuselah hates another of its kind and tries to make sure none of the plans of this enemy work out. The actual origins of this vendetta may go back so long, even the methuselahs don't really remember where it started.
- **Create a World of Blood:** The methuselah wishes to tear mortal civilization apart, making the world into an abattoir of blood. It wants to walk out in the open, terrorizing mortals and building a society where the Kindred are worshiped as gods by the herd they feed from.
- **Build a Kindred Empire:** All the sects must fall, their rulers subjugated until there is only one power controlling all of the world's Kindred, that of the methuselah. The secret empire of the undead must serve one will, that of the blood god.
- **Annihilation:** The blood god has come to believe that existence is fundamentally a mistake. Nothing but pain and suffering exists. There is no purpose. Only death and nonexistence make sense.

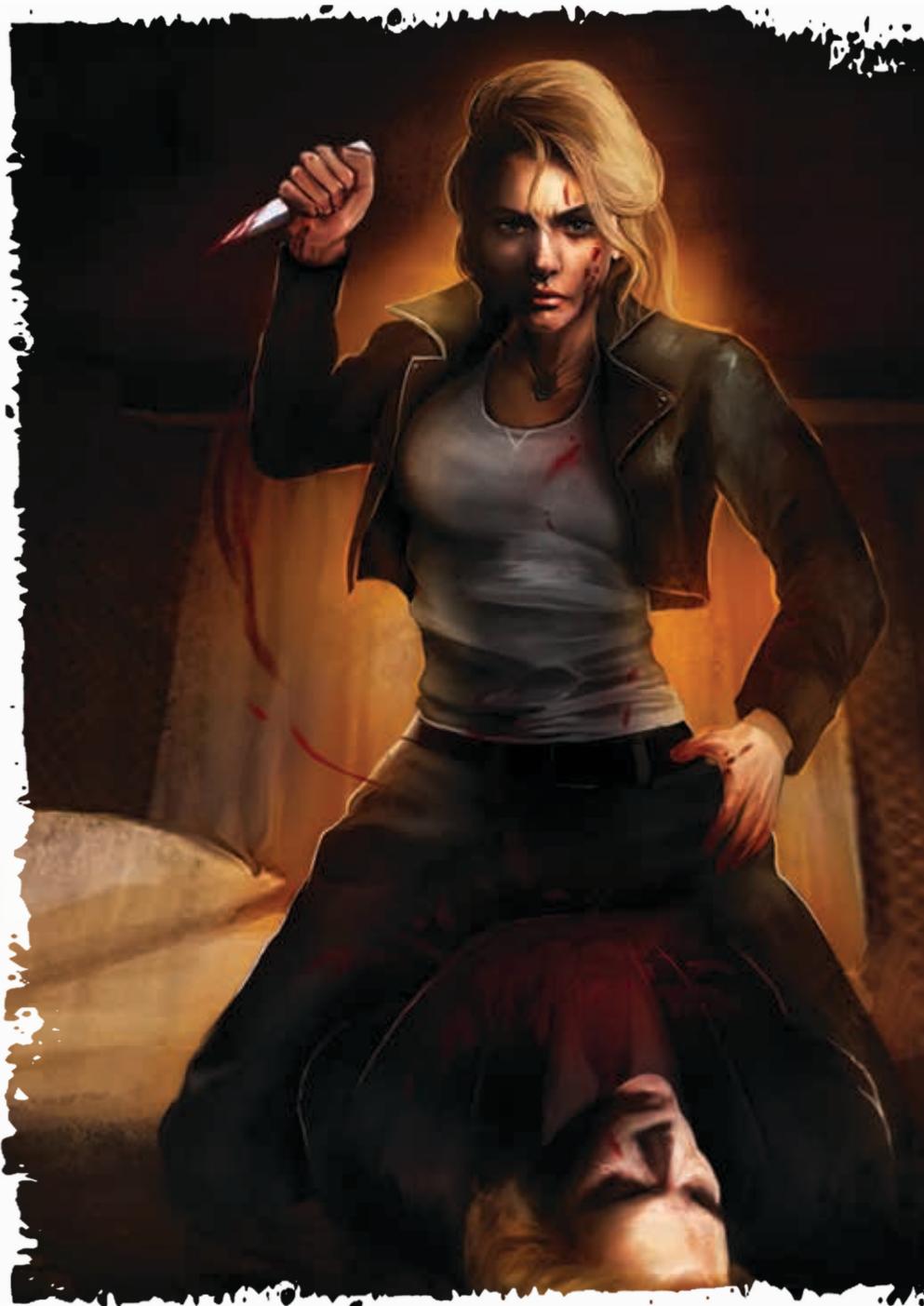
Bear in mind that it's rare for the goals of the methuselah to align with the Kindred factions it influences. The blood gods are liars, the same as any other vampire. Their spheres of influence don't necessarily follow the demarcation lines between the sects. A single methuselah may control factions in the Camarilla, the Anarchs, and the Sabbat, all the while giving the impression to its proxies that it's on their side.

CREATING ELDERS AND METHUSELAH

When creating or fleshing out an Ancient for your chronicle, keep a few facts in mind:

- Elders are Kindred between 200–1000 years of age, usually of the 9th through 6th Generation (Blood Potency 2–8)
- Methuselah are Kindred older than 1000 years of age, usually of the 4th and 5th Generation (Blood Potency 4–10)
- Childer, neonates, and ancillae—the players' characters—have a Blood Potency of 0–4
- Blood Potency generally grows 1 point for every 100 years of activity
- Blood Potency can also grow after committing Diablerie
- Blood Potency generally falls 1 point for every 50 years in torpor
- Kindred with Humanity 3 or less enter torpor for decades if not centuries
- Kindred with Humanity 4 or greater may still be in torpor for decades or centuries if they cannot slake their Hunger

Generally, it's best to treat a methuselah more as a special effect or a natural force rather than as an enemy with stats. The purpose of these guidelines is to show the parameters which define the existence of all Kindred, including those who are incredibly ancient.



How'd They Get Here?

With the Gehenna War being a phenomenon manifesting in conflict zones in many parts of the world, how do you add an elder or a methuselah to your chronicle so that it makes sense in terms of the setting? Sometimes, the past holds easy options. In terms of Kindred history, the important thing is that since the Second Inquisition commenced, travel has gotten a lot harder. Still, if your methuselah moved their sarcophagus into town in the Eighties, it happened before the current difficulties began.

From the dawn of the train until September 11th, 2001, the Kindred experienced a revolution in travel. The Second Inquisition trapped many vampires in place, making them unwilling to risk moving or determined to wait the mortal hunters out. After all, many ancients are very good at waiting.

Determining when, how, and why an ancient has come to the city can fill numerous sessions and provide interludes within an action chronicle, not to mention uses for Academics, Finance, Investigation, or other Skills. Here are a few ways the Gehenna War itself or merely an unexpected elder may have found their way to any city:

- **Safekeeping:** A sleeping elder was moved early in the city's history by their descendants with a mandate to protect the torpid husk. A player character's great grandsire may reveal how or when the ancient intended to be awakened.
- **A Journey Interrupted:** The onset of sectarian violence or 9/11 interrupted an elder's plans. They were merely visiting in the late Nineties but have settled down for all practical purposes, even if they continue to claim to be a visitor to the domain.
- **Disguise:** The ancient has a Mask, whether mortal or Kindred, and has been hiding in the domain for decades or centuries. Investigation or Finance may prove key skills in determining who is really behind the name.
- **A Holy Relic:** The ancient's torpid body is an object of veneration, whether by a Gehenna or methuselah cult or a misguided circle of ghouls.

If the ancient has awoken, a church or cult would certainly attempt to hide their previous activities. Would the ancient be well-disposed to its worshippers, or would they be their first target?

- **Belated Return:** The elder was known to be in the city decades ago but vanished in the 80s. Their domain was divided (perhaps among the players' coterie!) and other assets long gone or claimed by others. Until their sudden return, with stories of being called by their own sire or grandsire. Neonate or ancilla characters might explore their old memories of the elder via *Memoriam* (*Vampire*, p. 311) as they or perhaps their allies are targeted for usurping the elder's place.

Ancients in an Action Scene

What happens when one of the methuselahs is part of an action scene? How do you play them? Here are three stat blocks, each meant as a generic starting point for using an old vampire of a certain age.

Blood God

Difficulties: 10 / 8

Blood Potency: 6–10

Disciplines: All clan Disciplines and at least three additional Disciplines at five, as well as several methuselah powers (see below)

Methuselah

Difficulties: 8 / 6

Blood Potency: 5–9

Disciplines: All clan Disciplines and at least two additional Disciplines at five, as well as a few elder powers and at least one methuselah power (see below)

Elder

Difficulties: 6/5

Blood Potency: 4–7

Disciplines: All clan Disciplines at five and a scattering of other Discipline powers, as well as at least one elder power (see below)

No Dice Pools are provided because it works better if the ancients a force of nature and the characters make tests just to survive interactions with it. Tests involving something incidentally related to the ancient may have lower Difficulties, such as attempting to escape as the building starts to collapse.

Elder Powers

Elders, to say nothing of methuselahs, break the rules. Don't feel entirely constrained entirely by the rules for players' character creation when crafting or running an elder. They can have an extra Discipline power for each dot of Blood Potency above 5 if you like. A set of elder powers is found below. Consider giving an Elder one these powers, and a Methuselah a few of them. Some of these have suggested Disciplines or prerequisite Powers the ancient may have mastered to make the powers make sense when using them in your stories.

These powers are not presented as options that can be purchased with Experience Points but rather as abilities that can be used to make your elder antagonists appear distinctive and unpredictable.

A few options for such elder powers include:

- **Affect the Masses:** Any Discipline power which normally targets only 1 victim can affect a number of victims equal to half the elder's Blood Potency (rounded up).
- **Between the Ticks (Celerity):** The elder moves so fast they can take action against an entire coterie at once. They can act a number of times each turn equal to half their Blood Potency, but each action should be against a different target.

- **Cheat Anubis' Scales (Protean; requires The Heart of Darkness):** The elder can remove another's heart, not merely their own.
- **Conditioned Loyalty (Dominate):** The elder has made completely sentient thralls of multiple mortals or ghouls, who obey the elder's every whim and complex command. This can affect a number of mortals equal to the elder's Blood Potency. A ghoul counts as two mortals. They can still go about their daily lives with minimal trouble, only obeying their Domitor when the elder calls to them.
- **Dreaming Mind (Auspex):** The elder retains a vague sense of awareness in torpor and can send dream-like messages to those who share their bloodline within the region.
- **Dual Form (Protean):** The elder occupies two bodies at once, though while doing so their blood potency is reduced in half and they have no access to powers that they do not meet the blood potency requirement for.
- **Empower the Thinning Blood:** The elder's blood can be willed to thicken. It is so potent that slaking one Hunger on it raises a Kindred's Blood Potency by 1 for about a month of game time. A Duskborn with Blood Potency increased to 1 becomes a member of the elder's clan. Any individual Kindred can only have their Blood Potency increased by 1 from this, regardless of how many elders let them suckle on their vitae or how many times an individual elder allows a younger Kindred to do so.
- **The Knight's Bane (Fortitude):** Weapons striking the elder break, becoming useless after the hit. Using natural weapons (fangs, claws, or fists) against the elder suffer a level of superficial damage.
- **Lingering Phantasm (Obfuscate and Presence, requires Fata Morgana):** The elder can create an illusionary item or mask an object. The effect lasts until it is interacted with or touched by sunlight or until the elder falls into torpor.

- **Merge with Darkness (Oblivion):** The elder sinks into their own shadow, vulnerable only to fire or bright light, but must creep along flat surfaces. They can still attack physically, but only by attacking a victim's shadow.
- **Miles in the Mind:** The elder can use their powers at great range. Those requiring physical contact or close proximity extend to their line of sight (about 100 meters/yards), while those normally requiring line of sight can affect targets that they are familiar with anywhere within the city (miles/kilometers).
- **Pulse of the City (Presence):** The elder projects an emotion into everyone within a mile. The resonance of a whole city block may be affected, increasing the one selected resonance and decreasing the intensity of all others.
- **Restructure (Dominate and Auspex):** The elder can rewrite a Kindred's conviction.
- **Soul Mask (Obfuscate):** The elder leaves no psychic residue detectable via Auspex powers, nor can their aura be read.
- **Transcend the Flesh (Protean):** After taking damage from a substance (lead from a bullet, a steel blade, a wooden spear, and so forth) the elder can attune themselves to it to. They do not suffer damage from that substance until they attune to another substance.

Methuselah Powers

Methuselahs with a Generation of 5 or lower may have one or more of the following additional methuselah powers on top of their Disciplines. They've been designed to make encounters with the ancients as dire as possible. As such, they're more like special effects than the kind of Discipline powers that players' characters have.

These powers are not intended for use by players' characters or even ordinary powerful Kindred. They're for when the characters enter the final, climactic scene of your Gehenna War chronicle and you want to pull out all the stops.

Insect Plague (Animalism): The methuselah calls all the insects of the earth to rise and eat everything around them, living or dead. The insects descend in great clouds like a Biblical plague, destroying everything from crops to people. Within half an hour of the activation of the power, locusts, mosquitoes, wasps and other insects swarm from the skies and the ground, eating everything in their path. During their rampage, they eat every exposed living thing within a ten-kilometer radius. Animals and mortals exposed to the plague sustain a Health level of damage every ten minutes spent exposed. In addition, everyone, mortal or Kindred, suffers -4 die penalty to all tests made while exposed. The power lasts for at least one night, but can be extended at will by the methuselah.

Eyes of the Sun (Auspex): The methuselah grants a single target the ability to see the sun. Unfortunately, this ability activates at any time the victim opens their eyes. If they do so, they immediately literally see the sun regardless of where they are or if the sun is visible through normal means. The victim is affected as normal when in sunlight. The victim is affected as if they were in direct sunlight, sustaining aggravated damage (if they're a vampire) each turn as long as they have their eyes open. In addition, even if they have their eyes open, they're still effectively unable to see as the sun's radiance drowns out everything else.

Vortex of Blood (Blood Sorcery): The methuselah's Hunger is a force of nature. As the ancient activates this power, it starts to mystically draw blood from everyone in the vicinity, mortal or Kindred. As the methuselah gorges on blood, it leaves nothing but emaciated husks in its wake. Once the power has been activated, everyone within a 50-meter radius is affected. Mortals lose one Health level per turn. Kindred must make a Rouse Check every turn. As long as the power is active, the user automatically succeeds at all Rouse Checks.

Unavoidable Hunter (Celerity): So fast that they appear to require no effort at all to move, the methuselah is always where they need to be. They're

impossible to hit and may always be right behind you. After activating this power, the methuselah may always choose to be where they want to be within a hundred-meter radius. They can evade any attack that targets their person and they can always reach any enemy. They can still be affected by broad area-of-effect attacks, such as the collapsing of an entire building.

Witless Humanity (Dominate): To the Kindred, mortals are but livestock to feed from. This power takes that to an extreme, as it renders every mortal who is physically able to see the methuselah into an obedient servant. When the power is activated, every mortal who at that moment is able to see the user falls under their thrall, their utmost wish to serve in any way they can. The only limit to the power is that the mortals so affected become somewhat dull, their Mental Attributes capped at 2. There is no limit to their number. One or one thousand, all obey.

Shared Harm (Fortitude): All of the descendants of the methuselah's bloodline exist to serve their ancestor's every whim. If the methuselah is physically stricken, it can choose to have the blow inflicted on a random descendant of its Kindred bloodline instead. Every time the methuselah is struck, it can choose to have the blow affect a direct descendant instead. The victim is chosen randomly, and distance doesn't affect the power's effectiveness. Victims must retain the characteristics of the bloodline so Caitiff and thin-bloods are unaffected.

The Devouring Shadow (Oblivion): At the will of the ancient, a gaping maw of shadow opens, pulling everything in the vicinity into non-existence. Every object within a 30-meter radius is pulled into the shadow, possibly leading to the collapse of buildings, the loss of a significant amount of ground and other effects. The methuselah itself is unaffected by its own power although it must make sure to stand outside the area of the shadow to avoid falling down the bottomless well. Kindred and mortals in the area of effect must make a successful Strength + Athletics test at a Difficulty of 4 to escape the pull. At the Storyteller's discretion, Kindred pulled into

the void may reappear later as husks serving the methuselah.

Never There (Obfuscate): The blood god can disappear at any time, from anywhere. The user disappears from all senses, as if they were never present at all. The power activates automatically when there is any sort of an immediate threat to the user.

Shared Strength (Potence): The methuselah's Blood carries its strength, bestowing it on all their servants. All ghouls created by the methuselah automatically have four levels of Potence.

Dreams of the Ancients (Presence): The methuselah appears in the dreams of random mortals and Kindred all around the world. It appears as a seductive yet terrifying presence, leaving behind a strange longing and desire. The power is always active as long as the methuselah is awake and not in torpor. Its influence is subtle but broad and signs of the dreams may become apparent in internet posts, pop culture, music and everyday conversations. Every character who sees the methuselah for the first time nevertheless feels as if they had seen the ancient before. The methuselah can also choose to have the subject experience an effect similar to the Majesty power, requiring the expenditure of three points of Willpower to resist for a turn rather than a test.

Resurgence (Protean): Upon being physically destroyed, the methuselah can reconstitute a new body from whatever animals happen to be nearby. Upon being physically destroyed, the methuselah's body reassembles from animal matter within a one-kilometer radius. Typically, this happens out of sight and some distance from the specific location where the old body was destroyed. ■



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Chapter Five:

DOGS OF WAR



The great contours of the Gehenna War are dictated by the sects, the Sabbat and the Camarilla, and their endless fights across various domains across the world. The methuselahs have risen, pulling the strings from behind the scenes.

In between all these great forces, numerous smaller Kindred factions have chosen this moment to wage war of their own. Their motivations vary tremendously. Some are opportunists while others seek to fulfill their own dreams of destiny.

It is these factions that make the Gehenna War so confusing. Who can tell who's fighting who when there are dozens of different sides to the conflict?

STANCES AND RESPONSES

Each of these factions has their own way of responding to trouble. Some take a defensive stance, laying low, fortifying, and trying to make the aggressor be interested in something else. Some are aggressive and strike at any threat. While defensive factions may be provoked to aggression, aggressive ones rarely go on the defense—once the Beast is loosed, controlled de-escalation is usually off the table. Such a provocation is usually the destruction of a significant faction member or valuable assets.

If a faction is driven to the edge of destruction, they often become desperate, trying for mad gambles such as all-out attacks, last stands, or whatever doomsday protocols they might hold. Less fanatical ones may just cut their losses and head down whatever escape routes they have prepared.

If you are using the Response Algorithm from *Anarch* (p. 186), Organizations with the Defensive stance begin at the left and Aggressive ones at the right side of the pyramid. The really desperate actions start at A Land of Wolves Now.

AGATA STAREK AND THEO BELL DISCUSS
THE GEHENNA WAR:

AGATA STAREK: You broke that guy's teeth, pushed a grenade into his mouth and let it explode.

THEO BELL: Sure.

AGATA STAREK: We don't even know what those guys wanted.

THEO BELL: They blew up our car.

AGATA STAREK: Okay. I just wanted to point it out. You're the one who still cares about collateral damage.

THEO BELL: I... Fuck. This war is changing me. Sometimes I don't even know what we're fighting for. Or who.

AGATA STAREK: You should talk to someone.

THEO BELL: Thank you, but...

AGATA STAREK: I didn't mean you could talk to me! Someone else! Someone who still cares.

Fighting the War

These factions are actively fighting the Gehenna War, for themselves, for a methuselah or against them.

The Cartographers

Nosferatu. Decentralized network of information brokers.

Since the dawn of the Second Inquisition, the Nosferatu information network has been in disarray. But how does one avoid getting chewed up in the meat grinder of the Gehenna War without reliable information? That's where the Cartographers come into play. Comprising a hub of Nosferatu spies and informants, the group painstakingly charts the shifting landscape of the Gehenna War by hand. Shielded from the prying electronic eyes of the NSA, the Nosferatu sift through paper documents, rumors, and blatant lies and sell their intelligence reports to those interested in pursuing the Gehenna War.

Despite their efforts, the Cartographers are not impervious to manipulation or influence. In fact, it seems apparent that there are multiple Nosferatu of influence, old and young, who are seeking to direct the group towards their own ends. As the Cartographers expand, so does their need for leadership. This means that it's possible for someone to hijack the whole group for their own purposes.

Goals: Profit through gathering and selling of information. Its members usually understand the Cartographers as a neutral faction, but that conception is sorely tested now that so many powerful Nosferatu want a piece.

Allegiances: Whoever happens to wield the greatest influence over the faction at the moment. Embarrassingly, a few of the older Cartographers have become secretly enamored of the Toreador ancient Ceri and have granted her servants access to information for free.

Stance and Response: Defensive. The Cartographers eschew direct combat and in the face of concerted aggression, will escape and fight only if cornered. They will take indirect action, feeding information on the attackers to their enemies. Their decentralized nature also makes them difficult to take on as group. Should concerted effort be taken to destroy more than one cell, it becomes increasingly likely that the agents of the blood god Ceri manage a takeover, suborning the faction to her will.

Scenes:

- In the backroom of the warehouse, tension mounts as the lone Nosferatu tacks another name to the wall. They've tied faction symbols, notorious Kindred, and elusive methuselahs together in a confusing web of complex relationships. Just as the Nosferatu takes a step back to assess the new piece of information, the door bursts open.
- The information broker takes a long drag off her cigar and leans back, her worn leather chair creaking from springs in desperate need of oil. "You're hunting the Shepherds, eh?" she remarks. "That's dangerous work. I can give you a lead. Fuck, I can give you their whole West African operation. But it'll be expensive. And I don't do refunds."
- The character sprints down the alleyway, dodging late-night pedestrians, tourists, and street vendors. Their mission for the Cartographer had been successful, and the dossier was firmly in his back pocket. But his cover was blown. Agents of the Cohorts of Wepwawet were hot on his trail, and the airport was still twenty miles away.

Stoic Shield: Difficulties for using Telepathy or other mind-reading effects on the Cartographer are one higher than usual.

CARTOGRAPHER ANTAGONIST**Topos, Master Mapmaker**

When Topos and the rest of his coterie were sent to investigate an abandoned mine shaft, he wasn't expecting to come face-to-face with a methuselah. Topos has no idea how or why he survived, but when he told his tale to his superiors, they dismissed his account as hyperbole. However, a few fellow Nosferatu believed him and invited him to join an exclusive club. Nowadays, Topos runs one of the Cartographer's moving boutiques. Traveling from city to city, Topos sets up a temporary shop inside a storage shed or abandoned mall, makes a few deals, and after a few months, moves on to the next town. Given the value of his wares, Topos has found it best to stay on the move.

Clan: Nosferatu

Blood Potency: 2

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 7, Social 5, Disciplines 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Investigation 8, Brawl 6, Stealth 7

Disciplines: Animalism 2 (Sense the Beast, Feral Whispers), Auspex 2 (Sense the Unseen, Premonition), Obfuscate 4 (Cloak of Shadows, Unseen Passage, Mask of a Thousand Faces, Vanish), Potence 4 (Lethal Body, Prowess, Brutal Feed, Draught of Might)

**Cohort of Wepwawet**

Fanatics seeking to purge the Ministry of non-Setites.

The Gehenna War brings great promise for the Cohort of Wepwawet. Formed to defend the Church of Set's (see *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 68) holdings in Egypt, the cult within a blood cult took a hardline stance towards the faith they swore to

protect. They claimed that their doctrine was the only true word of Set and took a stance against what they saw as "heretical viewpoints." They vehemently disapproved of growing distance of many Ministry Kindred from Set's faith and engaged in a forty-year-long effort to purge all syncretic elements from the clan.

The attempt failed so spectacularly it had an opposite effect to the one intended. Newly Embraced Ministry Kindred in for the past few decades joined other Kindred faiths or less extreme factions of the Church of Set. Some chose to ignore Kindred faiths entirely.

Now, the Cohort see hope for a revival. This is their last chance to bring everyone under Set's banner. Success brings Set's blessings and rewards should he awaken to find his worshipers united once more. Failure brings a punishment so dire the Cohort dares not speak of it.

Goals: The Cohort ensures that Set, and only Set, is the victor of the Gehenna War. They also prepare for Wepwawet's full return, an event that, according to the blood cult, has been on the cusp of occurring since the 1960s. In the meantime, they

provide security and protection to orthodox Setite temples and subvert or outright purge aspects of the Ministry they feel “worships false gods.”

Allegiances: The Cohort claims that its leader is the methuselah Wepwawet, a descendant of Set resting beneath Lake Nasser in Egypt, under the former location of Abu Simbel. There is no recorded evidence of any childe of Set by that name, but if there was any Antediluvian who'd have a childe hidden from historical record, it's most likely the Serpent.

Stance and Response: Aggressive. The Cohort are fanatical. They respond to hostile action in kind and may strike at non-Setite Ministry vampires even without provocation. Against a concerted effort by the coterie, the Cohort defends by targeting whomever they think is pulling the coterie's strings—a more powerful vampire they have been working for, or possibly a Mawla or Mentor. After all, the Cult of Set knows that to kill a snake you cut off its head. If driven to desperation, the Cohort of Wepwawet's surviving members attempt a ritual to awaken Wepwawet for good, settling the question of his apocryphalness for good—and potentially raising another blood god to fight the Gehenna War.

Scenes:

- While interrogating a member of the Church of Set in a small, rundown apartment building, the doors and windows shatter around the coterie. The Setite's security, members of the Cohort of Wepwawet, arrive. The coterie must fend them off and get the information they need from the Setite.
- A Minister ally of the coterie comes to them for help. For the past several nights, they've been stalked by a mysterious figure. The ally suspects the stalker is a member of the Cohort, seeking a chance to take out the ally for their rejection of traditional Setite faith. They need help tracking the stalker and convincing them to stop.

- The coterie is ambushed by a powerful Cohort coterie. Someone in the Church of Set ordered the attack, but who? The Cohort might talk if the coterie can outfight them.

Powers: The Cohort's dedication to defending their faith leads them to making their one exception to their purity. In addition to all in-clan disciplines of the Ministry, all Cohort have access to at least one dot of the Potence Discipline, inherited from Wepwawet.

COHORT OF WEPWAWET ANTAGONISTS

Soldier of Wepwawet

“You have two choices: Kneel or defend yourself.”

Clan: Ministry

Blood Potency: 1

General Difficulty: 4 / 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Mental 6, Social 5, Disciplines 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 7, Melee 7, Stealth 7

Disciplines: Obfuscate 1 (Cloak of Shadows), Potence 1 (Lethal Body), Presence 2 (Awe, Lingering Kiss), Protean 2 (Eyes of the Beast, Feral Weapons)

General of Wepwawet

“The grand design is impossible to understand for someone like you. Or even someone like me, but that is the meaning of faith.”

Clan: Ministry

Blood Potency: 4

General Difficulty: 5 / 4

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 8, Mental 6, Social 7, Disciplines 8

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 9, Melee 9,

Subterfuge 8

Disciplines: Obfuscate 2 (Cloak of Shadows, Unseen Passage), Potence 3 (Lethal Body, Prowess, Uncanny Grip), Presence 2 (Awe, Lingering Kiss), Protean 4 (Eyes of the Beast, Feral Weapons, Earth Meld, Shapechange)

The Dead Lions

A gathering army to oppose the methuselahs.

When Archon Tabitha Delmare sounded the alarm about the Gehenna War to her superiors, her pleas and warnings were not heeded. Disgruntled, she abandoned her Camarilla domain and took matters into her own hands. Tonight, she functions as the de facto authority in Singapore. With an open call to arms against the methuselahs and their intrigues, the island country is quickly becoming home to many like-minded Kindred disenchanted with the sects. Within the walls of the Lion City, an army grows. The great Tiamat has taken notice of this and is moving to harness it for her own purposes.

Strategically located and boasting a population of over five million, Singapore offers Delmare an ideal base of operations. As a self-contained city-state, its access is limited to two bridges from Malaysia and includes one of the busiest shipping ports in the world. Half the world's supply of crude oil passes through Singapore, making it a critical gateway between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Delmare leverages this by requiring Kindred to pay a substantial fee for passage. After all, wars aren't cheap.

Goals: Create a haven for free-thinking Kindred to wage war against the methuselahs and their pawns.

Allegiances: The Lions have unknowingly done a lot for the blood god Tiamat.

Stance and Response: Defensive. The Dead Lions

are still gathering their forces. Against a threat, they will bunker down in Singapore and prepare their defenses. Within the city, they have a home field advantage. It is also here that they fight to the last, in vicious urban combat. Taking out Delmare will also end the Dead Lions, but whoever so does will have attracted the notice of the blood god Tiamat, and she is not happy.

Scenes:

- Justicar Lucinde tosses the dossier on the table, gesturing for the characters to pick it up. “You are to proceed to Singapore, infiltrate Delmare’s Dead Lions by whatever means possible, and terminate Delmare’s command. Do this, and you will have the gratitude of the Inner Circle.”
- As the unmistakable sound of automatic gunfire rips through the night air, the characters and their Dead Lion allies quicken their pace. Springing forward in tight formation, they storm the compound. Sharp shooters neutralize the armed guard as the team approaches the entrance. An explosives expert from the group attaches a thermite charge to the front gate. On her signal, the team looks away. It ignites, melting the fortified locks. Through a communication earpiece, the leader notes, “Third building on the left. That’s where it feeds.”
- The go-fast boat rockets forward, quickly reaching top speed as the characters navigate the congested waterways of Singapore’s harbor. Massive cargo ships, fishing boats, and leisure yachts fill the port, but the coterie zips and weaves between them. Suddenly, the radio crackles. “Drone incoming!” With ammunition loaded and safeties off, the characters ready weapons.

The Bleeding Blade: The Dead Lions are unusually adept at finding Kindred. All tests to avoid detection by the Lions are made at a Difficulty one higher than usual.

DEAD LION ANTAGONIST**Tabitha Delmare, Fallen Archon**

Tabitha Delmare's tactic, strategy, and combat talent earned her a fast-tracked appointment to Archon under Justicar Lucinde. But when she realized the dangers the methuselahs presented and the unwillingness of the Justicars to do anything about it, she left the sect. Reluctant to shoulder the responsibilities that come with leadership as the de facto ruler of Singapore, she has begrudgingly claimed the title of Boss.

Clan: Toreador

Blood Potency: 3

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Mental 6, Social 6, Disciplines 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee 8, Investigation 8, Leadership 7

Disciplines: Auspex 4 (Heightened Senses, Premonition, Scry the Soul, Spirit's Touch), Celerity 4 (Cat's Grace, Fleetness, Traversal, Unerring Aim), Fortitude 2 (Unswayable Mind, Toughness), Obfuscate 2 (Cloak of Shadows, Unseen Passage), Presence 3 (Awe, Lingering Kiss, Entrancement)

Garrote Vil

Camarilla agents suppressing knowledge of the Antediluvians.

Before the Gehenna War, many elders in the Camarilla privately believed in the existence of the Antediluvians but held onto a public policy of considering them either mythical or destroyed.

Sometimes, this policy was enforced by a secret society comprised of Noddist scholars, would-be prophets, and amateur futurists, known as Garrote Vil. Just as the garrote strangles its victims, so would they strangle any curiosity about the ancients. The fear was that an interest in the ancients would lead

to a desire either for the vitae of older Kindred or radicalization and eventual Sabbat membership.

When the Sabbat began their crusade and the Beckoning became more intense, Garrote Vil concluded that if they could stop others from learning further about the war around them, it'd burn itself out. The Sabbat would perish, and the Camarilla could take steps back to normalcy.

For the benefit of the Ivory Tower, Garrote Vil fights a desperate war against the legends of the ancients. The irony is that many, perhaps most, members believe in those legends themselves.

Goals: The Garrote Vil prevent their peers from learning more about the Beckoning, the Gehenna War, and the Antediluvians. All tools to do so, from blackmail to murder, are considered viable options. If someone is too useful to keep silent, they're offered a place in the society. Most presented with the option choose to join, fully aware they'll be destroyed if they don't.

Allegiances: Garrote Vil considers itself loyal to the Camarilla, or at least the ideals of the Camarilla as set out before the Gehenna War. They're considering reaching out to Anarchs, especially those who defected to the Unchained after the First Conclave of Prague. The society is leaderless, and all formal members have a say in its actions. They keep in contact through privately delivered letters.

Stance and Response: Aggressive. While Garrote Vil shies away from conflicts that do not pertain to their mission, they move to suppress forbidden knowledge. Those who acquiesce to silence will be offered a chance to join. Others will be destroyed. As a small and spread-out organization with no central authority or headquarters, Garrote Vil is difficult for enemies to target, but if driven to desperation, the remnants gather together to mount an all-out attack on the threat.

Scenes:

- As the coterie investigates an abandoned haven rumored to have a lost treatise about the Beckoning, ghoul servants of Garrote Vil arrive armed with gasoline tanks and matches. Garrote Vil's members destroyed the haven's former owner and expect their underlings to get rid of the evidence. The coterie must stop them or escape before the ghouls' fire grows out of control.
- At Elysium, a visitor to the domain approaches the coterie, claiming they know them. The visitor is secretly a Garrote Vil agent, who uses the opportunity to send the coterie a veiled threat. The visitor claims that if they continue to get involved with the Gehenna War, there may be deadly consequences.
- A fellow vampire that promised to get the coterie a genuine copy of the Book of Nod suddenly reneges on their offer. After some convincing, they relent and reveal that they caught someone breaking into their haven, and they fear it may be Garrote Vil's doing. They ask the coterie to watch their haven for the night while they get the book to a safer location.

Research Affinity: The Garrote Vil have deep connections and use them to thwart would-be truth seekers. Once per story, one test to research more about the Gehenna War, research more about the Beckoning, or get the favor of someone knowledgeable about either is always at Difficulty 5 thanks to the Garrote Vil's actions. Any character that failed the test due to this penalty receives a clue hinting that the society is responsible for their failure.

GARROTE VIL ANTAGONISTS**Garrote Vil Student**

“Knowledge must be reserved for the gifted few. I’m one of them.”

Ghoul

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 4, Social 3,

Disciplines: 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Larceny 6, Melee 5,

Intimidation 4

Disciplines: Potence 1 (Lethal Body)

Garrote Vil Scholar

“Some contest whether Caine was really the first vampire. There’s an argument to be made that based on a certain interpretation of Assyrian myth... I’m sorry. What was the question?”

Clan: Brujah

Blood Potency: 3

General Difficulty: 4/4

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Mental 8, Social 7,

Disciplines: 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 7, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee 8, Leadership 7,

Occult 9

Disciplines: Celerity 4 (Cat’s Grace, Fleetness, Blink, Draught of Elegance), Potence 3 (Lethal Body, Prowess, Uncanny Grip), Presence 3 (Awe, Lingering Kiss, Entrancement)

Moon’s Army

Sabbat hit squads hunting Tremere and Salubri agents.

The Sabbat Seraph Jeong-Bae Moon’s Host consists of many individual packs, but none as fearsome as Moon’s Army. Operating exclusively in Central and South America, the Army is efficient. They travel to a city, hit their target, and move on to the next. They

don't care about claiming territory for the Sabbat. All they care about is hunting pawns of the Tremere and Salubri methuselahs. And they have proven themselves quite good at it.

Much of their success comes from Rigoberto Vindel, a Salubri warrior and seer. Through his visions, he can identify targets of opportunity with surprising accuracy. However, unbeknownst to Vindel, Goratrix the Betrayer is responsible for his premonitions. The infamous Tremere methuselah and founder of the Tremere House Goratrix (*Blood Sigils*, p. 101) has old scores to settle and is more than happy to manipulate Vindel and, by extension, the Sabbat into attacking his enemies.

Goals: Moon's Army is in Central and South America and focuses primarily on hunting Tremere and Salubri methuselahs (and their agents).

Allegiances: The Army believes itself to serve the Sabbat and is unaware of the links to the Tremere and the methuselah Goratrix.

Stance and Response: Aggressive. The Army's first and last response is always to attack, even if it sometimes is not the most sensible strategy. The Army is not something that is going to last the ages but a movement of Kindred unlikely to survive the Gehenna War. This means that while from the perspective of a players' coterie, the Army may respond with oversized force, their next move may be to another direction entirely as their true mission once again calls for them.

Scenes:

- The characters sprint toward the exit with the Sabbat hot on their heels. But in a rush to escape, their Tremere companion stumbles and crashes into a lab table, sending beakers and test tubes sailing to the floor. The coterie turns to look back, just in time to watch Moon's Army descend on the Warlock. Teeth and claws tear into the neonate while his screams reverberate throughout the building.
- When a truck explodes, the characters dodge fireballs of twisted metal. Moon's Army has taken full advantage of the political unrest in Cartagena, using the violent demonstrations as

cover for their attack on the Tremere chantry. If the characters can get past the demonstrators and a wall of heavily armed police, they might reach the chantry in time.

- “Where is the missing Salubri?” asks Vindel. In a dank basement, the player's character and her youngest childe sit, both chained to chairs. The childe refuses to answer. Vindel slowly nods, unsurprised by the refusal. He produces a glowing fire iron and presses it gently against the childe's cheek.

Eyes in the Back of Your Head: Given their cadre of oracles and seers, Moon's Army has an uncanny ability to predict ambushes. As a result, they are immune to surprise attacks.

MOON'S ARMY ANTAGONIST

Rigoberto Vindel, the Loyal Lieutenant

As part of Seraph Jeong-Bae Moon's Host, Vindel puts brutality to good use. He leads a pack of twenty, scouring the cities of Central and South America for wayward agents of the methuselahs. After ingesting the blood of drug-induced mortals, Vindel enters a trance as visions overwhelm him. He sees the precise locations of Tremere havens and Salubri runaways with uncanny clarity. His visions have proven accurate to date, making him invaluable to Seraph Moon and a threat to her position.

Clan: Salubri

Blood Potency: 2

General Difficulty: 4 / 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Mental 4, Social 6,

Disciplines: 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 7, Occult 7,

Insight 8

Disciplines: Auspex 4 (Heightened Senses, Premonition, Scry the Soul, Spirit's Touch), Fortitude 4 (Unswayable Mind, Toughness, Fortify the Inner Facade, Draught of Endurance), Potence 3 (Lethal Body, Prowess, Brutal Feed)

The Servitors of Irad

Aspiring servants of the Antediluvians.

Both a blood cult and a manipulated faction within the Gehenna War, the Servitors of Irad emulate Irad the Strong, the mythical fallen childe of Caine. The apocalyptic faction openly serves the Antediluvians, though the Servitors are not a monolith. They are a faction of differing goals and methodologies. One group seeks to pit the Camarilla and Anarchs against each other. Another considers the Sabbat their primary adversary. And a third, perhaps the most audacious, intends to bypass the sects altogether and subject their masters, the methuselahs, to diablerie.

What the Servitors of Irad don't realize, however, is that the blood cult is being manipulated by more than one methuselah. Something in their creed seems to attract the ancients, perhaps because they too wonder about the stories of the first few generations of Kindred. This influence may explain why the Servitors seem somewhat erratic in their actions, although generally prone to inflaming tensions between the great sects.

Goals: Emulate Irad the Strong by swearing fealty to the Antediluvians in the belief that such loyalty will earn protection upon the ancients' inevitable return.

Allegiances: The Servitors are unknowingly serving a number of methuselahs, possibly including Ceri, Kemintiri and the Plague-Bride.

Stance and Response: Depends. The Servitors tend to have idiosyncratic responses to outside threats. Sometimes they seek to hide, fading into the woodwork so as to be able to focus on their true work. But if they feel, rightly or wrongly, that the threat is somehow connected to their mission of serving the Antediluvians, they pull out all the stops.

Scenes:

- “The Prince has failed us all! Grossly so!” roars the Primogen as he pounds his fist against the oak table. “How many more of our brothers and sisters must die because of his incompetence? When do we stop his madness and seize control of our own fates? Assembled Kindred, the time for change has come!” The room grows tense as the characters look around the chamber. The gradual nods of agreement multiply across the gathering of Kindred. A change in praxis, once unimaginable, suddenly seems inevitable.
- As the riots rage, the coterie makes their way toward the haven. The night air is thick with smoke and the acrid scent of tear gas. Sirens wail in the distance, accompanied by the occasional bark of gunshots and concussive pops of gas grenades. Just when they think they've made it home, they round the corner and freeze. Standing in front of their door is a Servitor. The Kindred draws a hatchet, pointing the weapon at the characters.
- Symone shakes her head, placing a hand on the character's shoulder. “I am your Mawla. You've trusted my counsel for many years. Now, I urge you to trust me once more. Let go of your human inhibitions. Discard these restraints. There is a time for caution and there is a time for action, and this moment calls for the latter. Unshackle yourselves and remove this threat from your unlife before it removes you.”

Powers: Powers for the Servitors of Irad may be found in the Servitor of Irad Loresheet in *Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 230.

SERVITOR OF IRAD ANTAGONIST

Symone, the Instigator

As a scholar of Gehenna, Symone's Sabbat brethren ranted about how the blood gods had enslaved the world. But the more Symone learned, the more she became convinced that one cannot kill a god. And if one cannot kill a god, then the smartest move is to serve them. Finding solace among the Servitors, her advice often fails to cut through the inter-sect politics. But as she climbs the ladder and seeks to become a Cardinal, her brethren within the Camarilla do the same. Soon, the Servitors will be in the perfect position to spark a second full-blown sect war.

Clan: Ministry

Blood Potency: 4

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 8, Mental 6, Social 5, Disciplines 7

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 9, Stealth 9, Subterfuge 7

Disciplines: Auspex 4 (Sense the Unseen, Premonition, Scry the Soul, Spirit's Touch), Obfuscate 4 (Cloak of Shadows, Unseen Passage, Mask of a Thousand Faces, Vanish), Presence 4 (Daunt, Lingering Kiss, Entrancement, Summon), Protean 4 (Eyes of the Beast, Feral Weapons, Earth Meld, Shapechange)



The Shepherds of Ur-Shulgi

Fanatical followers of the Banu Haqim methuselah.

Guided by the Sabbat defector Izhim ur-Baal, a former Seraph of the Black Hand, the Shepherds owe their eternal loyalty to the Banu Haqim methuselah Ur-Shulgi. United by a single edict, these loyalists stalk their traitorous clanmates with the Camarilla, executing them without mercy or hesitation. More often than not, these deadly agents

operate in isolation. However, certain situations require them to pair up and in the Gehenna War these have occurred more and more often. Only the most hardened of enemies merit the deployment of a trio of Shepherds.

With the Banu Haqim clan fortress Alamut having fallen to the Sabbat, the methuselah Ur-Shulgi's location and area of operations remain a mystery. Those Shepherds sent into the field often spend years accomplishing their missions, cut off from any direct communication with their master. This makes it very difficult to mount a counterattack against the Shepherds and the methuselah even if information was extracted from a captured agent.

Goals: Follow the will of Ur-Shulgi and destroy those Banu Haqim who do not swear fealty to the methuselah.

Allegiances: The blood god Ur-Shulgi.

Stance and Response: Aggressive. The Shepherds are weak in mortal influence and strong in supernatural force, meaning that their response often takes the form of undead assassins crashing through the skylight instead of anything more subtle that Kindred more enmeshed with the mortal world are used to.

Scenes:

- Heavy rain pounds against the bridge, the torrential downpour creating a curtain of water between two combatants standing on opposite sides. On one end is a Banu Haqim in a long, hooded coat offering scant protection from the rain. A silver brooch, symbolic of his loyalty to the Camarilla, glints under the streetlight. Opposite him is another Kindred obedient to Ur-Shulgi. They draw their swords and lunge at each other.
- The characters half-carry, half-drag the Banu Haqim Seneschal into the adjacent room, leaving a trail of blood in their wake. The Shepherd's initial assault had been too fast to counter, with the enemy striking and vanishing before the coterie was even aware. Weapons drawn, each takes a defensive stance, eyes scanning of any sign of entry—windows, doors, even the air vents above. They wait for the Shepherd's next move.

- The Shepherd of Ur-Shulgi loads a round into the Dragunov sniper rifle. The room is dark and barren, save for a folding table holding a closed weapons case. Adjusting the rifle's optical sights, she zeroes in on her target. Below, the Banu Haqim Primogen is finishing his meeting and preparing to exit the building. He'll exit the world if the Shepherd's aim is true.

Corrosive Vitae, Advanced: With a successful Rouse Check, the Shepherd alters the properties of their vitae, making it highly corrosive. Drinking the blood of a Shepherd inflicts 4 points of aggravated damage, minus one for every success in the margin on a Stamina + Resolve test at Difficulty 5.

SHEPHERDS OF UR-SHULGI ANTAGONIST

Sawi, Shadow of Alamut

There is an ancient coda among the Banu Haqim that declares “Honor the Eldest among you, for he is to rule my House when I am absent.” When the great Ur-Shulgi claimed the Black Throne of Haqim, for many within the clan, this was enough to submit to its rule. And when it ordered the loyalists to hunt down the traitors in the Camarilla, those such as Sawi did so without question. For him, there is no compromise. No negotiation. No need for credit or reputation or ego. The Dread Shepherd commands, and he obeys.

Clan: Banu Haqim

Blood Potency: 4

General Difficulty: 5/4

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 9, Mental 7, Social 6, Disciplines 8

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Investigation 9, Streetwise 8, Occult 8

Disciplines: Auspex 2 (Sense the Unseen, Premonition), Blood Sorcery 5 (Corrosive Vitae, Extinguish Vitae, Scorpion’s Touch, Theft of Vitae, Baal’s Caress, Rituals: Blood Walk, Communicate With Kindred Sire, Deflection of Wooden Doom, Defense of the Sacred Haven, Escape to True Sanctuary), Celerity 4 (Cat’s Grace, Fleetness, Blink, Draught of Elegance), Obfuscate 4 (Cloak of Shadows, Unseen Passage, Mask of a Thousand Faces, Vanish), Potence 2 (Lethal Body, Prowess)

Violence First

These factions can be connected from the Gehenna War from an opportunistic perspective, exploiting the conflict for their own ends. However, they're not intrinsically connected to it and are included here for use in action chronicles due to their ease with violence as a means to an end.

The Boule

Autarky. Kindred bank hoarding money and Noddist lore.

One of the Sabbat's largest holdings before the sect's implosion and refocusing on its Gehenna Crusade was the city of Detroit. Though the city, and nearly all the state of Michigan, were considered hostile territory to the Camarilla, not every vampire in the region belonged to the Black Hand. The Boule, named for the ancient councils of Greece, was formed as a gathering of non-Sabbat vampires in the Greektown district. Eschewing an affiliation with the Camarilla in the hopes of staying low and with no Anarch Movement to be found, the Boule managed themselves.

When the Sabbat pulled out of most of their holdings worldwide to shift into the Gehenna War, the Boule's independent mindset and survival instincts never softened. Convinced that one day the Sabbat will return, the Boule elected to use their connections to the district's entertainment and gambling facilities to offer themselves as a financial storage hub, a Cayman Islands for Kindred unwilling to travel to the Caribbean. In the time of the Second Inquisition and as the Gehenna War grows hotter, the autarky is one of the few stable Kindred institutions left in the area.

Goals: The Boule maintain their autarky through managing the finances of domains in the state, with some accounts from out of state, and a rare few being from out of the country. The council uses Greektown's casinos, hotels, banks, and other

undisclosed locations to launder and save money. They're rumored to hold other previous treasures, such as early generation copies of the Book of Nod or artifacts smuggled from the Tremere's lost Grand Chantry.

Allegiances: The Boule do business with the Camarilla, Anarchs, and occasionally Ashirra. Officially, they do not work with the Sabbat, but between deep cover infiltrators and the autarky's mostly anonymous transactions, a few packs use the autarky to hold their resources. Much like its namesake, every member of the Boule runs the district together, gathering monthly and making decisions through direct democracy.

Stance and Response: Defensive. The Boule's first response to a credible threat is to try paying it off. This may be expressed as a temporary dot of Resources. If provoked to attack by the destruction of one of their representatives or a money-laundering operation, the Boule will send hit squads of armed ghouls led by a pit boss (see below) after the coterie, while also assaulting their finances or even the local economy of their Domain. If driven to desperation, the Boule's endgame is to liquidate their assets and cover their tracks as they make their escape to begin a new unlif somewhere else. Of course, they will also make certain all of their clients know who was responsible for the Boule's demise.

Scenes:

- A representative of the Boule arrives in the coterie's city. At an Elysium, they claim that a vampire that recently met final death had an account with the autarky, and that they had instructions to follow on news of their demise. The coterie, whom the deceased vampire did not know, receive a mysterious artifact.
- The coterie, following an infamous Sabbat assassin, attend a meeting of the Boule. They must convince the entire autarky to give them a record of the last several months of transactions, several of which the assassin might have made.

- The heist was going so well. Making short work of the bank's night security was a breeze. Now that some of the Boule's enforcers have arrived on the scene, things might go pear-shaped.

Allies at the Ready: The Boule are never alone. With all their responsibility, a lone member is a weakness hostile forces could exploit. Once per session, a Boule member involved in a conflict may

reveal that they have one to three (a footsoldier has one, a middleman has two and a leader has three) allies ready and waiting to strike. In conflicts with two or more Boule members, only one Boule Storyteller character may use this power.

BOULE ANTAGONISTS

Floorman

"When you grow richer, we grow richer. Everyone benefits."

Clan: Malkavian

Blood Potency: 2

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Mental 5, Social 4, Disciplines 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 8, Firearms 8, Melee 8

Disciplines: Auspex 3 (Heightened Senses, Premonition, Scry the Soul), Dominate 2 (Compel, Mesmerize), Obfuscate 3 (Cloak of Shadows, Unseen Passage, Mask of a Thousand Faces)

Pit Boss

"You have overstayed your welcome. Accept this vessel compliments of the house and then please leave."

Clan: Ventrue

Blood Potency: 3

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Mental 8, Social 6, Disciplines 8

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee 8, Intimidation 7, Finance 9

Disciplines: Dominate 4 (Compel, Mesmerize, The Forgetful Mind, Rationalize), Fortitude 3 (Unswayable Mind, Toughness, Fortify the Inner Facade), Presence 4 (Awe, Lingering Kiss, Entrancement)

The Circulatory System

Board of Trust

Crime syndicate. Worldwide network of blood smugglers.

The Circulatory System is a fairly new syndicate, operating on a global scale as a network of human traffickers, smugglers, and would-be profiteers. But above them all, at the top of the logistics chain, are a handful of the most influential Kindred in the world. Publicly, they market “vintages” to affluent Kindred clientele. In truth, the Board rakes in millions by supplying mortal victims to all factions embroiled in the Gehenna War.

Although Kindred in many domains know of the Circulatory System, it’s a highly opaque organization. Few know who leads it and its leaders prefer it like that. Their theory goes that the less Kindred know, the harder it is for them to compromise the System and divert its resources away from what its directors want it to do.

However, more than one of the Kindred at the top has fallen under the thrall of other factions and perhaps even the methuselahs involved in the Gehenna War. Because of this, sometimes the System makes victims available surprisingly generously, for those whose Humanity won’t stand in the way of murdering people to get back on their feet quickly.

Goals: Make a profit by providing a steady stream of “vintages” to anyone and everyone. Stay out of the Gehenna War and remain a neutral party.

Allegiances: Numerous other factions and methuselahs. The Circulatory System is also a supplier of the Penny Dining Club (*Forbidden Religions*, p. 74).

Stance and Response: Aggressive. The Circulatory System is a criminal syndicate of extraordinary sensitivity and reacts to threats with extreme prejudice. A coterie meddling in their affairs will be initially given a stern threat to back off, or else.

Hostile action, such as attacking an agent of the System, will be met with force, usually strike teams of ghouls led by Kindred. They seek to capture rather than destroy, intending to put their captives to the open market. If driven to desperation, the Board of Trust seek to grab what assets they can and go to the ground; they are motivated by profit, not fanaticism.

Scenes:

- The board member dabs the blood from her lips using a damask napkin while contemplating the taste of the draught she just imbibed. “Curious,” she observes. “AB negative blood is rare. Did you know that? Oh! And if you survive the night, you may want to have your thyroid checked.”
- The coterie swings open the door and steps onto the transport bus. Inside are thirty individuals, diverse in age and background. Yet, they wore identical white shirts and pants, faces blank and emotionless. Their attention doesn’t shift to note the newcomers. It’s as if the “cargo” is entirely unaware of the coterie’s presence.
- Wolfgang gestured for the characters to join him at the window. From fifty stories up, the world and the population below seemed small. “You know what this city runs on?” asks Wolfgang rhetorically. “Blood. The blood I supply. And what do you think is going to happen when you take me in and that spigot runs dry? What do you think happens to all those people down there? They get eaten by hungry vampires. That’s what happens.”

Uncanny Palate: In addition to possible traits from the Circulatory System Loresheet (*Vampire*, p. 386), members of the Board have an uncanny palate, which allows them, with one sip of blood, to identify a victim’s age, blood type, cultural ancestry, and any preexisting medical conditions.

CIRCULATORY SYSTEM BOARD MEMBER ANTAGONIST**Wolfgang Goergen, Purveyor of Pain**

When Wolfgang's sire died in a Second Inquisition raid, he suddenly became heir to a multi-million-dollar logistics chain within the Circulatory System. He was initially stunned by the scale of human suffering he now oversaw. The Circulatory System didn't merely distribute blood so much as it provided people, and in numbers that were, by any definition, crimes of war. But with each new bespoke suit, flight on a private jet, and zero added to his bottom line, the shock subsided.

Clan: Tremere

Blood Potency: 2

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 6, Social 6, Disciplines 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Medicine 7, Science 7, Persuasion 7

Disciplines: Auspex 3 (Heightened Senses, Premonition, Scry the Soul), Blood Sorcery 3 (Corrosive Vitae,

Extinguish Vitae, Scorpion's Touch, Rituals: Blood Walk, Craft Bloodstone, Eyes of Babel), Dominate 4 (Cloud

Memory, Mesmerize, The Forgetful Mind, Rationalize), Presence 2 (Awe, Lingering Kiss)

Los Hijos de Si

Blood cult following a mysterious moon goddess.

Formed to worship the moon goddess Si almost 1500 years ago, the blood cult suffered during the centuries the Sabbat held territory in Peru and Bolivia. Whittled down to almost nothing, the cult kept up their offerings to the Machukuna, avatars of Si from a sunless world whose bones are found in caves, lake bottoms, and other dark places.

Then, a miracle came. The Gehenna War began, and the Sabbat left to fight it. Los Hijos de Si ("The Children of Si") began a campaign of restoration and expansion, eventually becoming a notable force among the Kindred in Lima, Peru.

In recent nights, the Machukuna send visions to take up arms against "the false ancient ones." The blood cult obeys. The Machukuna have always called them to greater acts of devotion. Ending the war on their own terms might be the greatest act yet.

Soldiers of the Gehenna War familiar with Los Hijos find their entrance unnerving. It's hard to discern which legends of the Machukuna are true,

but one thing is certain. If they're vampires at all, they're possibly something far stranger than the Antediluvians, and perhaps not even of this realm. Could this be the opening moves of a brand-new faction in the Gehenna War?

Goals: Los Hijos de Si recruit mortals to bring offerings to the Machukuna and Embrace the most faithful. These new cultists seek out further resting places of the Machukuna, scattered across the globe. They refuse to let the Sabbat force them back into hiding, and the Machukuna encourage the faithful to act against the Antediluvians and their servants for reasons only known to them.

Allegiances: At the head of Los Hijos is its reclusive founder, Illani. Publicly, she is known as a Nosferatu methuselah, but no one can confirm if that's true. The High Priests Don Esteban and Giuliana Santisteban, Lasombra and Tzimisce respectively, are the better-known heads of the faith in Lima.

Stance and Response: Defensive. Los Hijos de Si are the enemies of Sabbat and likelier to ally themselves with the players' coterie. However, the blood cult guards the secrets of the Machukuna jealously. Anyone threatening this secrecy is the enemy.

Scenes:

- At an Elysium where the Prince holds her monthly court, an emissary from Los Hijos comes with a dire warning of an incoming Sabbat attack. The coterie has a chance to learn more about the threat if they can gain his trust.
- Vampires from out of town are reaching out to the poor and marginalized, and asking for offerings to a shrine outside of town. All evidence of their activity is somehow erased from public record. The coterie must uncover the lost footage and discover how the vampires erased it.

- The coterie discovers a Machukuna resting place. As they explore, they hear an approaching group of Los Hijos. They plan to flush the coterie out. The coterie must decide whether to sneak away or fight on holy ground.

Visions of the Moon: Those of truly great faith can make others see the Machukuna's realm. Once per session, when a Storyteller character locks eyes with a character, they transmit a vision resisted with a Willpower test at Difficulty 3. On a failure, the character hallucinates the Machukuna's reality, stunning them for several turns equal to the margin of failure.

LOS HIJOS DE SI ANTAGONISTS**Servant of the Machukuna**

"Turn your eyes to the sky. Do you see?"

Ghoul

General Difficulty: 3/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 5, Social 5, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee 6, Intimidation 6, Investigation 7

Disciplines: Potence 1 (Lethal Body)

High Priest of the Machukuna

"We bade our time. We waited. And now we make our move."

Clan: Tzimisce

Blood Potency: 3

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Social 5, Mental 6, Disciplines 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee 7, Leadership 7, Awareness 7

Disciplines: Animalism 4 (Sense the Beast, Feral Whispers, Animal Succulence, Subsume the Spirit), Dominate

4 (Cloud Memory, Mesmerize, The Forgetful Mind, Rationalize), Protean 3 (Eyes of the Beast, Feral Weapons,

Earth Meld)

Mora's Death Seers

Hecata who reject the unification of the clan's many bloodlines.

While the Family Reunion brought together bloodlines of the Hecata under one house, some joined under false pretenses or did not take part at all. These Hecata have rejected the peace initiative and continue to hunt their cousins for past crimes. Mora, a member of the Hecata bloodline Harbingers of Ashur, leads one such faction. Loyal to the Hecata methuselah Unre, Mora's Death Seers stalk members of the Giovanni family throughout the globe.

To their credit, the Hecata have done well in hiding the existence of Mora's Death Seers. They present a unified front for the rest of Kindred society, but secretly, their concern grows that history may repeat itself. If casualties continue to mount, the other Hecata bloodlines may get ideas, and the Family Reunion could fall apart.

Goals: Erase the bloodline of Augustus Giovanni, i.e., the Giovanni branch of the Hecata clan.

Allegiances: The methuselah Unre is said to influence the Death Seers. It's possible this is really the case, but it could also be a claim made by Mora to make her faction seem more powerful than they are.

Stance and Response: Aggressive. The Death Seers are prone to conspiracy where they see the hand of their enemies behind every action, even ones entirely unrelated to them. It's possible they interpret the activities of a players' coterie as being controlled by Hecata of the Giovanni bloodline and respond accordingly.

Scenes:

- Crunching footsteps reverberate across the cemetery, the sound bouncing off the tombstones. Without warning, the earth shudders and cracks as a dozen rotting hands shoot upward. Gnarled fingers clutch at the air, then claw the soil as they drag themselves from their graves. In pursuit of the Harbinger, the coterie now finds themselves encircled by a horde of ravenous undead and their snapping jaws.
- “Me? Horrific, you say?” asks Mora with a slow smile. Standing in the middle of the crypt, outnumbered by the characters, the cornered Harbinger takes a hand and slowly pulls off their face, tearing flesh from bone. They reveal the grotesque visage of a skeletal husk beneath. Eyeballs bulge from bony sockets, and bloody fangs glisten. “This is the horror the Giovanni forced on me and mine. Now be a dear and step aside.”
- The room falls silent. Three Harbingers stride into the Elysium, their black garments flowing as they make their way to the Hecata delegation. No words, no greetings. The tallest draws an urn from her cloak. She tips it, and ash cascades onto the marble floor. Her eyes lock onto the Hecata. “You were warned.”

Theft of the Soul: The Harbinger makes a Rouse Check and makes a test of Resolve + Oblivion vs. Composure + Survival or Occult. On a success, the Harbinger rips the soul out of the target mortal, turning them into a ghost-like creature for the duration. The dispossession lasts for a number of turns equal to 10 minus the target's Willpower.



DEATH SEER ANTAGONIST**Mora, the Seer**

When the Family Reunion was called, Mora was there. The androgynous creature went through the motions of peace, offering apologies to the Giovanni and the other bloodlines of the newly formed Hecata. But it was a ruse, a pretense to get close to their enemies. Mora leads their small faction of Harbingers, destroying Hecata of note and leaving a honeysuckle twig in the remains. The twig pays mocking homage to rivals within the clan. Mora knows it's only a matter of time before they're caught and destroyed. But Mora also knows that death is not the end but merely the beginning.

Clan: Hecata (Harbinger of Ashur)

Blood Potency: 4

General Difficulty: 5 / 4

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 8, Social 6, Disciplines 7

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 10, Occult 9, Intimidation 8

Disciplines: Auspex 5 (Sense the Unseen, Premonition, Share the Senses, Spirit's Touch, Telepathy), Fortitude 4 (Unswayable Mind, Toughness, Fortify the Inner Facade, Draught of Endurance), Obfuscate 2 (Cloak of Shadows, Unseen Passage), Oblivion 5 (Ashes to Ashes, Fatal Prediction, Aura of Decay, Necrotic Plague, Skuld Fulfilled)

Oradea League

An ancient society of Kindred with designs on supplanting the Camarilla.

When the Camarilla was formed, it was but one of the many alliances between domains. Unlike the others, it was able to grow and subsume its rivals into itself until it came to be seen as inevitable, as the natural end result of Kindred organization. At least among the Princes who believed in it.

Still, vampires have long memories. Members of some of those other alliances still remember their glory days and harbor bitter resentment of the Camarilla because it succeeded where they did not. One such alliance is the Carpathian Oradea League, originally composed entirely of Tzimisce elders, ancilla and their pawns. In this age of Gehenna, several Gangrel and Nosferatu have claimed the ancestral titles of their masters, alongside the Tzimisce. The League is something of a throwback

to the medieval, pre-Camarilla model of organizing a domain where a tyrannical Prince brutalizes their subjects through sheer supernatural power. As such, it has lost a lot of territory and influence over the years to Camarilla domains with Kindred more able to change with the times and adapt to subtler, more discreet methods of wielding influence.

Perhaps the biggest problem held by the League is that its members fight each other incessantly. Composed as it is of current and former Tzimisce liege lords, their allies and compatriots, it boasts precious few members capable of compromise. Its traditions and laws emphasize protecting its leaders. Nonetheless, the ancient lords are not free of the chaos in the Time of Thin Blood, and new cracks are developing between the elders and their childer.

The League is just one example of what's effectively a mini-Camarilla, a local alliance of domains with their own rules and traditions. There are others, especially in South America and anywhere east of Poland.

Goals: The Oradea League had grand ambitions when it formed, but now it's riven between dissension between radicals and those seeking to maintain its traditional role. In an uncommon inversion, it's often the old who seek change and the young who wish to maintain things as they are. Many Oradea lords relish the chance to humiliate the Ventre and Tremere for ancient slights or even take down the Camarilla itself, feeling that the time to do it is now in the shadow of the Gehenna War. In contrast, the ancillae who have begun to replace lords and ladies lost to the Beckoning have little such ambition.

The remaining elders still yearn to replace the Camarilla, thinking that the League was always destined to rule over all Kindred. The fact that the Camarilla rose to hegemony in many areas is an insult that can never be forgiven. But it can be forgotten and the ancillae, both those who now hold ancestral titles and those who still serve their lords and masters, have been seeding a handful of well-trained childe into Camarilla domains in the hopes of perhaps one night doing the inconceivable: merging their holdings into the Camarilla and abolishing the League altogether.

Allegiances: In its own way, the League is surprisingly independent. The idea that nobody can tell the ruler of a domain what to do is ingrained in its makeup to such a degree that many of its members would rather be destroyed than compromise or accept the rule of another. Unfortunately, this attitude has also greatly hampered alliances with outsiders.

Stance and Response: Aggressive. The ancillae and elders of the League seeks to make the League itself appear bigger than it is and sometimes responds to smaller or medium threats with excessive force, like an animal bristling to make itself larger. Questions of pride are often mixed in with tactics. If a League member's status has been called into question, that merits a highly aggressive response.

Scenes:

- The Prince of a Camarilla domain is Beckoned away, only for a hoary old Kindred appears claiming to be the original ruler of the city before it even was a city. They insist that their domain is not part of the Camarilla but the less genteel and more brutish Oradea League. Furthermore, they immediately declare war on all surrounding Camarilla domains.
- An ancient Tzimisce offers bizarre enticements in the form of mind-wiped pleasure servants in exchange for the characters betraying their sect. How insulted would the elder be if they refused? And did anyone ask those servants their opinion before the mortals were horrifyingly adjusted?
- A member of the local Primogen meets up with Kindred in the domain to gauge support for an idea based on the old pre-Camarilla Oradea League: Join up with a few nearby domains, declare separation from the Camarilla and make up your own rules! They argue that for those Kindred on the top, it would have all the best features of both the Camarilla and the Anarchs. Structure and freedom!

Obstinacy: The Tzimisce of the League, their Gangrel and Nosferatu allies, and their servants are shockingly obstinate. Difficulties for influencing them socially whether with Skills or Disciplines are always one higher than normal.

ORADEA LEAGUE ANTAGONISTS

Wretched Ghoul Servant

"Please kill me."

Ghoul

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 4, Social 3, Disciplines 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Etiquette 6, Survival 5, Occult 6

Disciplines: Animalism 1 (Sense the Beast)

Oradea League Voivode

"I decide."

Clan: Tzimisce

Blood Potency: 6

General Difficulty: 7/5

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 7, Mental 8, Social 8, Disciplines 9

Secondary Attributes: Health 9, Willpower 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee 9, Intimidation 10, Leadership 9

Disciplines: Animalism 5 (Bond Famulus, Feral Whispers, Animal Succulence, Subsume the Spirit, Animal Dominion), Auspex 2 (Heightened Senses, Premonition), Dominate 5 (Compel, Mesmerize, The Forgetful Mind, Rationalize, Terminal Decree), Fortitude 2 (Resilience, Toughness), Presence 1 (Daunt), Protean 5 (Eyes of the Beast, Vicissitude, Earth Meld, Horrid Form, Mist Form)

Oswobodziele

A ghoul liberation organization.

The Oswobodziele, better known as either “The Liberators,” or more commonly, “The O,” is a group dedicated to the liberation of ghouls from servitude to the Kindred. They’re militant in their actions,

happy to destroy vampires who treat their servants particularly badly.

Although there are a few Kindred sympathizers among the O, most of them are ghouls recovering from servitude and the Blood Bond. All escaped years if not decades of abuse from their masters, most of them Anarchs. A decentralized resistance movement, the O is difficult to fight for the Kindred because it consists of cells that don’t necessarily know much about the rest of the organization.

The O has experienced a surge in recruitment over recent nights. Some individual cells have even received discreet support from more adventurous Second Inquisition agencies who assume that the Liberators represent some sort of a grassroots anti-vampire movement. Membership among the O is greatest in North America, Eastern Europe, and West Asia.

For the independent and former ghouls, the Gehenna War presents a unique opportunity to play an extremely high stakes game where the odds are stacked against them but it's possible to make incredible gains while the Kindred are distracted. With every Camarilla Prince and Anarch gang leader who's focused on threats from above, the O can strike from below.

Goals: Oswobodziciele seeks out ghouls trapped in the Blood Bond. After marking the regent's property with their symbol, a spraypainted red "O," they work to liberate the victim and destroy the oppressor. Whether the oppressor is fledgling or methuselah doesn't matter. All bondage must end.

Allegiances: The ex-ghoul O is decentralized and leaderless, but a figure known as "Cyrus," most likely multiple people under one pseudonym, serves as spokesperson. The sides keep a wide distance from each other for ideological and personal reasons but aid each other if necessary.

Stance and Response: Aggressive. Due to the imbalances of power they regularly deal with, the O has to respond aggressively but creatively. The purpose of the aggression is to finish the conflict then and there because the O is afraid that in a prolonged fight, they'll be destroyed. They often like to strike during the day, favoring explosions, letting in the sunlight and weaponizing mortal connections such as the police. Actually fighting the enemy one-on-one is to be avoided.

Scenes:

- The coterie runs across a group of Liberators while preparing to break into a Primogen's haven. The O don't mind help but are wary of being betrayed. Indeed, things take a turn once a coterie mate's ghoul makes a call, outing the players' characters as Kindred who have ghouls of their own.

- The O's symbol is showing up on the property of the city's most powerful vampires. The coterie is tasked with discovering who is committing the acts and how close their ties to Oswobodziciele really are.
- The coterie tracks an ally's lost ghoul to a warehouse controlled by the O, undergoing a "detox." These O are only mortals. Taking them down and rescuing the ghoul is the easy part. Convincing the ghoul to come back after their reeducation is when it gets tough.

Resist Vampiric Influence: The O train themselves to resist the influence of those that would enslave them. Once per session, influencing an Oswobodziciele Storyteller character through supernatural means requires taking 1 Superficial Willpower damage as an additional cost.

LIBERATOR ANTAGONISTS

Ex-Ghoul Liberator

"I got clean. You can do it too."

Mortal

General Difficulty: 3 / 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Mental 4, Social 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 6, Firearms 5, Occult 4

Blood Addict

"I use the Blood I steal from them to destroy them."

General Difficulty: 4 / 3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Mental 6, Social 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 8, Willpower 8

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 8, Stealth 7, Persuasion 8

Disciplines: Potence 1 (Lethal Body)

Throne's Keepers

Autarky. Followers of a figure called “the Goddess.”

Named after the Goddess on the Throne, a famous terracotta figurine representing an unknown female deity, the Throne's Keepers are an autarky located in Pristina, Kosovo. Formed during the Yugoslavian era, not long after the discovery of the figurine and the subsequent uncovering of a methuselah of unknown name and lineage. Some of the local Kindred fell under its sway and dubbed it “the Goddess.”

What began as a blood cult became a major autarky as years passed. They remained a pillar of stability in Kindred society through the Kosovo War and emerged from it as a powerful local force. Returning members of other sects found their havens preserved by the Throne's Keepers, supposedly under the orders of their Goddess. The magnanimous preservation of domains from before the war created a sense of goodwill that has yet to dissipate.

As the Gehenna War began, the autarky received new orders from their Goddess. Their home, her home, must be defended at all costs. The autarky heeded her call and dug in for a defensive war that may take decades, perhaps centuries, to end.

Goals: The Keepers will not see their city thrown into disarray again. Under what they believe are orders from their Goddess, the autarky maintains a military defense of their domains and the city itself. Their defensive actions extend beyond their borders. Sometimes, when the Keepers get word of a potential threat from beyond the city, they strike first. Their strikes are surgical, and designed to leave a message to any would-be Gehenna War soldiers that make trouble in their city.

Allegiances: The Throne's Keepers venerate their Goddess. They claim that she speaks to them in cryptic images and symbols in their daysleep. One Kindred, the Malkavian Besim Sopi, interprets these

messages and serves as the faction's de facto leader. The autarky maintains good relations with the other sects of Pristina, which include the Ashirra and the Camarilla. These relations are sure to sour once the Keepers' preemptive strikes receive blowback.

Stance and Response: Aggressive. The Keepers tend to go with defensive aggression, in that they hit hard against perceived threats but rarely pursue anyone very far. They're very well informed about everything that happens on their home ground, meaning that a response to the players' coterie might happen earlier than expected.

Scenes:

- A haven in the coterie's city was firebombed last night. The coterie is asked to investigate and discover evidence of Throne Keepers' presence. Was this just a one-time attack, or are they still around to prepare another strike?
- The coterie arrives in Pristina, Kosovo to meet a local Noddist scholar. Outside, they meet their greeting party, a Throne's Keepers coterie. They escort the coterie, gently interrogating them to discern their intentions in the city.
- Someone's convinced the Throne's Keepers that the coterie plans to harm their Goddess. The autarky has dispatched a coterie to confront them. A confrontation occurs where the coterie feels safest. If the coterie holds their own long enough, they have a chance to temper the Keepers' ire, clear up the misunderstanding, and get a lead as to who sent the Keepers to hurt them.

Shield of the Goddess: Devout followers of the Goddess have an incredible hardiness, almost as if the methuselah herself defends them. Once per conflict, a Throne's Keepers Storyteller character halves incoming Aggravated Physical damage in addition to halving incoming Superficial Physical damage.

BLOOD SPORTS

As undead, vampires are able to perform physical feats far surpassing those of mortal humanity. This has given rise to various blood sports, physical contests pitting Kindred against Kindred for power and status. These are often local, part of the culture of specific autarkies, Anarch domains or Camarilla holdings.

Here are a few examples:

The Sanguine Race: The domain of Pristina, home of the Throne's Keepers, is known for something called The Sanguine Race, where participating coteries attempt to get from one side of the city to the other while transporting a mortal. If the mortal dies, the coterie has lost and killing the mortal of a rival team is a time-honored strategy. The specific mortals are chosen in an arcane process involving dream visions from the mysterious Goddess followed by the Keepers. Somehow, the process has a tendency to hit on mortals dear to the Kindred participating, although you don't get to know the identity of the mortal before the Race starts. Victors can expect to enjoy a rise in status and the fulfilment of particular requests and wishes by the rulers of the domain. Losers are often thrown out of the city.

The Eternal Arena: An overgrown amphitheatre in a small town in Greece, the Sanguine Arena has been the venue for a fighting tournament of martial Kindred for decades, possibly centuries. The legend says vampires have fought here one-on-one since the nights of ancient Greece but who can tell for sure. What is known is that anyone can sign up to fight, but if the crowd doesn't like your style, they may demand the victor to destroy you once you've lost. Sometimes the tournament is held annually, and other times there are breaks of a year or a decade. Fights are presided over by masked figures rumored to be anything from favored ghouls to ancient methuselahs.

Blood Hunt: The Camarilla calls for a Blood Hunt when they wish to make a spectacle of the destruction of someone deemed an enemy of the domain. These can be sombre affairs, but in particularly depraved domains it can also be a matter of sport. The Prince designates a group of Kindred, often new arrivals to the city, as the targets of the Blood Hunt. If they survive the night, they can go on with their unives. But the incentives for their destruction are strong, from domain to feeding rights. And of course there's the party at Elysium afterwards, when the poor bastards have been crushed!



THRONE'S KEEPERS ANTAGONISTS**Throne's Keepers Custodian**

"We're proud of our domain and do our best to keep it clean."

Clan: Malkavian

Blood Potency: 1

General Difficulty: 4/3

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Mental 5, Social 4, Difficulty 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 4, Willpower 4

Exceptional Dice Pools: Brawl 6, Intimidation 5, Awareness 7

Disciplines: Auspex 2 (See the Unseen, Premonition), Dominate 2 (Compel, Mesmerize), Fortitude 1 (Unswayable Mind)

Throne's Keepers Guardian

"There's a greater purpose. Only the few are allowed to witness the secrets of the Goddess."

Clan: Tzimisce

Blood Potency: 3

General Difficulty: 4/4

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 6, Mental 7, Social 6

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Melee 7, Intimidation 8, Persuasion 7

Disciplines: Animalism 3 (Sense the Beast, Feral Whispers, Animal Succulence), Dominate 4 (Compel, Mesmerize, The Forgetful Mind, Rationalize), Protean 4 (Eyes of the Beast, Feral Weapons, Shapechange, Metamorphosis)

Other Factions, Cults, and Groups

The factions detailed in this book are but a smattering of the myriad entities that fight the *Gehenna War* or otherwise affect its course. Both Sabbat: The Black Hand and Second Inquisition contain numerous options for crafting action stories, from street level to the Gehenna War itself.

Some additional faction options from all corners of **Vampire** that Storytellers may wish to consider include:

- The Ashfinders (*Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 3)
- The Bahari (*Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 46)
- The Church of Caine (*Cults of the Blood Gods*, p.57)
- The Cult of Set (*Vampire Players Guide*, p. 36)
- Lui Domien (*Blood Sigils*, p. 113)
- Meneleans (*Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 120)
- The Mithraic Mysteries (*Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 95; see also *Fall of London*)
- The Plague Oracles (*Blood Sigils*, p114)
- Sons and Daughters of Helena (*Cults of the Blood Gods*, p. 120) ■



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Chapter Six:

WAR STORIES



In the World of Darkness, the Gehenna War plays out every night in cities and regions already marred by conflict, places often overlooked or ignored by those who sit in the comfort of social stability and order. Some Kindred plunge into the fray as zealous followers acting in service to a blood god, while others are unwitting pawns of those same ancients. This chapter presents a series of action stories, more or less connected to the Gehenna War. You can use them as part of a Gehenna War chronicle or just as individual action pieces unrelated to the machinations of the Ancients.

Bloody Business

When one of the characters' Touchstones mysteriously vanishes, the coterie launches an investigation that leads them to Decadence—a newly opened nightclub run by the Circulatory System. This global network specializes in human trafficking to satisfy the bloody appetites of powerful Kindred. And the players' characters soon learn that the Touchstone has been kidnapped and put in the system.

What follows is a glimpse into the logistics chain of the Circulatory System. From meeting with the nightclub owner, Shawn Merit, to confronting Wolfgang Goergen, the regional director, the characters quickly come to understand just how grim the blood business is. And when they discover

the Circulatory System has sold the Touchstone to Mora's Death Seers, they must rescue their loved one before becoming a sacrifice to the Harbinger's agenda.

Why the Coterie?

The Circulatory System has kidnapped a Touchstone of one of the players' characters. Knowing the Circulatory System, they should be very aware of what happens to the victims.

Goals

The players' characters must investigate the Circulatory System and rescue the Touchstone from Mora's Death Seers. For the Storyteller, the goal is to highlight the Circulatory System, and the extensive apparatus used to feed Kindred throughout the world. It is a dark tale, focusing on the need to kidnap people in order to maintain the supply lines for the Gehenna War.

Supporting Characters

Shawn Merritt is a low-level manager for the Circulatory System. As something of a blood sommelier, he has a knack for intuiting a vampire's unique tastes. The Toreador handles the warehousing and distribution of "stock" on the local level and works directly for Wolfgang Goergen. He sports a thin, meticulously groomed, pointed Van

AGATA STAREK AND BECKETT WATCHING A BURNING BUILDING:

AGATA STAREK: Do you believe we'll ever really find out why all of this happened?

BECKETT: The truth always comes out. The trouble is that so do the lies, and it's hard to say which is which.

AGATA STAREK: I interrogated a Sabbat prisoner.

BECKETT: ... and?

AGATA STAREK: Useless. Just kept making this incoherent noise until I got flustered and stomped it until it was just a rotting body.

BECKETT: This is why I do the research and you... Whatever it is that you do. Carry heavy items?

AGATA STAREK: You're afraid. You're afraid what happens the night when the sounds of those Sabbat prisoners start to make sense.

BECKETT: Preposterous.

Dyke goatee, hoping to hide the fact that he wasn't born with Hollywood bone structure.

Wolfgang Goergen inherited his board seat on the Circulatory System from his Tremere sire. Though he was hesitant at first, he put aside his initial misgivings, seduced by the wealth, power, and status his position brings. He handles distribution for the Circulatory System on the regional level and is well aware of how this has made him someone with whom to curry favor.

Mora prefers to dress in dark, flowing garments like waterfall cardigans and palazzo pants. As the driving force behind the Death Seers, a group of Harbingers dedicated to the destruction of the Giovanni, they have recently arranged for the purchase of a dozen souls they intend to use as fodder in their conflict with the Hecata.

Locations

Decadence: Managed by Shawn Merritt, Decadence is the hottest new nightclub in town. It includes three stories of booming percussive music, LED projector screens, craft cocktails, and exotic dancers of every stripe. The third floor is a VIP oasis catering to more discerning, undead clientele, complete with its own exclusive bar and private balconies.

Wolfgang Goergen's Mansion: Located in an upscale part of the city, Wolfgang's haven exudes a sense of timeless elegance mixed with modern sophistication. Having inherited the home after his sire's death, he's in the midst of upgrading the security system with cleverly concealed surveillance cameras and state-of-the-art locks.

The Church of Saint Anthony the Great: Originally named The Church of Radiant Light, the structure was once a place of worship for the evangelical community. Now that the Death Seers have taken over, the building maintains a focus on function and purpose rather than elaborate decoration, but Mora has made a few notable changes. They changed the name to honor the patron saint of gravediggers. And they converted the baptismal pool into a ritual space.

Scenes

The Hook: The Missing

The story begins innocuously. A Touchstone misses their therapy appointment. Or a reliable employee doesn't show up for work. Or a mortal descendant isn't answering calls or texts. When the player's character realizes something is amiss, they turn to their coterie for help. The characters decide to check in on the person, perhaps stopping by their home. However, what they find is an empty apartment. There's no sign of forced entry, no hastily packed bags, or signs of a sudden vacation. All they find is a stack of unpaid bills (who's been picking up their mail?), financial records of a growing mountain of debt, and an invitation to the opening of a new nightclub called Decadence.

Rising Action: Decadence

Getting into Decadence is a task unto itself. The line is long, and the guest list is short. The characters might use their social skills to charm a bouncer and talk their way past the rope line, or maybe they sneak in through the back. Once inside, they're greeted by the pulse of lights, the thump of dance music, and professional dancers of various shapes, sizes, and genders. Awash in color and smoke, the club is an obvious success.

Not long after their arrival, Shawn Merritt, the Toreador owner, approaches them. If Merritt has a reason to know the characters, such as from seeing them at a Kindred social event, he apologizes for not recognizing them earlier and invites them to the VIP floor reserved exclusively for vampires. They walk past armed guards and into a side room bathed in the glow of slowly shifting colored lights. After he pushes a doorbell-like button on the wall, a dozen mortals emerge to stand on a raised platform. Merritt gestures to the men and women dressed in simple white undergarments and lingerie, inviting the characters to inspect the curated selection.

But should a character mention the missing loved one, the conversation turns cold. Merritt denies knowing anything about the person and extricates

himself by putting the armed guards between him and the coterie. The characters could force the issue, fighting their way through armed guards to get to Merritt, wait for Merritt to leave the club and follow him home, or take a more socially deft route using bribery to convince him to talk. Once they get their hands on Merritt, however, the Toreador admits (through persuasion or pain) that he doesn't know where the Touchstone is. He says he passed them up the chain. Pressed further, he names the regional manager, Mr. Wolfgang Goergen. If the characters rely on a stealthy break-in, they can discover the same information in Merritt's office.

The Midpoint: Wolfgang Goergen's Mansion

The characters find Wolfgang Goergen's sprawling mansion in a gated community. To reach him, the characters must bypass security cameras and locks, deal with armed ghouls on patrol, and find some way to avoid or endure two separate blood sorcery wards. But once they've broken through, they find Wolfgang Goergen sitting comfortably in his study. For him, every confrontation is just another business meeting waiting to happen.

Wolfgang explains that the Touchstone needed money and went to the nightclub looking for a side-gig (something suitable for the Touchstone in question, anything from bartending to working as a bouncer). And when he learned of their snowballing debt, they had Merritt offer them a contract for six months of service, doing more than they initially were planning to. Once complete, the System agreed to pay off their debt in full. Having already received the purchase price from their client, Wolfgang doesn't care what happens next. He tells them the System delivered a few kine to a church a few miles away. He doesn't have any details on the client or the fate of those purchased.

The Climax: The Patron Saint of Gravediggers

The characters get on the move, heading toward the Church of Saint Anthony the Great. How the characters approach the Death Seers is entirely up to them. Perhaps they attempt to bargain with Mora, or maybe they try a frontal assault. Either way, the Harbingers do not give up their stock so easily. They are old and vicious in battle, and while they are wise enough to flee if truly threatened, the Seers are also arrogant enough to think they can defeat almost any foe.



The Resolution: Bodies in a Bag

After killing the Harbingers or driving them from the church, the characters reunite with the Touchstone. They also discover several other captives. What the characters do with them depends on their morality, but no matter what, the Circulatory System is far from finished.

Variations

If you want to up the tension, here are some ideas.

Feeding the War

At first glance, the Death Seers appear to be using the Circulatory System to secure fresh blood (people) for their soldiers in the field. But the characters might put the church under siege and fight their way through a pair of Harbingers only to discover Mora performing a ritual in the baptismal pool. They have opened the veins of two humans hoisted above them, so the blood drains into the water below. Suddenly, the coterie isn't dealing with a Gehenna War faction but one of its generals.



Drawing Out the Story

The story currently goes from the missing Touchstone's home to the mansion, with only the nightclub in between. However, you can elaborate on the Circulatory System's logistics chain. For instance, Shawn Merritt might direct the character to a nondescript storage unit run by a middleman. That middleman could lead them to a larger warehouse controlled by a criminal syndicate answering to Wolfgang Goergen. Or they can discover Goergen controls things from another city a hundred miles away.

Impacting More Characters

Initially, the story focuses on a single missing mortal tied to a player's character. But what happens if the coterie has made an enemy of a powerful vampire? That rival Kindred might invest a great deal of resources into uncovering the mortal descendants, Touchstones, and allies of the entire coterie. That Kindred might then hand the list over to Wolfgang Goergen, who then passes it down to Shawn Merritt. The result could be a targeted attack, and the entire coterie finds themselves invested.

Grim Tragedy

If the characters take too long or get distracted, they may find the Touchstone dead by the time they reach the Church of Saint Anthony the Great. This devastating outcome could be the catalyst for an even larger conflict with the Circulatory System, one likely to spill over into subsequent stories.

Hunting Lions

The sire of a player's character reaches out for help. Deeply troubled, the sire implores the childe (and by extension the coterie) to travel to Singapore. The mission: bring home their rebellious broodmate, Marguerite, who has thrown her lot in with the Dead Lions. They agree to travel to the Lion City,

but while searching for Marguerite, the Dead Lions capture them and bring them before Tabitha Delmare.

Delmare offers the characters a better understanding of the Gehenna War while Marguerite, loyal to her cause, refuses to leave them. So, she offers a compromise. She agrees to return home if the characters assist her in an operation she's leading for the Dead Lions. She plans to assault an incoming cargo vessel carrying a sleeping methuselah.

Why the Coterie?

Family loyalty drives this story and pulls the characters into a mission to rescue their broodmate from what is, on its face, a rogue faction of Kindred. It appears straightforward at first but proves more complicated once in Singapore.

Goals

The characters must infiltrate a foreign country, retrieve Marguerite, and either convince her to come home willingly or drag her kicking and screaming.

Supporting Characters

Tabitha Delmare considers her fight against the methuselahs an existential struggle, and one that leaves her no choice but to act. Often, her insecurities plague her, making her feel as if she stands alone on the front lines of an unwinnable war. Tabitha does what she can to mask any sign of emotional vulnerability, yet remains open to alliances and aid, understanding that ideological purity is a luxury she can't afford.

Huang Yue Lai Luna was born into the opulence of Singaporean high society. As the childe of Tabitha Demare, Luna's Toreador elegance and sophistication favors tailored minimalism with unexpected shocks of color. She always dresses impeccably in a suit with a bright tie, hat, or gloves that command attention. She is also the primary

financier of the Dead Lions, making her an invaluable asset to the faction.

Marguerite is an independent spirit and convinced the methuselahs are a danger. She also believes both the Camarilla and the Anarch Movements are ill-equipped to stop them. She's driven less by rebellion for its own sake and more by a fear of what happens if someone doesn't take a stand. In joining the Dead Lions, she feels like she's found both a purpose and a cause worthy of her unlife.

Locations

Singapore: The island-country of Singapore is located on the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula and is a bustling metropolis that combines modern sensibilities with ancient traditions. The city-state's strategic location as a global hub with one of the largest shipping ports and best airports in the world makes it attractive to entrepreneurs looking to expand into Asia and to tourists who want to experience everything from the crowded hawker centers to the artful opulence of Marina Bay Sands.

Good Class Bungalows: The Good Class Bungalow, commonly called GCB in short, is prime real estate in Singapore. For the 'Singaporean buyer only,' these status symbol homes are often in secluded neighborhoods that offer a significant level of privacy, with high walls, extensive gardens, and private roads. Owners also have a considerable amount of architectural leeway in designing GCBs, which is why acquiring one was a must have for the Dead Lions. Their base of operations is in district 20, close to Windsor Park.

The Pacific Gale: The Pacific Gale, at first glance, appears to be an inconspicuous steel-hulled container ship with towering cranes and stacks of metal containers docked in the Port of Singapore. Owned by a Church of Set front, the ship carries a sleeping methuselah currently in route from Hong Kong to Jebel Ali. What makes The Pacific Gale particularly intriguing is the well-hidden, high-security chamber in its bowels, specifically designed to house the methuselah.

Scenes

The Hook: A Wayward Childe

The sire speaks softly, almost whispering, as if the walls could hear. "The Dead Lions have taken your sister, Marguerite." Sighing, they continue, "Have you ever heard of Tabitha Delmare? She was an Archon under Justicar Ian Carfax until she vanished and took over Singapore. She's using the city-state as a kind of base or operations in her war against the ancients. She's a fanatic. She sees the machinations of methuselahs in everything, even inside the Tower. And now your sister is gone as well. I don't know if she went willingly or if Delmare took her thinking that we are puppets of the ancients."

The sire shakes their head. "She's building an army and uses those who flock to her as cannon fodder. What is Marguerite has somehow fallen under her thrall? Please go there, find out what's happened, and bring her home before something terrible befalls her." The sire goes on to offer the players' characters the use of a private plane, and access to any weapons and equipment they need.

Rising Action: Into the East

Leaving Changi Airport, the characters find themselves plunged into a beautiful, multicultural city. The polished streets brim with tourists and Michelin-star eateries. Skyscrapers tower overhead. Singapore is a prosperous city, teeming with millions of people. The Dead Lions, however, prove elusive.

After securing temporary lodgings, the characters consider their options and the best avenue for finding Marguerite. Some suggestions include using influence or Backgrounds, monitoring news traffic, or surveilling key feeding areas. They might also locate and identify graffiti symbols used by the Dead lions to communicate with each other. The more the players' characters dig, the more it should become clear that Singapore is a stronghold for the faction. And because no traditional Kindred power structure like a Camarilla Prince or distinct Anarch gangs exists, any Kindred they meet might lead them to Delmare and Marguerite.

Their persistence pays off when they spot a local Kindred to tail. Following the unsuspecting vampire down a quiet alley, they're suddenly surrounded. Emerging from the shadows, a group of Dead Lions, weapons aimed, encircle them. In steps Luna wearing a red tailored suit and bright yellow fedora. She speaks sharply, "Don't test my patience. Why are you in Singapore?"

Assuming the characters don't do anything hasty, Luna signals to her team. With military precision, they move to cuff the characters' wrists and place bags over their heads. Then, Luna escorts them, under guard, to the Dead Lion's luxurious GCB in district 20.

The Midpoint: The Lion's Citadel

When the Dead Lions remove the bags from their heads, the characters' eyes adjust to the light and their new surroundings. Beneath their feet is a rich, wood floor polished to a mirror sheen, and above them is a crystal chandelier hanging from a ceiling with intricate moldings. Incredible art pieces decorate the walls, while two lion statues guard a sweeping staircase of marble and wrought iron. A Dead Lion shoves them to keep walking.

They move through the foyer and past massive French doors with silk drapes outside to a private garden. Tabitha Delmare turns to greet them. "Welcome to the Gehenna War." She gestures to an elegant seating arrangement featuring handcrafted teak benches. In the intervening moment, the coterie has a chance to speak up. If they ask about the Gehenna War, she says, "The methuselahs are using us. Camarilla, Anarchs, even the Sabbat. But here, we refuse to be pawns in someone else's war. Your sister Marguerite has had that same realization. She opened her eyes instead of closing her ears."

At that moment, Marguerite steps out from the assembly of Dead Lions. She catches the gaze of her broodmates. But Tabitha continues: "If Marguerite wants to leave with you, she's free to do so."

Marguerite shakes her head: "I can't leave. I'm in the middle of a mission to take out a methuselah. But I tell you what... if you help us, then yeah, I'll leave with you. I'll talk to our sire, face to face, and explain why being here is important. Deal?"

While Marguerite waits for an answer, she goes on to explain that The Pacific Gale is coming into port tomorrow night and how it's a floating fortress designed to protect its methuselah cargo. The Dead Lions are prepared to storm it and kill the ancient with extreme prejudice.

The Climax: Assault on The Pacific Gale

Before the operation begins, the player characters join Marguerite and head to a secure planning room where maps, satellite images, and 3D models of The Pacific Gale cover a sleek, obsidian conference table. Marguerite briefs them, emphasizing that the sleeping methuselah is a ticking time bomb. Tabitha Delmare oversees the strategy sessions, her eyes sharp as she listens to each suggestion. The coterie also has a chance to contribute their insights, including items like which go-fast boats to use for the assault or how to breach the vessel's security systems.

Then, the next night, they execute the plan. Waves churn as the boats shoot forward. The sound of automatic weapon fire fills the air as they approach the cargo vessel. The players' characters must board the ship, find a way to the methuselah, and assist in its destruction.

The Resolution: Dealing with Betrayal

What the characters do next is entirely up to them. Marguerite, true to her word, agrees to travel with the coterie and talk to her sire. But the characters might also recognize the value of the Dead Lions and let her stay in Singapore. It's also possible for Marguerite to be destroyed in the attack on The Pacific Gale, and the responsibility of returning her remains to their sire might fall on her broodmate.

Or perhaps the reality of the Gehenna War hits the coterie, and they decide to join the Dead Lions and dive headfirst into the conflict.

Variations

These variations can help change the story to fit the players' characters or account for other decisions they make.

Exploring the Lion City

If the Storyteller wants, they can draw out the story, creating a variety of side plots that delve into the city's history or take them to iconic locales like the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple, the SkyPark Observation Deck at Marina Bay Sands, the Singapore Botanic Gardens, or any of Singapore's 63 offshore islands. One such island might be Pulau Hantu where, according to legend, the Mayal warriors who dueled to the death there still haunt its shores.

The Methuselah Wakes

If the Storyteller wants to showcase the awesome might of a methuselah, then the ancient vampire,

housed inside The Pacific Gale's cargo hold could wake up. This escalates the fight very quickly from a tactical strike to an apocalyptic showdown, putting the coterie face-to-face with the enormous risks and incredible dangers of the Gehenna War.

Snatch and Grab

If, after finding Marguerite, the players' characters opt for a speedy kidnapping and extraction rather than contributing to the assault on The Pacific Gale, the plot could change into a high-speed chase, with Dead Lions in hot pursuit. This variation could also prompt the Dead Lions to mount a rescue mission for Marguerite, spearheaded by Tabitha Delmare.

Take Me to Your Leader

Instead of Luna and her team ambushing the coterie, the characters could find her first, or at least, know the circles she might run in. They might infiltrate a party to speak with her or find her at a club, and with enough wits and charm, persuade her to give them an audience with Tabitha. The move could ease some of her initial suspicions regarding the coterie's unannounced arrival.



Midnight Chase

Jackson Burke is one of the most wanted Kindred in the nation after he sold information to a Second Inquisition agency, resulting in the destruction of several Kindred as well as compromised locations. A Gangrel autarkis named Musgrove has scooped him up for a mysterious patron and has placed his precious cargo on a freight train headed to a secure location to claim his fee. However, Jackson is from the characters' city, and the Prince wants to settle the score personally, believing Jackson Burke is responsible for their grandchild's final death.

So, the Prince puts a bounty on Jackson Burke's head — a huge chunk of some of the most desirable territory in the city and a Major boon if he's brought in "alive." The Prince knows where the train is currently stopped, but by the next evening, the information will be obsolete.

As a note, the exact location of the players' characters' city and the route of the freight train are intentionally flexible. From the Trans-Siberian railway in December to a train running through Arizona in July, adjust the physical location to better fit the chronicle.

Why the Coterie?

If the coterie wants to build a reputation, grow their Domain, and raise their status in the city, then getting in good with the Prince (or equivalent) is an excellent choice. They may also want the reward so they can sell it to someone else. Or, if there is an opportunity to integrate Jackson Burke into the characters' backstories, he might be someone they know or even ran with for a time.

Goals

The player's characters must plan to intercept the train, secure Burke from the antagonists who also want him, and return him back to the city's Prince. And they only have one night to do it.

Supporting Characters

Jackson Burke is a Ventrue who, for many years, sold information to the Information Awareness Office (IAO) in exchange for his and his childer's (or coterie's) unlivess. A survivor at his core, he was trying to reach his IAO handler, Tara Hernández, when Musgrove and his mercenaries snatched him. With a voice like gravel, Burke is rugged, charming, and patient.

Musgrove is a Gangrel autarkis built like a heavyweight boxer with fists that hit with devastating force. Leading a team of mercenaries dubbed the Night Stalkers, he hunts down criminals for both Camarilla Princes and Anarch gang bosses. In this instance, Karl Schrekt has hired Musgrove to bring him Jackson Burke so he can gain intelligence on the IAO.

Tara Hernández is an Army Lieutenant and a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom currently serving the United States as a member of the IAO. Loud and impulsive, Hernández is also Jackson Burke's handler. Her face is tanned and rugged from countless hours spent in harsh climates during deployment, and she typically dresses in military fatigues when on duty. She carries a sheathed combat knife strapped to her leg and is rarely seen without a sidearm holstered at her waist.

Locations

The Desolate Landscape: While the freight train does pass through towns and more urban areas, most of the time it's gliding across the countryside. Along with a service road and parallel street, the actual route should be isolated and perilously close to werewolf country. It's a route specifically chosen by Musgrove to keep other vampires away from his score. To add to the drama, there can be environmental challenges as well, like a heavy downpour that floods the service road or a snowstorm that kills visibility.

Musgrove's Train: The train transporting Jackson Burke is a collection of commercial freight cars hauled by a single locomotive. It includes twenty boxcars, most of which are packed with electronics—TVs, gaming systems, computer components, smartphones, and larger medical devices. The boxcars closest to the front belong to Musgrove. He has customized them to include living quarters, reinforced walls, side and ceiling doors, and a steel cage used for prisoners. The train has a maximum speed of forty miles per hour.

Scenes

The Hook: Have Gun, Will Travel

At a diner on the outskirts of the city, the players' characters sit in a secluded booth. The time is well past the hour when decent folks go to bed, leaving the establishment nearly empty. Amid the scents of frying oil and stale coffee, the night shift staff goes about their business while casting the occasional glance toward the clock. On the table in front of the characters rests an envelope sealed with the Prince's crest. When they open it, they find a letter inside.

"Jackson Burke," it begins, "is the lowest of our kind. He's a traitor who ran to the hunters of the Second Inquisition. Several of our brothers and sisters have met their final deaths because of his actions, including my grandchilde. I want him brought to me, still kicking and screaming."

"Included are the train's coordinate and timetable. But after tomorrow, this will be useless. You have one night, just one, to intercept that train and bring Burke back."

Rising Action: Midnight Intercept

Armed with the information from the Prince, the characters hatch a plan to intercept the train. The clock is ticking with only one night to execute. Maybe that means they ride alongside in an SUV and try to jump the gap or maybe they find a bridge from which to jump and land on the train. After

they successfully hijack the train, they must contend with Musgrove and three hired mercenaries.

The Engine: The Conductor and Brakeman drive the train.

Passenger Car 1: Musgrove and two mercenaries chat during the trip. The car also includes a side and ceiling door.

Passenger Car 2: A single mercenary guard Burke. Burke sits on the floor of the steel cage. As soon as the players' characters make their move, Musgrove and his team respond. They might speed up the train to outrun the coterie, or the Night Stalkers take positions and fire at the characters from cover. The players' characters could use stealth to board the train, enter the second passenger car, and kill or incapacitate the lone guard without alerting Musgrove and the rest of the group.

However, the moment the characters start to pick the lock on Burke's cage or otherwise attempt to free him, an unexpected guest enters the story.

The Midpoint: An Unexpected Stop

In the middle of the action, with a sudden, violent jolt, the engineer hits the emergency brakes, and it's a small eternity before the train grinds to a screeching halt. Three SUVS, black and armored, barricade the tracks. A heavily armed IAO Wet Team deploys with Lieutenant Tara Hernández taking lead. Dressed in tactical gear and gripping a bullhorn, she raises it to speak.

"Good evening, Leeches," she calls out. "Isn't this just the perfect setting for a massacre? But listen, I'm a reasonable woman. Hand over Jackson Burke or else we're gonna have ourselves a midnight barbecue."

Her wet team is outfitted with night-vision goggles, body armor, and an arsenal that includes flamethrowers. Yet, they're in the dark about one crucial detail—the presence of the players' characters. They only know about Musgrove and the Night Stalkers.

Meanwhile, inside the train, Musgrove cautiously emerges from cover. "Look," Musgrove says, "That piece of shit over there isn't worth getting smoked

by the SI. So, what do you say we deal with these hunters, and then we deal with each other like civilized people?"

The Climax: Free for All

With the ultimatum echoing from the Lieutenant's bullhorn, the characters have a countdown to decide. Do they fight with Musgrove against the Second Inquisition? Do they grab Burke and attempt to flee? Do they divide and conquer with one group acting as bait to divert the operatives' attention while the other half of the coterie sneaks around to surprise them from behind? Do they hand Burke over to the IAO?

What follows is a dramatic free for all between three deadly groups and a multitude of different outcomes. But unlike vampires, mortals (even dedicated members of the IAO) are not generally trying to get killed. Once the Wet Team suffers enough casualties, they make a strategic withdrawal. Musgrove, however, remains committed to his original plan to deliver Burke to Karl Schrekt.

The moment the Second Inquisition pulls back their forces, Musgrove betrays the characters, attacking them from behind. If they can subdue or eliminate him, the characters are free to abscond with Burke.

The Resolution: A Special Delivery

Assuming the characters survive the firefight, they can finally deliver Jackson Burke to their awaiting Prince. True to their word, the Prince grants the Major boon and the additional territory to the coterie.

Variations

The train heist and combat resolutions could result in a variety of outcomes. What follows is only a handful of ideas.



A Plea for Mercy

If given a chance to speak, Jackson Burke explains he did what he did to protect his family. His eyes, though tired, are full of regret as he comes clean about what led to him working with the IAO. “They took my childer—my family,” he says. “They told me I needed to give them useful information, or I’d see my family suffer unimaginable horrors.”

He takes a moment to collect himself, his voice dropping to a softer, more intimate tone. “None of us are saints. We’ve all done things we aren’t proud of. And the truth is, you would have done the same. You have your own families, right? Childer maybe? Your own reason to protect the people you care about.”

With a sigh, he looks at each of characters as he speaks, “If letting me go ensures I disappear forever, isn’t that preferable to more blood on your hands? I ask you, what’s worth more—my life or your soul?”

But I Was Framed

Burke could plead his innocence. In this variation, he doesn’t provide names or locations to the IAO, but everyone thinks he did. “I didn’t do this,” he says with the pleading face of an innocent man. “The person you’re looking for isn’t me. I don’t know if it’s another Kindred informant with my name, or a smear campaign masterminded by some enemy of mine.” He shakes his head as if to clear it. “Hernández took my childer, she had them in her custody. I didn’t give in, and she killed them. And now, she’s after me because I know too much.”

Burke searches the faces of the coterie for any flicker of doubt or sign they might reconsider. “You have the power to right a terrible wrong here, or to perpetuate an injustice.”

Let’s Make a Deal

With the dust settling, Musgrove surveys the scene. If most of his Night Stalkers are either incapacitated or destroyed, he realizes that brute force isn’t going to win him the day. He clears his throat and steps

out from behind cover with his hands empty. If the characters listen, he explains that he’s under order from Karl Schrekt. “Schrekt wants Burke for very specific reasons. He’s convinced that interrogating him gives us valuable information about the inner workings of the SI. Now, I get it. You take that piece of shit to your Prince, you might earn some boons or whatever but what I’m offering is the chance to align with real power. And let me be clear: Karl Schrekt does not forget his allies.

“So, here’s the deal. You let me walk out of here with Burke, I’ll take you to meet Schrekt. I’ll make sure he knows you helped me, and you’ll find that his gratitude can be quite expansive.”

The characters have a choice to make, but if they go with Musgrove, they discover that he is true to his word.

Raising the Stakes

If the characters have lost friends and loved ones to the Second Inquisition, they might be invested in bringing Burke to justice or they might have a desire for personal vengeance. With Burke secure in their possession, they could do anything they want to him and bring back a pile of ash to the Prince. Sure, they might lose the bounty, but they might finally receive sweet satisfaction.

Summit at Dragon Star

Amid the shouts and clamor of public protests and a heavy police presence, Chinatown becomes the location of an informal summit between factions within the Banu Haqim. Noor al-Basri represents the clan members who joined the Camarilla, and she approaches the player’s characters asking for their help with the summit. Specifically, she’d like them to act as security and impromptu bodyguards at the summit location when her associate, Hugo Eames, arrives. Hugo is an envoy for the independent assassins loyal to Fatima al-Faqadi.

The summit takes place at Dragon Star, an upscale Chinese restaurant, and is supposed to unfold discreetly amidst the chaos of the protests. But suddenly, the alarming smell of gas disrupts the meeting. Moments later, an explosion rocks the building. Emerging from the smoke and debris are Shepherds of Ur-Shulgi, three deadly assassins who grievously wound Noor before disappearing into the crowd. With Hugo wanting to chase the assailants, and Noor wanting to ensure he gets out of the city alive, the players' characters must choose between escorting the dignitaries to safety or hunting the Shepherds.

Why the Coterie?

The players' character may not have any direct affiliation with the Banu Haqim, but it's possible that they are an Envoy coterie, lending their assistance to a fellow city member. Alternately, they could be a Mercenary coterie on a job. Perhaps Noor al-Basri knows their reputation and offers them a boon they can't refuse. Characters suited to this story will have some diplomatic ability and enough security skills or physical attributes to serve as bodyguards.

Goals

The primary goal of the players' characters is to ensure the safety of the dignitaries, Noor al-Basri and Hugo Eames, during their meeting. Beyond safeguarding the meeting, when chaos erupts, they must make a split-second decision. Do they chase down the Shepherds of Ur-Shulgi or evacuate Noor and Hugo?

Supporting Characters

Noor al-Basri is an Iraqi-born Banu Haqim. A master negotiator and keen observer, Noor had been a diplomat in her mortal life, skills that have made her a valuable asset to her clan. When Ur-Shulgi ascended the Black Throne of Alamut, Noor

followed Tegyrius and joined the Camarilla to escape persecution. Noor's social acumen has sharpened among the political vipers of the Camarilla. And she hopes to foster allies with clan members outside the Ivory Tower.

Hugo Eames is a stocky figure who carries himself like a soldier. For years, he has been an indispensable attaché to Fatima al-Faqadi, one of the most formidable Banu Haqim assassins. Hugo has been entrusted to represent the interests of those loyal to Fatima, and his appearance at Dragon Star restaurant is no random assignment.

The Trio of Shepherds—known by their call signs Gir, Pa, and Ti—are a powerful cell of assassins among the Shepherds of Ur-Shulgi. Gir, the tallest of the three, has a hulking build and arcane tattoos on his exposed forearms. Pa is more unassuming in stature but has angular features, high cheekbones, and a shaved head. Her tailored coat conceals an assortment of weaponry. Ti moves with feline grace as she hunts. She wears her dark hair pulled back into a tight bun, revealing an earpiece through which she communicates with the others.

Locations

Chinatown, Singapore: The streets of Chinatown are far from their usual quiet. People are out in force, holding signs and chanting, to protest issues like police violence and political corruption. Tear gas clouds occasionally drift by, adding an acrid smell to the air. Some protesters face off against police in riot gear, making it clear that moving around this part of the city won't be easy.

Dragon Star Restaurant: The restaurant is hard to miss with its neon dragon sign glowing outside. Inside, the décor is upscale but comfortable. Hanging red lanterns bathe the table in a warm light that complements the dark walls. A large aquarium buzzes near the entrance, where colorful fish swim gracefully in small schools.

Hugo's Private Plane: On the outskirts of the airport, away from the commercial flights, Hugo's private plane sits in a nondescript hangar. The jet is

sleek and modern with a glossy exterior and tinted windows. Ready to hit the tarmac at a moment's notice, it's positioned for a quick exit. If Hugo and Noor can reach the plane, they can escape the Shepherds of Ur-Shulgi.

Scenes

The Hook: The Din of an Angry Mob

When public outrage reaches a boiling point, ignited by corrupt police and political negligence, irate citizens face off against police in riot gear in the streets of Chinatown. Noor al-Basri uses the protest to cover a meeting she'd like the players' characters to secure. It's scheduled to take place in the back room of the upscale Dragon Star Restaurant. Here, Noor intends to negotiate an alliance with a visiting attaché of Fatima al-Faqadi. The players' character can implement whatever security measures they deem essential. Options could range from emptying the restaurant of unsuspecting patrons, installing surveillance equipment, or setting up a watch or patrol.

Rising Action: A Shared Enemy

Noor al-Basri arrives first, offers her thanks to the coterie, and complies with whatever security instructions they give, including (but not limited to) handing over her weapons. Hugo Eames arrives five minutes later. Fatima's attaché is far less trusting than Noor, and while he begrudgingly adheres to the coterie's security requests, he patently refuses to disarm himself. Noor understands the alliance she's forging with a dangerous but highly skilled warrior in Fatima, someone who could turn the tide against Ur-Shulgi's influence, but also its risks. The motivations that drive Fatima are uncertain. Is Fatima in this fight for the greater good of the clan? Or is she driven by personal interests involving her once-lover and rival, Lucita?

In the back room of Dragon Star, Noor hands Hugo a scroll in a leather case. "This is a treatise on

diplomacy, written by Tegyrius and taken from the library of Alamut during the exodus. We offer it to you, as a token of our enduring friendship, and in the hopes of a greater understanding between yours and ours."

Eames formally takes the scroll. "On behalf of Fatima al-Faqadi, we thank you. We have little love for the Ivory Tower, but the sooner we put aside our differences, the sooner we can turn our efforts against Ur-Shulgi. Too much blood has been spilled already regarding our...disagreements."

The negotiations continue between the two. While both view Ur-Shulgi as their shared enemy, Noor wants the independent Banu Haqim to join the Camarilla. Meanwhile, Hugo demands shared intelligence, resources, and the free use of Camarilla territories. But just as they start to make headway, someone smells the distinct, rotten egg stench of gas. How long the characters have to evacuate the building is at Storyteller discretion based on the security precautions they took during the Hook. Once that time is up, the building explodes.

The Midpoint: Trouble Comes in Threes

The Dragon Star neon sign is a heap of smoldering metal, and plumes of smoke billow into the air. Amid the chaos of shattered glass and debris, onlookers scramble for safety. Some are wounded, while others are blind from the smoke. The wail of approaching sirens is almost indistinguishable from the roar of the ongoing protests. When the characters check on the dignitaries, Hugo is disoriented while Noor is grievously injured.

The original goal of the Shepherds was to kill Noor and Hugo in the explosion. Having failed, Gir, Pa, and Ti decide to take more direct action. They emerge from Obfuscate to attack. Noor is their primary focus, with Hugo their secondary one. They move at Celerity speed to slice into their targets if they can. At the first sign of threat, they flee down an alleyway.

"Three Shepherds," groans Noor. "I've never seen three in the field before."



Faced with a crucial decision, Noor urges a hasty retreat to Hugo's private plane. However, Hugo has a thirst for vengeance and wants to chase down the attackers. The players' characters have the final decision. The story continues with the coterie agreeing to Noor's wishes, but the Variation section explores hunting the Shepherds.

The Climax: The Gauntlet to the Hangar

Assuming the coterie decides to escort Noor and Hugo to the airport, they must make their way through a city on the brink of a riot. Between protesters, lines of police barricades, and emergency services rushing to deal with the gas explosion, the scene should be loud, chaotic and unwieldy. How the characters choose to reach the airport is up to them, but first they must either cut through the angry masses or bypass them. Maybe they have influences that can help or access to transportation like a vehicle or a city subway.

Meanwhile, the Shepherds continue to hunt the characters. Noor, Hugo, or members of the coterie might spot Gir or Pa in the crowd, tailing them close behind. Or they can reach the parking garage where Ti ambushes them. The Shepherds keep moving any time they're overwhelmed and prioritize escaping and regrouping over fighting until they reach Hugo's hangar. There, when the characters board Hugo's place, they discover a dead pilot, and however many Shepherds still remain.

The Resolution: Departure on Time

The story ends with the plane flying off as dawn approaches or with the Shepherds of Ur-Shulgi either dead or captured.

Variations

If the characters decide to hunt the Shepherds instead of escorting the dignitaries to safety, here are some suggestions.

A More Aggressive Approach

Hugo Eames is no stranger to violence. For him, the only acceptable resolution is a dead enemy. Instead of heading to the airport, the characters can track, kill, or capture the would-be assassins. Characters might sprint across rooftops in hot pursuit or weave through congested sidewalks and narrow alleyways. The coterie could use Noor and Hugo as bait to draw the Shepherds into an ambush. In this variation, the story ends when the characters defeat Gir, Pa, and Ti, after which, the negotiations can resume at a different location.

Different Environmental Factors

If the Storyteller wants to avoid using a mob of clamoring protestors as the story's backdrop, swap the angry mob for an environmental effect. Perhaps a torrential downpour causes massive flooding, or a December blizzard causes white-out conditions.

The Radio

To add drama to the story, the Shepherds can use a two-way radio to communicate with the characters. If the first Shepherd is killed or captured (let's use Gir as an example), the characters can find a radio on him. Then, Pa or Ti may use that radio to taunt the coterie. "Make the wise choice. Give up the traitors, and you might live to see another night," says Pa. Or Ti threatens them, saying, "Go ahead. Run. It'll give me something to aim at."

For reference, two-way radios have a range of four to six miles on flat, unobstructed terrain. An urban landscape drastically reduces that range but should be enough to provide suspense.

Wounds

Injuries suffered at the hand of the Shepherds can add to complications. The more wounded Noor and Hugo are, the harder it will be to travel. The coterie may need to turn to other allies to help them, opening additional avenues to continue the story.

Maybe this results in debts to pay or a sacrifice of their own assets.

Story Seeds

The following is a list of short story ideas centered on the Gehenna War.

Dinner Bell

When the Cartographers pinpoint the location of a sleeping methuselah, they don't keep it a secret. Instead, they sell the information to an array of various Gehenna War factions. Soon elements of the Dead Lions, Moon's Army, the Servitors of Irad, and the characters themselves descend on the isolated location. However, as it turns out the methuselah isn't so sleepy, and is using the Cartographers to provide it with fresh vitae.

Deliver Us from Bondage

A respected elder vanishes, leading many to suspect the pull of the Beckoning. But the characters soon find out that the Oswobodzicle, the radical Anarch group focused on ghoul liberation, is behind it when they discover a dozen blood dolls running free. To prevent future attacks by the O, and fearing the uprising of other ghouls, the characters are tasked with finding the liberators and ridding the city of them.

Hounds to the Hunted

The characters investigate a fallen Tremere Chantry in an isolated region of the world. However, when they arrive, they not only find a handful of survivors, but the bloody remains of Moon's Army. Both groups encountered a monstrous beast in the forest which, according to the Tremere, is a 500-year-old bear, blood bound to a sleeping methuselah. The characters must escort the surviving Tremere out of the area and kill the beast before it kills them.

Into the Fire

After an old friend goes missing in a war-torn region of the world, the characters execute a daring rescue mission. While searching for their friend, they stumble on two warring Kindred factions. On one side are the Servitors of Irad, working on behalf of the Antediluvians, and on the other is the mysterious Inconnu. The battle between the two spills over into the streets, causing a literal civil war.

Mark of the Methuselah

One by one, Kindred residents fall prey to a serial killer performing ritualistic murders. Each victim is left in ceremonial poses and is marked with ancient symbols tied to the Sumerian God, Enkidu. Uncertain if they are dealing with a Gehenna cult or a single mad Kindred, the coterie must stop the murders before they're the next victims.

Meltdown

Sybil, a methuselah, and sire of the supposedly destroyed former Prince of Washington, D.C. Marcus Vitel, commands a group of Lasombra soldiers to attack a nuclear power plant and abscond with enriched uranium. Racing against time, the characters arrive late, finding themselves sandwiches between the Lasombra and a FIRSTLIGHT task force. As the nuclear reactor teeters on the brink of catastrophe, so too does the Masquerade.

Pawn of Two Kings

In a desolate city, a battle rages between the followers of Helena and followers of Menele, each trying to claim territory and power. Both factions reach out to the coterie to hire them as mercenaries. While there is ample profit to be made, eventually, the characters must choose a side in the bloody feud, all while wrestling with the moral complexities of their actions and the weight of their decision.

Collateral Damage

The characters are on their way home when their private aircraft suffers mechanical failure and crashes in a remote part of the world. Dragging themselves from the wreckage, the coterie stumbles onto an isolated village. Ravaged by war and plagued by nightly attacks, the village is on the brink of extermination. Their enemy is a group of fanatical Kindred, loyal to a resting methuselah, seeking to claim the village for their own and use it as a base of operations against the rest of the continent. The characters must choose to help the villagers defend their land or join with the methuselah's followers to claim it.

The Fortress

Inside the character's home city, a section of territory falls to a new group of strange autarkis. Calling themselves the Servitors of Irad, the group lays claim to a dilapidated twenty-story residential apartment. Two separate groups have already gone in to clear them out, but none have returned. With friends and loved ones among the unaccounted for, the characters volunteer to finish the job. Story-by-story, the coterie fights their way through the fanatics, only to find, at the very top, a hungry methuselah.

The Mausoleum

Hired for a rare archaeological expedition, the characters assist a Hecata scholar in unearthing a forgotten mausoleum, home to an ancient Giovanni. But after they open the tomb and find the elder in torpor, Mora's Death Seers collapse the entrance. The Seers offer the characters safe passage—provided they abandon the Hecata scholar who hired them and the helpless Giovanni elder. ■

Appendix I:

ROLLING FOR IT



The greatest appeal of dice is the promise of true randomness. Card-based, action-based and point-based task resolution systems often provide control and strategy in addition to their uncertainty, but dice-based task resolution opens the door to all kinds of results, including those the table isn't prepared for. When someone at the table reaches for their dice, they're opening the narrative up to anything and everything, whether they know it or not.

Vampire: The Masquerade's dice pool system uses this feeling of total uncertainty to represent the night-to-night struggles of Kindred unlife. Every roll either threatens the increase of Hunger, the emergence of the Beast, or even the degradation of a vampire's Humanity. While this brings the game's mechanics closer to its themes, it sometimes creates challenges.

This appendix examines when to roll the dice, how to narrate failure in a way that brings the story forward, and how to best use elements such as Compulsions, Messy Criticals, and Bestial Failures.

When Do We Roll?

The randomness of dice turns what seems like a sure bet into a sudden defeat, and a million-to-one chance into an obvious event in hindsight. While this can be fun, it risks turning events into a farce or bogs down a tense scene.

Therefore, when a roll happens might be more important than what makes the roll. This section touches upon different philosophies of determining when to roll. One way is by measuring situations with certain criteria. Another is saving rolls to their barest narrative necessity. While certain groups most likely use one philosophy more than others, they are not mutually exclusive. And keep in mind that in *Vampire: The Masquerade*, the decision of whether to roll or not lies as much in the hands of the players as the Storyteller, as they can opt to Take Half (see *Vampire*, p. 123) in almost any test.

Criteria-Based Rolls

When deciding whether something could be a roll, considering the following questions:

- **Would the results of this roll be exciting, entertaining, or horrific?** Dice rolls exist to turn the narrative decisions over to a neutral, random party. If the consequences of success or failure isn't much more than an ordinary "you've done this" or "you've lost this," even with the threat of Hunger Dice, it might not need a roll at all.
- **Are we prepared for the results of the roll?** This goes for both success and failure. Declaring something needs a roll is a great way to heighten the tension in a scene, but sometimes a player or a Storyteller reaches for the dice expecting things to go one way and then being unprepared when it goes the other way.

- **Are we prepared for the presence of a Messy Critical or a Bestial Failure?** One Hunger die in a pool is all it takes for either result to occur, which can catch even veteran troupes off guard. While it's possible to use the results for any kind of roll (some examples are provided on p. 153), they might not be appropriate for the tone of the scene, or the troupe isn't interested in depicting a tone whiplash. This is especially important for players when deciding on Taking Half or not.
- If the situation passes all three questions, it could be rolled for. This ensures that even the most frivolous-seeming roll has narrative importance. Otherwise, players should be encouraged to Take Half, accepting the consequences if the result falls short. Let's consider three scenarios where we see these questions in action:
- Tom's troupe is in a heist scene. The coterie is breaking into the Prince's Haven to kidnap one of his retainers. After making it past the outside security with smooth talking, they split up to create false entry points to fool the security inside. One of the characters oversees creating the coterie's true entry point and needs to get a bolted window open. Tom considers asking the player for a roll and considers the three questions. A win continues the story, but since the other characters have successfully distracted the other guards, the roll's merely a gate to continue the story with no other consequences for failing. He suggests the player Take Half; the real challenge is leaving with the retainer.
 - Heather's troupe is in a scene at Elysium. The coterie is quietly interrogating an elder disguised as a neonate. Despite all their preparation, it's not going well. The most socially adept character makes a push to get the subject to reveal the truth and rolls a Bestial Failure. Heather already knows a Compulsion is best for the scene and considers rolling on the chart. (While this isn't a test as defined by the game mechanics, it is still a kind of roll.) She considers the three questions. Any result on the Compulsion table would be horrific, but as she looks it over, she realizes that

she wouldn't be prepared for how she predicts the character would act with some of the results. Instead, she turns the choice on the player, letting him pick off the chart, and thus the scene takes a dire turn.

- Blake's troupe needs their character to hack into the heavily secured FIRSTLIGHT database. Over the course of the chronicle, their character's gone from a good hacker to a great hacker, and they have a very large dice pool for the action. They have a feeling they don't need to roll to get into the database, but before they reach for their dice, they think about the three questions. They're sure both options would be fun to experience, they're sure their Storyteller is prepared for both results of the roll, but their character is at Hunger 4. With such a large dice pool and Hunger, a Messy Critical or Bestial Failure is likely, which the troupe, including themselves, might not be prepared for. They declare that they Take Half and hope it's enough.

Narrative Juncture Rolls

When deciding whether something should be a roll, the troupe considers whether the event is a *narrative juncture*, or when the situation could go in so many different directions that turning to the dice is the best way to find out what happens next. All other moments in the story are determined either by active roleplay or troupe fiat.

Narrative junctures in a *Vampire* story are usually:

- When a vampire hunts.
- When two or more characters enter conflict, and the outcome isn't guaranteed. A vampire browbeating their ghoul might not be a narrative juncture, but a vampire trying to shame their superior could be.
- When a situation is not under the purview of any coterie member's guaranteed capability. An expert driver getting the coterie to safety might not be a narrative juncture, but the only coterie member with 0 Drive taking the wheel because the others are near-Incapacitated might be.

- When a vampire must defend itself from a hostile force.

This way, rolling the dice is a dramatic event, and the troupe is excited to pay out any shocking outcomes they provide.

More on Talking Half

The Storyteller should consider leaving most decisions to roll completely to the player. While the Storyteller presents the situation and the challenge before the characters in detail, they keep the exact mechanical Difficulty secret. The Storyteller then asks if the character wants to risk a roll or to Take Half. In this way, making a roll becomes a mutual agreement instead of an order, ensuring strong player agency. For troupes that like to use a lot of rules and to translate most of their actions to system-bound tests, this also prevents mundane acts from triggering messy criticals and bestial failures. Likewise, for troupes less interested in rolling dice at every turn, it helps to keep the story flowing.

Test Variations

There are as many ways to resolve tests as there are active troupes. Here are some further suggestions:

- **Use Trackers:** One way to avoid rolls while maintaining tension and uncertainty is by offering a price instead of asking for a roll. The character wins the test but takes at least half of the Difficulty the roll would have been as Superficial Physical or Willpower damage. This represents any injuries or exhaustion the character suffered while pushing themselves to succeed. The damage received through this method can't be halved.
- **The Difficulty 0 Roll:** If failure doesn't open new opportunities, or if it makes no narrative sense for a character to fail a task, but the troupe still wants a roll, set the Difficulty to 0. The question is no longer if the character succeeds, but how well they succeed, and if the Beast had a say in it.

- **Give the Player a Choice:** If failure isn't interesting, but the character has no established competence in a task, offer them a special kind of Win at a Cost. Offer two options, both a success but with different consequences. Let the player suggest a consequence of their own if they have one.

Uncommon Dice Pools

Every session, consider creating a situation that could involve one unique-to-you dice pool for an appropriate test. Unless having no dots in a Skill is part of the Test's challenge, these uncommon dice pools should be based on Attributes and Skills the characters know. This increases your creativity and flexibility as a Storyteller and gives players a chance to put a spotlight on Attributes or Skills they don't normally get to use.

Here are a few examples of dice pool combinations might be unique for your chronicle, and one way to work them into the narrative:

- **Stamina + Animal Ken:** The character and their Famulus are being chased by a FIRSTLIGHT team. The character must issue commands to their animal while running for their unlife.
- **Charisma + Stealth:** While hiding among a crowd of kine, the character strikes up a conversation with a random passerby to avoid the gaze of an enemy.
- **Intelligence + Athletics:** As they escape a Circulatory System stronghold, a character takes in the warehouse's winding hallways and determines the fastest path out as they run.
- **Resolve + Etiquette:** To get closer to an elder's prized ghoul, a character must attend a midnight tea ceremony. As the only new arrival to a group that's known each other for nearly a century, they must keep on their best behavior during a very long, very formal event.
- **Composure + Occult:** The character is face to face with a furious ghost. They must stay calm as they prepare a ritual to banish it back from whence it came.

- **Strength + Finance:** While taking inventory in their deceased sire's Haven, a character comes across a large stash of precious metals. They can appraise them, but first they'll need to dig them out of the walls for a closer look.

Determining Outcomes

Now that it's clear whether the roll succeeded or failed, one question remains. How much does this win or failure impact the scene? The outcome is always narratively important to the troupe and their story, but it might not seem that way at that moment in the game's fiction.

Margins are the best way to determine an outcome's impact. If more successes are a larger degree of positive effect, the further away the player's successes are from the Difficulty are a larger degree of negative effect.

When determining an outcome, consider this guideline for how impactful a result could be, assuming the Difficulty was above average.

- **Margins of 4+ successes:** An incredible win. Commands immediate attention or could become the news of the week.
- **Margins of 1–3 successes:** A significant win. Something a bystander could remember the character by.
- **Margins of 0 successes:** A baseline win. Only noteworthy if the actual action itself was impressive.
- **Margins of 1–3 success below Difficulty:** A mild disappointment or embarrassment. Consider offering a Win at a Cost.
- **Margins of 4+ successes below Difficulty:** A major disappointment or embarrassment. Something a bystander remembers the character by for the wrong reasons.
- **No successes at all:** Total failure. A character may need to prepare for the worst.

Storytelling Failure

Failure is just as important as success in a role-playing game; peaks need valleys. This is especially true in horror role-playing games like **Vampire: The Masquerade**. A vampire overcoming their dark urges to commit a single redeeming act means little if that act wasn't surrounded by scenes of succumbing to the Hunger.

Still, failure can feel bad. Even if a player is playing a character they're morally opposed to in real life, on some level they might associate the character's success with their own. The Storyteller could find that failure is harder to work with than success.

Storytelling with failure is accomplished by looking at it as an opportunity, presenting several ways to keep the story moving, and, in the case of the action horror chronicles this book supports, looking at the bigger picture of a fight to keep it tense and exciting.

Failure Shapes, Not Stops, Stories

It's easy to see failure as a hard stop to a story. Its consequences might ensure that a character never gets to try that action again or is only able to try again with even more dire odds. A carefully thought-out plan is brought into chaos with a single bad roll, and now it seems unsalvageable.

In stories, a single failure rarely stops anything. Characters look for alternative methods of getting something done, or resort to another plan. Failures are opportunities for another way for characters to shine, or for another kind of story to be told.

Embracing this mindset requires the Storyteller to keep three things in mind:

- **There is always a chance of failure:** Even if a character had five dots in both an Attribute and a Skill, an achievement that can take almost an entire chronicle to achieve with some troupes, that dice pool wouldn't be guaranteed to succeed at every possible Difficulty. When the troupe

turns to the dice, they must be prepared for failure. The Storyteller doesn't need a rock-solid idea of what happens if a test fails but should be prepared for it.

- **There are always alternatives to every action, even if they're not ideal:** A failure only means that the current action isn't feasible, not that the goal of the action isn't feasible. If a lock can't be picked open, a social character might be able to get a guard to open it. A stealthy character might find an alternate route in. If all else fails, it could always get smashed open. If a troupe is willing to experiment and get messy, failures can be overcome.
- **A failure now could become an opportunity later:** Failures provide their own information and insight into a situation. A character that acts on bad information they gleaned on a failure now has something they can use as a lie to distract an enemy later. For example, losing an auction to a Storyteller character gives the coterie a target to rob.

Dealing With Failure

When a test fails, the worst thing that can happen from both a player and Storyteller perspective is nothing. Failure should always push the narrative forward. Consider one of these options to do so, when it's appropriate for your chronicle:

- The character receives bad consequences but they lead to a future advantage. A character offends a member of the Primogen at Elysium but gains the interest of an ambitious Anarch.
- The character's failure reveals an upcoming obstacle. A character fails to avoid detection by a FIRSTLIGHT deep cover reconnaissance group but is now aware that they're watching them.
- The character receives another chance at their goal, but at a price. A character's would-be meal rebuffs their social graces, but moves to a dark, well-hidden part of the nightclub. They're all alone.

- Though it's not necessarily for the better, the character changes the status quo of the setting. A social faux pas at a party comes off as a coded signal to a coterie striving to enter the Camarilla, and so a long-hidden faction makes its move.
- The character is placed into a brand-new situation at a disadvantage. Failing to thoroughly investigate a Tzimisce's Haven causes a character to stumble onto a secret room filled with fleshcrafted ghouls, all belonging to vampires who reported them missing...just as the Voivode opens the door.

Failure and Action Horror

Failure always stings, but it especially hurts in an action horror chronicle. These chronicles depend on combat; combat often depends on dice rolls, and dice rolls often fail. Characters, even those well-tuned for the fights to come, find themselves at the mercy of the dice, throwing punch after punch into thin air despite their expertise.

In action sequences, failure must be approached with the same mindset, and the same options to push the story forward may also apply. The only difference between failures here and failures elsewhere is that since dice rolls are usually more frequent, failures are more likely to occur. The Storyteller now needs to think about the result of success or failure on a moment-to-moment perspective.

The following options are choices Storytellers could make to describe failure while both moving the story forward and keeping an action scene's pace:

- The character learns something critical about the situation by experiencing it firsthand. A character's claws brush against the enemy's amulet. The enemy panics and tears into them, teaching the character that something's important about the amulet.
- The situation advances to a new, more dire state. Failing to grapple the pack leader gives her enough time to call for reinforcements.
- The character's failure was either due to an environmental detail in the scene, or created a new environmental detail in the scene, which can be exploited. Missing a shotgun blast blows a hole in the wall, revealing the rays of the rising sun.
- The character learns something about the state of their enemy. Though the character had their arm nearly amputated by a duellist, they notice a limp in their opponent's leg. The damage the character inflicted earlier is starting to take its toll.
- The coterie loses the conflict but gets a chance to escape. It's too late to pursue the elder, but not too late to avoid the police as they arrive.

Beastly Interruptions

Vampire: The Masquerade's gameplay loop depends on the ebb and flow of Hunger and its effects on a character's actions. This makes a vampire's eternal thirst for blood real and present in the mechanics as well as the game's fiction, but troupes might find it challenging to work with. What does it mean to have a Messy Critical or a Bestial Failure on a Craft test? How do Compulsions narratively fit into the narrative that spurred them into being? What are the best ways to keep the Hunger an engine of when all of the listed expressions have been exhausted?

Troupes can find the right balance by understanding the individual nature of the Beast, approaching Compulsions in creative ways, and looking at the Hunger outside of the moments the characters are on screen. This section also contains charts providing examples of what Messy Criticals and Bestial Failures might look like in the game's fiction, Attribute by Attribute and Skill by Skill.

Bringing in the Beast

Knowing that a Messy Critical or a Bestial Failure could occur at any time is one thing; having them spring up is another. The mechanical options **Vampire** provides (p. 207) are some suggestions, but there are other ways to keep expressions of Hunger aligned with the scene's narrative.

Some ways the troupe can approach Messy Criticals and Bestial Failures are:

- **Keep it in fiction:** If your troupe uses lots of dice rolls, the idea of having to wrangle constant Stains, Masquerade breaches, Aggravated health damage, Compulsions, and Advantage losses is exhausting. Instead of harsh mechanical consequences, consider harsh narrative consequences instead. Sometimes, losing the respect of a coterie mate is more devastating than losing a dot of Status.
- **Let the player create the result:** If you're not sure which option to choose or how to approach the result narratively, ask the player what they think should happen and what, if any, mechanical consequences should be. You don't have to follow their words, but it's a great way to get a player invested in their character.
- **Use the last resort options:** Turning a Messy Critical into a failure and a Bestial Failure into a Hunger increase are simple ways of showing the Beast's intrusion into a character's unlife. Increased demand for blood is the Beast's natural response to just about any setback, and if you know how to storytell Failure (p. 150), you can take most of the sting out of losing a Critical Win.
- **Get specific:** The sample Compulsions might not totally fit a character. Instead, use them as an inspiration for specific desires that you know a player can resolve. A player might have some trouble with "destroy or incapacitate something," but know exactly what to do with, "make that Harpy wish she'd never been Embraced."
- **Give Compulsions a deadline:** If your troupe enjoys Compulsions but has a hard time fulfilling them, consider giving open-ended Compulsions a lifespan. Set a deadline by which it should be fulfilled, like the end of a session. If it isn't fulfilled by then, have it resolve in a messy way, such as an act guaranteeing at least one stain.

Considering Compulsions

Out of all the mechanical effects of Messy Criticals and Bestial Failures, Compulsions might be the easiest to invoke. However, too many Compulsions risk taking the sting out of them unless the troupe really enjoys this kind of directed roleplaying.

Compulsions generally have the greatest impact when players have plenty of opportunities to fulfill them in the fastest, most terrifying way possible. To achieve this, consider the following:

- **Let the player choose the Compulsion:** If players are having a difficult time working with Compulsions the Storyteller chooses or rolls, having them choose an option instead lets them pick out the kind of scene they want to play. This ensures Compulsions are resolved quickly.

- **Get specific:** The sample Compulsions might not totally fit a character. Instead, use them as an inspiration for specific desires that you know a player can resolve. A player might have some trouble with "destroy or incapacitate something," but know exactly what to do with, "make that Harpy wish she'd never been Embraced."
- **Give Compulsions a deadline:** If your troupe enjoys Compulsions but has a hard time fulfilling them, consider giving open-ended Compulsions a lifespan. Set a deadline by which it should be fulfilled, like the end of a session. If it isn't fulfilled by then, have it resolve in a messy way, such as an act guaranteeing at least one stain.

The Long-Term Beast

One of the most unexpected places the Beast might surface is in extended test scenes, or downtime in-between the tense, dramatic events. Messy Criticals and Bestial Failures are designed to thrive in. These results are just as likely to appear while hitting the books in the library as pulling the trigger in an alleyway. It's easy to imagine the Beast emerging while trying to sweet talk someone at a party, but what about during a long gambit to gain a Herald's favor?

When narrating how the Beast affects these scenes, consider the following options:

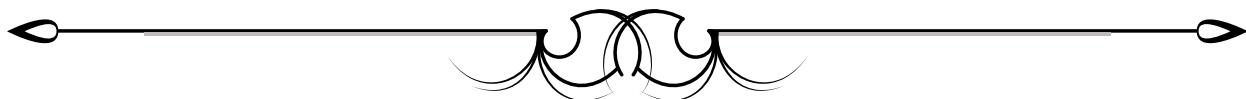
- Messy Criticals and Bestial Failures only erase successes and wins in an extended test scene if the Messy Critical turns into a failure, or if the Bestial Failure is also a total failure.
- Messy Criticals and Bestial Failures affect the entire scene, even if they only happen once. While researching in the library, a Messy Critical advances the character's research, but also turns it towards predatory and harmful ends. While jockeying with the Herald, a Bestial Failure drives a momentary wedge when the character's Beast recoils at having to suck up to a pompous freak and says so without meaning to. In either case, it's possible to move forward, but future events in the scene are colored by the roll. ■

Table 6: Messy Criticals and Bestial Failures for Skills

Skill	Messy Critical Example	Bestial Failure Example
Academics	The Beast uses its knowledge to hurt or put a target in distress.	The Beast rages at forgetting what it knows and rages at those who seem smarter than it.
Animal Ken	The animal obeys out of fear of the Beast within, even if it's a pet the character knows well.	The Beast makes it clear that it sees the animal as prey or less, driving the animal into panic or anger.
Athletics	The Beast makes the character's incredible motions inhuman or animalistic.	The Beast can't keep up with the character's motions and forces them to stop.
Awareness	The Beast keeps the character's eyes locked on to its subject with a hungry gaze.	The Beast tries to take its entire environment, making it hyperaware of the wrong things.
Brawl	The Beast demands the character to make riskier, deadlier attacks.	The Beast flinches at incoming blows, opening the character to injury.
Craft	The Beast makes the character's creation unnerving or deadlier than it should be.	The Beast forces the entire project to be damaged or destroyed after a single mistake.
Drive	The Beast urges the character to drive recklessly.	The Beast's arrogance forces the character into making a critical error.
Etiquette	The Beast pushes the character to use their social graces to obtain prey.	The Beast grows bored of formalities and pursues its desires.
Finance	The Beast treats financial analysis and appraisement like a hunt, hoping to trap a victim.	The Beast demands action on a transaction now, ruining the character's plans.
Firearms	The Beast demands fatal or near-fatal shots.	The Beast grows frustrated with the character's misses and demands compensation.
Insight	The Beast makes the character read someone as prey.	The Beast follows its instincts and makes an incorrect decision.
Intimidation	The Beast gives an air of hunger and desperation to the character's scare tactics.	The Beast forces the character to act too strongly, too fast.
Investigation	The Beast pursues its leads with vicious gusto.	The Beast grows bored and jumps to the conclusion that lets it commit the most violence.

Skill	Messy Critical Example	Bestial Failure Example
Larceny	The Beast moves the character's fingers in unnatural ways.	The Beast grows angry, and might even destroy the character's hard work out of frustration.
Leadership	The Beast makes the character's orders forceful and menacing.	The Beast resorts to crude and ineffective tactics to gain dominance.
Medicine	The Beast makes the character gaze at bloody wounds with hunger and longing.	The Beast urges the character to cause more harm than help.
Melee	The Beast's additional power threatens to kill needlessly.	The Beast acts too soon or too slowly, hitting nothing with such intense force that it might damage the melee weapon.
Occult	The Beast focuses on the violent or bloody aspects of the subject.	The Beast craves excitement during a ritual, ruining it.
Performance	The Beast adds tinges of seduction and predation to the performance.	The Beast's rages at slight imperfections, turning a recital into off-time screeches.
Persuasion	The Beast gives the character's argument predatory force.	The Beast reduces the character to begging and empty threats.
Politics	The Beast urges the character to describe politics as a division between predator and prey.	The Beast underestimates a political figure or structure and acts rashly.
Science	The Beast focuses on the harmful aspects of the character's scientific pursuits.	The Beast demands to pursue simpler answers to disastrous results.
Stealth	The Beast urges a character to watch for potential prey while hidden.	The Beast forces the character to reveal itself too early, either for an attack or for a hunt.
Streetwise	The Beast treats the streets like a hunting ground, and its residents notice.	The Beast wants to pursue prey or eliminate a threat on the streets instead, distracting the character.
Subterfuge	The Beast gives the character's lies an unsettling, violent edge.	The Beast can barely hide what it wants, and it leaks into the character's words.
Survival	The character is visibly urged on by the Beast's natural instincts.	The Beast is too focused on hunting to pick up an important fact.
Technology	The Beast encourages the character to take more destructive actions with coding and hacking.	The Beast feels humiliated at the character's lack of mastery and demands compensation.

Appendix II: LORESHEETS



This appendix presents new Loresheets designed specifically to support a Gehenna War chronicle. The following Loresheets in *Vampire: The Masquerade* can also be useful for use with this book: Theo Bell, The Circulatory System, Sect War Veteran and The Week of Nightmares. ■



BECKETT

According to Kindred cultures that acknowledge the generation model, the fourth generation of vampires was a kind of Cambrian explosion, increasing and solidifying emerging vampiric strains in the previous generation. Sometimes nicknamed methuselah due to their age, most of the known Kindred of such low Generation have been Beckoned or chose to serve in the Gehenna War, but some lie dormant in domains outside its battlefields.

One of the greatest seekers of Kindred lore, most knowledgeable about the resting places and graves of the ancient dead, is the Gangrel Cuthbert Beckett. Where some Kindred scholars are content to theorize from the comfort of their libraries, Beckett has always gone out to look for himself.

As the Gehenna War intensifies, there's a sudden demand for those with the specialized knowledge to know what the Kindred of various domains are really facing. Beckett is not the only Kindred archaeologist who has suddenly started to receive invitations to the courts of mighty vampire Princes.



LORE

Bloody Ancestry: You trail a methuselah by tracking their descendants. You own and maintain notes on vampiric ancestry concerning vampires in your region in a physical or digital form. You receive a +2 dice bonus to all Occult tests when investigating the ancestry of any vampire.

Dream Interpreter: Sometimes, methuselahs and even older vampires communicate to their progeny through the daysleep. Once per story, when a character or Storyteller character tells you a dream, you may make an Intelligence + Occult test at Difficulty 2. On a win, you receive a number of actionable facts from your Storyteller equivalent to one plus the margin of win.

Perks of Youth: From your contact with Beckett, you've learned that those with knowledge are targets for manipulation by older Kindred. You've developed hardiness to such supernatural manipulations. Once per session, when a vampire of a higher Blood Potency uses a supernatural coercive power on you, you have receive a two-dice bonus to resist it.

Ancestor Cult's Favor: You've entered the good graces of a cult worshiping a methuselah. Assign six dots in any way you like to the following Backgrounds to represent what they provide you: Influence, Haven, Herd, Resources, Retainers, or Status. You keep these benefits as long as you obey at least one of their requests once per story.

Face to Face: If you seek out the Ancients, you risk finding them. Once per story, if facing a methuselah or an elder, you can make an Intelligence + Occult test at a Difficulty of 4. If you succeed, you manage to recollect a detail or an angle that prompts the vampire to answer a single question about their own past or the Kindred of bygone eras truthfully, at least from their own perspective, as long as it doesn't significantly jeopardize them or their plans.

THE ETERNAL ARENA

Kindred society needs activity and entertainment. It gets them in the lulls between hunts. Some take solace in accumulating knowledge; others try their hand at taking up art or engaging in indulgent social manipulation.

Then there are the vampires that beat the shit out of each other. One venue for such things is the Eternal Arena in a small town in Greece, where a violent Kindred tournament has taken place for decades, perhaps centuries. (See p. 126.)

Higher-minded Kindred may scoff, but they can't deny the excitement of watching two or more vampires in a bare-knuckle brawl. Some domains sanction the activity, forming underground fight clubs where their opponents are their peers, unsuspecting mortals, or animals on vitae. Other places do it openly, like the Eternal Arena. Blood sports aren't only fist-to-fist events, bladed weapons and firearms are sometimes used. Vampire blood sports require incredible resilience and push Hunger to the limit. At the Arena, the fighters agree beforehand on weapons but all Kindred powers are allowed. The only limit is that the fight has to take place within the Arena and can't involve friends or allies unless it's coterie versus coterie.

You're involved in these blood sports, either as a fighter or an organizer. You may even have had a connection to the Arena itself. You know the best techniques to shatter a vampire's body. Should a mortal get on your bad side, you know how to rend them into bits.



LORE

● Champion's Aura: You've bested all kinds of Kindred, and you're not afraid to remind everyone around what you're capable of should they choose to cross you. Once per story, you receive a two-dice bonus to Intimidation tests against vampires during a scene, as long as these vampires are aware of your reputation (or you make them aware of it).

●● Bring It On: You've fought at the Eternal Arena or a similar Kindred blood tournament. Once per story, you can goad a target into a physical fight with you. For the rest of the scene, they'll engage in combat with only you. Targets that would put themselves in lethal danger by doing this must first be bested in a Charisma + Brawl vs Composure + Insight test.

●●● Combat Analysis: Blood sports require a tactical mind. You've followed the exploits of the best vampire fighters in your domain, learning from how they approach each match. You don't see fights as desperate struggles, but as puzzles you can solve. Once per session during a physical conflict, you may make an Intelligence + Awareness test at Difficulty 3 before making an attack. On a win, you receive two additional dice on your next physical attack action.

●●●● Talented Manager: You're an organizer or coach in an underground fight club or other gathering of like-minded Kindred pugilists. You pull the best out of them, and your talents extend to anyone who fights with you. Once per session, when you lead a group of people through a fight involving

Brawl or Melee, you gain four bonus dice on any Leadership tests.

●●●● Die Hard: In your time in the pit, you've brushed up against final death many times. One night, it'll come for you, but when it does, you know how to get one more moment. Once per story, when you face final death due to a violent conflict or act, you survive, as long as you can describe how it happened. (The Storyteller must decide if this explanation is plausible, but if it isn't, they should provide you with the opportunity to come up with a better idea.) This does not mend any more damage you suffered than is absolutely required to survive, nor does it guarantee that you won't end up in the hands of those eager to make your extended unluck even worse.

TEGYRIUS THE VIZIER

From his soldiering days on the battlefields with Alexander the Great to his time as Vizier of the Banu Haqim stronghold Alamut, Tegyrius has prioritized his ideals over personal self-interest. Instead of claiming the Black Throne for himself, he ceded the privilege to Jamal and used his wise counsel like a guiding hand to shape the destiny of the clan. And when Ur-Shulgi the Shepherd awoke and demanded the Banu Haqim abandon their mortal faiths, Tegyrius refused to take part in his violent tyranny. Alongside his friend and colleague, al-Ashrad, the pair abandoned Ur-Shulgi to safeguard their clanmates and led them out of Alamut.

In the tumultuous years that followed, Tegyrius solidified his position within the Ashirra and opened negotiations with the Camarilla, culminating in the Vermillion Wedding to Victoria Ash. On the surface, it seemed the marriage was a purely political union. And at first, it was. Yet, what many failed to realize is that during their brief courtship, despite his best efforts, Tegyrius experienced something akin to love. Since the consummation of their mutual Blood Bond, those feelings have only intensified.



LORE



● The Art of Negotiation: As a skilled diplomat, advisor, or negotiator, the legacy of Tegyrius is reflected in you. When you mediate between two opposing individuals or groups, you receive a two-dice bonus to Intimidation or Persuasion skill tests.

●● The Pen is Mightier: Following in the footsteps of Tegyrius, you value knowledge and choose to hone your mental abilities just as much as you do your fighting skills. As a protégé of Tegyrius, you have access to a Banu Haqim library transplanted from Alamut during the Schism. The library counts as a two-dot Haven (●●) with a two-dot Library (●●), but its contents are being sought after by one of the Shepherds of Ur-Shulgi, counting as a two-dot Adversary

●●● Hear My Words: You are a known ally of Tegyrius, and when you speak, others listen. As a source of wisdom and restraint, you get three additional dice for any social test against another Banu Haqim of the same sect, and two additional dice for any social test against a Banu Haqim of a different sect.

●●● Perception is Power (Banu Haqim characters only): In the hallowed halls of Alamut, the Council of Scrolls dedicated their unives to the pursuit of academic knowledge. But when Ur-Shulgi awoke and seized the Black Throne, the Council disbanded. You sat on the Council, and under Tegyrius' guidance, learned that one cannot fight what one cannot see. You have access to the Auspex Discipline and may buy dots using experience points as if it was one of your clan Disciplines.

●●●● A Matter of Honor: Not only were you a guest of honor at the Vermillion Wedding, but Tegyrius himself owes you a debt of gratitude. Perhaps you assisted in his negotiations with the Camarilla, or maybe you saved his life several years ago. Once per chronicle, Tegyrius functions as a five-dot Mawla, and uses his lofty position to aid you as best he can (short of violating the alliance between the Camarilla and the Ashirra)

VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

HUNTER

THE RECKONING

WEREWOLF

THE APOCALYPSE

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