

# Chronicles of Darkness **HURT LOCKER**



A Sourcebook for  
the Chronicles of Darkness





# Chronicles of Darkness HURT: LOCKER

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# HERO OF WAR

BY DAVID A HILL JR

Hannah stood from her chair, then sat back down. She put a hand on the armrest and moved to rise again, but then stayed seated. She removed two folded yellow pages from her purse and put on her glasses.

"Dear Matthew."

She cleared her throat, and produced a pair of black-rimmed glasses from her purse. She put them on and continued reading the folded papers.

"I hope this reaches you. I want to start off by saying I love you. I'm going to say some hurtful things, but you need to know that I love you, and I think I always will. We were stupid kids together. We grew into stupid adults together. I still smile when I think of that night by the county fair, when you gave me that rose. I still have it. It's pressed in a scrapbook. That night at the county fair, when we walked together and you told me you loved me."

She smiled earnestly and opened the papers the rest of the way.

"It's an awful way to start a letter, isn't it? Telling you I'm going to say mean things, then following up by telling you about a great memory. Oh well. I was never good with words.

Matthew, I think I've been more than understanding, and more than patient with you.

Six years ago, you told me you wanted to serve your country. I said no at first, but I understood that it was important to you. I didn't want to live alone. But you told me it was temporary. I believed you. At least, I believed that you thought that was true.

I waited for you.

Every week, I woke up at stupid hours of the night, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed for that little window where we could Skype. I sat in bed with my laptop like a giddy schoolgirl, eager to see you and hear your voice. And when the Internet broke up, and I just saw pixels that looked a little like your face, I was happy with them.

The calls slowed, but I understood. You were in the desert. You were young. It was too much.

We were together for two years before you deployed. Married for six weeks. Before too long, you were away for longer than we were together.

Right before our three-year anniversary, you came home. I knew it wouldn't be for long. I relished every second of it. You told me about the mistake you made with that dancer, and how she meant nothing to you. I believed you. That's how couples work from afar, isn't it? Everyone needs a little tenderness.

A few weeks later, you were on the plane again. I begged you to stay, but I knew it was worthless. I knew you had to go. It was back to Skype. Back to waiting."

Hannah turned the first page over, and sat back. She sighed, and started anew.

"We found out I was pregnant. I knew it was what you wanted. It's what I wanted. I figured if I couldn't have you here, I could have that piece of you to keep me company. My mom called me a single mother. I told her to shut up. But that's what I was. You couldn't raise him over Skype. You're just a tourist in his life, Matthew."

She paused.

"Matthew."



She shook her head.

"I hated that you wanted to name him Matthew. I hated that you convinced me to name him Matthew. A kid named after a parent is like tattooing someone's name on you. It's a stupid choice that too many people make.

For almost four years now, I've called him Jacob. His middle name. The name I picked. I don't even know if he knows the name Matthew. I don't call you Matthew in front of him. To him, you're "daddy." Hell Matthew, to me you're just "daddy." I barely remember a Matthew.

And I know what you're thinking. I'm not writing this to tell you I've found someone else. I haven't. So hear me out. Please.

I've been patient, Matthew. I appreciate that you told me when you were unfaithful. First it was once in two years. Then three times in a year. Then five. I told you to stop telling me. I told you I didn't care. I told myself I didn't care. I did. I think you know I did.

But do you know what I hated most? Your fucking plans. Your schemes. I begged to talk to you for a few minutes every couple of weeks. If I got to talk to you once a month, I was lucky. When we did talk, you wouldn't shut up about your army buddies, and these great, grand plans you had. About how you're going to move us all to some town and start a restaurant. Or about how you're saving up to start a tour guide business and move us to the coast.

You always had these plans, but they never involved me. They never involved Jacob. Sure, the plan was always "move us along with you," but you never once asked me how I felt about these stupid plans. You never asked how I felt about the idea of uprooting and leaving my family. They're retiring soon. I want to take care of them, since my sister's nowhere to be found. Do you care? Did they fit in with your plans? Don't answer that.

I'm tired of hurting, Matthew. I'm tired of being patient. I'm tired of seeing you through a fifteen-inch screen. I need a partner.

The last time I tried to say this to you, you told me it was temporary. You told me how great army wives have it. You told me how life would be on "the base." I'm not raising my son on a military base. I didn't sign up to be an army wife. I signed up to be your wife. To have and to hold, remember that?"

She bit her lower lip and stared at the pages. She then took the top page and cycled it around underneath the other page.

"You told me how the army would take care of us. How we'd retire early. How you'd go to college. How I could go to college.

I never wanted to be taken care of. I never wanted any of this, and I feel like you never once seriously considered that. I wanted to write. My dad got me a job writing for the paper, but I had to quit because I couldn't afford daycare. I could have been an editor by now. I could have been taking care of you. We could have been together. You could be trying to get skateboarding sponsorships like you always wanted. Did you give up on that? Can you even skateboard in the desert?

That hurts, too. You were so good. I loved seeing you on your board. I loved that look on your face when you competed. It was so sexy. So raw. You were just this beautiful, perfect thing, and when you were skating, nothing could bring you down. You gave that up for a gun and a flag.

I know this must all sound so negative. But I've got to write it, because you've never listened when I've said it. And I've said it. You just talked over me, and told me about the next big plan for your future that I was just supposed to ride along for.

I was supposed to be your partner, Matthew. Not your passenger.

I can't be. I won't be. I deserve better. Or maybe I don't. But I want better. That's why I'm writing this.

I know you took a bullet. You got to be the big hero you always wanted to be. I get that. I guess to a degree, I respect that. But heroes leave orphans and widows, and I can't live that life. When you were leaving, I told you that I didn't want you to go, because you'd get shot. You told me you wouldn't. You promised me you wouldn't.



*And I know I sound ridiculous and shitty because I'm blaming you for the guy who pulled that trigger. I must sound like the worst wife ever. Maybe I am. But you chose to be there. Nobody forced you to go, Matthew Randolph Comstock."*

*Hannah looked to the door, then back to the paper. She flipped the page and kept reading.*

*"I'm tired of hurting for you, Matthew. I'm tired of waiting for you. I'm tired of worrying. I'm tired of praying.*

*I love you. I don't think I can ever not love you.*

*But I can't live my life for you. I can't keep hanging on a thread, on a hope, on a maybe. I owe it to Jacob. He doesn't get a father, so at least he should get a dedicated mother. I can't be this doting teenage girl anymore. I'm tired of telling the old ladies at the grocery store that I don't know when you'll be back. Every time, they tell me you're not coming back, and that you're going to find some girl over there, and I should just get over you. Then they give me their grandson's number. It'd be really cute if it didn't hurt like hell every time.*

*I think deep down, you understand my choice. I hope you don't hate me. I know I don't hate you. I have resented you from time to time. I've hated the things you've done, and I've definitely hated the things you put me through. But I've never hated you. I hope you respect what I'm doing.*

*The first three times I wrote this, I closed with 'I'm sorry.' But I can't apologize. Not anymore. Not this time.*

*Goodbye, Matthew."*

Hannah closed her eyes, folded the letter, and wept.

"Excuse me, Missus Comstock." A man in a brown sweater vest cracked open the door and said politely.

She put up a finger to pause him while she choked back the tears.

"Miss Mintzer, please." She took a tissue and blew her nose, then wiped the tears from her face. She stood to face the man.

"Miss Mintzer." The man approached. "Your attorney has processed the necessary paperwork. Are you...?"

Hannah cut him off by putting up a hand then nodding repeatedly.

She sat back down in her chair, and reached to the bed before her. White sheets, baby blue linens. The figure before her had his hands crossed on his lap. His head was almost completely obscured by extensive bandages and a pale blue tube coming from his mouth. She put her hand on his and squeezed lightly.

"Do you need a moment?" The man said.

She shook her head. "No. Now, please." She swallowed hard and failed to fight back more tears.

The man nodded once, then walked to a machine next to the bed. He flipped a sequence of switches, and the machine stopped whirring and humming. Hannah's head fell onto Matthew's chest, and the sobbing became wailing. Her glasses fell off her face and tumbled along the cold marble floor. The man took Matthew's wrist between his fingers, and watched his wristwatch.

"My condolences, Miss Mintzer." He left the room the way he came.



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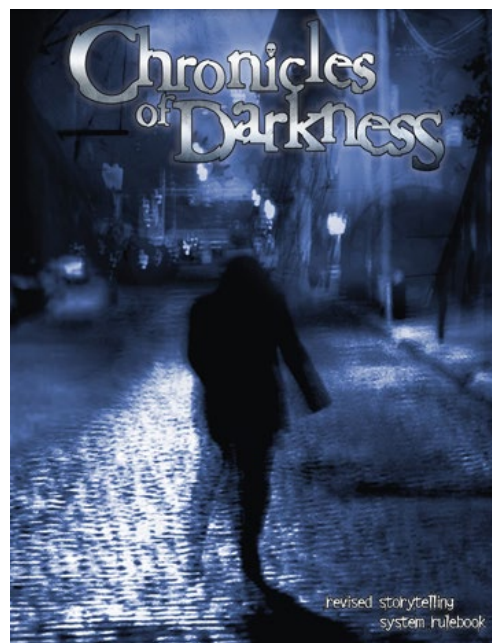
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the Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook



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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>11</b>				
What This Book Is	11	Detective	35	Falconry	48
What This Book Isn't	12	Nation of the Divine	35	Grappling	49
Violence Chronicles		Minister	36	K-9	49
Vs. Violent Chronicles	12	Soldier of Faith	36	Kino Mutai	50
What You Will Find Inside	13	The Seventh Sharp	37	Martial Arts	50
		Gang Banger	38	Mounted Combat	51
		One of Seven	38	Powered Projectile	51
		Nameless	38	Spear and Bayonet	51
<b>Chapter One:</b>				Staff Fighting	51
<b>Stories of Violence</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Chapter Two:</b>		Strength Performance	52
Storytelling Violence	15	<b>Instruments</b>		Systema	52
Stories About Victims	16	<b>of Violence</b>	<b>41</b>	Thrown Weapons	52
Stories About Victimiziers	17			Two Weapon Fighting	53
Stories About Lasting Harm	19	<b>New General Merits</b>	<b>41</b>	Weapon and Shield	53
Stories About Moving On	20	Air of Menace	41	Individual Merits	53
<b>Framing Scenes</b>	<b>21</b>	Body as Weapon	41	Armed Restraint	53
Framing Scene Format	21	Cohesive Unit	42	Boot Party	53
Winging It	22	Defender	42	Clinch Strike	53
Risk and Reward	22	Empath	42	Covert Operative	53
Timed Traits	23	Object Fetishism	42	Ground and Pound	54
Unlockable Advantages	23	Peacemaker	42	Ground Fighter	54
<b>Scenes from a</b>		Punch Drunk	43	Headbutt	54
<b>Rust-Dark City</b>	<b>23</b>	Scarred	43	Iron Chin	54
<b>Violence Groups</b>	<b>27</b>	Support Network	43	Phalanx Fighter	54
Concept	28	Survivalist	43	Transfer Maneuver	54
Aspirations	28	<b>FIGHTING MERITS</b>	<b>44</b>	Trunk Squeeze	54
Virtue and Vice	29	<b>Deconstructing</b>		Retain Weapon	54
Attributes and Skills	29	<b>Fighting Styles</b>	<b>44</b>	Roadkill	55
Merits	30	Style and Background	44	Other Styles	55
Size	30	Stacking Fighting Merits	44	Aggressive Driving	55
Individual Members	31	Style Tags	45	Drone Control	55
Portraying Members	32	<b>Style Merits</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>LASTING TRAUMA</b>	<b>56</b>
History and		Avoidance	46	Acquiring Lasting Injuries	56
Bringing It All Together	33	Berserker	46	Injuries as	
Trying to Join	33	Bowmanship	47	Persistent Conditions	57
<b>Sample Groups</b>	<b>33</b>	Boxing	47	Arm Disability	57
Precinct 44	33	Chain Weapons	48	Chronic Agony	57
Patrol Officer	34	Combat Archery	48		



Chronic Sickness	57
Deaf	58
Leg Disability	58
Prosthetics and Assistive Technologies	58
Ableism and Storytelling Games	59

## VIOLENT SKILLS 59

## Chapter Three: The Other Side 71

### Supernatural Merits 71

Animal Possession	72
Appotation	72
Assertive Implement	72
Biomimicry	72
Bless Amulet	72
Camera Obscura	73
Consecrate Weapon	73
Curse Effigy	73
Dark Passenger	73
Doppelganger	73
Evil Eye	73
Fated Ferocity	73
Hardened Exorcist	74
Hidden Variable	74
Incite Ecosystem	74
Invoke Spirit	74
Mind Control	74
Phantasmagoria	74
Psychic Concealment	75
Psychic Onslaught	75
Psychic Poltergeist	75
Psychokinetic Combat	76
Psychokinetic Resistance	76
Sacrificial Offering	76
Sojourner	76
Tactical Telepathy	76
Technopathy	77
Telekinetic Evasion	77
Vengeful Soul	77

### Supernatural Merit Templates 77

New Merit:	
Supernatural Resistance	78

### ATARIYA 78

Being Lucky	78
-------------	----

The Downside of Up	78
Creating a Atariya	79
Damn Lucky	79
Mr. Lucky	80
Nine Lives	80
Count Down	80
See the Flow	81
Luck Flows Up	81
Easy Come, Easy Go	81
All-In	81
Rio Matsumura	81

### THE DREAMERS 82

Creating a Dreamer	82
The Mission	82
New Conditions	83
Missing Time	83
Endgame	83
Subliminal Conditioning	83
A Word from Our Sponsor	84
Realpolitik	84
Memory Palace	84
The Treatment	84
Not A Bug But A Feature	85
Mephistopheles	85
Déjà vu	85
Field Handler	85
Diane Thayer	86

### THE INFECTED 87

Creating the Infected	87
New Conditions	87
Latent Symptoms	87
Acute Symptoms	87
Symptomatic Flareup	87
Progressive Infection	87
Carrier	88
Bulletman Syndrome	88
The New Flesh	89
Virulent	90
Richard "Rick" Starr	90

### THE PLAIN 91

Being Plain	91
The Look and the Lifestyle	92
Creating a Plain	92
Plain Reader	92
You Are Being Recorded	93
I'm Bleeding on You	93

Most Infected Thing I've Ever Seen	94
Over Before it Started	94
Phantom Pain	94
The Consequences of Violence	94
The Push	94
Amar Harrold	95

### THE LOST BOYS 96

Eye of the Storm	96
The Lost Boys Network	96
Creating a Lost Boy	96
The Withdrawal	96
New Merit: The Protocol	96
Protocol Fixer	97
The Serum	97
Augmentation Merits	97
Archangel System	97
Augmented Resilience	98
Augmented Speed	98
Cloaking Device	99
Holdout Storage	99
Implanted Interface	99
Jumper	99
Last-Chance	99
Pulse Generator	99
Strength Augmentation	100
Sub-Dermal Armor	100
Uncanny Perception	100
Voice Box	100
Stuart Olmo	100

### PSYCHIC VAMPIRES 101

Template Features and Merits	101
Ephemera	101
Psychic Vampirism	101
Breath Stealer	103
Burst of Speed	103
Ephemeral Battery	103
Euphoric Touch	103
Nocturnal Supremacy	103
Psychic Infection	103
Psychic Seduction	104
Psychic Transference	104
Shapechanging	104
Soul Eater	104
Unearthly Beauty	104
Vampiric Potency	104
Lucia Merchant-Esposito	104



## Chapter Four: Tokyo

Tokyo: Some Basics	107
Chronicles in Tokyo	107
Violence in Tokyo	109
Modern, Global Approach to the Supernatural	109
The Wards	110
<b>Shinjuku</b>	<b>110</b>
Neighborhoods	111
Ghost Trains and New Lives	113
Red Station and the Titgwai Gang	114
Wong Ng	116
The Tek-Tek	116
<b>Chiyoda</b>	<b>118</b>
The Lonely Spirits at Tokyo Daijingu Shrine	118
Areas in the Ward	118
Daisuke Shiori	119
Ugly Americans	120
The Lads	121
Gary	122
Stephanie	122
Mark	122
<b>Taito</b>	<b>123</b>
Death by Nostalgia	123
Areas in the Ward	123
Ueno	125
The Ravenous Blade	126

Yatakono Akono	126
Matatoshi Joto	128

## Appendix: Equipment

<b>Equipment</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>Modern Weapons</b>	<b>129</b>
Range	129
Range and Movement	130
Ammo and Capacity	131
<b>Firearms and Ranged Weaponry</b>	<b>132</b>
Heavy Weaponry	134
<b>Melee Weaponry</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>Armor</b>	<b>140</b>
Equipment Tags	142
<b>New Merits</b>	<b>143</b>
Trigger Discipline (•)	143
Loaded for Bear (• or ••)	143
<b>New Tilts</b>	<b>143</b>
Bleeding	143
Burning	143
Pierced Armor	143
Pinned	143
<b>Gear and Accessories</b>	<b>144</b>
Firearms Accessories	144
Bipods	144
Ear Protection	144
Gunsmithing Kit	144
Light Mount	144
Reloading Bench	144

Reloading Bullets	144
Sighting Tools	145
Sights	144
Speedloader	145
Collapsible Stocks	145
Suppressor	145
Surveillance Gear	146
Binoculars	145
Bugs (Listening Devices)	145
Bug Sweepers	147
Disguised Camera	147
Tracking Device	147
Keystroke Logger	147
Reverse Peephole	147
Spyware	147
Wi-Fi Sniffer	147
Wiretap	147
Survival Gear	147
NBC Suit	148
Potassium Iodide (Bottle)	148
Survival Kit (Basic)	148
<b>Other Sources of Harm</b>	<b>148</b>

## Appendix Two: Conditions

<i>Fixated</i>	150
<i>Hunted</i>	150
<i>Lethargic</i>	150
<i>Oblivious</i>	150
<i>Reluctant Aggressor</i>	150
<i>Surveilled</i>	150









# Introduction

**“To hurt is as  
human as to breathe.”**

**— J.K. Rowling,  
*The Tales of  
Beedle the Bard***

Welcome to the Hurt Locker. We’re talking pain. We’re talking violence. We’re talking bones snapping, veins bursting, and flesh tearing. We’re talking about how to make it in a terrifying world, or how to die trying. We’re talking violence as a tool, as a defense mechanism, and as a plot element. If it hurts, it belongs in here.

## Violence Versus Combat

**Chronicles of Darkness** is a game of modern horror, and the **Storytelling System** is meant to emphasize that horror. Pain, injury, and death are all strong elements of horror, and that’s the subject matter ahead. A lot of times in these sorts of games, when we think of pain, injury, and death, we think in terms of “combat.” While we’ll touch some on the idea of combat, we want to approach less from the direction of “combat,” more from the direction of “violence.”

This isn’t to say that there’s a right way and a wrong way to address violence in your games, or that combat is “wrong.” But, **Hurt Locker** looks at violence from this specific viewpoint because it’s a unique and poignant tool in your **Storytelling** toolbox. This book is a spiritual successor to **Armory** and **Armory: Reloaded**. They each had their own approaches to violence, and are still very useful for your chronicles. Instead of retreading the same ground, we’re taking a different direction.

There’s also something to be said for the fact that violence isn’t always direct, physical violence. Social, psychological, or emotional violence is a pervasive issue that doesn’t get much attention in our game rules. We try to touch on these ideas, and show ways to present them in your chronicles.

## Rules

This book uses the rules from the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook** as its baseline.


If you’re looking for swaths of weapon and equipment traits, we don’t have many here. Again, that’s the purview of other books. Instead, we’re opting for a more open, freeform system. However, if you have **Armory**, it’s easy to convert first-edition rules weapons to second edition. Simply subtract one from the damage rating, and use the Size as the Strength requirement. Also, in second edition, all weapons cause lethal damage, so ignore the bashing designators. Keep in mind that this might not be perfect. You might want to massage the exact numbers to fit your chronicle and vision. But that should be the case with any rules.

## What This Book Is

Inside, we’re looking at what violence can mean in your chronicles. This includes ideas for how to tell impactful stories with pathos and consequence, where the effects of violence don’t end after you stop tracking initiative, and a wound means more than a box on a character sheet.

Fighting Merits, including Fighting Style Merits, receive a strong treatment within. We believe that offering additional options for delivering violence can





help to contextualize what's happening in your scenes. They're also popular choices to help customize characters. So while they may look at first glance to defy our "violence over combat" tone, uniqueness and personality make violence matter. They put a face on it. Three Health boxes marked by a fencer mean something different than three marked by a practitioner of Jeet Kune Do, even though they function identically within the rules.

We also touch on unique ways violence presents itself in our chronicles. For example, psychics exist, where they don't in the real world. Violence affects everyone, so we examine what violence means to some of these unique elements in our stories.

As well, we provide tools for presenting violence in different ways using the Storytelling System rules. We offer a more fluid approach to Tilts, a more freeform look at weaponry and equipment, and suggest ways to make groups of violent people more compelling, cohesive, and easier to deliver to the table.

## What This Book Isn't

This book is not a thesis on violence and its effects on humanity. We deal with some psychological issues and social issues related to violence and brutality, but always from the idea that ultimately this is still a game. Any concepts and rules we present are designed to deliver stronger play experiences, not to teach you about human psychology. Not to say that reading up on psychology and sociology can't help your chronicles, but any given shred of a topic addressed with serious, sensitive, real-world implications deserves more word count than we've devoted to the entire idea of violence in this book.

We're also not dictating how your games should flow, or what they should feature. Our tone here exists to foster certain experiences at the table; but as this is a supplementary book, it's made to supplement your chronicle, not be the sole focus. Harping on the darkness of violence can get draining and pessimistic quickly, and frankly, it can become a labor; a chore. Ultimately, we play storytelling games to have fun. So if your players want the occasional skull-cracking without thinking about the sound of a bone breaking or the social implications of ending a life, that's okay. Do what works for your troupe. This is a storytelling toolkit, not a political doctrine.

## Violence Chronicles Vs. Violent Chronicles

Particularly when using rules and ideas from this book, you should consider what role you want violence to play in your chronicle. Is your chronicle about violence? Is violence a set dressing piece? Is it a major motivator? Is it something your players' characters should avoid at all costs? To some extent, you may want to surprise your players, and set them up to experience the chronicle as you present it.

The right characters make for the right chronicle. A military drama will likely fall apart if it takes place in a high school with all teenage characters. Then again, it might not. Look to works like *Battle Royale* as an example. In that case, every aspect of the story was designed with very specific characters in mind, and your chronicle should be, too. Heavily traumatized characters who freeze when fists start flying aren't always the best fit for high-action chronicles.

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## Only Flesh

This book is loaded with character options, game traits, and other things your players might want to dig their fingers into. Read with the caveat that these were written for "mundane" human characters, in accordance with the needs and design goals of the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**. Can you use the Merits in Chapter Two for your **Vampire: The Requiem** chronicle? Sure. But there may be some mechanical or logistical questions that arise. For example, some Merits let characters ignore bashing damage sources. To a vampire character, almost everything causes bashing damage. This means those Merits are unintentionally much more powerful for vampire characters. Is that okay? That depends on you, your troupe, and the style of game you want to run.

In short, if you plan to use these for the various supernatural game lines, just consider what effects they'll have on your narrative. Modify them, or selectively allow them as you see fit.

## A Note On Monsters

Many monsters benefit from rules that diminish damage. For example, vampire characters only suffer bashing damage from attacks which would cause lethal damage. This is meant to make them more resistant to weapon attacks. If a Merit or other mechanic upgrades damage types (for example, a Merit that allows a punch to cause a lethal wound), does this cause lethal or bashing damage? There's no hard rule here. However, as a rule of thumb, if the Merit or effect has a per-use cost to the character, or adds a degree of risk (for example, if the character must sacrifice her Defense or spend Willpower), you should favor allowing the effect to cause its stated damage.



Conversely, nonviolent chronicles might not work too well with battle-hardened, well-equipped warriors. To the point, you need to know what you're getting into.

## Planning For Punches

One good way to set the tone for your chronicle is to address violence and combat as parts of character creation. If you want a high-action chronicle, you may consider giving a handful of Merit points to your players which must be used on appropriate Merits such as Fighting Styles. Even a small allotment, like three additional, specific Merits, will help to set your tone well.

If you want a more cinematic, less realistic experience (see *Battle Royale*), you may want to ignore the prerequisites for Fighting Merits.

## Planning For The Gauntlet

If your chronicle will be extremely or frequently violent, it's worth addressing that extent in character creation. Set rules. For example, you may offer two additional Skill dots, which have to go toward Athletics, Brawl, Firearms, or Weaponry. You may insist that one of a character's Aspirations must have to do with violence or its ramifications.

## Turning the Thumbscrews

The basic **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook** offers some fundamental options to consider in regards to violence and combat. Do you find the Down and Dirty Combat system to fit your vision of violence in your upcoming chronicle? Do you think Beaten Down makes sense or removes agency from your players? These are just the basic options (see the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 87 for both).

As you go through this book, look at all the various options and take notes. Decide what you want and don't want to use.

Discuss these options and ideas with your players, so everyone's on the same page, playing by the same rules. They might design their characters differently with different priorities and options in mind. For example, a player who wants to make a swordsmith may not devote as many Merits to that profession if using Down and Dirty Combat, since swords don't have the same degree of mechanical advantage in that simpler system.

## What You Will Find Inside

Here's the rundown:

- **Chapter One: Fields of Hurt** – We start off by addressing Storytelling, and how to frame your chronicle.
- **Chapter Two: Instruments of Violence** – Next, we offer character options. Merits, Tilts, rules for lasting trauma, and how to use non-standard Skills in a fight.
- **Chapter Three: The Other Side** – Here, we talk about the supernatural side of the World of Darkness, including new character options and Supernatural Merits.
- **Chapter Four: Tokyo** – We bring together some of the rules and ideas we've presented thus far and execute them in an example setting: a World of Darkness take on some of Tokyo's neighborhoods.
- **Appendix One: Equipment** – Here, we offer ideas and rules for equipment. This isn't just a list of new weapons; this is an approach to add new tools to your chronicle.
- **Appendix Two: Conditions** – We close out the book with a list of the Conditions featured throughout, for ease of reference during play.









# Chapter One: Stories of Violence

Violence is dark.

This is fairly obvious. If you've any experience with *Chronicles of Darkness* stories, you'll know that one of the first things most players think of when conflict arises is violence. For some players, it's wondering if the problem will hurt their characters. For some players, it's wondering how to hurt the thing causing the conflict. Violence ties inexorably into our stories, and we explore it in order to get the most value out of it. Violence can be a powerful tool, but it can also become passé and tired, losing its impact and meaning very easily. In this chapter, we're going to examine how it can work well, and offer advice on how to maintain its integrity and value in your chronicles.

First off, we'll talk Storytelling techniques, and ways to make violence hurt. Then, we'll talk about how to frame and contextualize scenes in such a way as to immerse players and remind them of the relative danger of a given situation. We close out the chapter with a method for addressing groups that use violence for various reasons, and how to easily improvise your own violence groups.

We're not going to belabor the point, but we do want to put it out there: This content can be rough. It's not for every group. If a player doesn't find these kinds of stories fun or interesting, do not push the issue. If you are not comfortable telling these kinds of stories, this does not mean you are in any way a failure or insufficient. This is all discussion of possibilities, not defaults. This takes some of the material in the *Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook*, and cranks the volume. There's no shame in turning it back down to a level you're comfortable with.

*"It is forbidden to  
therefore all murderers  
are punished unless  
they kill in large  
numbers and to the  
sound of trumpets."*

— Voltaire

## Storytelling Violence


In the *Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook*, we recommend sensory details over direct presentation of game mechanics. Talk about bones snapping, about blood spraying, instead of relying on "He takes two lethal and an Arm Wrack Tilt." That's basic 101 Storytelling. To master the art of Storytelling, you need to take that concept to the next level.

Take notes. Study your players. As you're describing scenes, pay close attention to what makes your players wince and shudder. Write these things down, because they mattered. Bring them up later, even once the game mechanics have long been forgotten.

**Example:** Erica's Storytelling for Jessie, whose character Texx is a leather-clad ruffian punk trying to fight off a strange creature that's killing people in his neighborhood. The creature's possessing his biology professor, Mr. Timms.

Texx has traced Mr. Timms back to the modular shack out behind the elementary school. It used to be an art class, but budget cuts have kept it closed and out of the public eye for the past three years. When Texx busts into the shack, he sees Mr. Timms beating a bound, naked young man with a cane. It isn't just any young man. It's Texx's boyfriend, Chen. Or, ex-boyfriend. Texx left him because he knew his mingling with the supernatural would put his loved ones in trouble.





Jessie tells Erica that Texx is rushing Mr. Timms, trying to stop him before he takes another hit. Erica says she's going to use *Down and Dirty Combat*, since Mr. Timms is a significant force, and Texx is all alone. Mr. Timms's intention is to hurt Texx significantly and escape. Either way, Chen would be safe. Jessie agrees.

They roll, and Erica gets rolls four successes more than Jessie. Jessie takes a deep breath. Erica says, "Texx charges and yells to get Mr. Timms's attention. And he gets his attention. The lanky old biology professor turns around with one quick, fluid spin. He cracks Texx across the right knee with his cane. Texx's leg gives out. His knee snaps out of socket, and he falls to the ground, howling in pain. He grabs his leg, which is bent out to the right, not the way a leg's supposed to bend. Mr. Timms leaps over Texx and runs out the shack door. Everything's black and red for Texx, and he screams for ten solid seconds until he can jerk his leg back into its joint. Then he screams again. Mr. Timms is gone."

Everyone at the table's eyes go wide. They look among each other. Erica follows up. "That's five lethal damage, and a *Leg Wrack*." Jessie puts his hand over his chest for a second, nods, and writes it down.

Erica scribbles a note, "Remember Texx's knee."

Over the course of a couple of weeks, the group continues their hunt for Mr. Timms. It's two weeks where Texx spends a lot of time in a support role, doing Internet research, actively engaging in the neighborhood watch's phone tree. He wants to go out and hunt, but everyone tells him they need him healthy.

Texx is all healed. Eventually, they spot Timms, and the whole crew starts a chase. Texx has the *Parkour Merit* and a high *Athletics*, so he's making great headway in the chase. After a few turns, he's a single success away from catching Timms. Timms bolts up a fire escape, and knocks down the ladder behind him. Jessie rolls well – enough to catch him.

Erica narrates. "Texx looks around for a split second, then decides 'fuck it.' He jumps up to the next story fire escape, and swings his body up. He catches the railing with his foot. For a split second, his knee aches. It feels like it's going to give out. He pictures himself falling down and splitting his head open."

One of the players says, "Oh no" under her breath. Everyone looks around the table.

Erica continues. "But he shakes himself back to his senses. He pulls himself up and a second later, he's face to face with the neighborhood monster."

In this example, that knee wound didn't really matter to the chase scene. It had no mechanical impact whatsoever. But, for the players, it had emotional resonance. They cared. They remembered that moment.

## Can I Take a Condition?

In fact, if she wanted to take it a little further, Erica could offer Texx a *Shaken* Condition related to his leg injury. That way, later on Jessie could milk that dramatic potential at his leisure. Texx gets a *Beat*, and there's a little more depth to the story.

You can even tell your players up front that if they want, they can request Conditions reflecting the issues their characters face. *Shaken* is a particularly good example, because it's a purely opt-in Condition. A player can choose to let it matter whenever they'd like. For some players, that can be a problem, because it can encourage boring, "safe" play. But generally, it allows players to interject drama into scenes that lag or lack impact. This isn't really about consequences; damage and injury already have consequences. This is about resonance and conceptual continuity.

## Stories About Victims

At its heart, *Chronicles of Darkness* assumes the players are the protagonists of their stories. While this doesn't always mean warm and fuzzy objective victories, it generally assumes characters will more or less overcome adversity. The game rules hammer this home: Most actions succeed most of the time with three or more dice. When small groups work together with a little planning, very little can overcome them. This is okay. *Darkness* does not mean hopeless. Sometimes victories are pyrrhic. Sometimes victories come at a cost. Sometimes it's okay to just "win."

Often, our stories are about these characters, these achievers. Bad stuff happens in the world, and our characters are unique because they take a stand and enact change upon the world.

Sometimes, we want to tell stories about victims. That's okay, too.

But the single most important thing to remember is that victims are people, too, and being a victim doesn't negate one's identity or impact on the world. Being a victim doesn't stop a character from being important to a story, or important to the world. Many of the people throughout history who have shaped the world for the better have also been victims. Remember that word: *also*.

Storytelling games are games about choices and consequences. Don't define protagonists by what happens to them: Define them by what they do. Even if your stories put a spotlight on the violence, how characters react to that violence is ultimately more important from a proactive storytelling perspective than the violence itself.

In game terms, the easiest way to express this is to encourage creative use of *Aspirations*. If someone wants to play a victim, encourage that player to take an *Aspiration* centering on how his character responds to his circumstances. Is he coping well? Is he coping poorly? Is he perpetuating a cycle of abuse? Is he withdrawing? Is he trying to understand his abuser? There's a million ways to respond to violence, and that response is what shines a light on the victim, instead of the victimization.

Alternatively, you can offer players the choice to take a Condition, and potentially make it *Persistent*. As with the broken leg example above, players should always have the choice to heighten drama with Conditions if they see fit. But with trauma, 100 people might have 300 different responses to the exact same problem. So it'd be reductive and diminishing



## Eschew Labels

One of the strongest choices you can make when telling stories about violence is to eschew labels, and avoid making value judgments. When you call a character a victim or victimizer, you're making a judgment, you're applying an identity onto the character. I know that we're using those labels here in this chapter, but that's for organization and help guiding techniques.

It's best if you don't define characters by single actions. Is someone who slaps her partner a victimizer? Maybe. What if it was just a momentary lapse of judgment she regrets and works to make better? What if she was coaxed and goaded? What if a supernatural force influenced her? Most importantly, does it really matter if she is or isn't? What actually matters is what she did, and how the world responds. Now, this is an important distinction: the world may label her as an abuser, even while you — on an out-of-character basis — do not.

Likewise, who gets to call someone a victim? The easiest answer is, a person gets to make that call for himself. He gets to say, "I was victimized," "I did not consider that to be violent," or even, "I'm over it. I don't care, don't dwell on it." But even then, there's complexity when you consider legal and social implications. For example, in most of the world, children cannot consent to certain interactions, so even if an adult says that what happened to them as a child was not harmful, society still places that judgment, that label.

This is why it's important that you avoid labels as a Storyteller whenever possible. Let the world debate. Let the world contextualize that behavior. Because when you place those labels out-of-character, you bring bias that removes complexity, nuance, and agency from the characters.

to just say, "Take the Trauma Survivor Condition." Not only would that be jarring to any player who has experienced significant trauma, or who knows anyone who has, it also limits your stories significantly. Defining intricate, meaningful human responses with ultimately simple, relatively narrow game mechanics makes a firm and not particularly mature statement about the way the game world works.

## Stories About Victimiziers

Sometimes, we look at the other end of that spectrum. Sometimes we tell stories about people who hurt people.

First, if you're telling stories about people who hurt people, it's best that you approach from the outset by not making objective value judgments about people, and instead rely on actions, choices, and consequences. If you say, "everyone's playing an evil character in this chronicle," you've failed in this regard. There's no "evil chronicle" in *Chronicles of Darkness*. We're telling stories about individuals, who make individual choices, and who have complex relationships. Nobody's "evil," and if she were, she'd be a boring character for this style of game. *Chronicles of Darkness* favors exploration of the human condition, and "good and evil" style designations rob everyone at the table of the ability to explore variables and individual responses.

This doesn't mean characters cannot repeatedly and consistently commit terrible actions. This doesn't mean characters have to feel any sympathy for those they've wronged. Sometimes that numbness, that apathy, that heartlessness can deliver impact for us as players, even if nobody in the game world ever finds out. Some people in the world truly do not care, and that's *fucking terrifying*.

It's important with these stories to consider what Integrity is, and what it means. By default, having a low Integrity doesn't mean a character does "bad" things, any more than a high Integrity means a character only does "good" things. While sometimes loss of Integrity can mean a sense of guilt or a shaken sense of self, it doesn't always manifest that way. If a player wants to play a character outside the mainstream, work with him to decide more appropriate Integrity Conditions for his circumstances. Some characters might experience Obsession when losing Integrity, for example. Just understand that this kind of path can lead through dark places, and may end very badly for everyone involved.

Integrity, for a victimizer (or for anyone, for that matter), is not a punitive mechanic. It's simply a representation and a spiral. At lower Integrity levels, it becomes harder and harder to resist those Conditions, since both failure and success deliver them. For this reason, it's almost a reward; frequent Conditions mean frequent Beats, so long as the player pursues resolution. This often means highly dramatic, sometimes disturbing play.

Further, these two types of stories are not mutually incompatible. Sometimes, victims hurt people. A lot has been written by many better-qualified people about cycles of violence, and with the word count we have, anything we could say would be reductive and problematic. But this doesn't always mean that victims become victimizers. Sometimes, there's just overlap. Sometimes bad things happen to people who have hurt people. People are complicated, and this is why it doesn't serve you well to make value judgments and place labels on individual characters; it makes you less likely to look at them through another light.







## Power Differentials

If you're playing a *Chronicles of Darkness* game, you're playing normal humans, more or less. There's some room for variance with Supernatural Merits. But by and large, these characters are just people. If you're playing one of our other game lines built on *Chronicles of Darkness*, you're playing a character with a distinct supernatural identity. All of these games are built on at least a nominal assumption of horror as a foundation. This means violence happens. And when you're playing supernatural characters, often that means the violence flows outward. How can we look at this through the same **Hurt Locker** lens?

With most of these games, power differential is a very real thing. The supernatural abilities exhibited by even the least of these creatures put them well ahead of even the most capable humans. Between humans, violence occurs when there's means and a will to commit it. Supernatural ability guarantees that there's always means. For these characters, they need only the will to commit violence, and often their monstrous natures mean they don't even need that.

To some schools of thought, power differential in and of itself is a form of violence when expressed. The powerful, by virtue of their power, can rob agency from the powerless. When supernatural ability comes into play, the debate becomes less muddy and abstract. Coercion becomes easy, often to the point of it being unintentional or casual.

Here are ways that might play out in other game lines.

**Vampire: The Requiem** is a game about monsters who must take from the living in order to survive. Sometimes, they can resist their urges, resorting to animal blood or carefully grooming herds who accept or even desire vampire predation. But to what degree can people consent to creatures that can rob free will with a casual glance and a few well-placed words? Sure, these people could resist, they could say no, but there's no physical or social pressure by which the vampire must abide.

That, frankly, is frightening.

For a reasonable person turned vampire, that's doubly frightening. She knows she's supernaturally alluring and that the Beast inside her can demand obedience. So can she ever really know that interest is legitimate?

Further, the *Masquerade* builds a whole different level of problem. A smart vampire avoids revealing her nature to humanity. But if she does, she puts her witness, her confidante, in danger. On one hand, she has to engage with incomplete information, functionally lying to everyone she meets. On the other, she has to put people in danger. There's no safe choice. There's no ethical answer.

**Werewolf: The Forsaken** poses its protagonists as not-quite-human, not-quite-spirit. They're forever outsiders. They have an ancient duty to maintain a boundary between the worlds. They're urged to band in tight-knit packs, and viciously defend territories. Their sense of morality has little concern for the safety of humans, and in fact, many of their duties end up requiring humans to be hurt or killed.

There's one glaring problem with this: Every single one of the *Forsaken* comes from human stock, from human families. It's easy for the universe to dictate that *you're different*, but that doesn't erase a character's fundamentally human upbringing. So every Uratha must struggle with duty and context. Further, violent action will always shake a werewolf's Harmony, which can be unsettling and upsetting. For example, killing a human sends an Uratha closer to her spirit side. However, refusing to do so sends the Uratha barreling toward her flesh side. This dilemma can conflict greatly with a werewolf's personal life.

Also, Uratha contend with *Kuruth*, the Death Rage. When in *Kuruth*, she sees everything in shades of red, in shades of meat. Humanity means nothing to the devastating monster that inspired centuries' worth of horror stories. When she comes to, she could wake naked in a pile of corpses. To even the vaguely humane Uratha, this is a terrifying prospect. She has to ask herself, "Do I deserve to live, if my very existence means destruction?" She can fight to steel herself against *Kuruth*, but that's never foolproof. She'll fall to it again eventually, and she knows it.

**Mage: The Awakening** is a game about people who are granted immense privilege. They do not have to accept the world at face value. They are never powerless. Technically, mages never have to hurt or kill anyone. But hubris becomes a great pull. After all, if you can take with impunity, why shouldn't you? If you're born to a divine right, why not own it? To the mage, the only thing between him and violence is a desire, a will. He can reshape the world as he sees fit.

Everyone feels the desire for violence at some point. What if the world couldn't tell you "no"? This is the reality of a mage's existence. Mages don't deal with consequence on the same level others do. As with the extremely wealthy, mages have little to fear from societal repercussions and law enforcement. For some, the threat of punitive action is the only thing that keeps them from antisocial behavior. Mages don't have that filter.

**Promethean: The Created** is a game of stolen lives. Violence, at its core, is the act of stealing life. Prometheans struggle with Torment, and deal with never truly being welcome in the world. Only those with the greatest degree of willpower can cope with being forever on the outside looking in.

In many cases, the Created are violent by virtue of their alien natures. It isn't because they're inherently *evil* or *wrong*, it's that they're incomplete and don't really fit in with the rules of the world. The obvious parallel here is John Gardner's *Grendel*. Grendel's a monster, but he never really intends to be. The world perceives him as a monster, and continually beats the idea into him until he's convinced of it. Another approach would be Lenny from Steinbeck's *Of Mice And Men*. Without considering the implications of mental illness and the social context of the book, Lenny is a person who intends well, but he's just different in significant ways. He doesn't want to hurt people, but his body is just so powerful, so massive that he can't help but to cause harm, and that's his great tragedy.





**Changeling: The Lost** is a game which relies heavily on a metaphor for abuse and trauma. Changelings are people whose autonomy was removed, then they took it back. This left them damaged and dealing.

This entire chapter, and indeed most of this book, is solid fodder for **Changeling** chronicles. Some wounds never truly heal, and the Lost understand this more than anyone.

One difficult implication with **Hurt Locker** is that we've stated you should never really label characters as "victims" or "victimizers" because it diminishes them and narrows your stories. The Gentry are nigh-objectively victimizers. It's their role in Changeling stories. Then again, they're not quite human. They don't have creative spark. They don't have the same degree and depth of identity. They buck this rule, because they're literally characters; they exist of labels and limitations. In many ways, they're less *people* and *characters*, more forces of nature. They're creatures of pure story; they must follow rules without exception. To cause violence, to abuse, one must make a choice. Are the Gentry truly capable of making choices?

If you want to explore these issues in **Changeling**, perhaps, it's worth looking at the Gentry less as individuals who abuse, who abduct, who traumatize, and instead look at them as metaphors for cultures which enable, foster, hide, and exalt abuse. Those who suffer at their hands can't trust anyone, because cultural expectations and stories allowed this to happen.

**Hunter: The Vigil** is a game about hunting monsters. In many cases, these monsters were once (or still are) human.

While not every hunt results in a kill, and not every hunter kills, violence permeates every aspect of the Vigil. Is violence acceptable if it stops violence? At what point does a hunter committing violence become a monster?

In the context of **Hurt Locker**, **Hunter** stories can be powerful explorations of power differential, of exchanges of violence, and of cyclical abuse. Even when hunters do what they think is right, people get hurt. No matter how much a person says "to make an omelet, you have to break a few eggs," that pain is still very real. And if you shut it off, if you shut it out, are you any better than the beasts you hunt?

## Stories About Lasting Harm

Harm lasts. That's one of the reasons it's awful. Sometimes, you can return to full health and comfort, but injury and trauma can haunt you in little ways. For some people, a scar doesn't matter unless it's about to rain, when it starts to itch. For some people, that fight with the roommate in college didn't leave any significant, lasting marks; but sometimes they sit up at night crying about it. Some people don't even remember childhood trauma, but get occasional, distracting flashbacks. Some people who are bullied skip important social activities and withdraw.

This is the reality of harm.


As a Storyteller, how do you represent this in a game?

Long story short: You don't.

The more complicated answer is, it depends on whether it's a Storyteller character or a player's character.







For Storyteller characters, if you want to present these kinds of ideas, look at them the way you would look at any other game trait, any other facet of the character's personality. You present it when it matters, when it would advance or challenge the plot. You show just enough to communicate the idea, you present symbols and description. And, if the players move on those descriptive elements, you unfold *at their pace*. Ultimately, your stories are about their characters, and if you put too much emphasis on a Storyteller character's trauma, you'll quickly overshadow the players' role in the story.

Picture your Storyteller characters as closed books. When you put them on stage, when you bring them into a scene, you open the cover and set the book on the table. If the players pick it up and turn the pages, you tell them what's on those pages. But you don't skip ahead. You don't spoil the plot. If they close the book and put it down, take it off the table.

If you have an element you find interesting, in a character you love, and the players don't take that cue, don't force it. Don't present characters who wear their trauma on their sleeves. And most importantly, don't judge players for not pursuing those plot threads. Maybe the player doesn't care, or isn't interested. Or, maybe the character isn't that invested. It doesn't matter. Move on. There will always be more characters, and more opportunities.

If it's a player's character, just don't. At chronicle outset, you can communicate that you're interested in exploring trauma and lasting harm. Tell the players that if there's an idea they want to pursue and follow through with, to tell you so you can foster those story elements. But make it clear that they're under no compulsion to do so.

If a player pursues, if a player asks to explore these issues, then let them guide the development. This is a place where player ownership and agency is of the utmost importance. Unless a player explicitly tells you otherwise, their concept of what a given trauma means for their character will mean more to that player than anything you can do for them. This is their garden. You just water it if they give permission.

If a player doesn't take interest in that direction of play, drop the issue.

## Stories About Moving On

This should be at least nominally easier than telling stories about lasting trauma. But don't be deceived into thinking it's simple. You still need to let players guide the play, lest you overshadow their characters' roles and their interest in the game events.

For a Storyteller characters attempting to move on past her trauma, hoping to shed that harm, present it in the same fashion. Present the open book. Let the players turn the pages if they want.

For players, always use existing mechanisms. This is important. New rules and game concepts frame moving on as something special, something outside the scope of normal life. Aspirations are probably the best avenue for most chronicles. Taking meaningful steps toward moving on is an ideal way to deal with long-term Aspirations, or even short-term

ones if players just want to address the issue and move on.

Virtues and Vices can be used sparingly in these cases.

Virtues are good to represent strong, life-affirming actions a person can take which help them overcome a painful past. They already play that role; using them to address trauma is simply extending that existing system outward logically.

Vices can relate to that trauma as well, but on a more destructive level. Some people delve back into things that remind them of the circumstances of their traumas. For some people, this is helpful. For others, it's just another bad habit. Vices take an interesting conceptual space though, since they're not actually negative by nature. They're often negative actions, or negative in a narrative sense, but ultimately they give the character an explicit, objective reward. So players can use Vices to explore these ideas however they'd like, be it negative or positive.

More creative but less intuitive ways to address moving on is through narrower character traits such as Specialties and Merits. Merits such as Support Network (see p. 43) give a way to represent character growth on an internal and external level. Specialties can reflect lessons learned, and sometimes, learning is a way to truly take ownership of one's trauma and turn it into something positive. But these aren't exhaustive examples, just some places to start. As we've said before, every character responds differently, so cater your style of play to the players.

## Optional System: Integrity by Attrition

Violence shakes even the most hardened heart. Experiencing atrocity whittles down the strongest soldier the same as the most callous criminal. The following rules are to reflect this, and the way it eats at a person.

With this play option, we replace the standard Integrity loss rules with an attrition-based system. This system will use counters. Something weighty is advised, to add a little gravity to the act of exchanging them. First off, look to the unfilled dots on your character's Integrity track. By default, that's going to be three. That's the number of counters you'll need to threaten your character's Integrity.

Any time your character participates in a violent or traumatic scene, the Storyteller hands you a counter. Any time your character would face a breaking point, take a counter. Whenever you take a counter, take a Beat. Once the counters reach the number of unfilled Integrity dots on your sheet, give them all back to the Storyteller and remove an Integrity dot.

These counters reflect the weight on your character's psyche and soul. They tug at her, and pull her away from her life and stability. At any time, the number of counters in your possession acts as a penalty to Empathy, Socialize, and any other rolls reflecting your character's ability to relate to other people. These Integrity counters subtract on a 1-for-1 basis.

When the counters go away with the loss of an Integrity dot, this doesn't necessarily mean the character is stable or no longer burdened, just that she's reached a new plateau of sorts, and is temporarily able to approach situations with a renewed confidence.

Regaining Integrity through this system should be done through a reverse system: Meaningful, positive interactions



that reaffirm a person's sense of self and belonging should be able to shed a counter. Once all counters are gone, another such interaction can potentially bring a dot of Integrity. When the interaction occurs, make a Resolve + Composure roll. Failure brings back half the necessary counters for Integrity loss (round up). Success adds a dot of Integrity, and returns one counter short of losing that dot. For example, going from five dots to six would return three counters, since four would cost the sixth Integrity dot.

### Optional Merit: Smile Through It (•)

**Prerequisites:** Composure + Resolve of 5 or higher

**Effect:** This Merit only applies if using the Integrity By Attrition rules above. During any scene where your character would suffer a penalty from Integrity counters, she can grin, bear it, and force relatively normal interactions. Take the Shaken, Spooked, or Guilty Condition (or another Condition agreed upon with your Storyteller) to ignore the penalties for Integrity counters for a scene.

### Optional Merit: Choke It Down (•)

**Prerequisites:** Composure + Resolve 5 or higher

**Effect:** This Merit only applies if using the Integrity By Attrition rules above. Instead of comparing your character's unfilled Integrity dots for the purpose of Integrity loss, you can instead compare Integrity counters to your character's combined Resolve + Composure dots.

## Framing Scenes

People sometimes talk about combat in Storytelling games as if it's all happening in some featureless flat space. It's a useful conceit when you want to compare traits and powers but it reaches a dead end some distance away from real, dramatic fights. Beyond a few strange scenarios, combat never takes place in these convenient white rooms of the imagination, but in chaos-ridden spaces, filled with debris, uncertain footing, awful noises, and a history that explains why this particular alley, corridor, or battered stairwell turned into a human abattoir. Even a safe, unremarkable space can be transformed by violent struggles. Windows smash. Bullets rip through walls into unintended targets. After a few seconds of fighting, a kitchen becomes a slick-floored arsenal of opportunity, where combatants struggle to stand and snatch errant knives.

This book calls these spaces framing scenes. They range from entire eras to single, significant objects. The criteria are dramatic, but inspired by concrete places and things. To design one, follow the writers' cliché: Show, don't tell. But the physicality is a starting point. Framing scenes always influence action, and while they don't ignore physical reality, they ground it in story consequences. For instance, broken windows might not just affect a scene due to the pretended physics of the world, but when it would be dramatically appropriate for them to do so.

We're going to detail a bunch of framing scenes in this chapter, but it's not an encyclopedia. Pluck them for immediate use, but also eyeball them with a thought to designing your own. Use them as design examples. Tweak them. Change the description, "reskinning" the same systems for a different situation where they'd be just as useful.

## Framing Scene Format

Framing scenes use the following format to clearly describe them in the context of this book, but when you invent your own, feel free to abbreviate things. Like Conditions, save full descriptions for situations you'll visit repeatedly, or if your idea's complex enough to need an extended explanation. Otherwise, don't work too hard — keep it to point form. Stick with efficient descriptions. Nick pictures from the Internet that look like the place you want to describe. Do what works to keep your game manageable. The last thing you want is for framing scenes to switch from a cool story tool to a burden.

With those cautions in mind, here's the long version of the framing scene format.

### Example Framing Scene: Overturned. Fetid Dumpster

Dive in with a simple, evocative description of the scene that establishes its physical presence, provides an overview of any obvious risks, and hints at actions characters might take.

*The fallen metal dumpster's rusted body's seen better days, but it looks solid enough. It smells like something died here, and there's enough of its rotted trash strewn around to signal that somebody skipped a pickup. This mucky, vomit-scented refuse covers the ground around it. Some of it is sharp — a one-way ticket to sepsis if it penetrates the skin.*

The example above tells us what it is (an overturned dumpster that's spilled crap all around it), possible risks (slippery filth) and possible actions (somebody might get cut by sharp or pointy refuse, or use it to stab some unfortunate victim).

**Advantage:** Zero in on something the characters can use to gain an edge in combat. Describe it in the story and present systems. In most cases, these aren't secrets — tell players what they can do, and what the associated risks might be. Sometimes there might be a hidden trap or boon, but don't overuse these because the whole point of framing scenes is to make the environment a *persistent* part of combat, not a series of tricks, traps, and secret entrances. For example: *There's a lot of big, sharp junk around. Pick some of it up to acquire an improvised weapon that inflicts one point of lethal damage and a Toxicity 2 Condition — a cat shit-smear'd broken bottle or busted needle. To get it, you'll have to deal with the penalty for moving around by the dumpster. As long as you carry it, you're at risk for the dramatic failure, below.*

**Penalty:** Describe a penalty imposed by the scene. This might be a persistent complication, something the character needs to do to earn the advantage, or dangers that strike during dramatic moments in the fight. Again, show the physical







## Generic Framing Scene

To help you hit the ground running, here's a generic framing scene to apply when you don't want or need anything more tailored. Note that the framing scenes in this chapter don't always follow these rules. We designed them for novelty over consistency. Feel free to do the same, but this template's got your back.

**Advantage:** The environment provides a +2 bonus to rolls able to take advantage of it, as long as the player is willing to accept a dramatic failure in return. The Storyteller decides based on the description of the scene. She can do this on the fly if she likes.

**Penalty:** The environment imposes a -2 penalty to a category of other actions. Again, the Storyteller can decide ahead of time, or on the fly.

**Dramatic Failure:** Basic dramatic failure imposes a Tilt selected by the Storyteller or another disadvantageous Condition. The dramatic failure only applies when a character harnesses the framing scene's advantage. In some situations the player can decide whether to suffer a dramatic failure to earn a Beat.

**Example:** It's pouring out. Strange figures stalk Tara's character. The Storyteller decides she gets +2 to Stealth rolls to evade them, a -2 penalty to see them clearly or aim at them with a gun, and that hustling from pursuit and failing might cause her to slip and fall prone, or cause another problem related to rain-obsured, slick streets.

situation and explain the system. Favor choices where possible. For example: *There's slippery, dirty junk everywhere. Moving through the area over half your character's Speed imposes -2 to all physical actions, or inflicts one bashing damage from stumbles and scrapes. The player chooses which penalty to accept.*

**Dramatic Failure:** Framing scenes impose dramatic failures based on how characters interact with them. Sometimes the character needs to reach for the benefit or perform a certain action, but other times, she just needs to be in the framing scene. Some dramatic failures are optional — the player chooses whether the character suffers it in exchange for a Beat. Again, base it on the scene's environment; in most cases, don't keep it a secret from the player, so she can make a smart choice based on the scene's risks and rewards. Example: *Your character slips and falls on a hypodermic needle. Whatever is inside has a Toxicity 4, and can cause a Condition based on the body's reaction. Characters take this risk by fighting or performing vigorous physical actions in the vicinity, or by carrying an improvised weapon they plucked from the scene.*

## Winging It

Framing scenes are part of the setting, and their descriptions — sight, smell, dimensions, composition, and the rest — are just as much “systems” as anything we might describe with dice, dramatic failures, and all the other constructions of game systems. Players may want to interact with your framing scenes in ways that step beyond anticipated rules. As Storyteller, it's your job to roll with these proposals. Negotiate something that works for everybody at the table.

In the case of that nasty dumpster, players might propose the following things.

### Winging Example: Defeat the Hounds

Fleeing from dogs, Tara wants her character to slide into the filthy dumpster, reasoning that pursuers won't be able to see or smell her. She doesn't propose a system, so the Storyteller asks for a Dexterity + Athletics roll to get there before the dogs come around the corner, but warns her that it risks the dramatic failure of getting stuck with a dirty needle, above. The Storyteller decides not to bother with the action penalty (a slippery surface could help her, and that dramatic failure is pretty nasty) and floats the idea that the smell imposes a -3 penalty to the dogs' rolls to find her (resisted by her Resolve + Stealth, to stay still in the disgusting muck).

### Winging Example: Disgusting Ambush

Steve's character notes the overturned dumpster and its gross, spilled cargo while he waits for the hooligans who called him here to either pay a debt, or take a beating. He wants to teach them a lesson instead. Steve wants to rearrange the debris to create a slick spot and just past it, paper and rags covering a whole bunch of nasty, sharp stuff. He plans to taunt the leader into charging, slipping, and getting stuck with lots of sharp filth.

The Storyteller notes that Steve is trying to script the story well in advance, and getting it done might involve a bunch of annoying dice rolls, so she offers an alternative. His character can create a disguised pile of really slippery muck: lots of dangerous, pointy things under light, loose trash. This requires an Intelligence + Survival roll. If it succeeds, Steve's character benefits from a +2 bonus to dump a victim in it with any action that renders an opponent prone, the attack will inflict two additional lethal damage, and strike the victim with the penalty for dramatic failure. Steve's character might be able to push or lure a victim to that spot as well, forcing a Dexterity + Athletics roll to avoid falling down and suffering two lethal damage and the dramatic failure penalties.

## Risk and Reward

Framing scene traits normally break down into two categories. In the first, characters automatically suffer any penalties and dramatic failure options for acting in that environment, but can easily make use of a fairly broad advantage. The nasty dumpster



we've been using as an advantage is mostly this sort of scene. Fighting and running around it means you might get stuck, but it's easy to pick up a jagged piece of refuse to use as a weapon.

In the second, getting access to the advantage requires a conscious choice to suffer the drawbacks. These might take the form of a required roll to avoid harm, or a dramatic failure that isn't inevitable, but that characters need to willingly risk to exploit the scene's benefits. When Tara and the Storyteller wing it and improvise an advantage for hiding under the dumpster, they build a framing scene of this type. Tara needed to roll to get inside, and risked her character getting stuck and infected.

It's entirely possible to build framing scenes that mix these two types, or to even stack them. For example, you might design a framing scene with an in-built dramatic failure, but give players the option of choosing an even more severe dramatic failure in exchange for a better benefit.

**Example:** *The rooftop is covered with loose gravel and tile. Combatants benefit from a +2 to rolls to knock or grapple each other to a prone position, but also a +2 bonus to Break Free in a grapple – they can slide away. But the site imposes a dramatic failure: Combatants fall prone by themselves when they blow a close combat or movement-related roll. But if a character wants to take it to the edge of the roof, this bonus now applies to throwing an enemy off – but the dramatic failure means that if your character misses, she plunges to the ground as well.*

## Timed Traits

As noted at the start of the chapter, fighting can reduce even innocuous locations to disorganized ruins filled with dangers and opportunities. Storytellers can introduce timed traits to represent this, and to create dynamic environments which change and develop over time. Storytellers can introduce new advantages, penalties, and possible dramatic failures this way, through two basic methods:

**By Turn:** In some situations you might want to add new traits after a set number of turns have passed. For example, a sinking boat may add new traits after three turns (when water reaches the deck) and six turns (when it lurches to a 45-degree angle).

**By Event:** Some traits might arise after a trigger event. Breaking a large window showers the scene with sharp fragments. Just the thrashing action of combat may be enough to change the surrounding area, so you might determine that the first successful attack creates splintered wreckage that presents an advantage, penalty, and dramatic failure option.

**One Time vs. Cyclical:** Whether timed events occur based on turns or events, they might just happen once, or at regular intervals. For instance, fighting on a road might trigger traits related to oncoming traffic every other turn.

## Unlockable Advantages

Some framing scene advantages require extra effort to exploit. They're called "unlockable" advantages, and you can note them as such by using the word and listing the

requirements, or describing them in detail. When we decided to wing it and add a new way to use the dumpster (see "Winging Example: Defeat the Hounds," above), Tara needed to roll to slip under and inside the overturned dumpster, but benefited from it after that point. That's an unlockable advantage.

Unlockable advantages should be either persistent or especially potent because characters need to work to earn them. If a character needs to succeed at a Dexterity + Athletics roll to make it to an ideal sniper's nest, that location provides its advantage for several shots.

## Scenes from a Rust-Dark City

Every street is a potential armory, if you have the desperate will to grab chains, bricks, and other shards of urban detritus. The following framing scenes describe just a few of the environments and situations you might find in the city.

### Atop a Speeding Train

The struggle drives your character to the roof of a moving train. This framing scene fits a freight train, fast subway, or the commuter rail lines Americans know. High speed "bullet trains" present greater risks.

**Advantage:** If your character scores an exceptional success while grappling, she can fling her opponent off the train. On a lesser grappling success your character may drag an opponent to the edge of the roof. From there, you need only succeed normally on a grappling roll to hurl your opponent from the train.

A thrown character gets a reflexive attempt to grab the edge and halt her plunge. This requires a successful Strength + Athletics check and leaves her dangling. She's considered prone, as the Tilt.

In a tunnel combatants must drop prone, or the impact hits with the force of a head-on collision with a Size 10 object moving at the same speed as the train. On a successful grapple, a character may force her victim up half his height. If that's high enough, the opponent suffers collision damage (see **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 99).

**Penalty:** All of the above rules apply to your character as much as her enemy, and vice versa. Also, wind and vibration impose a -2 penalty to ranged attacks.


**Dramatic Failure:** If you fail a grappling roll while your character's positioned at the edge of the roof, you must succeed at a Dexterity + Athletics roll or she falls from the train. Success leaves her dangling from the side. This isn't optional – you must risk it.

### Big Meat Locker

It's cold, full of chains and hooks. Sides of beef, bled pigs, and other big animals hang from some of the hooks, clustered in a hanging garden of butchery. Spots of frozen







blood cover the floor. This isn't a restaurant locker, but likely part of a meat packing plant.

**Advantage:** It's easy to grab a chain (same traits as a chain weapon). Characters may slip between sides of meat and move them in the way of attacks. This provides cover with a Durability of 1, or adds +2 to Dodging — chunks of pig and cow are too unwieldy to enhance standard Defense, so your character needs to use her action. If you score an exceptional success while grappling, your character may lift and skewer her opponent on a meat hook. This inflicts lethal damage and an automatic 1L per subsequent turn, immobilizing the victim until he dislodges himself with a successful Strength + Stamina roll as an instant action.

**Penalty:** It's cold, imposing the Extreme Cold Environmental Tilt.

**Dramatic Failure:** Optional — accept it for a Beat, if you want. Your character falls prone, slipping on ice or frozen blood.

## The Dojo

It's a well-equipped martial arts school. Maybe characters train there, but the school might be involved in shady business. Despite the Japanese name this could represent many types of martial arts schools. Adjust traits accordingly — there aren't any katanas in the medieval sword school.

**Advantage:** Characters enjoy a space optimized for close combat, with mats and padded posts. This grants +1 to close combat attacks, and attacks that slam characters against the floor or into padded surfaces must contend with 2 points of armor.

Available gear also modifies combat. MMA or light training gloves grant the wearer's opponent 1 point of armor; regulation boxing gloves increase it to 2 points, and impose a -2 to grappling rolls. Grapplers add +1 to rolls if they or their opponents wear judo uniforms or wrestling jackets, because they can use them to strangle victims or anchor grips. Training versions of various weapons may be available. They inflict bashing damage instead of lethal, but otherwise possess the same traits.

If characters fight according to a competitive or training rules set, any character with formal training in a fighting method that uses those rules benefits from +1 to close combat rolls. On the other hand, breaking the rules grants a +2 bonus, though disguising the foul from witnesses requires a successful reflexive Dexterity + Subterfuge roll, resisted by onlookers' Wits + Investigation rolls.

**Penalty:** The advantages above can hinder combatants as well as help them.

**Dramatic Failure:** If a character follows rules in a bout, a player can decide that a failure produces an accidental foul, raising the ire of judges and possibly prompting physical reprisal. If the social consequences are meaningful, the player earns a Beat.

## Downtown Riot

Driven by rage or fear, people swarm an urban area, choking the streets between skyscrapers and Brutalist mall blocks.

If police are present, they're not helping — and if they're not present, *why not?*

**Advantage:** If the character moves through the thick of the riot, ranged attacks from street level suffer a -4 penalty to attack rolls. Rooftop snipers must bear a -2 penalty. These attacks suffer a dramatic failure (optional — the player can choose to take it and the Beat) by hitting another rioter or bystander when they miss. Characters in the riot also benefit from +2 to Stealth rolls versus street level observers, though not those searching from higher up.

**Penalty:** The character suffers a -2 penalty to close combat attacks and any action that requires lateral movement. She moves at half Speed (round up) cutting across or against the flow of the crowd.

**Dramatic Failure:** Optional. Failing any close combat or movement-related roll knocks the character prone. That's dangerous. Roll 6 dice per turn the character is prone. She suffers bashing damage equal to the roll's successes (this ignores any armor that doesn't cover the entire body, since the damage is distributed across the character). Others might intervene to help, however. If police or another unfriendly faction are present, a dramatic failure on any visible action might draw their attention.

## Free Fall

Voluntarily or otherwise, the character falls from a plane or a truly lofty height.

On successive turns, characters fall 40 yards, 120 yards, and 160 yards (37, 109, 146 meters). After that most characters hit the normal terminal velocity for non-aerodynamic humans, falling 200 yards (183 meters) per turn. These are approximations for ease of play.

Your character may increase this speed by 150% or decrease it by 50% if you succeed at a successful Dexterity + Athletics roll, or can fall at double speed on an exceptional success; but your character can never fall faster than 300 yards (274 meters) per turn, and after five turns always falls at least 200 yards per turn unless she deploys a parachute, wingsuit, or similar device.

**Advantage:** Use Dexterity + Athletics - Defense to strike as a human missile. Subtract the victim's falling distance this turn from the attacker's. Divide the result by 10 (rounded up) and add it as lethal damage, to a maximum of 10. The difference between meters and yards is sufficiently close that the two can be used interchangeably here. Both characters take the damage, however.

**Penalty:** In free fall, characters cannot add Strength to close combat dice pools except to grapple, so those trained in Weapon Finesse have a significant advantage. To stay engaged in close combat requires a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll, resisted by the enemy's roll if she wants to avoid combat. This replaces Dodging, which is impossible. Characters suffer the Deafness Tilt and an additional -3 penalty to firearms attacks (thrown weapons are impossible).

**Dramatic Failure:** A failed Dexterity + Athletics roll puts your character in an uncontrolled spin until you succeed, making an



attempt each turn as an instant action. During this turn your character cannot take physical actions, including opening a parachute.

## Galley Kitchen

It's got utensils, cabinets, appliances — it's a perfectly ordinary compact kitchen suited to good friends cooking side by side, not enemies out to leave the dishes bloody.

**Advantage:** Weapons, weapons everywhere! In a well-stocked kitchen there's always a utensil drawer or knife block available. Characters who aren't armed can grab a knife or skewering implement as a reflexive action, if they're not picky. These inflict anywhere between zero to two lethal damage, and about half are knives. (If the character doesn't take advantage of grabbing it as a reflexive action, she can be choosier, but it takes time). Using it on the same turn in which she grabs it imposes a -1 penalty to the attack.

**Penalty:** It's hard to defend yourself in a space this confined. The character suffers a -2 penalty to Defense.

**Dramatic Failure:** Optional — the player chooses whether to fail normally or get a dramatic failure and Beat. A new dramatic failure possibility appears at every odd-numbered turn. Choose from the following list or improvise.

- **Collapsing Cabinet:** Your character slams into a cabinet, and its heavy contents come crashing down, inflicting one point of bashing damage and imposing a -1 to physical actions. The penalty is cumulative until the kitchen runs out of cabinetry.
- **Drawer Disarm:** A loose drawer catches a weapon in the character's hand, depriving her of it. Otherwise it catches a sleeve or closes on a hand, and the character loses her next attack.
- **Stove Burn:** At some point an elbow tweaked a dial, turning a burner on — and look where the character put her hand! This inflicts one point of lethal damage, and the winner of any grapple may now inflict this as bonus damage by pressing his victim against it.
- **Wet and Slippery:** A jostled tap or busted pipe sprays water on the floor. A dramatic failure tosses the character prone. There's a 50/50 chance this fills a sink, and combatants can drown their victims (succeed at a Hold result for a number of turns equal to double the victim's Stamina; victims who need to breathe die, or are pulled away and Beaten Down).
- **Wrong Tool for the Job:** With scattered objects everywhere, the character accidentally replaces a working weapon (if any) with a wooden spoon or other normally useless tool.

## High Steel

Characters trade blows and shots on an unfinished building's steel skeleton, a hundred feet up or higher. Characters with nerve or experience might turn its dangers to their advantage.

**Advantage:** Your character picks her degree of risk. She can stay in safe parts of the scene (platforms, finished areas) without invoking any special systems, or she can go on to the beams and scaffolds. If so, you must succeed at a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll once per turn for your character to move at more than half Speed or engage in close combat. Set a modifier ranging from +3 to -3. Whatever modifier you choose affects the dice pools of anyone seeking to follow, along with an additional -1. If a character follows someone else, she has to adhere to modifiers set by them, in the same fashion.

**Penalty:** Any character who lacks a Specialty or other trait indicating that she's used to working in high places cannot have a dice pool before equipment bonuses higher than Resolve + Composure.

**Dramatic Failure:** If you choose, your character can risk falling. On a failed Dexterity + Athletics roll (above) you must make another reflexive roll, but this time the pool isn't limited to Resolve + Composure. If you fail, your character falls — ouch. If you succeed, your character hangs on an edge and is considered prone, as the Tilt. On an exceptional success the character stays standing.

## Old Sewers

In a city at least 200 years old, workers have built tunnels on tunnels. There's a labyrinth under these grates, and few places to go that aren't ankle-deep in water and filth.

**Advantage:** The first group to scout out this irregular, dark, and fetid space unlocks a +2 bonus to Stealth and combat rolls against intruders. This disappears after the first turn of a combat scene. If a character renders an opponent prone, maintaining a Hold result on a victim for a number of turns equal to double her Stamina drowns her, assuming she needs to breathe.

**Penalty:** Lighting conditions range from bright spots near storm drains to complete darkness. Some areas are cramped. Characters have to stoop, suffering a -2 penalty to Athletics and close combat tasks. During a rainstorm, players may be forced to succeed at a Stamina + Athletics roll to keep their characters' heads above water. If a tunnel's completely submerged, characters must hold their breath.

**Dramatic Failure:** On the run, characters might get turned around and lost in some forgotten passage. Otherwise, the sewer's full of shit and filth, introducing a Toxicity 2 disease-related Condition. These are both optional results, traded for Beats.


## Pack Mentality

These enemies take their lead from a boss — toughest in the gang, or maybe the smartest. He's present, and helps them work together to kick ass, but take him out and that'll give the pack reason to pause.

**Advantage:** Every turn where your character imposes her will on the leader with a successful attack or social maneuver unlocks a cumulative -1 penalty on attacks from the rest of







the pack. Every diss and smackdown shakes their faith in his competence.

If your character kills the leader, reduces him to Beaten Down status or utterly crushes him socially, roll Presence + Intimidation resisted by the highest Resolve + Composure dice pool among pack members. If you win, your character cows the pack. They can't take offensive action against your character or her allies for the rest of the scene unless they suffer new violence or humiliation.

Finding the leader might be obvious if he's not hiding his role, or it might require a Wits + Empathy or Wits + Streetwise roll.

**Penalty:** The pack knows how to work together. If it outnumbered your character's side of the fight, pack members earn a +1 bonus to attack rolls against her and her allies.

**Dramatic Failure:** If your character fails in an attack or Social action against the leader, the pack sees her as weak. The pack loses penalties to attack her, and adds +1 to attacks instead. This isn't optional.

## Working Factory

This place produces anything that requires large-scale smashing, cutting, shredding, or burning. It's full of rusty catwalks, suspicious chemical smells, and workers missing fingers. How many days since the last accident? Soon it'll be zero!

**Advantage:** The character can position himself near active machinery. If he does, he and any enemies attacking in close combat both risk the nasty dramatic failure below. On a successful grapple, he may also force his victim into various presses, jets of steam, or cutting machines by choosing the Damage result, inflicting lethal damage. On an exceptional success, victims automatically suffer the dramatic failure results below as well.

**Penalty:** Characters can play it safe by either staying away from active machinery, or by accepting a -2 penalty to close combat actions while near it. In these cases they don't need to worry about dramatic failure, but can't gain any advantages.

**Dramatic Failure:** On a failed close combat roll when the character isn't playing it safe, roll Dexterity + Athletics as a reflexive action. On a success, he suffers one point of lethal damage from a close call with heavy machinery. Failure inflicts two lethal damage and the Immobilized Tilt, though a machine might pass him along a conveyor belt for further injury. Make one reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll each turn. On every failure he suffers another two lethal damage and remains Immobilized.

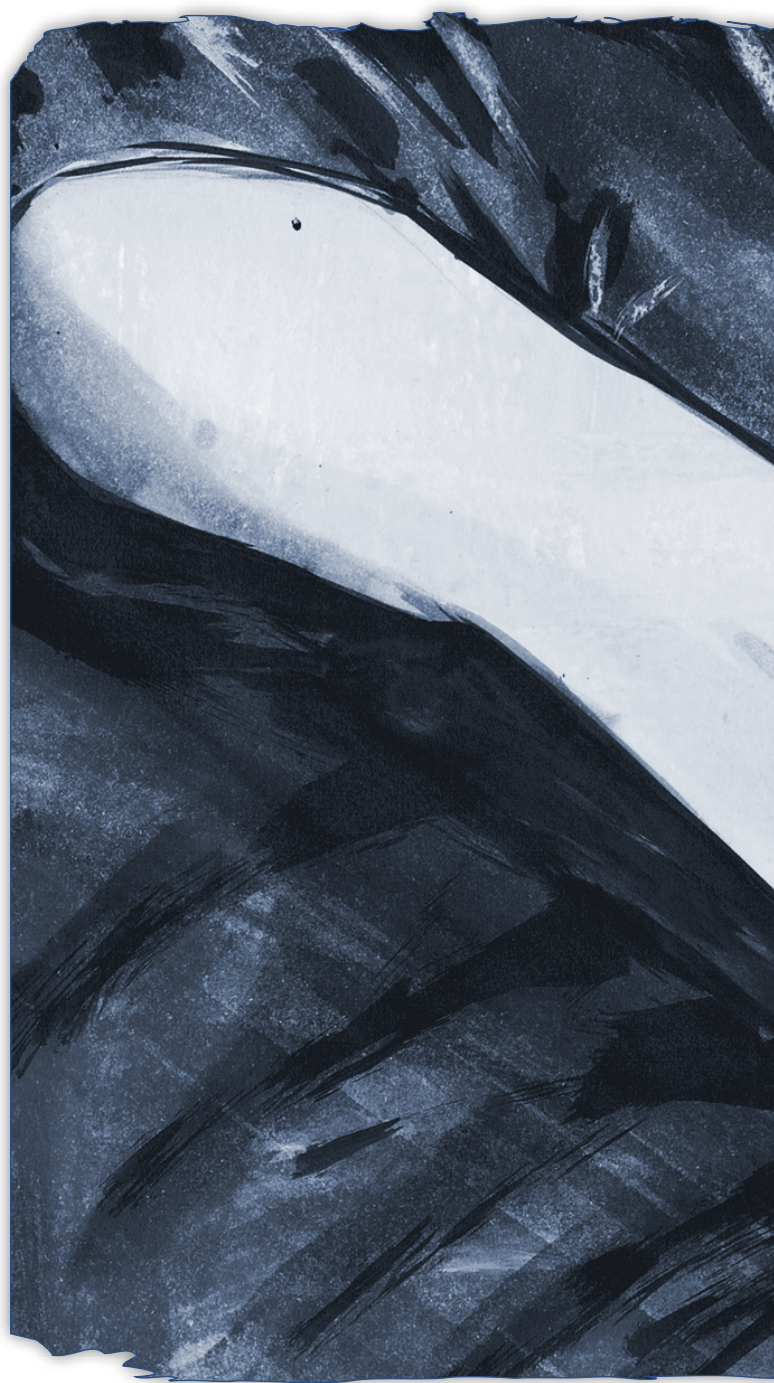
## Wrong Damn Neighborhood

Maybe he's unwelcome in a place full of bigots. Maybe he's carrying a surfboard and a tourist's map on a beach where the surfers are "localist" assholes. Hell, maybe he just hit the punk bar with a popped neon collar, and it's not ironic. If the character blends in without effort, this scene doesn't apply, though some places are filled with awful people who discriminate based on things your character can't change.

**Advantage:** There's no scorn without a bit of fear and ignorance. Add +2 bonus to Intimidation and Subterfuge rolls.

**Penalty:** Right or wrong, they're watching the character with all kinds of bad assumptions. Players suffer a -2 penalty to Stealth rolls and anything else involving covert action, though not verbal deceptions (where characters actually do better, as above).

**Dramatic Failure:** Optional. If the character doesn't blend in, failing any Social roll inspires locals to try to get rid of her with harsh words or worse. Self-defined genteel types might call police or security, but others might take matters into their own hands.





# Violence Groups


Humanity has a curious relationship with violence. As a species, humanity developed the ability to negotiate complex problems without resorting to aggression. Clashes between people invariably lead to injuries, to pain on both sides. Those humans who routinely use violence as the primary answer end up too weak to fight off a second threat. This inclination became so hard coded in human nature that even a trained soldier cannot harm her enemies without her body betraying her. Shots go wide as the body refuses to take proper aim. Fists and strikes lose strength as the body denies intent. It takes

a lot of effort and training to overcome this base instinct. However, if a competition over resources arises, then all bets are off. These resources do not even need to be physical; they can be anything at all from money, to sex, to recognition of your peers, to ideological purity. Then, no matter what the resource, the gloves come off, the people cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war. Hatred rapidly grows between the opposing sides, that very desire to inflict pain, to succeed, to establish superiority over each other.

Soon enough, the stronger and more charismatic of the opposing sides attracts others, encouraging each new potential recruit to follow the leader's beliefs in the struggle over these precious resources. Herein lays the most







dangerous part about violence. Whenever someone joins a new organization, that person finds himself constantly surrounded by people who think and act a certain way. Over time, those thoughts, those poisonous ways of living and thinking, spread to the new recruit. Without realizing it, he adopts the violence around as his own. Even the nicest, most rational people in existence can become twisted when constantly exposed to poisoned rhetoric. It has the worst aspects of the mob mentality, where the group subsumes each individual's beliefs into itself.

In a very real way, this phenomenon allows the organization to act as a cohesive group, almost as if a single person. The members share ideals, ambitions, even interests. All this, taken as a whole, allows Storytellers to design these groups of violent people much like individual characters. Just like any other character, each group remains unique. No matter how identical each appears on the surface, all the organizations possess their own individual motivations, goals, and personalities.

## Concept

Every character needs an idea behind it, something that informs what purpose that character serves for the campaign and how he helps shape the story. That includes any organizations that exist in the *Chronicles of Darkness*. A nosy and overconfident police officer, either corrupt or just prone to making bad calls in the heat of the moment, investigates where she should not. An aggressive gang moves in on the troupe's turf, such as a vampire coterie's damned city grounds or a hunter cell's bloody blocks, in order to stake a new claim to the territory. A vicious hate group, for better or worse, chooses to target one of the player characters for having the gall to stand out. A tempting avenue of political advancement offers characters powerful connections, but those connections come with some rather unfortunate practices. A secret cult does not approve of a character's actions, and this group has some very definite ideas on what to do to anyone who crosses the will of the cult's dark idol.

Try to keep the core concept down to a single statement, something clear and concise. It should not be anything complex, just a simple idea that embodies the essence of the group in a handful of words. The concept can help serve as a general guideline if any doubt about what a member of this association should act like comes up.

A concept should always, in some way, tie into the stories of the players' characters. It should always function as some kind of potential plot hook. Perhaps that hook serves as a character foil that highlights the dangers of a chosen lifestyle. Alternatively, it serves as a direct antagonist to player goals, a dedicated rival that will stop at nothing to accomplish its desires, even if someone gets in the way. Maybe the plot hook even works as a dark temptation for the more power-hungry characters, willing to do whatever it takes. The concept should always answer the question, "Why should the players care about this group?"

## Aspirations

The most important thing, when looking at violence, is to identify the motive. What are the goals of the group in question? What Aspirations drive them? Most violence is personal. People use it as a means of establishing and maintaining control and order. Violent organizations hurt, threaten, lie, and attack others as a means of control over anyone else.

Violence is all about control and power — just how far someone will go to establish that authority. However, that control and power needs to exist for a reason. It drives people to hurt one another. The vast majority of crimes, especially violent crimes, revolve around three things — sex, money, and hate. Consider what the people involved will fight over, and how that intersects with what the player characters prioritize. Just like player characters, each violence group should have three Aspirations in any combination of short- and long-term goals. Unlike regular characters, however, the whole organization shares all these goals.

These specific goals serve as a trigger for when someone becomes violent. That person wants something, and damn it all, she will have it her way come hell and high water. The ambition might be nothing more than having dinner and a drink on the table at six o'clock and a home that works like clockwork, or as far reaching as silencing an entire culture with values that fail to match one's own. The scope of the Aspiration does not matter, only ensuring that the world and the people in it conform to the desires of the perpetrators.

On the other hand, these Aspirations also serve as methods for avoiding violence as well. Barring a mental illness, people do not become violent without a reason, without an unfulfilled desire. Such brutality not only hurts the victim, but also the instigator. No one escapes a fight without bruising herself, without her victim hitting back a few times. Even with weapons, even with a gun, things go wrong and problems crop up. Violence hurts everyone involved. As a result, no one really wants to become violent unless that person absolutely needs violence in order to accomplish something. In short, people become violent in order to achieve their Aspirations.

This is important because the Aspirations provide specific triggers that initiate violence, and reveals what characters can do to avoid violence when confronted. These guidelines detail what happens when the player characters end up as the targets of the Beaten Down Tilt or social maneuvering. It also provides limits on what the violence group will fight over.

A gang fights over limited territory — not because anyone cares about the actual land, but because a larger territory means more shops to steal from and more corners to sell drugs from, and therefore more money that flows into its pockets. A hate group feeds on the fear, mistrust, and hatred of other cultures, lashing out against a perceived loss of power and influence, trying to beat the perceived threats into submission. A father raises his hand against his family, his significant others, his children, in order to ensure that his sense of order in the universe remains in place. A police officer falls back on brute force to make a simple belligerent driver comply with her demands, all in the name of social order.



Every person who acts violently has a specific trigger. When he got his money, the surrender, the smile on the outside and a “yes, sir,” the violence stopped, and life went on. At least it did until the next time. A next time always comes. Just as when a character resolves one Aspiration, the player chooses a new Aspiration, so does the Storyteller choose new Aspirations for the organization. Such people always have a new mountain to climb. Without one, the membership will fall apart.

## Virtue and Vice

No one paints himself as evil. No one likes to think of herself as doing the wrong thing. Human beings always justify their actions somehow. Groups are no different. When something happens, the group always has some kind of line used to justify its actions, both to the world at large, and to its members. Often enough, this manifests as a catchphrase that serves as the banner under which the group operates. “Gay marriage is against the Bible!” “The US government is a modern dictatorship, and we’ll bring it down!” “It’s about ethics in journalism!”

More often than not, these slogans hide the true motivations of the membership. This leads to every group bearing a so-called “Virtue,” the mask that the organization wears to justify its actions to anyone who will listen, and to potentially attract new members into the group. Often enough, a member shouts it long and hard enough that she believes it, no matter what she does or how she does it. Other times, she realizes the lie, but simply does not care.

This catchphrase masquerades as the group’s Virtue. When portraying the group, remember that the members only use the Virtue as justification, not a true drive. While a member still feels the same rush of self-satisfaction from proving herself right, this Virtue does not affect the way she acts, and player characters can see through that mask. Make a Wits + Empathy action, contested by the target’s Manipulation + Subterfuge, when confronted with the rhetoric. On a success, the character sees through the charade.

Meanwhile, a Vice serves as the group’s true underlying drive. Hate, greed, lust, fear, arrogance, cruelty. Every group possesses a different drive powering its ambitions; unlike the Virtue above, feel free to draw the Vice from the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook** or customize one of your own that fits the concept better. This Vice should somehow tie into the group Aspirations as well. Something needs to fuel the ambitions that drive men and women to commit violence upon others. If the Aspirations answer the question “What does this group want?” then the Vice asks, “Why do the people act that way? Why do the members want those things?”

These work as an additional set of Virtues and Vices for the entire organization, replenishing Willpower as if every member had the Virtuous and Vice-Ridden Merits (**Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 46), though with a caveat – the membership replenishes its Willpower when word spreads of any member of a group who has fulfilled the group’s Virtue or Vice. If a religious extremist drives a

desperate woman away with poisonous words and images, or has new laws passed to fit his ideals, everyone involved feels a rush of justification for those actions.

## Attributes and Skills

The players’ characters have just encountered a new group moving in on their territory. This ruthless organization beats down any opposition that gets in the way of their conquest. These new people have a plan and they will to do whatever it takes to see it through. The question now becomes “How exactly do these people work? What are the consequences for crossing them?”

Every organization has a focus, a method of operation that it prefers. Violent organizations do as well. Most often, the members fall back on physical violence. Gangs, criminals, and even protesters working themselves into a mob fall back on Physical Skills in order to intimidate and force their way. This might take the appearance of a brute force assault, a drive-by shooting, or breaking into a home and trashing it.

Other methods exist, however. Violent confrontations do not need to include physical intimidation, and using multiple approaches to violence fulfills goals that much faster. A member of an Internet-based hate group, given its origins, employs more technological forms of intimidation. He will leak personal information and pictures to large numbers of people, use verbal abuse over phones, and harass the victim’s friends and family. Other members might resort to calling the police on targets with bogus claims, or design homemade bombs from blueprints taken off the Internet. Meanwhile, someone from a religious organization often will use protests, gathering alongside fellow believers in large numbers to block streets and verbally abuse her hated targets. Spoiled food and other noxious materials often double as humiliation as well, dumped on unsuspecting victims.


These preferred methods of violence inform what Skills the average member possesses. These same Skills dominate the group, not only because each person teaches new recruits, but the Skills often serve as a common point of interest to draw members to join in the first place. See Skills in Combat (p. 59) for more ideas on how to use the different skills to attack and hurt others.

Based on the preferred method of violence for the group, decide on the primary, secondary, and tertiary importance for the Social, Mental, and Physical categories. This reflects the average member of the organization. Mental primary groups use multiple computers, bureaucratic red tape, or homemade weapons to threaten victims. Physical primary groups rely on physical force, or stealth and larceny, to intimidate. Social primary groups employ rally speeches, old-boy networks, picket lines, and protests, or ally with other organizations in order to gather support, especially when it comes to silencing victims.

To represent average members, prioritize Social, Mental, and Physical Skills. Each average member receives a dice pool of 5 for any action involving an average member’s primary Skills, a pool of 4 for the secondary Skills and a pool of 2 for the tertiary Skills. Assume two dots in each Attribute for derived traits.







Remember that these people are not highly trained individuals. Every organization in the world needs the members who hold jobs, who work on the mundane, day-to-day aspects that keep the organization running. Even the most violent groups need people to take care of logistics, public image, and funding. However, ensure that the members can still perform the group's favorite method of violence, such as brute force, angry protests, and more. Keep those preferred methods in mind when picking out Skills.

Individually, these average members do not pose a large threat. As members of an organization, they support and rely on each other for strength. They travel together, work as a group, and come at any problems with overwhelming numbers. These people do not want, or even believe in, a fair fight. Each member believes in accomplishing her goals and making her point with overwhelming numbers. If caught alone, or unprepared, she will retreat until she can return in force.

## Merits

Merits do not mean the same thing for social organizations that they do for single characters. To an individual, Merits reflect personal enhancements and background elements. Merits represent specializations and training beyond what just Skills can model. To a group of people, however, shared Merits reflect something entirely different. These Merits should reflect the resources, territory, and equipment that the organization as a whole has access to, and only rarely specialized training. Appropriate Merits for a group include Allies, Anonymity, Contacts, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Fame, Library, Multilingual, Resources, Safe Place, and Status.

Allies, Contacts, and Resources all work the same for a group as they do an individual. Each reflects a different web of influences and liquid assets the organization can tap into as needed. How much will the local people, the police, the politicians, the average person on the street help the group, be it out of loyalty, greed, or fear? How much money does it have? Does the group have access to lots of black market weapons or other illegal substances?

Fame and Anonymity work similar to Allies and Contacts above. How well does the group hide? How much media attention does it get? Does anyone actually believe in what the group claims to stand for, even if she does not officially join?

Multilingual reflects a common language such groups may share. Violent organizations often draw their members from a singular cultural background. People can encounter a gangster proficient in Spanish, English, or Mandarin Chinese in addition to her native tongue in many places in the world. A religious extremist can pick up his religion's holy tongue and use it to communicate with other extremists. Remember that the world is a diverse place, drawn from many cultures, and anyone, of any race or gender, can join a violence group.

Library, despite its name, reflects more than just access to books. Mechanically, the Merit remains the same; however, it no longer represents a collection of books. Instead, for

large groups, the Library Merit reflects a large think tank of people drawn from a wide variety of lifestyles. The Merit encompasses engineers who know a thing or two about building dangerous weapons, lawyers who know the way around the political field, and biochemists who specialize in making drugs. Where the Attributes and Skills reflect the general abilities of a member when confronted, Library reflects access to specialized knowledge a handful of members may possess.

Like Library, the Merits Status, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, and Safe Place keep the same mechanics, but all reflect something different than normal. These four Merits reflect any territory that such an organization may hold, and only apply within that area. Note that more than just gangs hold territory. Hate groups, for instance a purist community planning organization, congregate in specific neighborhoods and often do their best to keep undesirables out. Police have set areas they patrol and watch for deviants. Criminal predators often have favorite hunting grounds they maintain, learning the ins and outs of the land. Shadowy cults have ambitions and drives that revolve around anything from sacrifices to access to specific materials needed for their ceremonies. Not every violence group has territory, but the vast majority does. Remember, people primarily attack others in order to establish control over resources, even if that includes other humans as a resource. Established territory brings access to the vast majority of resources a group could want.

In these cases, Status reflects how much the local community recognizes the power and authority of the violence-prone organization. How much pull does the group have? Is the influence strong enough to convince the people never to snitch to rivals or the authorities? As well, consider Status as a measure of how good an impression the membership has with people who recognize the Status for purposes of social maneuvering. One dot of Status provides a good impression, three an excellent, and five a perfect. The organization may default to Hard Leverage and violence a lot, and the supposedly goodly impressions may actually be born out of fear and a desire to avoid pain, but not every interaction will involve threats and physical confrontations.

Meanwhile, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, and Safe Place all reflect how well the organization has set its territory. Does the gang have a sufficient web of lookouts to tell when a threat comes? How well do the members know their territory and use it to their advantage? The advantages from Safe Place do not just refer to a single building, but the whole of the established territory the organization controls. The entire membership benefits from the coordinated efforts of its people, so that its members never end up lost, know when a danger approaches, and get the jump on threats with traps.

## Size

The scariest thing about a large organization has nothing to do with its goals, its rhetoric, or its resources. It does not even relate to a willingness to use violence to solve issues or to climb up in the world.



No, the mere fact that a group exists as a collective, a single mind, scares people the most. Anyone can overcome a single violent person with a will to fight back, a plan, and perhaps a good weapon. What can someone do against an entire organization? Individual members exist as smaller parts of a greater whole. Should an enemy of the organization ever hurt one of the small parts, then the whole comes back looking for revenge. A small handful of people just cannot take on a full group.

The larger the group, the larger the threat it represents, and not just because more antagonists show up when the group wants to hurt someone. Such organizations support each other in more ways than just a lopsided fight. Each member helps to reinforce the others' beliefs, to support efforts to convince others to come to his way of thinking, to do research, and to aid in a large number of casual workings.

In addition to the above Merits, groups can take the following Organization Size Merit to reflect the size of its membership. Player characters who join a violence group for any reason qualify for the Merit.

## New Merit: Organization Size

(● to ●●●●●)

**Prerequisite:** Must be part of a violence group; cannot apply to individual characters.

**Effect:** Each dot in Organization Size reflects a larger number of members that the group can bring to bear. One dot can reflect a local organization with only ten dedicated members, while five dots can represent a far-reaching organization with international ties, such as the Cosa Nostra or a Triad. The exact size of the group does not matter, while the number of supporters who can come at any given time does. Therefore, while the Mafia has hundreds of thousands of members, a local branch may only have a handful of men, and a smaller Merit rating.

Organization Size has several effects:

- Each dot of the Merit adds to Doors whenever someone outside the group tries to manipulate a member through social maneuvering.
- Whenever the members can work together towards a group roll, such as trying to put pressure on a judge or researching how to build a bomb, each dot adds an automatic success to the main actor's total. On an extended action, apply the extra successes to the first roll.
- If a member of the organization calls for help, each dot represents two average members, as detailed using the rules above, who will arrive to support in time. For long-term plans, up to five members per dot arrive to help in person.

**Drawback:** The group expects you to do the same whenever someone else calls for your help. Members quickly can tell who steps up to the plate when the shit hits the fan, and who does not.

## Individual Members

The more significant members, such as the leaders or unique factions within the organization, use more the detailed Attributes, Skills, and Merits from standard character creation rules. While the average members make up the bulk of the organization, and provide much of the mundane grunt work and logistics necessary for any group to function, the specific skill sets and abilities of the group's leaders embody the driving force behind the group's operations.

Before designing any specific member of the organization, consider what specialized talents the group needs, and why the character needs to distinguish herself from the average members. Does the story involve running into the local leader of the group? Will the characters encounter a recruiter for the organization, or perhaps an enforcer, the muscle that does the dirtiest jobs? Does the story require that the group has a member with a sympathetic ear, who has doubts about what she has gotten herself into? Does that same group have internal watchdogs who root out subversion? Should the group have access to a technical specialist for building a homemade bomb?

As always, the troupe determines if a need for such a specialist exists. These members represent points of contact with the player characters. They serve as the faces and arms of this violence group. Specifically, these individuals represent the Storyteller characters that the group will encounter. Adjust the following traits up and down to fit your chronicle's needs. These reflect a general example of such a specialist.

This new Storyteller character needs Aspirations, a Virtue, and a Vice; usually, the character's traits are just a modification on the group's theme, taking into account any specialty or position the character possesses.

Prioritize the Attributes and Skills. Put three points in each of the Attributes critical to the role the character plays, one dot in an area neglected, and two everywhere else. Put three points in a single Skill. Skills critical to the concept receive two dots, and any distantly related Skills receive a single dot.


Assign the Skill Specialties at this point. This should result in one dice pool with 7 dice, two others with 6 dice, and several with 5 or fewer.

For Merits, important members of violence groups commonly possess Professional Training and various Style Merits. Remember that each individual also has access to the group Merits, so these Merits should reflect the personal specialty and needs of a character, not the trends of the organization as a whole. The leader should have one Merit around 3 points, one or two near 2 points, and any other necessary Merits at 1 point.

Lastly, make a few notes on how to portray each individual — how he differs from the average member, as well as the role he plays. Many groups commonly include a spokesperson who leads the organization, a dedicated enforcer, and an informant of some kind. However, groups that only include one or two of the above do exist, and some groups







function with nothing more than average members. The actual makeup depends heavily on the individualized needs of each organization.

The leader serves the organization as its most charismatic member. He shouts the catchphrases the loudest; he attracts and brings in new members, who work as the spokespeople of the group presented to the outside world. He works as the glue that holds everyone together and the rudder that steers the culture of the group. In a very real way, he embodies everything that the organization stands for. A leader can end up as a true believer, or just someone who wears the mask of one comfortably for all the advantages it brings him.

A leader tends to have a wide variety of Skills, depending on the organization. Not only does he need charisma, but also a good head for planning and strategy as well as a demonstrable proficiency in the group's favorite tactics. These tactics could include physical brutality, slanderous words, and good aim with rotten fruit, the ability to dig up a victim's personal information, or whatever violent technique the group may favor. A leader who cannot participate loses credibility in the eyes of the group. Make Social traits primary, along with Skills like Expression, Politics, and Intimidation. Merits should reflect the need to inspire and convince others to his way of thinking, like Inspiring and Pusher.

An enforcer works as dedicated muscle or a thug. This physically oriented member may want a bigger slice of the pie along with greater recognition, or perhaps she just enjoys working for others while getting her hands dirty. Whatever her motivation, the enforcer represents the most violent aspect of the group, specializing in physical brutality. Often enough, she also serves as a watcher so she can keep an eye out for trouble.

Ability-wise, an enforcer relies heavily on Physical Attributes and Skills as well as Wits. One will prefer a more hands-on approach, literally relying on her fists or a weapon in hand, while another will refuse to trust in anything but powerful guns. No matter what method the enforcer picks, it always carries the risk of death for her victim. Necessary Skills for the enforcer include Brawl, Weaponry, Firearms, and Athletics, as well as Intimidation, Investigation, and Socialize. Merits, unsurprisingly, include Fighting Styles and Trained Observer.

Information gathering, spying, and espionage make up a significant portion of more robust organizations. The group simply cannot function without an informant. Any time that someone needs information, the members go to this person. A leader cannot make plans without good information. An enforcer does not know who to take as her next victim without someone to point the finger. Whether he works as a street-level snitch, corporate spy, undercover cultist, or something else, the informant knows everyone else dances to the information he provides.

Finesse Attributes win the day here. An informant needs subtlety more than anyone else; open eyes and ears, tapped into the pulse of different cultures. The informant finds that Subterfuge, Empathy, Investigation, Computers, Stealth, and

Larceny are critical to his operations no matter what kind of organization he works for. Merits such as Sympathetic, Barfly, Fixer, Trained Observer, and additional Contacts all work for the informant as well.

## Portraying Members

Uniforms can make the members of a group easy to recognize, which can be both a blessing and a curse. Many groups adopt a uniform to suggest organization, power, and numbers. Moreover, as discussed under Size above, many people blanch at the thought of going against an organization and multiple antagonists. An intimidating, unified appearance alone can cow opponents into submission without a word being spoken, without lifting a single finger.

Police have uniforms for that exact reason; law enforcement in the United States actually considers a striking appearance as part of the force continuum. Gangs likewise have their colors and certain tattoos in their uniform. Different hate groups have their white hoods and Guy Fawkes masks to inspire fear, a visual threat anyone can recognize on sight. Religious groups wear necklaces, pins, or tattoos with religious icons on them. While wearing a uniform remains unnecessary, the benefits generally outweigh the costs so greatly that, unless the group needs to hide for some reason, most adopt some kind of uniform or some other kind of identifying mark.

The uniforms also help reinforce a group mentality. Any cult, whether a mystery cult, a cult of personality, or even a commercial cult, employs these fixed appearances to help subsume individuality into the group. "I am not hurting you for my own reasons. I am part of something greater," becomes the mindset. It helps serve as an excellent justification to the human mind to commit crimes and atrocities.

While these ensembles may have a lot of benefits, not every group has them. However, many organizations do tend to attract certain demographics into their membership. What kinds of people join the group? Does the group predominantly recruit young males of a single ethnicity? Will the membership include the elderly? Does recruitment happen on the streets, on college campuses, or at churches? The recruitment could even happen in a hellfire club comprised of the idle rich with a taste for blood sport. Consider where the members predominantly originate, and how that ties into the group's Aspirations and Vice.

In addition to dress and origins, each organization also tends to attract members who display a number of distinct mannerisms, such as adopted scripture quotes, nervous tics, certain attitudes, and a couple of distinct habits that can come up when group members are interacting with the troupe. Most people who fall into violence as an answer come to feel entitled. What other emotions does a group member constantly display? How does it tie into the Virtue that the group wears as a mask?

Planning out these different tendencies helps frame the group not only as a single entity, but makes it stand out as a unique threat that isn't replaceable by any other faceless antagonist the troupe may come across.



## History and Bringing It All Together

The final step in creating an organization involves looking at its history, and what bloody steps it took to reach where it stands now. Background and history — the spark of life for a character — does more than just provide an idea of what that character has done in her past. It serves as a map to all the character's ties and relationships. The history of a group serves the same purpose. Who the leader knows, who the enforcers hurt, what bridges the informer burned, where the individual members stand now, and why the group as a whole does the terrible things it does.

These backgrounds should not be complex or overly involved. However, much like Concept discussed above, the history still needs to contain any plot hooks or connections that the player troupe would become interested in. Any relationships to character Mentors, Allies, Contacts, or Retainers are especially important. Remember that violent behavior defines this group. Therefore, any relationship should always have a raw element to it. Standard methods of interacting with others can include the troupe's friends, family, Allies, Mentors, and Contacts being targeted with gratuitous bribes, poisonous rhetoric, threats and even assault.

## Trying to Join

Sometimes, players surprise you. The troupe may have decided to go undercover and launch an attack from the inside in order to oppose a violence group. Maybe, instead of opposing it, the characters decide to try to subvert the organization for their own ends. Perhaps, the characters believe in the lies the organization spins, and decide to join.

While most organizations that engage in violent behavior do not recruit blindly, they all love gaining new members. The leadership remains well aware that society at large frowns upon a notable portion of the more violent activities, so most groups like to ensure that new recruits resonate with their beliefs.

The Status Merit models advancement through an organization's ranks. Before a character may buy a point in the Status Merit, the group subjects him to a contested social maneuvering action, with the player character attempting to convince the group to let her in, and the group attempting to convince the character to adopt its Aspirations (and drop any directly opposed to the group). No matter who opens all his Doors first, the group will welcome the character in. However, should the group recruiter open the new recruit's Doors, it represents the corruptive influence such extended close proximity to a large group brings. This contested action repeats itself for every dot of Status the character wishes to buy.

Either a socially adept individual or an average member will serve as the recruiter. No matter who contests the main character, she keeps the full benefits of the Organization Size Merit.

Upon purchase of the first dot of Status, the character gains access to the group Merits, with a caveat. Every time the

character uses the Merits, the organization targets the player character with another social maneuvering action with the same goal as above. This continues until the character adopts Aspirations similar to the group's. At this point, the character also gains access to the group's Virtue and Vice as if the character had gained the Virtuous and Vice-Ridden Merits, even if the character already possesses the Merits. The alternate rules for regaining group Willpower apply to the character as well.

The social maneuvering action may fail at any time the group believes that the character's petition to join involves deception. The group's members roll Wits + Empathy or Wits + Subterfuge to determine if the character lies; violence groups rarely trust easily. Alternatively, if the character refuses to take part in the group's violent activities, many of which may lead to Integrity breaking points, it will also cause suspicion that the character truly does not wish to join. Suspicious activity provides a scaling +1 bonus per action to any Wits + Empathy or Wits + Subterfuge roll on the part of the organization's members.

## Sample Groups

Violence comes in many different forms. Many times, the violent wear black hearts on their sleeves, while other times, those same people hide behind pleasant faces. Violence can come from anyone. This next section examines some of the people who embrace violence in their lives.

### Precinct 44

In this world, three types of people exist — the sheep, the sheep dogs, and the wolves. The police swear to protect the public, to keep them safe, to act as the German Shepherds that protect a flock from those that prey on it. Things go very wrong, however, when the police end up becoming the wolves instead. Drawn from the friends and family of gang members and criminals, the various officers of this Precinct have turned against the very law-abiding people they swore to protect. Some cops go bad. Even more start out that way. Why should the characters care?

### Entropy Spreads

Police represent the law. If you cannot trust them, you cannot trust the law at all. And, as trust in the law declines, anarchy spreads. Not only do crime rates go up everywhere, but also people stop caring about their neighborhoods as much. Broken windows and graffiti proliferate; trash is strewn about everywhere. The entire neighborhood becomes afraid, and violence against innocent people on the street grows as no one tries to restore order. The characters' homes become dangerous.

### Shakedown

Civil forfeiture laws let a police officer seize money during a drug raid. Just fill out the right forms, a bit of sleight of







hand in front of the camera, and voilà. The cop arrests you for possession, takes the money and cards out of your wallet, and tows away your car, never to be seen again. Processing takes forever, until someone pays the cop's "bail" money. It can happen to anyone.

**Concept:** Corrupt police

**Aspirations:** "Arrest" people and hold for ransom, Support associated crime lords, Discourage citizens from reporting.

**Virtue/Mask:** Protection ("Serve and protect")

**Vice:** Greed

**Average Member:** Social 5, Physical 4, Mental 2

**Group Merits:** Allies (Crime) 1, Contacts (Equipment Requisition) 1, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Organization Size 3, Safe Place 2, Status (Neighborhood) 3

**Portraying Hints:** The officers of Precinct 44 look like average police officers, having all the same mannerisms and habits you expect from the police. However, the members invariably come off as rude, doubting, and accusatory. They warn people that filing a false claim is a crime, especially when that claim would reveal a real problem. Help comes too late to do much beyond filing a report. If anyone resists or makes too much of a fuss, then the Tasers, pepper spray, and cuffs come out. People arrested do not get out until the family and friends pay "bail" the police themselves set.

**Background:** No one calls a crime lord dumb. He knows that he can seed his own people into the military, the police, the courts, the government. The crime lord just needs to make some of his allies look good on paper. In addition, inner city police always need more people on the job. With a clean record, nothing stops young men and women from applying to the police, and coming away with a badge. Enough time and these corrupt officers can place themselves through the police department and watch each other's backs. They tend to gravitate towards positions where a lot of information or goods pass through, such as Patrol Officer, Dispatch, Evidence Clerk, and the Detective Bureau.

**Specific Members:** Precinct 44 has the following specific members:

## PATROL OFFICER

In order to be effective, a corrupt officer needs to be with the action. Driving in a car, being the first responder to the scene, handling citizen calls as they come in, this officer always serves as the first line for pretty much everything. He hears everything, knows when to avert his eyes, and always arrives at the right time to make sure no one steps out of line.

**Aspirations:** Keep ears open for information, Make money on the side, Dirty the badge.

**Virtue:** Loyalty



**Vice:** Arrogant

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

**Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 2 (Police Tactics), Drive 2, Empathy 1, Firearm 2, Intimidation 2, Investigation 2, Larceny 2 (Plant Evidence), Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Weaponry 2 (Baton)

**Merits:** Contact (Street, Police Database); Fast Reflexes 1, Police Tactics Style 3, Professional Training (Cop; Streetwise, Firearm) 2

**Integrity:** 3

**Willpower:** 5

**Defense:** 5

**Initiative:** 5

**Health:** 8

**Portraying Patrol Officer:** The patrol officer feels he deserve respect. He has the badge and the gun. He can mess up your life; this officer just needs one excuse. Oh, he understands that he has to play the game and follow the rules while watched. However, when push comes to shove, he always has something he can do or say to justify his actions at any point.

## DETECTIVE

Where the patrol officer runs on the front lines, directly dealing with the public and criminal element, the Detective serves to monitor the more evidence-based aspects of police work.

**Aspirations:** Report evidence to interested parties for extra cash, Take it easy, Check out all the best restaurants in the city.

**Virtue:** Humble

**Vice:** Untrustworthy

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

**Skills:** Academics 1, Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Empathy 2, Firearms 2 (Pistol), Intimidation 2, Investigation 3 (Crime Scene), Politics 1, Streetwise 2 (Detect Lies)

**Merits:** Professional Training (Empathy, Investigation) 2, Status (Police) 2, Trained Observer 3

**Integrity:** 4

**Willpower:** 4

**Defense:** 5

**Initiative:** 5

**Health:** 7

**Portraying a Detective:** The detective has earned her way, having gotten exactly where she wants to be. Thanks to

the union, now she does not have to worry about someone firing her; so now that she has all the information she can sell, she can kick back and let herself go a bit. The detective comes off as a bit sloppy and apathetic about the cases she covers. She just does not feel the necessity or drive to work that hard, leaving plenty of time to catch up on all the Netflix on her tablet. She gets her paycheck no matter what happens.

## Nation of the Divine

Xenophobia and racial hatred rise around the world, from the Americas, through Europe, to Africa and Australia. Into this environment steps this old religion, asking if the second-class minorities have had enough, if the people want to take their rightful places. On the surface, the speakers claim to teach the downtrodden the road to self-independence. However, the religious leaders fill those inspirational speeches with hate mongering and a message to prepare to rise up. Anyone who does not look like them becomes the enemy. People who sue for peace turn into friends of the enemy. The same homophobic, anti-Semitic speeches that have existed for centuries return in force. And a growing number of people across the world listen to these hate-filled speeches. Religion, the opiate of the masses, has beaten the plowshare into the sword. Why should the characters care?

## The Revolution

Violent rhetoric begets violence. Many cities lie on the edge of disaster, just waiting for a spark before going up in flames. Once the spark hits, the Nation of the Divine sends its ministers to step forward, raising a call for action. The Nation will see Justice served, even if half the city has to burn in the process. If any city has any racial tensions, the ministers, the followers who have taken up arms, are on standby to raise the cry. Depending on the followers, that cry could take the form of picketing, riots, or even some shots fired.

## The Militant

The Nation of the Divine preacher maintains that the members need to prepare for a coming war, violent and bloody. The people listen. Guns and other weapons flood the neighborhoods. All the young men with their fancy new gear itch to try it out, now and again. Sometimes, people end up as targets instead of the paper ones at the shooting range.

## The Chosen People

The Nation of the Divine preaches a message of hope to its people, and hatred of everyone not part of its people or religion. Or even sexual preference. Especially if someone tries to leave — authorities have attributed a number of bodies to religious leaders killing deserters. Anyone who falls outside of the lines can become a target of attacks in any community where the Divine Nation holds influence, especially if the target speaks out against the Nation.





**Concept:** Religious Extremists

**Aspirations:** Incite conflict, Convert chosen people to cause, Generate positive press for the group.

**Virtue/Mask:** Righteous (Improve the social and spiritual health of all humanity)

**Vice:** Aggressive

**Average Member:** Social 4, Mental 2, Physical 5

**Group Merits:** Allies (Media) 1, Allies (Weapons) 2, Fame 2, Multilingual, Organization Size 2, Resources 3

**Portraying Hints:** A member of the Nation of the Divine seems like a good person. He appears rightfully concerned with the imbalance between people in the world. However, a deeper look reveals that the Nation, for all its love of its people, preaches hatred of everyone else. The faithful member does not fight for justice. Deep down, he just spoils for a fight. Any fight. He bickers over prices at a store counter, or engages in road rage. But he always fight with outsiders, and never his own.

**Background:** Nation of the Faithful traces its history back nearly 200 years in the Middle East, with the decline of the Ottoman Empire. As Europe began to overwhelm the declining Empire, the remnants of the Empire went underground, dreaming of the time that their people ruled. Sadly, that dream never realized itself. Instead, it merged with the people's religious practices, and became a new dogma. Interestingly, the religion began to move away from its original roots, and spreading to other cultures and races, but always a downtrodden minority treated as second-class citizens. And, even though the religion has changed hands, the message remains the same. Those who follow the Nation of the Divine remain a chosen people, who once ruled the most ancient of empires before it fell to devils. Their time shall come again.

**Specific Members:** Nation of the Divine has the following specific members:

## MINISTER

The religious leader of the Nation of the Divine spends her time deep in the heart of her people's neighborhoods, working closely with them. Like any good minister, she does good works among the people to earn their trust. Then, the minister preaches to the people, teaching the Nation's propaganda. This message says that the people need to fight in order to gain power for the community, and that same community needs to rise up against its oppressors. Peace, to this teacher, is not an option.

**Aspirations:** Provide support to her oppressed people, Convert followers, Incite conflict.

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Wrathful

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

**Skills:** Academics 2, Athletics 1, Empathy 2, Expression (Speeches) 3, Firearms 1, Intimidate 2, Politics 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Area of Expertise (Speeches), Contacts (Other Religions), Fast Talking Style 2, Inspiring, Meditative Mind 2, Professional Training (Academics, Expression) 2

**Integrity:** 5

**Willpower:** 6

**Defense:** 3

**Initiative:** 5

**Health:** 7

**Portraying Minister:** The minister does holy work, calling herself the poor, righteous teacher preaching to the masses, the sworn enemy of the rich and powerful. The job involves hard work, like visiting the wrongfully jailed and running local handouts. She spends time playing Euchre with those elders of the community. The minister even plays basketball on occasion with the kids, though she loses a lot. The injustice that her people suffer angers this Nation minister. She wants the imbalance to change. It's always someone else's fault that the people remain poor and downtrodden, though. Her voice, the embodiment of her people, needs to spread across the world.

## SOLDIER OF FAITH

The soldier wears many faces. Mainly, he acts just like every other working parent in the world, working at low-end jobs to make ends meet. He works in the factories, or he rides the bus out half an hour to work a fast food job. No matter what, the soldier patiently deals with what the world throws at him, just waiting for a chance to strike back. Sometimes, he walks among the people, urging them to fight back and riot. Other times, he makes sure that anyone causing trouble for the Nation just disappears.

**Aspirations:** Make a world where one's children can rule, Be ready to lead the fights, Avoid the bottle at all costs.

**Virtue:** Loving

**Vice:** Cruel

**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

**Skills:** Animal Ken 1, Athletics 3, Brawl 2 (street), Drive 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Investigation 1, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Weaponry 2 (Improvised)

**Merits:** Common Sense, Fast Reflexes 1, Indomitable, Improvised Weaponry Style 3, Street Style 2



**Integrity:** 5  
**Willpower:** 5  
**Defense:** 6  
**Initiative:** 7  
**Health:** 8

**Portraying Soldier of Faith:** The people have had to put up with a lot of stress, and this particular individual had enough. He used to fight in the streets and the bars all the time, wrecking his life with each scuffle. He still has the scars from those days. The Nation of Divinity helped pick this soldier up, get off the booze, and clean up his act; then the soldier saw the light. Now, he just watches and waits for the opportune moment, putting all those skills from the street to good use. He has kids to watch out for, after all. He knows that, one day, he will wake his children up to a brand new world for them.

## The Seventh Sharp

When people hear the word “gang,” all thoughts immediately turn to low-class neighborhoods. Images of the inner city street thug arise, complete with the pose for a mug shot. No one looks to the middle classes, or the bored, rich elite for gangs. That attitude lets the Seventh Sharp get away with murder. People see them as a little clique of privileged youth working together to have some fun away from home, just raising a little hell, making a little money on the side selling some prescription drugs. The people shrug and say that boys will be boys, after all. Why should the characters care?

## Teaching the Next Generation

Seven men and women make up the head of the Seventh Sharp, each around mid-20s in age. They have moved from kids making mistakes to career criminals. The authorities know the real people behind the recent rash of muggings and the new drugs hitting the street in the nicer areas, where people do not expect bad things to happen. But the authorities cannot do much; the Seven do not actually do anything themselves. No, this gang recruits from all the schools and makes the kids come out and play. If the cops catch the little ones, the kids only serve only a little time in juvie, with sealed records. And heaven forbid the parents not cover for their children. Meanwhile, these budding gangsters attack innocent citizens, assaulting them en masse in the street. The gang has not seriously hurt anyone yet, but people wonder when that will change.

## Zero Tolerance

While the Sharps have their fun messing with people in the neighborhood, the police have adopted a zero tolerance policy and hit the streets in force. The authorities give out tickets for even the smallest violations now, making even more people upset. Faces turn away when the police drive

past, and everyone seals their lips tight. Each person starts to harbor doubts about the competency of the cops to protect the people, leading to more tension.

## Broken Window Theory

Families, hoping to get away from everything going on, sell their homes at below market price before heading out of town. New, more apathetic families move in. Mysterious people end up buying up some other houses as well. Nothing major has happened yet, but if the trend continues, it will change the entire resonance of the neighborhood. Already, local kids have thrown rocks through the windows of empty houses, shattering the panes. Next time, the stone throwers might hit a house with people still living inside.

**Concept:** Bored middle class kids joining gangs

**Aspirations:** Raise some hell, Buy or swipe expensive things, Live the life Peter Pan wanted.

**Virtue/Mask:** Courageous (Just having some fun!)

**Vice:** Greedy

**Average Member:** Social 5, Mental 4, Physical 2

**Group Merits:** Allies (Parents) 1, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Organization Size 1, Library (Pharmaceuticals) 2, Safe Place 2

**Portraying Hints:** The Sharps all come in youth-sized packages; the ages range from the late-20s to the mid-teens. Some of them even wear a school uniform during their crimes, adding a bit more insult to the injury. Most of the youths joined for not only the thrill, but the extra cash. With the economy slow, no one had a lot of money. Once they join, however, the gang members earn the cash for all the little things life can offer, such as top-of-the-line phones, game systems, music, designer clothes, and all the other trinkets that make life worth living. The Sharps treat the entire situation as a big joke, so exaggerated signs, fake colors, and mocking of other gang clichés remains constant.

**Background:** The Seven Sharp started off when a group of seven friends met each day behind their school to smoke a few cigarettes and complain how much their lives sucked. These seven acted out frequently, breaking curfew and slumming on the wrong side of town. Eventually, they found someone who would sell them some pills, in quantities large enough to resell. They took the drugs, started asking around school, and made some money selling the drugs there. When three of the group moved to a different school, they kept it up. They pulled in members from a third and fourth school. The trend continued, pulling in more and more people. It grew to the point where every school district has at least one of Sharp's kids.

**Specific Members:** The Seven Sharp has the following specific members:





## GANG BANGER

The middle management of the Sharps, this gangster has gotten too old to stand on the front lines and directly deal with drug distribution. Instead, she watches over the supply distribution, and making sure the money goes where it needs to. So what if she redistributes a bit to a slush fund to pay for her apartments and cars, and maybe a gift or two for a friend? She works hard enough for her cut, and the bosses pay better than a fast food gig.

**Aspirations:** Make money, Settle into a new life, Get a bigger cut of the pie.

**Virtue:** Humble

**Vice:** Untrustworthy

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

**Skills:** Animal Ken 1, Athletics 2, Computer 2, Medicine 1, Drive (Motorcycle) 1, Firearm (Pistol) 3, Larceny 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2 (Drugs), Subterfuge 2, Weaponry 2

**Merits:** Barfly, Firefight Style 2, Pusher, Resources 2

**Integrity:** 4

**Willpower:** 4

**Defense:** 5

**Initiative:** 5

**Health:** 7

**Portraying Gang Banger:** Life is good, and the gangster knows it. Good food, enough money to blow on anything she could want to buy, and a new home without having to put in all those years back in school. The Seven Sharp holds her absolute loyalty, at least until something goes wrong. Then, she will do whatever it takes to avoid the heat. For now, though, the Sharp has the gangster's loyalty, and she wears a lucky number seven gold necklace as a sign of that allegiance.

## ONE OF SEVEN

The leader reached his power and influence almost entirely with luck. He built up this little empire in an empty space, with no local rivals. Now, he has a firm grip on the neighborhood, and spends most of his time either cooking up new creations, or enjoying the poisonous fruit of his labors.

**Aspirations:** Make new designer drugs, Get petty revenge on society, Get rich.

**Virtue:** Generous

**Vice:** Hasty

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

**Skills:** Animal Ken (Lab Rats) 1, Firearms 2, Medicine 3 (Biochemistry), Persuasion 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Allies (Drug Suppliers) 1, Fast Talking Style 2, Fast Reflexes 1, Firefight Style 2, Library (Pharmaceuticals) 3, Pusher, Resources 3, Status (Drug Trade) 2

**Integrity:** 3

**Willpower:** 4

**Defense:** 2

**Initiative:** 5

**Health:** 7

**Portraying One of Seven:** The Seven Sharp founder just wants to procrastinate and enjoy life. He has found his meal ticket, and intends on keeping it. Right now, he is the only game in town, and that has made the Sharp complacent. He started out in the whole drug trading biz because he indulges in laziness, doing everything the easy way. He *deserves* the easy way. The founder has not quite realized that money does not actually buy real friends, and that he has surrounded himself with sharks.

## Nameless

The Internet makes everything easier. Communication, learning, and buying all became easier. Sadly, however, it makes it easier for hate groups to communicate and find each other across the globe. Nameless grew out of these dark parts of the Internet. Formed from local neo-Nazi, Klan, and other hate groups, the members coordinate new tactics that drive out the undesirables from their communities. This little group can cause a lot of trouble for others, and all from the safety of the anonymous Internet that brought them together. The Nameless feel they have carte blanche to do whatever they wish. No, not wish. The members have carte blanche to do what they need to do for the good of everyone. Why should the characters care?

## Viral Targeting

The Nameless do not just target people who fall outside of their ideas of purity; they target every friend, coworker, and distant relative of the target, making everyone's lives miserable. They make constant phone calls throughout the day and night, call SWAT teams to the homes of innocent people, issue bomb and gun threats, and throw bricks with threatening messages through windows. Every tactic one can imagine to scare another, targeted at others just for having the wrong friends. Player Mentors, Allies, and Contacts all qualify as vectors for marking a member of the troupe as a target.

## Lost Business

Nameless tactics involve destroying properties around the community. They burn buildings down to the ground,



heedless of the lives lost while the firefighters attempt to contain the blazes. The Nameless bomb conferences, and the shrapnel injures innocent bystanders simply because the right person took the stage. Every business in the community feels the aftershocks, as sales drop and large corporations debate the wisdom of investing capital in the city.

## Witch Hunt

As the targeting continues, people point their own fingers at potential suspects. The Nameless could be anyone at any place. The group has not even hinted at how many members it might have. Anyone who may possibly fit the idea of one of the Nameless can expect suspicion and harassment from the community. Fear may even goad someone scared enough into taking justice into his own hands.

**Concept:** Internet hate group

**Aspirations:** Drive out undesirable members of society, Create mistrust, Watch the world burn.

**Virtue/Mask:** Righteous

**Vice:** Hateful

**Average Member:** Social 2, Mental 5, Physical 4

**Group Merits:** N/A

**Portraying Hints:** As an amorphous entity hiding behind masks and IP addresses, the Nameless goes out of its way to avoid direct confrontations. These people deliberately do their best to appear as boogiemens and faceless entities. Not only so the authorities cannot catch them, but to make their terrorist tactics that much more frightening. The members aim to become ghosts. Fortunately, they have not perfected it yet. Investigators have found cheap Halloween props left behind, suggesting the group has taken the whole ghost thing literally. To one of the Nameless, keeping her identity secret remains a top priority.

**Background:** At one point or another, all the Nameless had all previously adopted the beliefs of an extremist racial hate group. Once the members discovered each other through various net chats they became friends, before adopting their current tactics. Even now, they go about their normal lives. Jess the lawyer loves spending her evenings reading the latest Harlequin novels from the store, while Frank the butcher remains obsessed with watching forensic and game shows. These are all just regular people trying to carry on two different lives, united by their hate.

**Specific Members:** The Nameless have no specialists, only average members.









# Chapter Two: Instruments of Violence

In this chapter, we address many character options, game systems, and other tools for your table. We start off with some general Merits dealing with violence as a topic. Then, we move on to a thorough treatment of Fighting Merits. Next we address methods for representing lasting trauma in your games. We wrap up by discussing many ways various Skills can be used in violent scenes and stories, besides the obvious Brawl, Firearms, and Weaponry Skills.

## New General Merits

These Merits are available to any character who meets the prerequisites. They are written with human characters in mind, but most should work fine in the other **Chronicles of Darkness** game lines. They may require some consideration for your particular chronicle's direction, and some traits might not convert perfectly. For example, some Merits that reference Integrity might convert reasonably to use the Humanity trait from **Vampire: The Requiem**, but others might not since they don't work the same way. You may have to adapt or rethink some of the details to fit the game you're playing. This shouldn't necessarily be grounds for disallowing such a Merit, but do what is best for your chronicle on a case-for-case basis.

### Air of Menace / (••)

**Prerequisites:** Intimidation ••

**Effect:** Your character has survived dozens of fights, and each one has taken its toll. He carries scars, features that have healed crookedly, and an attitude that unsettles others. The character gains +2 dice to rolls that use fear and menace to force compliance, such as with Intimidation rolls. Opponents less menacing than the character also think twice before provoking him. Opponents with Intimidation dots fewer than the character's must spend a point of Willpower to initiate combat against him.

**Drawback:** Though many people try to overcome their prejudices, appearance still drives many human opinions. In social maneuvers, the character's first impression is downgraded one step for people who do not know him, and even for those who do, he must overcome an additional Door.

### Body as Weapon / (••)

**Prerequisites:** Stamina •••, Brawl ••


**Effect:** Your character has honed her body to be a hardened weapon. She has trained long, punishing hours to inure herself to the pain of the cracked knuckles, broken hands, and crushed toes that come with hitting others with her body. She can hit harder and more often without flinching. Your character's unarmed strikes still cause bashing damage normally, but they add one point of bashing damage on a successful hit.

"The primary thing when you take a sword in your hands is your intention to cut the enemy, whatever the means. Whenever you parry, hit, spring, strike or touch the enemy's cutting sword, you must cut the enemy in the same movement. It is essential to attain this. If you think only of hitting, springing, striking or touching the enemy, you will not be able actually to cut him."

— Miyamoto Musashi,  
Go Rin no Sho

— Miyamoto Musashi,  
Go Rin no Sho





## Cohesive Unit (•, •• or •••)

**Prerequisites:** Presence •••+

**Effect:** Your character is a natural leader who brings out the best from those he works with. At one dot, team members add +2 dice to teamwork actions dedicated to helping the team (see **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 72). At two dots the team gains access to a pool of dice equal to the character's Presence each scene, which they can draw upon for actions where they work towards their established purpose. At three dots, all team members can reroll a failed result once per scene. In each case, the benefits last until depleted, or until the team reaches or deviates from its agreed goal or disbands. The character with this Merit can't access any of the benefits he encourages in others.

**Drawback:** The character's natural aura of command can cause confusion in groups where the character is not the recognized leader. If a group benefiting from the character's Cohesive Unit Merit receives orders from someone they are expected to follow, and those orders don't conform with the actions the group is already taking, they suffer a -1 penalty for a number of turns equal to the character's Presence while they work through the conflicting tasks.

## Defender (•, •• or •••)

**Prerequisites:** None

**Effect:** Your character is filled with a burning fury when her friends or family are threatened. For each dot of this Merit, the character gains a Willpower point to spend on actions related to defending or protecting these loved ones. This also applies to actions taken preemptively to prevent clear threats to her charges, and to acts of retribution against an offender if her loved ones are hurt. These bonus Willpower points do not count towards the character's normal Willpower dots, and replenish each chapter.

**Drawback:** The danger of loving so deeply is the pain of loss that comes from failing. If someone the character loves is killed or otherwise permanently taken from her, she cannot regain Willpower unless she strives towards inflicting retribution on the guilty party. If she is prevented in doing so, she grieves and loses a point of Willpower per day until she reaches zero. At this point, she may begin the healing process and recover Willpower as normal again. Your character loses this Merit at that point.

## Empath (••)

**Prerequisites:** Empathy ••

**Effect:** Your character has seen pain, and can identify it instantly. With a single Wits + Empathy roll, you can identify any mental Conditions from which a character suffers, and his Integrity. A character trying to hide this can contest with Manipulation + Subterfuge, but may roll no more dice than his Integrity or other relevant trait. If he does not have Integrity, you get an idea of his general, abstract state and internal conflicts. For example, a vampire has Humanity instead of Integrity. Your character might know that the

vampire struggles with a terrible addiction, and feels inhuman, but wishes to maintain attachment to what made him feel like a person.

Any character so discerned is always down one Door in any social maneuvering with your character.

After a successful roll, with meaningful, relevant interaction, your character can give the 8-again quality to a subject's breaking point rolls for the chapter.

If a character takes your character as a Support Network (see below), that character may never roll fewer dice for a breaking point than your character has Empathy dots.

## Object Fetishism (• to •••••)

**Effect:** Your character places immense trust and confidence in an object, often assuming it has mystical or otherworldly significance. He believes he's tied inexorably to the object. Choose a Skill Specialty when taking this Merit; that Specialty must be tied to your character's relationship to the object.

Each chapter, your character gains an additional number of Willpower points equal to the Merit's dots. If your character uses Willpower on a roll using that Specialty, any failure is considered a dramatic failure. However, exceptional successes occur on three successes instead of five.

Your character cannot regain or use Willpower when separated from the object.

**Note:** If the fetish object is destroyed or truly lost, it constitutes a breaking point, the dice pool of which suffers this Merit's dots as a penalty.

## Peacemaker (•• or •••)

**Prerequisites:** Wits •••+ and Empathy •••+

**Effect:** Your character is keenly attuned to indications of imminent violence, and knows techniques to soothe hot tempers and calm emotions. At two dots, the character may act first in a violent scene to attempt to deescalate the behavior. He spends a point of Willpower and forces his opponent into a social maneuver. The opponent's base number of Doors is equal to the higher of her Resolve or Composure for this maneuver.

The character rolls each turn as if he had a perfect first impression. If the character fails a roll, his opponent may attack him next turn unless he spends another point of Willpower to continue the social maneuver, but his opponent adds two Doors to her remaining total. If the character dramatically fails, his opponent may attack him immediately without the chance to reinitiate the social maneuver.

If the character removes his opponent's final Door, her will to fight is exhausted — Storyteller characters will seek a nonviolent resolution to the scene. Players' characters may either take a Beat and seek a nonviolent alternative, or gain the Reluctant Aggressor Condition.

When facing groups of attackers, this Merit allows the character to single out the leader of the group, or an individual the others look to for guidance. While the social



maneuver continues, the other attackers wait to see the outcome. If the leader gains the Reluctant Aggressor Condition, so too do all her allies. The social maneuver automatically fails if the character's allies initiate any violent actions while the character attempts to avoid violence.

At three dots, the character's soothing voice and actions are almost supernatural in effect. He may use this Merit against opponents suffering supernaturally inspired anger, including vampires in frenzy or werewolves in Death Rage. These opponents have an additional number of Doors equal to their Supernatural Tolerance traits — talking down an enraged werewolf is very difficult, but the character can do it.

**Drawback:** The character's first instinct is to reduce violence, not join it. He suffers -1 to his dice pools for attacking opponents until he suffers damage, which overcomes his deeply-held reluctance to injure others.

### Punch Drunk /(••)

**Prerequisite:** Willpower •••••+

**Effect:** Your character's resolve is unwavering, even when suffering wounds, broken limbs, and lost blood. She can fight on past the point that her body demands she quit. When she suffers bashing or lethal damage that would remove her last Health box, you may spend a point of Willpower to keep the last box, and instead upgrade damage in her other Health boxes. This Merit has no effect on aggravated damage.

### Scarred /(•)

**Prerequisite:** Integrity ••••• or lower

**Effect:** You may take this Merit when failing a breaking point, if you have the Experience. Otherwise, with Storyteller discretion, you may take it "on loan," and spend the next earned Experience on it.

When your character fails the breaking point and loses Integrity, write down this Merit along with whatever event caused the breaking point. Your character no longer suffers breaking points from that influence or action.

This Merit is tied to a specific Condition you and your Storyteller choose at the time you take this Merit; that Condition becomes Persistent. The normal resolution terms become a source of Beats. Removing the Scarred Merit becomes the only method for resolving that Condition.

**Note:** While you have this Merit, you cannot increase your character's Integrity. You may shed it through the Sanctity of Merits rule if you wish to increase Integrity.

### Support Network /(• to •••••)

**Prerequisite:** Allies, Mentor, Retainer, True Friend, or another similar Merit.

**Effect:** Your character has friends, family, teammates, or any other person or people who provide emotional support in the face of terrifying circumstances. This Merit must be tied to another Social Merit such as Allies, Mentor, Retainer, or True Friend, but can be tied to any Merit representing a person or group that the Storyteller deems fitting. Alternatively, any character with the Empath Merit (see above) can be the anchor point for this Merit.

Once per chapter, you may prolong an Integrity breaking point by spending a point of Willpower. During the same chapter, your character must have a meaningful interaction with her Support Network, or the breaking point dramatically fails. If she interacts with her Support Network, add her dots in this Merit to the roll to resist the breaking point, and the roll achieves exceptional success on three successes instead of five.

### Survivalist /(•)

**Prerequisites:** Survival ••, Iron Stamina •••

**Style Tags:** Attitude (Endurance)

**Effect:** Your character has been trained to fight even through the most dangerous environmental extremes. When inflicted with the Extreme Cold Tilt or Extreme Heat Tilt (**Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 282) she doesn't begin taking the normal -1 to her rolls until a number of hours equal to her Stamina.







# FIGHTING MERITS

They say you sweat in training to avoid bleeding in combat, but sometimes the bleeding comes first. You learn moves and instincts because you should have, could have, and will — next time, if someone else steps up *that* way. Survivors debrief experiences, codify them, and pass them on. Students and rivals tweak techniques to account for new experiences, methods, rituals, and aesthetics.

## Deconstructing Fighting Styles

**Chronicles of Darkness** models Fighting Styles through two mechanisms. First, a linear Merit ladder that represents steps on the way to mastering the style. Second, individual Merits list Style Merits as prerequisites. They're optional abilities that further distinguish characters from one another.

In this chapter, we're breaking that structure. Characters can now learn styles in a much less structured fashion, though you don't have to change existing characters. The **Chronicles of Darkness** rules stay the same. Yet we want to free Fighting Styles from formal martial arts and other rigidly defined backgrounds. So first, let's present new systems for learning, mastering, and defining your own styles.

## Style and Background

Some styles have informal names. Others take the names of real martial arts. In both cases, take style names as suggestions to help incorporate a style into a character's history. For example, the Systema name suggests that characters with this style might be students of that martial art, but a player could just as easily decide that the character's a dedicated student of modern dance with special body skills. The style's prerequisites, systems, and Style Tags (see below) take priority over their names and histories, but we've still included that information to make it easy to pick Merits to fit character backgrounds.

On the other hand, many real-world training regimens are too complex to be encompassed by a single style. Some

Chinese and Japanese martial arts teach dozens of weapons and special skills. Police and military training demand more than the ability to shoot and internalize a few combative tricks. Nevertheless, you can claim a character's been comprehensively trained, because a Fighting Style represents specialized focus on a form of combat, not basic exposure. Most training is already a function of your character's Skills. Your elite Russian operative might train in Close Quarters Combat, Firefight, Light Weapons, and Systema but you don't need all those Merits to represent that. Pick Merits for one or two special talents, not every hour of training.

Other Styles could be easily modified to suit specific chronicle needs. For example, a **Vampire: The Requiem** character who can speak with and train bobcats could very well use the K-9 Style to represent that relationship, even though a bobcat is not the required dog.

## Stacking Fighting Merits

Can you use more than one Fighting Style maneuver or other Merit in a single attack? Sometimes. The following rules apply.

1. If nobody can explain how the maneuvers would stack in the story, it doesn't work. The player needs to describe an action that brings them together. Your two-pistol backflip neck breaker's probably going to sound dumb — unless you can somehow make it sound *amazing*.
2. The required equipment or other circumstances for all maneuvers used must be present.
3. You can't stack Fighting Merits that penalize one of your character's traits more than once, or impose the same disadvantage more than once. For example, you cannot stack two Merits that lower Defense, even if they cumulatively would not reduce Defense below zero.
4. You can't stack maneuvers that use different dice pools, unless changing the dice pool is a benefit the Merit specifically confers. For example, you can use

## Why Can't I Do It Without the Merit?

Some of the Merits in this section represent things most combatants may be capable of, such as specific targeted attacks and general martial arts maneuvers. There's nothing to say a character can't use a trunk squeeze while wrestling without the Trunk Squeeze Merit. However, he doesn't have the specialized training necessary to benefit from the specific mechanics listed in the Merit.



Fighting Finesse with maneuvers that require Strength + Weaponry, and they'll use Dexterity + Weaponry instead, but you can't combine a Merit that uses Weaponry with one that uses Brawl.

5. When stacked maneuvers provide the same benefit, the higher of the two apply. All disadvantages apply (though remember that you can't stack maneuvers that impose the same disadvantage twice). Note that when two maneuvers provide the same result by different means, they *do* stack, so the Rote benefit (re-roll failed dice) does stack with bonus dice.

## Style Tags

In these rules, most Fighting Merits have *Style Tags*. These define a Merit's basic category, how it functions, and most importantly, its relationship with similar Merits. Most Merits utilize the following Style Tags. Avoid inventing new ones, as it disconnects them from existing Merits and keeps players from developing their own Fighting Styles. In addition, the Style Tag lists currently published styles that fall under these tags.

**Archery:** Using a hand-drawn bow, as opposed to a crossbow (which normally uses Pistol or Rifle). **Styles:** Archery

**Attitude (and Keywords):** These styles don't rely on movement, but channel an emotional state or motivation into the focus to fight. Note that this actually stands for a number of tags with specific keywords representing emotional states. To help create styles, create new keywords sparingly. The default keywords are: Calm, Cautious, Determined, Enraged, Retributive. **Styles:** Berserk (Enraged), Relentless Assault (Determined)

**Creature (Keyword):** Styles that use the natural capabilities of creatures that don't have a strictly human form, including animals and certain monstrous beings. Keywords define individual Style Tags. Default Keywords are: Avian, Bite, Claw, and Constrictor. **Styles:** K-9 (Bite)

**Flexible:** Chain weapons, rope weapons, flails, nunchaku, and other weapons that strike with a combination of weight and transfer through flexible cords or weights. **Styles:** Chain Weapons

**Grappling:** Practitioners grab opponents to strangle them, pin them, hyperextend their limbs, and throw them. **Styles:** Grappling

**Heavy Melee:** Using a blade or club that is best wielded with two hands, but isn't operated with evenly spaced hands like a Pole Weapon — two-handed swords and big clubs qualify. Note that some weapons might be used as both Heavy Melee and Pole Weapons. **Styles:** Armed Defense, Heavy Weapons

**Light Melee:** Using a blade or club that can easily be wielded in one hand. **Styles:** Armed Defense, Light Weapons

**Movement (and Keywords):** Ways of moving to optimize fighting or athletic ability. This Style Tag is actually several, each with its own keyword. Avoid creating new keywords so that it's possible to match Merits into a style based on

keyword-specific Style Tags. Default Keywords: Agile Strong, Tough. **Styles:** Parkour (Agile), Strength Performance (Strong), Systema (Agile)

**Pistol:** Using a pistol or pistol-gripped ranged weapon that does not require a stock, such as a dart gun or modern miniature crossbow. **Styles:** Firefight, Marksmanship

**Pole Weapons:** These styles teach the use of staves, spears, polearms, and other long-hafted weapons. Some weapons might be used as both Heavy Melee and Pole Weapons. **Styles:** Staff

**Rifle:** Operating a hunting or assault rifle, or other long-ranged weapon that typically employs a shoulder stock. **Styles:** Firefight, Marksmanship

**Striking:** The focus is on striking with fists, feet, elbows, knees, and other human "natural weapons." Inhuman natural weapons are the province of Creature styles. Striking may function with weapons that utilize the Brawl Skill. **Styles:** Boxing, Martial Arts, Unarmed Defense

**Supernatural (Template):** Methods that build on the powers of certain supernatural beings. Each supernatural template represents a separate keyword, and in most cases only those beings can use their associated styles. **Styles:** Adamantine Hand (Mage; see **Mage: The Awakening**), Brutal Sorcery (Mage; see **Mage: The Awakening**)

**Tactical (Keyword):** These styles represent trade skills and tricks from certain professions, such as police or members of the military. Each profession has its own Keyword, and when attached to the tag, creates a specific Style Tag. Default Keywords: Military, Police, Street. Create new Keywords only if they can be attached to enough Merits to create a significant Fighting Style. **Styles:** Close Quarters Combat (Military), Improvised Weapons (Street), Street Fighting (Street), Police Tactics (Police)

## Using Style Tags


On one hand, you can choose to purchase the next level of a Fighting Style as usual, for the cost of a single Merit dot. The standard **Chronicles of Darkness** rules apply. If a Fighting Style possesses alternate maneuvers, you may add the "standard" or alternate maneuver to your character this way.

Yet your character might abandon orthodox advancement. If she chooses this route, you may purchase any maneuver for the price of a one-dot Fighting Merit and add it to her abilities. The catch? The character needs to first possess as many Merit dots in same Style Tag as the rank (in Fighting Style progression) of the unorthodox or extra maneuver she wishes to learn. This investment can take the form of maneuvers (for one dot each) or Merits with a matching Style Tag (which may have variable Merit dot costs). This restriction also applies to characters who wish to learn more than one alternate maneuver in a single style.

Style Tags can't override prerequisite Attribute and Skill ratings, prerequisite maneuvers (such as exist in many Grappling maneuvers), and other special requirements, noted with each style.







**Example:** Musa was a Dambe boxer in Nigeria, but thought he'd left the hobby behind when he went to MIT. But recent events plunged him into weird, violent scenarios, so it's time for him to continue his training. He studies at a local Muay Thai gym. Musa knows the first two dots of Boxing (Striking) and the two-dot version of Iron Chin, which also uses the Striking tag. That gives him four dots of Merits that fall under Striking. The gym teaches the Martial Arts style, which also uses the Striking tag, in the following progression: Leg Kick •, Cutting Elbow ••, Whirlwind Strike •••, The Hand as Weapon ••••, and High Momentum Strike •••••. Musa's four dots of Striking Merits allow him to learn anything up to The Hand as Weapon without methodically advancing up the style. His player decides to pay the cost of The Hand as Weapon (as a one-dot Merit) and Musa hits the heavy bag. After dedicated training, Musa now knows the following maneuvers: Head Protection (Boxing •), Defensive Jab (Boxing ••), and The Hand as Weapon (Martial Arts ••••). Combined with the Iron Chin that represented enough raw experience to skip a certain amount of formal training, Musa has evolved into a deadly puncher. Of course, his coaches lambast his terrible kicking technique, and nag him to work on it and become a well-rounded fighter.

## Style Merits

The following are all new Style Merits which use the tagging system listed above.

### Avoidance (Style: • to •••••)

**Prerequisites:** Manipulation •••, Athletics ••, Stealth ••  
**Style Tags:** Movement (Agile)

**Effect:** Your character's only goal in a fight is not to get hurt. She tries to create situations where opponents hurt themselves or target her big mean friends instead. There is no formal training for this Style; it's a mixture of ingenuity and a person's innate desire to avoid pain.

**Insignificance (•):** When a fight starts you ease out of sight and try to become a part of the scenery. Make a roll of Manipulation + Stealth – the highest Composure in the room. If successful, your character comes across as very non-threatening. Unless an opponent perceives no other threats around him whatsoever she cannot be the direct target of his attacks. This effect ends if she attacks or takes any threatening actions during the scene.

**Coattails (•••):** Your character's reaction to being attacked is to dive behind her bigger friend and let him take care of it. When taking a Dodge action she can designate an ally in close range whose hasn't attacked yet that turn. Go Prone. If hit by an opponent's attack, her ally can choose to take the damage.

**Whack-a-Mole (•••):** Your character makes herself into a tempting target and unsuspecting opponents end up doing more damage to themselves than her. Once per turn you may make a contested roll of Manipulation + Persuasion + Avoidance against an opponent's unarmed or melee attack roll.

## The Best Style

Martial arts, combat sports, and training for crisis-prone professions each have their own methods, philosophies, and objectives. As cultural products these things mutate, mash together, and shift context, but there's always the feeling that the stakes are high enough that it's not enough to just learn to fight, but learn the very best way.

So martial artists annoy each other with differences of opinion all the damn time.

Exponents of combat sports like Muay Thai and MMA exchange plenty of unkind words with advocates of traditional styles like karate. Fans of "reality-based self-defense" methods based on police and military tactics think everybody else is stuck in rules and traditions. People who like guns just say they'll shoot all these assholes. Style and school rivalries break out all the time. It's mostly trash talk, but sometimes people come to blows at formal tournaments or closed-door "training sessions." Stories readily erupt from these sorts of conflicts.

This book doesn't take any particular position because it's more fun if we cast a wide net, and don't tell you that such and such a method is garbage. On the other hand, in the **Chronicles of Darkness** a strip mall karate school where most of the students are under 12 is never going to make you a "warrior," and regardless of what you believe, we assume that without supernatural powers, knocking someone out requires you to pound them, not lightly tap pressure point GB-12 with Crane Hand. (Fun fact: GB-12 is behind the ear and yes, getting punched behind the ear is bad.) In the **Chronicles of Darkness**, fighting is a sweat-drenched trade that leaves bruises, breaks, and lacerations.

If the character gets the most successes the attack does no damage, and instead inflicts the Arm Wrack Tilt on the opponent.

**Play Dead (••••):** When your character wants to bow out of a combat she makes even the most superficial wounds look fatal. After any attack your character sustained lethal damage from, roll Manipulation + Subterfuge. Opponents require a contested Wits + Composure roll to notice that she's still alive.

### Berserker (Style: • to •••)

**Prerequisites:** Strength •••, Iron Stamina •••

**Style Tags:** Attitude (Enraged)

**Effect:** Your character enters a controlled madness in combat. Whether a believer in the throes of ecstatic fervor





or a warrior emulating the Norse berserks, this Style is not about technique but about achieving the right state of mind.

**The Red Mist (●):** Your character focuses inward, seeking out her source of rage within. By spending a point of Willpower she inflicts the Insane Tilt on herself for the remainder of the scene.

**War Cry (●●):** Your character chills an opponent's blood with her mad howl. Instead of attacking, roll a contested Strength + Intimidation versus opponent's Resolve + Composure. If your character gets the most successes, her opponent suffers a penalty equal to your successes to any action other than Dodging for the next turn.

**Manic Brutality (●●●):** Your character lashes out with a single-minded determination to destroy. Her all-out unarmed attacks have a +1 bonus to hit specified targets. If she's using a weapon then she may substitute its Durability for its weapon bonus.

**Drawback:** If she's using a weapon, then all damage taken by her opponent is also applied directly to the weapon's Structure.

## Bowmanship (Style: ● to ●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity ●●●, Firearms ●●, Trained Observer ●

**Style Tags:** Archery

**Effect:** Your character is a patient hunter with a bow. She fires precision shots across long distances to take out targets that had no idea she was even there. This Style focuses on a character's ability to aim by judging distance and trajectory. It uses a dice pool of Dexterity + Firearms for its attacks.

**Arcing Fire (●):** Your character knows how to tilt her aim to make a shot hit true even from afar. Her range increments for using a bow are doubled.

**Bullseye (●●):** Your character places her shots to hit deep into an opponent's weak spots. When attacking a specified target you may lower your bow's damage rating to any amount (0 or greater) to add +1 and the 8-again quality to the attack roll.

**Out of Nowhere (●●●):** Your character fires her arrows and then ducks out of sight, leaving her enemies bleeding and confused. Roll Dexterity + Stealth as a reflexive action after attacking a target that is unaware of her presence. Her target must roll Wits + Composure – her successes, where failure applies the Shaken Condition to the target.

**Death from Above (●●●●):** Your character looses vertical shots that reach opponents even behind cover. She reduces an opponent's Concealment rating by adding 10 yards (9 meters) per point to the range of her shot. If his cover provides vertical protection then subtract Durability from damage as normal.

## Boxing (Style: ● to ●●●●●)


**Prerequisites:** Strength ●●, Dexterity ●●, Stamina ●●, Brawl ●●, Athletics ●●

**Style Tags:** Striking

**Effect:** Trading blows with the hands dates back to Classical times, and probably earlier – some biologists believe our hands have been optimized to deliver blows. There are hundreds of folk styles of boxing, from West Africa's *Dambe* to the Filipino method known as *Suntukan* or *Panantukan*.







This style concentrates on the modern combat sport, which combines European methods with innovations developed by trainers or borrowed from other cultures. Your character is trained in modern boxing, or a similar traditional style.

**Head Protection (•):** The head is the primary target for most boxers, so your character has learned to protect it by bobbing, weaving, and angling away from blows. Your character's Defense increases by 1 against unarmed strikes or weapons that use the Brawl Skill, and attackers suffer an additional -1 penalty to target her head.

**Defensive Jab (••):** Your character interrupts attacks with well-timed punches from the lead hand. Any time an opponent misses with a Brawl or Weaponry attack, your character inflicts one point of bashing damage which ignores armor. If your character Dodges, change this to one point of bashing damage per two successes that exceed the opponent's attack successes (a minimum of one, but round fractions down).

**Knockout Artist (•••):** Your character knows how to knock someone out. She now treats the target's Size as 1 lower at all times for the purposes of inflicting the Stunned Tilt, reflecting her ability to casually hit someone in the head. If you suffer a penalty to target the head as a true specified target, treat the target's Size as 2 lower for the purpose of inflicting the Tilt.

**Combination (••••):** Your character learns to fire off several blows in rapid succession, so that if one hits, the others often follow. If your character's Brawl strike succeeds, roll her Dexterity dots as dice and add successes to damage to reflect other blows striking home.

**Out for the Count (•••••):** When your character knocks someone out they don't get back up any time soon. When she inflicts the Stunned Tilt it not only lasts for a number of turns equal to the damage she inflicted, but it produces true unconsciousness for that period unless the victim spends a point of Willpower.

## Chain Weapons (Style: • to ••)

**Prerequisites:** Strength •••, Dexterity •••, Athletics ••, Weaponry ••

**Style Tags:** Flexible

**Effect:** Your character knows how to use a length of chain as a weapon. These maneuvers require at least a yard's (or meter's) worth of chain and can be any design from a martial artist's chain whip to one ripped off the sprocket of a motorcycle. The Style is taught among traditional Chinese weapon styles but is also favored among everyday street gangs.

**Imposing Defense (•):** Your character spins her chain around, creating a whirling metal barrier between her and her opponent. Sacrificing her Defense, and she inflicts her weapon damage rating + 1 in bashing damage to any opponent who attempts an unarmed or melee attack against her that turn.

**Bring Down the House (••):** Handy in rooms with chandeliers or dodgy support beams, your character lashes her chain around some part of the environment over an opponent's head and then gives it a good yank. She makes an attack against an object with a penalty for the object's Size

(use the specified target chart in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 92 as a guideline). If successful, she inflicts bashing damage equal to the object's Structure on all characters within range. Characters with their turn still available can Dodge, with successes removing damage.

## Combat Archery (Style: • to •••••)

**Prerequisites:** Strength •••, Athletics ••, Quick Draw (Bow) •

**Style Tags:** Archery

**Effect:** Your character uses a bow for rapid draws that riddle opponents with arrows. She knows how to move across the battlefield while firing from any angle. This Style is about trick shots and using archery in the thick of a fight. It uses a dice pool of Dexterity + Athletics for its attacks.

**Rapid Nock (•):** Your character has trained herself to have another arrow set and her bow drawn within a heartbeat of her last shot. As long as there is a supply of arrows in reach she can make an attack every turn without taking an action to position them on the string. Also, ignore the bow's Initiative penalty.

**Reflex Aiming (••):** Your character knows how to time her shots to hit her opponents and not her allies. Ignore penalties for firing a bow into close combat.

**Parthian Shot (•••):** Your character feints retreat to lure an opponent in for a close-range shot. The first time in a turn an opponent attempts a close-range attack, you may choose to Dodge as normal. However, any successes in excess of your opponent's are applied as attack successes with your bow against him.

**Rain of Arrows (••••):** Your character fires a group of shots at multiple opponents in the blink of an eye. She can attack with a bow as an autofire medium burst with three arrows hitting up to three different targets.

**Drawback:** This maneuver sacrifices distance for speed. Triple all range penalties for medium and long distance.

**Trick Shot (•••••):** Your character rolls, leaps, and runs along walls while firing arrows in any direction. Your character can fire her bow simultaneously while taking an Athletics action, including maneuvers from Movement Styles. This imposes a -2 penalty to both rolls.

## Falconry (Style: • to ••••)

**Prerequisites:** This Merit works in conjunction with any predatory bird of at least Size 2. The character must possess Wits •••, Animal Ken •••, and share the Bonded Condition with the bird.

**Style Tags:** Creature (Claw)

**Effect:** Your bird performs incredible feats at your command. You purchase this Merit for your character, who may apply it to any bird she shares the Bonded Condition with after a reasonable amount of time training together. Used for both hunting and sport, this practice has roots going back into antiquity and among numerous cultures. While not as widespread now as in the past, finding a trainer for this style is still relatively easy. Unless otherwise noted, these Merits



constitute actions the bird takes independently, with only a simple, one-word or gesture command. Thus, your character does not have to dedicate an action to make them happen. Additionally, possession of this Merit allows your character to spend Willpower to benefit the bird's actions in her presence.

**Predator's Vigil (•):** The presence of your bird instinctively wards off prey animals. Even a flock of pigeons or swarm of rats won't come too close when a natural predator circles the skies. Any creature of equal or smaller Size than your bird in his immediate vicinity has the Shaken Condition applied to them for any action other than hiding or fleeing the area.

**Flyby (••):** Your character commands her bird to dive past an enemy at high speed, creating a distraction. Roll Presence + Intimidation against an opponent's Resolve + Composure as an attack action for the bird. If successful, the opponent takes a -3 penalty to his next action.

**Retrieve Item (•••):** Your bird knows how to grab small items and bring them back to you, even snatching them from someone's hand. On your character's turn she can designate any object of the bird's Size or smaller within her and her bird's field of vision that the bird will retrieve. An opponent actively holding onto an item treats this as a Disarm maneuver, but if successful the bird's roll is automatically considered an exceptional success. This generally requires the bird make an all-out attack.

**Rake the Eyes (••••):** Your character commands her bird to claw at an opponent's eyes. Take a -1 penalty to attack. A successful attack applies the Blinded Tilt.

## Grappling (Style, • to •••••)

**Prerequisites:** Stamina •••, Strength ••, Athletics ••, Brawl ••

**Style Tag:** Grappling

**Effect:** Grappling's first three dots are covered in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**. This section presents additional Grappling maneuvers. Some extend the style to the fourth and fifth dot. Others are alternatives to those listed in the core, or present multiple maneuvers. By acquiring maneuvers according to the rules on p. 44, characters may learn these instead of or in addition to maneuvers with the same dot ranking.

**Standing Throw (•):** Your character knows how to toss someone over his hip, trip, or sweep her while keeping his footing. He may inflict the Knocked Down Tilt as a grappling maneuver, but if he remains standing his opponent automatically breaks free.

**Small Joint Manipulation (••):** By accepting a -2 penalty to the attack roll, your character may immediately dislocate or otherwise bend the opponent's fingers in one hand (or toes in one foot, in some circumstances) the wrong way. This occurs instead of any other maneuver, inflicting one point of bashing damage per two successes (round down, but always at least one) and the Agony Tilt. If the attack targets a hand, it can no longer hold objects until the associated damage heals. Optionally, you may assign the Tactical (Street) Style Tag to this maneuver to represent a form of "underhanded" fighting.

**Ippon (•••):** *Additional Prerequisite: Takedown Maneuver.* While using Drop Prone with the Takedown Maneuver, your

character hurls his opponent to the ground with exceptional force. Double the damage of the takedown for the purpose of inflicting the Stunned Tilt, but not as actual damage.

**Dynamic Guard (••••):** While prone, your character uses his body to shake and redirect his enemy. Reduce the opponent's dice pool to grapple by your character's Dexterity. Unfortunately, your character can't get up from prone while using this maneuver.

**Lock Flow (••••):** *Additional Prerequisite: Joint Lock Maneuver.* When your character's opponent slips out of one lock you know how to go with the motion and trap her in another. You gain +2 to grapple rolls when you declare ahead of time that you're attempting a joint lock.

**Tap or Snap (•••••):** *Additional Prerequisite: Joint Lock Maneuver.* If your character succeeds in a grapple in the turn after applying the Joint Lock maneuver, he may allow the opponent to choose between accepting the Beaten Down Condition, or suffering an Arm or Leg Wrack (attacker's choice) and lethal damage equal to the successes scored, as your character breaks or dislocates the relevant limb.

**Positional Dominance (•••••):** Your character knows how to hurt and tire an opponent from any position, crushing the life out of him. No matter which maneuver you choose on a successful grapple, your character inflicts one point of bashing damage per two successes scored, rounding down, but always inflicting at least one point. If your character chooses a damaging maneuver, add this to the damage inflicted. You may choose not to inflict this damage.

## K-9 (Style, • to •••••)

**Prerequisite:** This Merit works in conjunction with a dog of least Size 3. The character must possess Wits •••, Animal Ken •••, and share the Bonded Condition with the dog.

**Style Tags:** Creature (Bite), Tactical (Police)

**Effect:** Under your supervision a dog may perform exceptional actions. You purchase this Merit for your character, who may apply it to any dog she shares the Bonded Condition with after a reasonable amount of training time together. Police and military forces are the place to go to learn to work with an animal in combat, but independent trainers might know this style as well.

Note that each maneuver includes the special ability to never require an Animal Ken roll to order its use. Your character's dog obeys without a second's pause.


**Detection (•):** Your character's dog has been trained to detect a certain class of substances by smell and indicate its location. Choose from one of the following: Drugs, Explosives, Tracks, People, and Corpses. When your character works with his dog it gains the Rote benefit (re-roll failed dice) on Wits + Survival rolls to detect the target substances. You may purchase this Merit multiple times for different categories.

**Targeted Bite (••):** Your character may command his dog to target specific body parts. Reduce penalties to attack specific targets by -2.

**Tactical Positioning (•••):** The character's dog knows how to position itself to make it difficult for opponents to







fight you both. When acting side by side against a single opponent, one of the pair gains +1 to Defense against that opponent, and the other benefits from +2 to attack rolls targeting the opponent. Your character decides which participant gets the offensive or defensive bonus at the beginning of each turn. Finally, you never take a penalty to ranged combat rolls to avoid shooting the dog, because he avoids your line of fire.

**Takedown Bite (••••):** At your character's command, his dog may inflict a Drop Prone or Hold grappling maneuver on a target if it hits with a successful bite attack. The target may be no more than double the dog's Size, however. This immediately initiates a grapple. Dogs may employ the above maneuvers along with Break Free, Control (opponent's) Weapon, and Damage.

## Kino Mutai (Style. • to •••••)

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity ••, Resolve •••, Brawl ••

**Style Tags:** Enraged, Street

**Effect:** Your character learns to bite opponents, tear at soft tissues and gouge eyes with special skills. This is sometimes called "Kino Mutai" in Filipino martial arts, but it can be learned by anyone uninhibited enough to use these unconventional methods to the greatest extent possible for humans. Thus, this Fighting Style only works for beings with a human body plan and a decent set of teeth.

**Trained Bite (•):** If your character prevails in a grapple she may bite harder than normal, targeting sensitive parts of an opponent's anatomy. This acts as the Damage maneuver, but inflicts an additional two points of bashing damage. Vampires, werewolves in humanoid form, and other monsters with particularly potent bite attacks cause one additional damage of the same type (potentially lethal) when using this maneuver.

**Ripping (••):** Your character overcomes squeamishness and distractions to grab and tear earlobes, eyelids, and other soft, loose parts. She doesn't pause before ripping out hair by the scalp. None of these injuries are life-threatening, but they inflict pain. If you win a grappling roll with more successes than the opponent's Resolve, she may use the Ripping maneuver, which inflicts the Agony Tilt on the opponent but only inflicts one point of bashing damage.

**Trained Gouge (•••):** While grappling, your character can drive her fingers into an enemy's eyes with exceptional force and persistence. If you win a grappling roll and score at least three successes, you may opt for the Gouge maneuver. This inflicts the Blinded Tilt, but unlike typical cases your character maintains this Tilt until the opponent Breaks Free, Restrains your character, or renders the arm unable to function.

**Continuous Bite (••••):** Your character knows how to apply pressure, rip flesh, and use the rest of her body's musculature to enhance a bite. In a grapple, she may inflict lethal damage with the Damage maneuver by tearing off strips of her opponent's flesh.

## Martial Arts (Style. • to •••••)

**Prerequisites:** Resolve •••, Dexterity •••, Athletics ••, Brawl ••

**Style Tags:** Striking

**Effect:** The Martial Arts Style in the *Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook* represents a generic unarmed striking style. The following maneuvers are alternatives to those listed. Using the options for purchasing maneuvers on p. 44, characters may acquire these maneuvers alongside or instead of the others with the same dot ranking.

**Leg Kick (•):** Your character knows how to kick an opponent's legs out from under him. She might use a Thai-style round kick or drive her heel into his kneecap. If she reduces her Defense by 1 while concentrating on low kicks, she'll cause the Leg Wrack Tilt if her Brawl attack inflicts at least one damage that turn. She doesn't suffer the usual penalty for targeting a leg. Note that trying to hit the *other* leg for a knockdown doesn't use this maneuver, but the normal rules. However, using Leg Kick on subsequent attacks lengthens the duration of the Leg Wrack by attaching the Tilt to additional damage.

**Cutting Elbow (••):** When striking with an elbow, your character targets thin skin in the opponent's scalp with the aim of ripping it open. She only suffers a -2 penalty to attack when she wishes to inflict the Blinded Condition on an opponent with human-like anatomy because when she hits and inflicts at least one point of bashing damage, blood from the scalp wound washes over the opponent's eyes. This maneuver may also be purchased through the Tactics (Street) Style Tag.

**Trapping (•••):** This maneuver has a lot of names, including "sticking hands" or "scissors." Using it, your character knows how to control her opponent's limbs so they can't be used to block incoming strikes. By making limb-to-limb physical contact, she can sense and counter her opponent's reactions. If she hits with a Brawl attack, she may set aside as many successes as her Brawl Skill and add these to her Brawl attack next turn. If she sets aside all successes, the first attack inflicts no damage, but makes contact for the follow up. She loses this advantage if the opponent leaves hand-to-hand range and she can't or won't follow.

**Inch Force (••••):** Your character knows how to swiftly strike across extremely short distances. She can hit hard with an inch of movement, or smash with a shoulder, hip, or head butt. When an opponent tries to grab your character she's entitled to one immediate counterattack per turn as an additional reflexive action (multiple grab attempts during the turn don't entitle her to additional counterattacks). Roll Strength + Brawl - Defense as usual. If the attack scores more successes than the opponent's Strength, she automatically breaks free of the grab and inflicts standard Brawl damage as well.

**High Momentum Strike (•••••):** Tornado kicks, spinning backfists, and flying knees are hard to pull off, but in the right circumstances can be devastating. If your character has a higher Initiative rank, she may wait for an opponent to attack with a Brawl or Weaponry strike. If the opponent scores 0 successes, your character may attempt an immediate counterattack, using her action for the turn on a leaping and/or spinning attack. If the counterattack hits it knocks the opponent down. In addition, roll the character's Brawl dots and add it to the attack's total damage.



## Mounted Combat (Style: • to ••••)

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity •••, Athletics ••, Animal Ken ••

**Style Tags:** Archery, Heavy Melee, Light Melee, Tactical (Police)

**Effect:** Your character fights from horseback using the animal's size and maneuverability to make her attacks more effective. While trained cavalry regiments are largely a thing of the past, many police departments around the world still have officers who use techniques like these in the modern day.

**Steady Saddle (•):** Your character knows how to position herself in the saddle to attack an opponent without risking being dismounted or hurting her horse. Your character gains a +3 bonus to any rolls for staying mounted during combat.

**Fixed Charge (••):** Your character and her horse charge headlong at her opponent. She gains the benefits from both charging (though you move up to twice your horse's Speed rather than your character's) and an all-out attack. Both she and her horse lose Defense for the rest of the turn.

**Skirmishing (•••):** Your character's attacks are designed to harass her opponents, moving in range to strike and then out again before the counterattack. Her horse can travel half its Speed before her attack and the rest after as one move. She suffers a -2 penalty to her attack for the turn but both her and her mount gain +2 to Defense.

**Rearing Beast (••••):** Your character has trained her horse to be an intimidating and dangerous opponent in the thick of combat. Instead of attacking, roll Wits + Animal Ken and add successes to attack rolls made by her horse.

## Powered Projectile (Style: • to ••••)

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity •••, Athletics ••, Firearms ••

**Style Tags:** Pistol

**Effect:** Your character is comfortable using premodern ranged weapons like crossbows, slingshots, and blowguns. Though long ago replaced by firearms, these weapons remain popular for hunting and are widely available in some countries.

**Quick Reload (•):** Your character has trained herself on the steps to reload her weapon to the point it's ingrained in her muscle memory. She reloads one turn faster than normal (to a minimum of a reflexive action).

**Intercept Shot (••):** Your character can shoot a projectile out of the air with her own. This maneuver is not capable of stopping bullets, though it could be used to deflect a grenade if you're feeling lucky. Any turn your character spends aiming she can make an attack against a thrown object with a -2 penalty (in addition to the normal penalties for attacking a small object). A successful hit deflects it a number of meters (or yards) equal to damage in a random direction.

**Penetration (•••):** Your character knows how to best exploit the weaknesses in a target's armor. She can add +2 to her weapon's armor piercing rating for her next attack.

**Drawback:** This shot requires intense concentration. Your character loses her Defense any turn she uses this maneuver.

**Skewer (••••):** Your character uses her projectiles to impale parts of an opponent's anatomy. When attacking a specified target, reduce the penalty by -2, and any inflicted Tilts require the victim to roll Stamina + Strength - damage inflicted to remove a projectile before it's resolved.

## Spear and Bayonet (Style: • to •••)

**Prerequisites:** Strength •••, Dexterity ••, Weaponry ••

**Style Tags:** Pole Weapons

**Effect:** Your character is trained with long weapons that end in a point. This could be anything from a traditional spear to a fixed bayonet on a modern rifle. This Style has countless variations around the world but is historically incorporated as part of military training.

**Firm Footing (•):** Your character braces herself with her weapon to skewer a charging opponent. Any opponent attempting an all-out or charge attack against your character takes her weapon's damage automatically before he makes his attack roll. Armor subtracts from this, but then will not apply to any attacks your character makes in the same turn.

**Keep at Bay (••):** Your character can threaten an opponent with her weapon to prevent maneuvering. Choose an opponent with a shorter weapon; if that opponent takes any action other than backing away or Dodging he loses his Defense against your character's next attack.

**Drawback:** Spend a point of Willpower to activate this maneuver.

**Strike and Develop (•••):** Your character stabs an opponent with her weapon then turns the blade before removing it, leaving a more grisly wound. Attacks made with her weapon that inflict lethal damage causes the victim to bleed out, causing one point of lethal damage for a number of turns equal to her successes on the attack roll. Subsequent attacks can add to the total number of turns but never cause more than one point of lethal damage per turn in bleeding to the victim. She loses her Defense any turn she uses this maneuver.

## Staff Fighting (Style: • to ••••)

**Prerequisites:** Strength ••, Dexterity •••, Weaponry ••

**Style Tags:** Pole Weapons


**Effect:** Your character uses a staff as her weapon of choice. These maneuvers are usually performed with a quarterstaff or bo staff, but anything of a suitable length and shape like a walking stick or a heavy curtain rod will work as well.

**Short Grip (•):** Your character moves her grip to the end of the staff, maximizing reach but losing speed. She gains a +1 to attack at the cost of her staff's +1 bonus to Defense. You can change your character's grip once per turn reflexively before taking an action.

**Thwack Weapon (••):** Your character slaps away an opponent's weapon with the tip of her staff. She can Disarm with a roll of Strength + Weaponry contested by an opponent's Strength + Athletics. If successful, the opponent drops his weapon at his feet. On an exceptional success, your character knocks the weapon a number of meters (or yards) away equal to her successes rolled.







**Vaulting Defense (•••):** Your character knows how to use her staff to rapidly reposition herself in a fight. Spend a point of Willpower; your character can add her dots in Melee to her Defense against one attack per turn.

**Tornado Strike (••••):** Your character spins her staff rapidly in a circle, hitting opponents all around her. She treats her staff attack as an autofire medium burst against up to three targets of her choice within range.

## Strength Performance (Style, • to ••••)

**Prerequisites:** Strength •••, Stamina ••, Athletics ••

**Style Tag:** Movement (Strong)

**Effect:** While the Strength Attribute covers all forms of issuing bodily force, your character has specifically trained in lifting, pushing, and pulling enormous weights. He learned this as an Olympic-style weightlifter, strongman competitor, or performer. This doesn't help your character hit things, but if he does, anything at the other end is going to break and hurt.

In addition to learning maneuvers, at ••• dots your character can actually increase in Size after adding prodigious amounts of muscle. You may purchase the Giant Merit for your character during play, or if he began play as Small-Framed, get back the Experience value of those Merit dots while increasing to Size 5, and losing its benefits. (Your character can't do one after the other — there's a limit to what her skeleton can support.) Your character must have had Strength Performance ••• for at least one year, and you must tell the Storyteller your character is trying to get bigger. No character can move from Giant to Size 7 this way, and any Size change is optional — small people can still max out in this style.

**Strength Tricks (•):** Your character combines trained strength with a practical knowledge of physics to perform impressive, if minor, feats of strength. He can rip phone books in half, bend rebar, and smash bricks with his bare hands. The character benefits from a +2 bonus to Performance and Intimidation rolls where he can demonstrate his talents, and an additional +1 to other non-combat feats of Strength.

**Lifting (••):** Your character can perform incredible feats of raw strength. When attempting a feat of strength that requires a Strength + Stamina roll, you gain the Rote benefit — re-roll failed dice. This does not aid running, jumping, or combat rolls, but does aid in attempts to damage relatively immobile, inanimate objects. In that case your character gains the Rote benefit on a combat dice pool no larger than his Strength + Stamina.

**Push/Pull (•••):** Have you ever seen someone pull a tractor trailer or airplane with their teeth? Your character's all over that. If your character's goal is to move an object laterally, double her effective Strength. If the object is on wheels or friction has otherwise been minimized, multiply her Strength by 5. Practical considerations may require equipment such as ropes and a harness, and the quality of this equipment may provide a bonus to the roll.

**Stronger Than You (••••):** If your character succeeds at Strength-based tasks, he does so with an increased level of performance. You don't gain bonus dice for Strength-related rolls but if you roll at least one success, add +1 success to the total. This *does* apply to combat, making this character capable of bone-cracking blows and grips.

## Systema (Style, • to ••••)

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity •••, Athletics •••, Wits ••

**Style Tags:** Movement (Agility), Tactical (Military)

**Effect:** Your character learns to move with exceptional suppleness, rolling with blows and obstacles. She redirects incoming force not as a technique, but an instinct. These abilities are often taught within Systema, a Russian martial art developed for intelligence services and special operations. It can also reflect the advanced body skills taught by "soft" martial arts such as Tai Chi or Aikido.

**Rolling (•):** When knocked prone, your character relaxes, tucks, and rolls with the momentum. She easily spins to face any direction she wishes. She doesn't suffer that usual -2 penalty to attacks while Knocked Down or otherwise prone. If she suffers any damage for falling or impacting against an unyielding surface like the hood of a car, roll her Dexterity; each success removes one point of bashing damage (this is not effective against sources of lethal damage — you can't roll with impalement). She benefits from this in addition to any other action she might take to mitigate damage.

**Balance (••):** Your character instinctively aligns her posture and bends with incoming force to keep her balance. Attempts to inflict the Knocked Down Tilt or Drop Prone grappling maneuver must achieve two additional successes.

**Combat Posture (•••):** Your character's posture and sensitivity are strong enough to knock down anyone who tests his balance against yours. Your character's Brawl and Weaponry attacks inflict the Knocked Down Tilt whenever they score successes that equal or exceed the victim's Strength. If an attack would have already delivered this result (such as with a weapon that inflicts the Knockdown effect) it does so with particular force, inflicting an additional point of damage.

## Thrown Weapons (Style, • to ••)

**Prerequisites:** Dexterity •••, Athletics ••, Quick Draw with a thrown weapon Specialty •

**Style Tags:** Light Melee, Agile

**Effect:** Knives, darts, throwing stars, and tomahawks are all weapons your character can send flying in her enemy's direction. Many warrior cultures have used thrown projectiles in wartime or for hunting purposes and may teach this Style. Also, similar techniques are found among circus and sideshow acts. These maneuvers may only be performed with edged weapons Size 1 or smaller.

**Practiced Toss (•):** Your character knows how to throw her weapon with a quick and fluid motion. Add her Athletics score to Initiative when using a thrown weapon.

**Impalement Arts (••):** A well-placed throw staples an opponent's limbs to the environment. If your character succeeds in damaging a specified target arm, leg, or hand with a thrown weapon, she inflicts the Impaled Tilt.

**Drawback:** The heft needed to make her throw penetrate leaves your character vulnerable. She loses her Defense any turn she uses this maneuver.



## Two Weapon Fighting (Style; • to ••••)

**Prerequisites:** Wits •••, Fighting Finesse ••, Weaponry •••

**Style Tags:** Flexible, Light Melee

**Effect:** Your character fights with a weapon in each hand. She can amplify her attacks by using them together or balance between attack and defense by using one weapon for each. Different martial arts focus on different sets of weapons. Some employ a rapier and dagger, or a *katana* and *wakizashi*, while others use sticks or two light swords. This Style can be used to replicate any of them. Unless your character possesses the Ambidextrous Merit she takes the usual -2 penalty for using a weapon in her off-hand. Neither weapon can be above Size 2 for performing these maneuvers.

**Balanced Grip (•):** Your character knows how to use her weapons so they're not awkward to hold. Your character does not count her weapons' Initiative penalties as long as her off-hand weapon's rating is the same or the lower of the two.

**Protective Striking (••):** Your character uses her off-hand weapon to deflect attacks. She adds her off-hand weapon's bonus to her Defense for the first attack made against her in a turn. If her off-hand weapon has no bonus then add +1 instead.

**Dual Swipe (•••):** Your character attacks with both of her weapons simultaneously against one target. As part of an all-out melee attack, add her off-hand weapon's bonus to her attack roll and reduce her target's Defense by 1. If her off-hand weapon has no bonus then add +1 instead.

**Double Strike (••••):** Your character attacks two different targets simultaneously. Spend a point of Willpower and designate two targets in close range of your character. Take the highest Defense and -1 to the dice pool. Choose which weapon's damage applies to which target. This maneuver cannot be used with Dual Swipe.

For example, if you're up against two opponents with 4 and 6 Defense, and you have a 2L and 1L weapon, you would take -7 to Double Strike (the 6 Defense, with an additional -1). If you rolled three successes, one opponent would take five points of lethal damage, and the other four points of lethal damage – your choice which.

## Weapon and Shield (Style; • to ••••)

**Prerequisites:** Strength •••, Stamina •••, Weaponry ••

**Style Tags:** Light Melee

**Effect:** Your character knows how to fight from behind a shield with a one-handed weapon. These maneuvers strike a balance between protection and offense and are used in tandem with others, such as in a Viking shield wall or riot police formation.

**Shield Bash (•):** Your character slams her shield into an oncoming opponent, disrupting his attack. When Dodging add her shield's Size to her pool. If she reduces an opponent's attack successes to 0 then any additional successes inflict bashing damage.

**Boar's Snout (••):** Your character throws everything into a forward charge, trusting in her shield to protect her. Using a weapon and shield, your character can all-out attack and

retain her shield's Size bonus to Defense for the turn. If this maneuver is used the same turn by other allies with shields, then add an additional +1 to Defense for each.

**Pin Weapon (•••):** Your character uses her shield to trap an opponent's weapon. If an opponent misses a melee attack against your character he is automatically disarmed.

**Tortoise Shell (••••):** Your character knows how to position herself so that she's completely protected by her shield. When using a shield she is considered behind cover with Durability equal to the shield's size plus one for each shield-wielding ally in her immediate vicinity.

## Individual Merits

The following Merits are individual benefits that can be attached to multiple styles, or purchased on their own using the Style Tag rules, where applicable.

### Armed Restraint (••)

**Prerequisites:** Staff Fighting •••

**Effect:** Your character knows how to use a pole with a hook or noose on the end of it to restrain animal and human targets. Using a suitable weapon, such as a catch pole or shepherd's crook, your character can grapple and immediately apply the Hold maneuver on success. During subsequent turns her opponent's grapple rolls are penalized by the weapon's damage rating.

### Boot Party (••)

**Prerequisites:** Brawl ••

**Style Tags:** Striking

**Effect:** Your character understands the effectiveness of grinding her heel into a delicate part of a downed opponent's anatomy. When attacking an opponent in the prone position, she may make an unarmed attack at a -3 penalty in addition to normal modifiers. Any damage inflicted is lethal.

### Clinch Strike (•)

**Prerequisites:** Brawl ••

**Style Tags:** Striking, Grappling, Tactical (Street)

**Effect:** Most people will instinctively grab anyone they want to hit, but your character has trained to hit hard and accurately from a clinch position, using short punches, elbows, and knees. She inflicts standard Brawl damage when initiating a grapple instead of sacrificing the opportunity to damage someone in order to grab.


### Covert Operative (•)

**Prerequisites:** Wits •••, Dexterity •••, Stealth ••

**Style Tags:** Tactical (Military)

**Effect:** Your character is trained in getting the jump on her opponents. She creeps up on unsuspecting enemies from the shadows and neutralizes them before anyone realizes anything's happening. When your character ambushes an opponent, the victim loses the 10-again quality on his





roll to notice the attack. Even if he successfully notices your character, your character acts at +3 Initiative in the first turn.

## Ground and Pound ,(●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Brawl ●●

**Style Tags:** Striking, Grappling, Tactical (Street)

**Effect:** Your character skillfully uses gravity to drop a fist, elbow, knee, or other strike on a prone opponent. When using Brawl to strike or inflict the Damage grappling maneuver on a prone opponent, you may declare your character uses this maneuver. You gain the rote benefit (re-roll failed dice) to your attack, but automatically fall prone; and if grappled, your opponent automatically breaks free.

## Ground Fighter ,(●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Wits ●●●, Dexterity ●●●, Brawl ●●

**Style Tags:** Grappling

**Effect:** Your character knows how to fight from her back. Many mixed martial arts styles emphasize being able to fight from the ground. Brawl and weaponry attacks do not gain the +2 bonus to attack your character when prone. She can perform the Stand Up maneuver.

- **Stand Up):** When grappling an opponent from the prone position you can stand up without having to Break Free of the grapple.

## Headbutt ,(●)

**Prerequisites:** Brawl ●●

**Style Tags:** Striking, Grappling

**Effect:** Your character has found few arguments she can't end by ramming her skull into a softer part of the human anatomy. This Merit allows for a new grappling maneuver:

- **Headbutt:** Your character inflicts the Stunned Tilt on her opponent. Each use of this maneuver in a scene imposes a -2 penalty as the shock and surprise of this tactic wears off.

## Iron Chin ,(●● or ●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Resolve ●●●, Stamina ●●●

**Style Tags:** Attitude (Determined), Striking, Tactical (Street)

**Effect:** Your character's taken her share of beatings and can't be scared by pain or the sight of her own blood. This Merit comes in two levels. At ●● dots, she no longer suffers the Beaten Down Tilt from any amount of bashing damage. At ●●●● dots, she never suffers Beaten Down, *period*. This is probably more foolhardy than brave. If your chronicle doesn't feature conflicts where Beaten Down features prominently, don't use this Merit.

## Phalanx Fighter ,(●●)

**Prerequisites:** Weapon and Shield ●●, Spear and Bayonet ●

**Effect:** Your character is trained to wield a spear alongside a shield. She does not increase her spear's Strength

requirement for using it one-handed as long as she's also using a shield. She can use a spear for any Weapon and Shield maneuvers.

## Transfer Maneuver

(Same Cost as Original Maneuver; see below)

**Prerequisites:** Intelligence ●●, Wits ●●●. Your character must also possess at least ●●● dots in both the original and new Skill that the maneuver applies to.

**Style Tag:** Special; see below.

**Effect:** Many styles teach unarmed methods as a prerequisite for armed methods, and vice versa. This maneuver allows your character to transfer a maneuver from a Brawl-based Fighting Style to a Weaponry-based Style, or vice versa. The maneuver must not depend on the physical presence of a weapon, in that it can be applied with empty hands. The Storyteller decides which maneuvers are appropriate, though this can only be used on maneuvers worth no more than ●●● dots – after that, they're too specific to the original fighting method. Your character must know the maneuver in its original form, and you must purchase it again, at the same cost in dots and Experience.

## Trunk Squeeze ,(●●)

**Prerequisites:** Brawl ●●

**Style Tags:** Creature (Constrictor), Grappling

**Effect:** By wrapping arms or legs around an opponent's torso, your character can practically crush the life out of him. While grappling, your character can use the Trunk Squeeze maneuver.

- **Trunk Squeeze:** Using a bear hug or leg scissors, your character crushes the opponent's torso, making it increasingly difficult to breathe. Thus maneuver inflicts one point of bashing damage and imposes a cumulative -1 to the opponent's grappling rolls for each round she maintains it. The penalty persists until after your character attempts another maneuver, or until the target Breaks Free. This maneuver doesn't work on anyone who doesn't need to breathe, or victims with a Size at least 2 higher than the attacker's.

## Retain Weapon ,(●●)

**Prerequisites:** Wits ●●, Brawl ●●

**Style Tags:** Light Weapon, Pistol, Tactical (Police, Military)

**Effect:** Your character has trained to resist being disarmed. Police and military forces often teach this, but your character might learn this as part of a traditional martial art, as part of a shooting course, or as a member of a private security service. When an attacker attempts to use the Control Weapon or Disarm grappling maneuvers to take his weapon, or otherwise take it away in combat, reduce successes by your character's Brawl dots.



## Roadkill (••••)

**Prerequisites:** Aggressive Driving ••

**Style Tags:** Tactical (Street)

**Effect:** Your character has a knack for running down living creatures with her vehicle. When using with a vehicle to hit a human-sized target she adds two additional successes per 20 miles per hour (32 kilometers per hour) her vehicle is moving instead of one. She also inflicts the Knocked Down Tilt on her target even if she misses.

## Other Styles

These are not all fighting Styles, per se. But they use the same Style tag rules.

## Aggressive Driving (Style: • to ••••)

**Prerequisites:** Resolve •••, Fast Reflexes •••, Drive •••

**Style Tags:** Tactical (Police) or (Street)

**Effect:** Any vehicle can become a weapon when your character is behind the wheel. From the earliest days of bootleggers these maneuvers have passed between police and criminals as a means to evade or stop other vehicles, even at high speeds.

**Powerslide (•):** Your character can slide into turns and gain momentum coming out. Make a reflexive Dexterity + Drive + Handling roll anytime your character's vehicle comes to a curve, successes add to her total for that turn in a contested pursuit. This causes one point of Structure damage to the vehicle.

**Bump and Run (••):** Your character brings her vehicle alongside an opponent's and swipes his bumper, causing his rear tires to lose traction. First developed in stock car racing, this technique is used by police departments around the world as a safe means of ending a pursuit. Roll Dexterity + Drive + Handling minus an aware opponent's Defense. If successful, an opponent must succeed on an immediate Dexterity + Drive roll or lose control of his vehicle.

**J-turn (•••):** Your character can turn her vehicle around so quickly she baffles pursuers. If, during a contested pursuit, an opponent achieves more successes and catches up to her she can spend a point of Willpower and roll Dexterity + Drive + Handling with a -2 penalty. Success allows her to restart the chase, but now going in the opposite direction. This maneuver can only work successfully once per scene.

**Swoop and Squat (••••):** Your character cuts off an opponent's vehicle and jams her brakes, forcing an opponent to stop or wreck. A favorite of insurance fraudsters, this technique is most effective with another car beside the target vehicle to pin it in. Anytime she gains more successes than victim's Wits in a contested pursuit, the victim must make a reflexive Resolve + Composure + Handling to stop his vehicle or else he crashes into the other vehicle's rear. Note that a victim can choose to crash instead of stop.

## Drone Control (Style: • to •••)

**Prerequisites:** Intelligence •••, Computer •••, Drive ••

**Style Tags:** Tactical (Military) or (Police)





## Or Death (Optional)

Storytellers may choose to offer lasting injuries as an alternative to character death. In this scenario the character's last Health box has been filled with aggravated damage, but instead of dying the character can be stabilized through emergency medical aid. The character retains a lasting injury from the experience, which may or may not be treatable later on. The player can always decide that her character dies instead. The player and Storyteller work out an appropriate Persistent Condition to reflect the injury. Once stabilized, the character heals one point of aggravated damage.

This option isn't appropriate in games where lasting injuries can be easily reversed, or if the character experienced a most *definitive* ending, such as incineration. Furthermore, this should never be offered to the same character more than once to avoid overuse and accidental, gruesome comedy.

**Effect:** Your character knows how to operate weapon systems via remote. Though more impersonal than a knife or a gun, armed drones are quickly becoming a mainstay of the modern battlefield and increasingly sophisticated in the consumer market. These maneuvers work independently of the sophistication of the actual device. An RC car with a mounted pistol and a Wi-Fi receiver works just as well as a state-of-the-art military drone for the purposes of using this Style.

**Remote Immersion (•):** When your character accesses her drone she enters a focused state that lets her perceive and

react to things as if she were physically present. Perception rolls made using the drone gain the 9-again quality.

**Interface (••):** Your character has honed her control over her drones to the level of instinct. Spend a point of Willpower; she can take an additional instant action per turn with her drone. Drones capable of attacking can only make one attacking action per turn.

**Overclock (•••):** Your character can push her drone past the boundaries of its hardware. By sacrificing a point of Structure, she can add +2 to Physical actions the drone makes that turn.

# LASTING TRAUMA

**Chronicles of Darkness** games take a charitable approach to injury. Given time and proper treatment, characters recover from pretty much any wound. But real injuries leave lasting effects, and even minor bruises and scrapes carry the risk of complications. Injury management is a constant concern for athletes and people in active professions. Few leave a violent trade without twinges and aches.

Nevertheless, the game isn't about realism but hitting strong emotional notes in a world that feels compelling enough to invest in. That means any injury system must follow this ethos; and while some players prefer the battered but unbowed default, others might want to invest in scars and troubles, writing a history in lasting trauma.

## Acquiring Lasting Injuries

The primary rule? Storytellers don't choose lasting injuries. Players do.

Storytellers may suggest lasting injuries as a consequence but can't demand them. Players may choose lasting injuries under the following circumstances.

**Aggravated Damage:** In *Chronicles of Darkness* games, aggravated damage is a catch-all representing extremely serious injuries: the crushed bones, deep cuts, and other nasty things

that toss characters at death's door. When a character suffers aggravated damage either directly or as a rollover from lesser serious injuries, her player can choose to acquire a lasting injury.

**Repeated Trauma:** When characters survive repeated minor injury, small traumas may build into lasting injuries. Suffering lethal damage repeatedly over the course of a chapter may allow players to acquire lasting injuries, if the Storyteller agrees this makes sense.

**Special Situations:** Anything that imposes an appropriate Personal Tilt or other special effect (such as those inflicted by certain Fighting Styles) might be converted into a lasting injury. The character simply never recovers from its effects. Players and Storytellers may develop Tilts into Persistent Conditions with the same effects. When the Condition hinders the character, the player earns a Beat.

**Integrity Threats:** Challenges to character Integrity can impose psychological consequences above and beyond the rules in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**.

## Narrative Justification

No matter which event gives players an opportunity to choose lasting injuries, their choices need to make sense in



the story. That means the initial or chronic traumas need to logically lead to the Conditions victims will later suffer. The Storyteller ultimately determines which lasting injuries fit the bill, consulting with the player. Players always know which Conditions will result from their choices, even when their characters may not understand what's going on.

Think broadly. The injury Condition doesn't need to follow straight from an existing wound. There's a causal relationship, but it doesn't have to be as simple as "He hurt his leg and it evolves into the Leg Disability Condition." Your character might develop an Addiction from using pain medication. Psychological Conditions don't need to be triggered by direct exposure to the trauma because the character might have fixed on another detail — a red car or a Russian accent, say — that her mind associates with the trauma so strongly it acts as a trigger.

## Injuries as Persistent Conditions

Lasting injuries fit into the rules for Conditions and Tilts. They either impose Persistent Conditions or convert Tilts into them. Players benefit from these Conditions as per the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook** rules, acquiring Beats when the Condition imposes a disadvantage.

The following existing Conditions from the core rules are appropriate lasting injuries: Addicted, Amnesia, Blind, Broken, Disabled, Fugue, Madness, and Mute. New lasting injuries are listed below. Some of these have Chronic options where the Condition is not always active, but might become so in certain circumstances. These are starting points. Design new Persistent Conditions using these as inspirations to apply new challenges to characters. For example, as we mentioned previously, you might convert any Tilt into a Persistent Condition that awards a Beat whenever it prevents the character from acting or contributes to a failed action. The following Conditions apply this principle to common injuries.

### ARM DISABILITY (PERSISTENT)

One or both of your character's arms no longer function. This may occur due to nerve damage, after tissue death due to lack of blood flow for several hours, or due to amputation. (Note that in the case of tissue death, amputation must follow, or else sepsis will kill the character.) Improperly set fractures or repeated minor trauma might impose it as well, though in the latter case this might take the form of a chronic issue.

The Condition imposes the effects of the Arm Wrack Tilt. (One arm: Drop anything held, suffer off-hand penalties for most rolls. Both arms: Chance die on rolls requiring manual dexterity, Ⓛ3 to other Physical actions.) Unlike the Tilt, the Condition cannot be resolved without appropriate treatment.

**Origin:** This Condition can easily arise out of the Arm Wrack Tilt, but might be a lasting effect of aggravated damage as well. Anything that severs an arm definitely imposes it.

**Chronic Condition (Optional):** This Condition might be chronic if it affects the nervous or musculoskeletal system but the arm has not been amputated. Failing a Dexterity or Strength-based roll that requires the use of the affected arm imposes the Condition for a scene.

**Resolution:** Appropriate medical or supernatural treatment. Prosthetics (see below) can help treat the Condition.

**Beat:** The Condition prevents your character from performing an action, or you fail a roll penalized by it.

### CHRONIC AGONY (PERSISTENT)

Your character experiences chronic pain: a lasting reminder of her injuries. Head trauma might cause occasional headaches, and injury to the body's nervous system and structural supports might generate agony that makes it difficult to think or move. These attacks impose the effects of the Agony Tilt.

**Origin:** Aggravated damage and head injuries commonly impose this Condition.

**Chronic Condition (Mandatory):** This is always a chronic Condition. After any period of stress or physical exertion, roll Stamina. Failure imposes the Condition for a scene. Optionally, you may set one or more triggering circumstances, such as exposure to bright lights

**Resolution:** Appropriate medical or supernatural treatment. In the absence of a permanent resolution, characters can use painkillers or other drugs tailored to the Condition's medical origin. (This does not impose the Drugged Tilt, which assumes a larger, harmful dose.) Addictive drugs may impose the Addicted Condition as well.

**Beat:** When you fail a roll penalized by the Condition or it prevents your character from acting, take a Beat.

### CHRONIC SICKNESS (PERSISTENT)

Exposure to toxins or diseases causes this Condition, which persists even after the usual effects of the hazard pass. Chronic Sickness causes the effects of the moderate Sick Tilt. (Take a penalty Ⓛ1 to all actions. Penalty increases by an additional -1 for every two turns to a maximum of -5.)

**Origin:** Failing a roll against anything with a Toxicity rating might develop into this Condition.

**Chronic Condition (Mandatory):** This Condition is always chronic. By default, roll Stamina whenever the character encounters psychological or physical stress. Failure imposes the Condition for a scene. You might set other conditions instead, such as exposure to certain chemicals or if your character consumes anything that might aggravate the illness.

**Resolution:** Appropriate medical or supernatural treatment. You can also decide that the Condition eventually fades away. Drugs may help treat the Condition.

**Beat:** The character fails a roll while under the throes of the illness.



## DEAF (PERSISTENT)

Injury to the brain or structures of one or both ears causes deafness. In the latter case this might come from sudden or repeated exposure to loud noise, such as from a powerful PA system or firearms. Deafness imposes the same effects as the Deafened Tilt (One ear: ⓑ3 Perception rolls. Both ears: Chance die on Perception rolls, ⓑ2 to combat rolls.)

**Origin:** This might arise in situations that cause the Deafness Tilt, head injuries, or from aggravated damage.

**Chronic Condition (Optional):** Infections and various forms of neurological and ear structure damage can cause chronic deafness. Exposure to loud noises may trigger it for a scene, or the player and Storyteller can agree to another trigger.

**Resolution:** Appropriate medical or supernatural treatment. A hearing aid, cochlear implant, or similar prosthetic aid can provide assistance.

**Beat:** When your character fails a Perception roll due to deafness, take a Beat.

## LEG DISABILITY (PERSISTENT)

One of your character's legs no longer functions. Just as for an Arm Disability, this might occur due to improper healing, nerve damage, after tissue death due to lack of blood flow for several hours, or due to amputation.

The Condition imposes the effects of the Leg Wrack Tilt. (One leg: half Speed, ⓑ2 penalty on Physical rolls for movement.) Unlike the Tilt, the Condition cannot be resolved without appropriate treatment. Note that when this affects both legs, it leads to the Disabled Condition instead.

**Origin:** This Condition often arises from the Leg Wrack Tilt, but might be an aftereffect of aggravated damage instead. Losing one leg always leads to this Condition.

**Chronic Condition (Optional):** This Condition might be chronic if it affects the nervous or musculoskeletal system but the character's leg is intact. Failing a roll that requires the use of the leg imposes it for a scene.

**Resolution:** Appropriate medical or supernatural treatment. Prosthetics (see below) can help treat the Condition.

**Beat:** Failing a Physical roll penalized by the Condition or suffering another disadvantage due to it earns a Beat.

## Prosthetics and Assistive Technologies

Characters with disabilities and access to medical treatment may benefit from prosthetics and other technologies that assist common physical functions. Some of these technologies are very common. For example, a character with a disability that affects her ability to communicate can use

common messaging and text to speech apps on smartphones. Glasses and contact lenses represent interventions so common they don't even have a presence in the game system.

Specialized technologies require a combination of money and medical coverage. Exact requirements vary by nationality and profession. For example, medical insurance in the US may only cover basic prosthetics, but veteran status might provide more sophisticated options. Thus, the following descriptions don't list costs.

People with disabilities have complex relationships with these technologies. A deaf character may prefer to experience the world without hearing, using hearing aids only when required for the job. A character who uses prosthetics selects them based on lifestyle and personal preferences.

The following items address the long-term injuries listed here, but barely cover the enormous range of options available to characters with disabilities. Note that wheelchairs are covered under the Disabled Condition in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**.

## Hearing Aids and Implants

Some deaf characters may use hearing aids to mitigate the effects of deafness. Not all forms of deafness respond to hearing aids, but not all hearing aids simply amplify sound. Cochlear and bone conduction implants may be indicated for characters living with some forms of deafness. Unlike conventional hearing aids, these may not be removed.

**System:** These technologies remove penalties for deafness in one ear, or reduce the penalties for deafness in both ears to the penalties for one ear.

## Prosthetic Arms

Prosthetic arms range from cosmetic devices that look much like their biological counterparts to electronically controlled limbs designed for function over form. One of the most common functional arms uses a strap system to allow the wearer to open and close a hook with muscle contractions. Others sense nerve signals and use computer-controlled motors. The most sophisticated use direct input from a user's motor cortex, but the technology to sense input from peripheral nerves is several decades old. Prosthetic arms are custom fit for each user and cannot be casually used by anyone else.

**System:** Most functional prosthetic arms can be used to carry objects and push buttons, but tasks that require significant manual dexterity may suffer a -3 penalty or may not be possible. Other tasks impose a -1 to dice pools. Most prosthetic arms are considered to have a Strength of 1, though this doesn't affect Brawl or Weaponry dice pools, which use the whole body (but suffer the -1 penalty, above).

## Prosthetic Legs

Like arms, leg prostheses aren't simple substitutions for biological limbs, but come in a range of models for different tasks. Legs are fitted to individual wearers, and can't be trivially swapped. Some models use motors, while others get energy from the user's movements or hydraulic systems.

**System:** Characters with one artificial leg designed for an active lifestyle change their Species Factor for Speed to 3. Characters



who use two artificial legs of this type reduce this to 1. In any case, the challenge isn't keeping a standard walking pace, but moving in a crisis. Characters with two specialized carbon fiber "blade" legs add 2 to Speed, but the prosthetics impose a -2 penalty to Physical dice pools that require firm footing, including grappling.

## Ableism and Storytelling Games

Even though this section is all about acquired violent injuries, many people live with disabilities from birth or due to nonviolent circumstances. Early games represented these characters by assigning point values to their situations, implying that disabilities represent some sort of "negative value," or by providing bonus points to create a character, unwittingly perpetuating the stereotype that disabilities always inspire exceptional prowess in another area.

The Beat system provides an alternative by acknowledging that disabilities present challenges, but these are neither a constant statement on a disabled character's value as a person, nor

anything that implies that disabled characters acquire special powers as "compensation." Beat-generating challenges come up for characters of all types who encounter challenges. It's a common system for everyone. If disabled characters seem to get singled out for the different ways in which they acquire Beats as if they've got an inside track on exceptional abilities, consider switching to the optional group Beats system.

It's hard to dodge ableism in games that focus on violent conflict and physical threats. When people with physical disabilities are protagonists, it's time to reassess the role of violence and physical action in your game. There's nothing wrong with action, but ask yourself if you're using it to fill out a thinly plotted chronicle where, when all is said and done, nobody has much to do besides wander from one violent appointment to the next. Chronicles of Darkness games are supposed to move through Mental, Physical, and Social challenges — and through all of them, threats to moral Integrity. If you over-emphasize one area you'll reduce the range of characters who can meaningfully participate, no matter the bodies they live in.

# VIOLENT SKILLS

When most players think of fights and violence in Chronicles of Darkness, they think Brawl, Firearms, Weaponry, and to a lesser extent, Athletics. Sometimes they think Intimidation. But in their own ways, each Skill can be used as an instrument of harm. In this section, we provide some ideas for various ways different Skills could be used in the **Hurt Locker** style.

## Academics: Publish or Perish


Economic violence is one of the quietest and most effective means of assault — physical wounds may heal, emotional trauma may lessen over time, but a derailed career will rarely be set back on track. On top of that, very little can be done in the name of revenge or restitution, thanks to the cutthroat nature of capitalism. A bad reputation, deserved or not, can follow one throughout one's life, and slam shut doors that should have been opened. This happens to hundreds of thousands of people every year, if not more, simply due to the vicissitudes of the market; but a clever individual can turn this riptide into a weapon and direct it at a specific person.

In order to target someone's livelihood or social connections, the character must prepare a trap for her target. This is represented by an extended roll of Intelligence + Academics — the target's Resolve, each roll representing a day spent laying the groundwork. Such groundwork will vary depending on the Merit being targeted — for example, if the player is trying to get someone fired, she'll need to build connections with higher-ups so that when her target "slips up," she can convince them that the firm would be better off without him. If she's simply trying to make him persona non grata at every bar in

the city (targeting the Barfly Merit, in other words), talking to his bosses serves no purpose. Most of the grunt work can be abstracted away into dice rolls, but the important moments should be highlighted, and even just a line of dialogue or two will give them weight. Foreshadowing an opponent's downfall, after all, makes one seem even cleverer from the narrative's perspective. All according to plan, indeed.

The target number of successes is double the cost of the Merit being targeted plus the target's Composure. The character loses the Merit, and is eligible for the Sanctity of Merits rule. However, those points cannot buy the same Merit again; they must go toward other traits. Should the character's plan fail, either through fault of her own or though being discovered, she cannot attempt this action against the same target for the remainder of the story.

It's possible to use Academics in a similar way in the short-term as well — spur-of-the-moment plans can be just as effective as long-term plans in the right hands. In a stressful situation or a short period of time (a scene or less), the character may devise a plan that, while not permanently damaging to the target's reputation, puts them at a significant disadvantage. The groundwork is laid with a simple roll of Wits + Academics — the target's Composure. This is not enough to complete the plan, however, as the Storyteller will choose a single action, possible to complete within the available time frame, that will set the plan in motion. This action will use its own dice pool, appropriate to the task. If the goal is to cause physical damage to the target, the character may elect to have the target's Defense not apply to a single action (which need not be one of her own). If the goal is to place the target in an awkward position



to better attempts to open Doors with him, it improves the character's impression with the target by one step, not because her impression has actually improved but because the target is too off balance to have his defenses completely up.

## Computer: Online Harassment

The world is interconnected in a profound way, as the Internet pushes its way more and more into daily life. In the modern world, cell phones and social media are extremely common, even outside of the developed centers of capital. Doxxing and SWATting have become a part of the everyday lexicon as the wrong word on social media can provoke a torrent of vile threats, stalking, and yes, even direct violence, outsourced to unstable individuals willing to ruin someone else's life for their 15 minutes of fame. The details of organizing such a "movement" are best left to Politics, Expression, or Socialize, below; when it comes to the unique mechanics of stealing identities, breaking into emails, and acting from behind proxies, however, Computer is the skill of choice.

This is not hacking, though — there's very little actual penetration of systems done here, and when there is it's typically using known exploits that haven't been patched or through social engineering. People generate a tremendous amount of metadata through social media, and this is a treasure trove of potentially sensitive information. Digging that information up is finding the needle in a haystack.

To scrape social media for personal information, roll Intelligence + Computer, opposed by the target's Resolve + Computer, in an extended action. Each roll represents an hour of work on the hacker's part; rolls by the target represent longer-term vigilance to prevent metadata leakage. The hacker must accrue a number of successes equal to twice the target's unmodified dice pool, and the target must do likewise — the first to reach this number is victorious. If successful, the hacker gains access to personal information, including name, address, and frequently visited places. An exceptional success grants government ID numbers or bank account information, giving the hacker access to the subject's Resources Merit, if she has one (if she does not, he'll likely open a credit card in her name and run up obscene bills, saddling her with debt). If the target is victorious, her stalker's efforts are stymied, and he cannot gain access to her information through this means.

On its own, doxxing (the publication of personal information to a wide audience) may not seem like the worst thing that could possibly happen. The truth of the matter is that doxxing never happens in a vacuum. If someone cares enough to dig up information and publish it, odds are others will be sufficiently motivated to act upon it. The Storyteller should roll a die every chapter — a failure indicates that the victim is clear of harassment for the remainder of the story, while a success indicates that a stalker will harass him in some way. This could be as subtle as taking selfies outside his workplace or as blatant as leaving dead animals on his doorstep — or worse. For every dot of Fame or Status the target has, add one die to the roll — bigger names attract more attention. Other Merits affect this roll at the Storyteller's discretion.

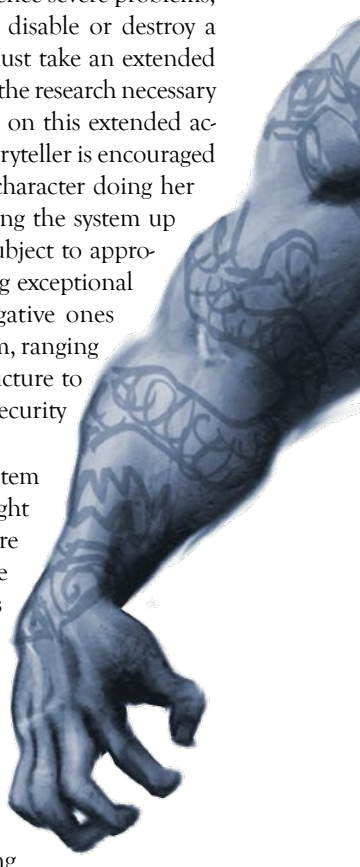
## Crafts: Make or Break

It's hard to create, but easy to destroy, right? Sure, you can take the sledgehammer method when you're trying to bring something down, but it's so much more satisfying (and so much quieter!) to force that thing to bring itself down. This can be done with any reasonably complex mechanical or electronic system — everything has some kind of weak point that, properly taken advantage of, will absolutely ruin the whole. Consider dropping a lit cigarette into a paper recycling bin, or damaging the brake lines on a car. In and of themselves, these actions aren't immediately destructive, but give them time and they'll quickly spiral out of control. The bin will burst into the flame and the sprinkler system will go off, flooding the building. The car will get up to speed and the brakes will fail, and the inevitable result will ensue.

Finding that weak point, and taking advantage of it, is the challenge. This will usually involve legwork, planning, and research to find the exact place to strike, but a quick-witted individual can take advantage of the fragility of systems on the spur of a moment, provided she has the necessary means to do what needs to be done. This needn't always be dangerous to human life, but it's always something destructive.

In order to size up a system, the player must roll Intelligence + Crafts. For improvised efforts, this is an instant action, and while the target system will likely experience severe problems, it will be salvageable. To permanently disable or destroy a mechanical or electronic system, she must take an extended action using the above roll, representing the research necessary to find the system's keystone. Each roll on this extended action represents a day's work, and the Storyteller is encouraged to play through short vignettes of the character doing her work, a montage of the process of setting the system up for destruction. Both rolls should be subject to appropriate modifiers, positive ones reflecting exceptional equipment or insider knowledge, negative ones representing the complexity of the system, ranging from -1 for simple engines or infrastructure to -3 for integrated circuitry or advanced security systems.

The destruction of any complex system is a spectacular thing. A server rack might burst into flame after its heat sinks were removed. An entire floor might collapse if the appropriate load-bearing beam was weakened. The bigger the system, the more likely it is that there will be human casualties in the process of its destruction, and this is especially true if it's a piece of infrastructure that is regularly interacted with by the public. The Storyteller should take into account whether or not the character subverting the system is attempting to do so in a way that will be more respectful of human life than strictly necessary, but ultimately, it's her call. When systems fail, people get hurt — when they fail catastrophically, people may die regardless of the plans made beforehand. Entropy is a cruel mistress.







## Investigation: Watch and Learn

Know your enemy as you know yourself, and you shall win a thousand battles. Going into a battle with foreknowledge of the enemy's capabilities and tendencies is widely recognized as essential in warfare, and it's no different in a street fight — if you don't know what the drunken biker with the switchblade can do, he's probably going to carve you up. It therefore behooves a wise person to know when she's going to get into a fight ahead of time, and to study her opponents if at all possible. This is common practice in boxing, MMA, and practically any contact sport you care to name, and that's because it *works*.

To gauge the opponent's abilities and favored tactics, the character must observe her target in a fight — not a sparring match or a casual pile-on, but a serious, no-holds-barred brawl where life and limb is at stake. Anything less, and details will be left unrevealed. Having observed such a fight, the character rolls Wits + Investigation, opposed by the target's Composure + Combat Skill — whatever he's using. Success indicates that the character has found a hole in her target's fighting style that she can exploit. For every successful scene of study,

the character receives an instance of the Came Prepared

Tilt — an exceptional success grants two instances of the Condition. By resolving it, she may choose a single attack roll during a fight with the target against which he can only apply half his Defense, rounded down. If the character has stocked multiple instances of Came Prepared, only the first used in a single fight generates a Beat when resolved.

The character may also use previous experience with her opponent to her advantage. If she has previously clashed with the target, she may roll Wits + Investigation, opposed by the target's Wits + Composure. Success gives her the Anticipated Blow Tilt, which she may resolve at any time during the fight to give herself temporary Armor equal to her Investigation Skill. This Armor only applies to a single attack, and cannot be used against this opponent again.


Preparation is not always possible, of course. Sometimes, a character has to improvise. By rolling Wits + Investigation as an instant action during a fight that she has not prepared for, the character may make a series of cursory observations about the way her opponent moves. This roll is also opposed by the target's Wits + Composure. Success allows her to apply her Investigation to her Defense instead of her Athletics throughout the fight (and that fight alone).

## Medicine: Surgical Strikes

The human body is a complex network of organs, all supporting each other, each with its own function and its own foibles. Someone with the appropriate training and the will to use it lethally can do a tremendous amount of damage with precise blows, even if that damage won't show — or kill — immediately. This is the basis of many techniques in martial arts, but a windswept mountaintop is far from the only place that such knowledge can be attained. First, do no harm.







Employ this system to model the sort of internal injuries that can result from the exchange of blows. Following an exceptional success in combat, any bashing damage suffered through such an attack does not resolve itself at the end of the scene, but lingers. One point of this bashing damage converts to lethal every scene as the internal injuries begin to manifest themselves. Once all the former bashing damage has been converted, lethal damage continues to be added, and death will almost certainly follow if the victim isn't hospitalized or at least stabilized.

This sort of lingering and deadly injury is not always an accident, though. Individuals trained with anatomical knowledge can inflict this sort of damage intentionally. Doing so requires the Medicine skill and at least one dot of a combat skill (Brawl and Weaponry are eligible, but Firearms is not — the tissue trauma inflicted by a bullet far exceeds what mere blunt force trauma can do). Make the attack as normal, with a Specified Target modifier of at least -3 — hitting these points intentionally in the middle of a fight is not easy. Using this knowledge to kill is a breaking point — at Storyteller discretion, if the character ensures that his victim survives afterwards, the breaking point may be waived in favor of a Condition reflecting the inner turmoil. Only the most callous of people feel nothing when they've just tried to kill someone, after all.

Finally, someone properly trained in Medicine can use that knowledge to kill silently and, with a Specialty in Forensic Science or a similar field, little possibility of being detected in an autopsy. She must first diagnose the victim — this need not be with his knowledge, though an uncooperative “patient” does impose a -2 modifier on the Intelligence + Medicine roll. Once she has completed the diagnosis, she must then obtain (or create, if possible) the compound she will use to murder her target. Appropriate Status or Contacts Merits grant her immediate access, but Science or Medicine may allow her to synthesize it herself, at Storyteller discretion. The time frame of death need not be immediate, but every hour between application and death imposes a -1 modifier to the acquisition roll — such compounds are more difficult to create or acquire. To apply the compound, select a method of delivery — oral, transdermal, or intravenous. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages. Applying any of them in combat requires the victim to be surprised or grappled, though the one applying the compound need not be the one doing the grappling. Note that applying a compound intravenously to a resisting victim *will* leave a bruise.

## Occult: Hidden Moves

The world is awash with supernatural energies, though the majority of humans don't meaningfully interact with them. Protagonists in *Chronicles of Darkness* games are not like the average human, and will no doubt encounter any number of horrors in the shadows. Every entity in the *Chronicles of Darkness* has its weakness, one way or another, and exploiting that blind spot in its psychology or physiology will make all the difference between survival and a gruesome demise (or worse).

Any character with Occult may attempt to ground himself out, so to speak, cutting himself out of the ebb and flow of occult energies that permeate the world, and in doing so interfere with the senses and abilities of the monsters around him. This is not an act of power, but rather finding the path of least resistance — no Supernatural Merits are required to use this system.

Constructing such a charm requires a few crafting materials relevant to the entity being warded against, which will vary depending on the creature's nature (however, a part of that creature, such as hair, skin, or claws, are always acceptable). Putting the pieces together into a stable magical effect requires an Intelligence or Wits + Occult roll, depending on whether the charm is being painstakingly or hastily constructed. Successes on this roll translate into dice added or subtracted from a single effect — the subject being warded may receive bonus dice to their Stealth rolls against the facade's target, or a weapon may be forged into a perfect antithesis, adding those dice directly to its Damage Rating when used against a specific creature. With Storyteller approval, these successes may also be used to affect other outcomes — reducing the amount of nourishment a vampire might gain from draining the blood of a specific victim, for example. However, regardless of intended application, if the roll fails the desired effect is reversed.

No charm designed with this system endures longer than a day or so, as the occult energies of the world will eventually burn it out. Successes may be applied on a one for one basis to gain additional working days through sturdy construction, but once the charm has been built the clock is ticking.

## Politics: No Turning Back

Ideology is a powerful tool, encouraging participants to take the path of least resistance down preprogrammed avenues of thought that divide them into predetermined groups based on what they think that they think. No one is immune to the pull of ideology, as it saturates the world in a *They Live* fashion. A savvy person knows what dog-whistle terms can whip a crowd into a frenzy, but like all frenzies the most one can hope to do is point it in the “right” direction and hope it doesn't turn on its instigator. Better, and somewhat safer, to create your own ideological cages, but such skill with the art of the spin is rare indeed.

The Storyteller should take into account the group the character is attempting to agitate, and design a Violence Group (p. 27) representing it if she hasn't already done so. It needn't be exclusively devoted to physical violence, but if the group is vulnerable to radicalization it should have at least one Aspiration reflecting its members' barely-caged impulses. To radicalize an existing non-physically violent group, a longer-term strategy is necessary, and this is handled using Expression.

To drive a group to give in to its violent impulses, treat it as a normal example of social maneuvering, but using Politics as the primary skill. Presence or Manipulation is always appropriate, and Intelligence or Wits may be useful as well if the organization has an intellectual bent, or at least maintains the facade of one. The violence group has a number of Doors equal to the sum of its Mental and Social traits, and



the Impression table determines the time frame between attempts to open Doors as normal. Instead of interacting with a specific individual, though, the character may interact with any member of the group, and it need not be the same member each time she attempts to open a Door. Doing so steers the collective thought process of the group by introducing new memes and concepts at strategic points, allowing them to spread throughout the group so that it decides to engage in violent action without the character ever having to reveal herself as the spark that lit the powder keg.

Alternately, the character may choose to speak to the group as a whole, at a protest, rally, or similar ideologically charged gathering. In such a setting, things are simpler, as the sheer number of like-minded people weights the scale towards immediate action. Halve the number of Doors needed to convince the crowd to turn violent. Mob mentality will quickly take over, and anyone who doesn't wish to be caught up in the chaos (the character who started the mess included!) had better get out of the area quickly. Expression or Politics can be used for this roll — a dramatic failure at any point will lead to the group rejecting the character, likely seeing him as an agent provocateur sent in to delegitimize them. What it won't do is get them violent, though it may get the character hauled away and possibly, depending on the crowd, get a lesson beat into him.

## Science: The Fine Art of Overkill

It's remarkable what one can do with the proper knowledge. Anyone who passed high school chemistry probably knows how to make thermite, for example. Using Science in combat or as a means of attack draws upon knowledge of how the world works, at least as far as humans know. Careful application can greatly expand the capabilities of even a single individual when it comes to attacking others, disabling infrastructure, or causing general havoc and mayhem. The downside is, of course, that it's rarely subtle, and when you work within the rules, you're leaving clues that the authorities will very much understand — and they tend to take a dim view of people who do things like make mustard gas or pipe bombs.

Building explosive devices or brewing dangerous chemicals requires an extended roll of Dexterity + Science, with a number of successes required equal to the damage desired. For devices intended to affect large groups of people, the target is a theoretical Structure large enough to contain the target group — see the section on inanimate objects in **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 96. The construction of the device is divided into phases, consisting of five successes each — round up if necessary — and each roll represents an hour's work. Dramatic failures in early phases typically result in minor harm or the loss of work. A preliminary charge detonates and burns the character, or her chemical solution is contaminated and useless. Later stages bring progressively greater consequences. The final phase of construction (which is also the first phase in small devices!) is the most dangerous, and dramatic failures here should result in long-term consequences for the character. A bomb might detonate early, and she might well lose fingers, an eye, or even a limb. A chemical weapon might escape its container, exposing

her to its effects. Building homemade explosives or chemical weapons is extremely dangerous, and a bomb-maker with no scars is likely very careful and *extremely* lucky. A proper laboratory setup or engineering facility gives positive modifiers to this extended roll, but it in no way removes the danger — industrial accidents happen, regardless of the safety precautions taken to reduce their incidence.

Getting these devices to their targets, of course, is a matter all its own. Small ones might be hidden or even thrown like grenades in combat. Larger ones will require more robust transportation, and are not likely to be subtle. As a rule of thumb, every phase of a device's construction should add 2 to its total Size. If the character has access to military-grade components (which are not easy to come by!) such as C4 or Semtex, each phase should add 1 to the total Size of the device instead. Such a device, if used, will bring serious federal attention down on the area — repeated use is *not* recommended, unless the character is looking for a lifetime of free rent in a private solitary cell in a maximum-security prison. Remember the world we live in — bombs are serious fucking business.

## Drive: Bringing a Car to a Fistfight


One shouldn't be surprised that a thousand-pound mass of metal moving at high speeds can be used as a dangerous weapon. Running someone down is an excellent way to get rid of her, if you don't mind cleaning the mess out of your radiator — which you'll want to do, or it'll start to stink. But what to do when your opponent brings a car of her own to the fight? Smashing cars into one another is a good way to total them, and it vastly increases the likelihood of a dangerous, even fatal crash.

Modern automobiles have air bags, of course, which tend to put an immediate end to any sort of vehicular activity. It's hard to drive, after all, with an enormous balloon smashing into your face at high velocity. Not every collision will cause air bags to deploy — when you factor in different impact angles and the relative speed between two or more cars in a collision, you wind up with a surprising number of crashes where air bags aren't triggered. Anyone who endures an airbag deployment following a high speed collision receives the Beaten Down Tilt — the impact knocks the wind out of you in a way that makes getting out and continuing a fight with your bare hands a fool's errand.

Dealing with someone else in a car when you are on foot presents difficulties. The appropriate tools, such as spike strips, can disable a car easily enough; but these aren't things that can be manufactured at a moment's notice. Running somewhere, if you can, that the vehicle can't follow is a better bet — but keep in mind that if all that's keeping them out is propriety, they might not mind smashing through a set of glass doors to chase you through a mall. Better to run down an alley too narrow for a car, and hope that it's not a dead end. Better still to have a car of your own.

Car chases are one thing, but if you're actively trying to do each other in from inside those cars, things become a little more difficult than an extended action can really handle,





especially if you want to focus on the fight rather than the car. One character must be the driver, responsible for the handling of the vehicle and dodging whatever obstacles the Storyteller places in the path of the cars, but the others can take whatever actions they might be able to reasonably accomplish. Whatever Skill the occupant of a car uses is capped by either his Drive (if he is driving) or Athletics (if he is a passenger) Skill, however. It's not easy to do battle between two speeding cars, after all. Characters may target the opposing car instead of the occupants — aiming for the tires is recommended, as their Durability and Structure are lower than the car surrounding them. Every blown tire imposes a -1 modifier to all rolls made to control the vehicle, to a maximum of -5, as well as lowering the vehicle's safe Speed by 10, so sooner or later this will end the chase and the fight.

## Larceny: Smooth Operators

Modern society has us trained to look over our shoulders constantly, to worry that anyone we meet on the street might be a deranged killer or a bomb-throwing radical. The simple snatch and grab has almost fallen off the cultural radar, but it still happens, and it's a quick and relatively easy way to make a few bucks. Even better, these days people are carrying personal electronics on them, and if you're clever with it you can even keep it from calling home to its rightful owner.

The snatch and grab can vary. Purses are an obvious target, as are shopping bags and the like. It doesn't stop there, though. A thief with deft hands can knock a man over and lift his wallet or keys just as easily as he might yank a purse free from its straps. Really, taking something from someone isn't that hard when you think about it — it's what comes after that's the real issue.

If the local authorities are nearby — first of all, is the thief likely to operate with a cop watching? — they're likely to give chase, doubly so if the thief is a member of a marginalized community. Sometimes, the victims themselves will even give chase! Damn whatever's in their way, they want their belongings back! Increasingly, too, there's the threat that they might be armed, in which case the power balance in the relationship has just shifted wildly, unless the thief is armed too, and willing to use what he's got. The goal of the snatch and grab is a quick getaway with the goods — if you're leaving bodies behind you, you've already made a critical mistake.

As a result, being an accomplished snatch and grab artist relies on several Skills besides Larceny. Intimidation can help keep the target docile for those few seconds while the thief is at work. Athletics is necessary for the getaway, as putting distance and even obstacles between the victims and their things makes it much more likely that they'll never see them again. Stealth comes in handy when the thief can't make that breakaway, or when the police get involved and every squad car in the city has his description. Larceny comes in handy there as well, being the Skill of choice for varying your appearance.

When the authorities get involved, foot chases become more complicated, and much harder to get out of. After the successful Dexterity + Larceny roll that starts the whole

thing off, start off an extended Stamina + Larceny roll — the thief is going to be running hard for a long time, and will still need to think quickly on her feet. What doors will be locked, and which are left open? Which fences can she scale quickly? Where are the blind corners in the neighborhood? Every roll the player makes, the Storyteller should make a Resolve + Composure roll, reflecting the combined forces searching for the thief. The use of Violence Groups (p. 27) is entirely appropriate, as the authorities are unlikely to treat the thief with kid gloves if they do catch him. The first group to accumulate five successes more than the other is the victor — either the thief escapes, or she's captured.

## Stealth: Clearing Up

Okay, so you've rolled Dexterity + Stealth to sneak up on your target. He blew his Wits + Composure roll and has no idea your character is there. She pulls the trigger. He's dead. There's a terrible mess. Has she ever cleaned brains out of a carpet? Blood out of wallpaper? Has she ever smelled the inside of a human being? Wait, his phone is ringing — should she answer it, or let it go to voicemail? Where'd the bullet go?! This is a lot more complicated than you thought, isn't it? It turns out that sneaking up on someone with the intention of killing them just isn't *enough*. There is so much more that goes into killing someone and getting away with it, even in the Chronicles of Darkness.

First, let's address the mindset necessary to do this in the first place. A character who wants to kill someone has bypassed every other option for dealing with the situation. She's decided that the only way to fulfill her objectives is to take another person's life. Furthermore, she's decided to employ stealth — it might be the intelligent decision, after all, given what she's trying to do, but thinking intelligently about killing someone in cold blood and *actually going through with it* takes a toll on a person. Doing so is absolutely a breaking point, no question about it.

So we'll assume that the character goes through with her plan. Now she has to deal with the results. Can she trust someone else to help her with this? Congratulations — odds on they're dealing with a breaking point as well. We'll assume for the sake of expedience that nobody fails it egregiously and flees the scene, leaving all manner of evidence behind. Now they have to dispose of a body. Ever tried to carry a limp person around? Bodies are heavy. Perhaps she decides to cut it up into more manageable pieces — another breaking point. Perhaps she simply finds the nearest tub and applies quicklime. The smell will give it away sooner or later, but by then she'll hopefully be states away. Then there comes scrubbing the scene — cleanup for this sort of thing can take hours, and will need all sorts of caustic chemicals, none of which are lightweight in the quantities she'll need them in. This will be the work of hours, every second ticking closer to someone discovering that she's forcibly shuffled the unfortunate victim off this mortal coil. Witnesses only compound the problem, of course. Storytellers, if you want to make deaths matter, play this up — your players have *not* chosen the easy way out.

There is, of course, another way to make use of Stealth, a much cleaner and less violent solution to a problem: *hide*.



Hide, and pray that whatever it is you're hiding from doesn't come snuffling around the dumpster you dove into. Hide, rather than drawing your own weapon. Hide, and survive to see the light of another day without blood on your hands. Discretion is, as they say, the better part of valor.

To remain perfectly still, barely breathing for minutes or hours on end, however, is not as easy as it sounds, and there are beasts in the *Chronicles of Darkness* who can hunt by the sound of a heartbeat alone. For extended Stealth situations where the character is not moving, the Storyteller may call for a Stamina + Stealth roll — failure means that your leg has begun to cramp, or something has crawled across your hand and made you gasp, giving away your presence but not your position. This skill is also useful for snipers, who may have to wait hours beneath a sweltering ghillie suit before the perfect shot presents itself.

## Survival: Hunting the Deadliest Game

To a trained survivalist, the world around her is a series of resources. In the wild, these represent means to survive — hunting and gathering, finding shelter and clean water, staying warm at night, building a fire, and so forth. In urban environments, the setting changes but the goal remains the same. The environment here is laden with the detritus of human civilization, and someone who knows his way around can sustain himself, if not entirely healthily, at least enough to survive.


Traps are a key part of survival, especially in the wilderness where protein and fat, both necessary for human life, can be hard to come by in non-animal form. In urban environments,

traps are used, at least professionally, for pest control more than anything, but even this requires understanding of the area as an ecological unit and knowledge of how the trap functions. Actively using survival knowledge to harm others, paradoxically, requires a largely passive approach. When you're weaponizing the land itself, it's hard to aim that at a moment's notice. Instead, you have to guide your target to the appropriate location, where you've prepared a surprise for them.

Building a trap is a Dexterity + Crafts or Survival action, modified as necessary by the absence or presence of tools and equipment needed. Someone with Survival knowledge can make do without tools, but the basic resources used to construct the trap must be present, either in the environment or imported by characters. Some kinds of traps can be pre-built (bear traps, for example), but some rely entirely on the environment and cannot be prefabricated (pitfall traps, for example). Storytellers should decide how much damage the trap does based on the player's description of the device, but the player has option to make damage bashing or lethal. When a trap is triggered, roll the trapmaker's Intelligence + Survival — the target's Defense as it if were an attack. Armor reduces damage as usual. In the event that the trap is intended to immobilize the target, treat the trap's effective Strength + Brawl pool as identical to the trapmaker's Intelligence + Survival. The target may use Strength + Brawl or Wits + Survival to resist.

Placing a trap is another matter entirely. Even the most elaborate or cunning trap will be useless if the target doesn't trigger it, after all. Guiding the target to the appropriate location is a skill all its own, and may require significant alterations





to the surrounding area to funnel traffic through the area without making it obvious that it's an ambush. This is a contested Wits + Survival versus Resolve + Composure roll, on the part of the trap-maker and the intended target respectively.

### Roll Results

**Both Fail:** The target is unaware of the trap, but manages to blunder through without triggering it anyway.

**Trapmaker Succeeds:** The trap goes off as intended when the target enters the area.

**Target Succeeds:** The target realizes the current situation is a trap, and may even see the apparatus of the trap itself.

**Both Succeed:** Take note of the number of successes. If the target has more, he has just barely avoided triggering the trap. If the trapmaker has more, the trap the target saw was a dummy — avoiding it was what triggered the real trap!

## Animal Ken: Man's Best Friend

How do you weaponize an animal? Wild animals can be dangerous, of course, but they're not especially trainable, so working with one is a bit like playing with fire — if you teach it to burn, it might well burn *you*. Domesticated animals are different, having been selected both for amiability and trainability over tens of thousands of years. Dogs in particular are an excellent example. A dog may bite or snap if threatened, but all things being equal it's not likely to go for the throat, unless it's been trained to do so.

Turning an animal into a weapon has its advantages. A large breed of dog is essentially a very inbred wolf, some weighing as much as a human, with a bite strength not too different from their wild counterparts. Most people are not used to fending off angry predators, and will back off even at the sight of an angry junkyard dog, allowing their master to maintain a safe distance from a possible scrap.

There are disadvantages, too. Once an animal has learned not to respect human life, it can't *un*-learn that. The animal will always be dangerous, and aside from being unable to retire them from the job they have a better than even chance of turning on their master if they feel sufficiently threatened. Most people who train animals to fight don't have moral qualms about destroying them once they've served their purpose, of course, but commanding an animal to kill is no different than pulling a trigger — it's still taking a life and it's still a breaking point.

Controlling an animal once it's been commanded to attack is no mean trick either, but depending on how you've trained your animal it might be the only way to keep it from killing if you order it into a fight. Maintaining a strong leash hand allows the character to pull the blow just as if she were the one attacking — however, to do so the character must succeed at an opposed action of Strength + Animal Ken versus the animal's Strength + Brawl every round. Failure on this roll means the animal has slipped or broken the leash. A dramatic failure could mean that the animal breaks and runs, or even that it has turned on the character, and no leash can stop something charging at you instead of away from you. The character may not apply her Defense while

## Abuse, Triggers, and Taking It Too Far

No words, no system, can model what it feels like to be abused. "Walking on eggshells" doesn't convey the heart-in-your-throat feeling, the tingling in your extremities, the fear. It's different for everyone, but anyone who has suffered that knows what we're talking about. For those of you who are fortunate enough not to have, trust us — this isn't something you want to touch off, even accidentally. If you're going to use the systems described for the following Skills, be sure everyone is completely on board with it, and be sure everyone is okay with anyone stopping play *immediately* if something gets to them. Content warnings are entirely appropriate.

she is controlling an animal in this manner, as it takes all of her strength and focus to hold it back.

Eventually, of course, the stress of being sent into fight after fight takes its toll on an attack animal. Despite their teeth and claws, animals are no more designed for combat than humans are — in the wild, they're much more likely to avoid a fight, all things being equal. Being properly cared for can ameliorate this somewhat, but eventually there's going to be nothing left to do to help the beast; even if giving them a quick end is the merciful option, it's still a breaking point unless you're extraordinarily callous.

## Empathy: Breaking Hearts

When someone is unnecessarily vicious or harsh, we sometimes call it "going for the throat." Going for the heart might be more appropriate. Bodies can heal most trauma with the appropriate care, but wounds to the psyche are often much more difficult to treat. This subsystem expands Social Maneuvering (*Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 81) to model both inflicting and taking advantage of emotional and mental traumas. Doing so is always considered to be forcing Doors, and is likely to poison any relationship in which it's used, probably permanently.

To use this system, your character must know at least one of the target's breaking points — these can be ascertained with an extended Intelligence + Empathy roll, with a number of successes required equal to the target's Integrity. Each roll requires a scene of interaction with the target. This is the process of gaining the target's trust, though if the character has a specialty in Psychology or another relevant mental health professional field, it can also represent the process of diagnosis. In either case, each successful extended action reveals a single breaking point. Naturally, access to the target's relevant records, if any, will provide the same information given sufficient study. Supernatural beings, naturally, differ



psychologically from the masses of humanity, and will require special study to affect in the same way. Mechanically, assessing a non-Integrity breaking point may use either Empathy (behavioral understanding) or Occult (mystical understanding).

There are three ways to use this information. One is as leverage in social maneuvering. Each breaking point the character knows about removes a single Door, provided she's willing to exploit it by engaging in behavior that drives the target to instinctive self-protection. The second use of this information is as a weapon. By repeatedly forcing breaking point rolls, the character backs her target into a psychological and emotional corner. Consider this social maneuvering as well, with the requisite number of Doors, except that the only way to open these doors is to exploit breaking points. Opening all of these Doors places the Broken Condition on the target. He is unlikely to refuse demands or attempt to break contact of his own accord unless seriously triggered for fear of retaliation from his abuser. The third use of this information relates to combat or other stressful situations – triggering the target (whatever may be necessary to do so) takes her out of the action completely, as stressors compound the reaction and she simply shuts down.

## Expression: Eating From the Trash Can of Ideology

Politics, above, gives characters the means to light a match and begin a conflagration waiting to happen. Expression, to continue the metaphor, is the can of kerosene used to thoroughly soak the environs before said match is lit. Art is a perfect vehicle for ideology, because very few people interrogate the media they consume. This is not to say that we are all automatons (not quite, anyway), but that everything we interact with changes us in some way, even if only slightly; and those who master the presentation of their ideologies can expose them to vast numbers of people without those people ever being aware of it.

Expression can be used in social maneuvering with groups, particularly Violence Groups (p. 27), to alter how they perceive and interact with the world by adding or removing Aspirations. This is done with a Manipulation or Wits + Expression roll – groups have a number of Doors equal to the sum of their Social and Mental traits. Once those Doors have been opened, the character's influence is felt throughout the group, and a new Aspiration is adopted or a current Aspiration is removed.

Naturally, this can be used to manipulate nonviolent entities into becoming violent, radicalizing them by alienating moderate or pacifist members while simultaneously drawing in a new membership attracted by the prospect of direct action. Doing so usually draws attention, though, and is likely to result in opposition. If a major Storyteller character opposes the group's slide into violent action, add a number of Doors equal to their Resolve + Composure – after all, one of the strongest ideological weapons used against mass protest is the idea that violent protest is somehow invalid, and many members of a nonviolent organization will be thoroughly committed to maintaining their

“legitimacy” lest their cause lose favor. In such a case, even if the character is successful, the group is likely to split as the nonviolent members break off, decrying the radicals and accusing them of being mere thrill seekers who don't care about the issues.

Expression can be used to interact with and guide groups in a nonviolent manner as well, of course. In such a case, the opposition of a major Storyteller character does not add Doors to the total needed to influence the group, unless an Aspiration the group holds directly supports that Storyteller character or her position in the argument. Suggested tools for Expression actions intended to influence organizations and like-minded groups of people include astroturfing (paid comments on social media to create the illusion of a groundswell of support), blackmail, subtle intimidation, and the like. If you're hurting for ideas, watch a politician's stump speech and count the dog-whistle terms – that's how your character needs to get the message across. Forcing these Doors would require the character to be in a position of power over the organization, such as being one of its primary fundraisers or having significant sway (Contacts, Allies, or Status) within relevant media.


## Intimidation: The Hard Way

Torture does not work. At least, not for the purpose it's typically used for in television and cinema. It is not a shortcut to perfectly accurate information when the clock is ticking and there's no other option. It is not the hard but necessary choice of the gruff protagonist that will ultimately save lives. Rather, it is the first refuge of the bully and the sadist, good for nothing more than breaking another person. It is not a key that unlocks a door, but a sledgehammer that smashes everything in its path. It is the systematic destruction of a human being. Someone who has been abused in this way will tell the torturer anything he wants to hear, even after the pain has stopped. This information may be accurate, but it probably isn't. We cannot emphasize enough – this is not the act of a hero. This is not how you avert the immanent eschaton (and if it is, tell your Storyteller to fuck off). This is nothing but a way of ruining someone's life.

So why do people torture, then? Aside from the widely believed myth still thoroughly reinforced by fiction and even non-fiction media that it's the quick way to make someone talk, it's an excellent way to instill terror, not just in the person you're torturing but in an entire population. Obedience and pliability are the goals here, and whatever details you might in theory be trying to extract from someone are incidental at best. Not everyone involved might acknowledge that fact, but historically it's been a major contributor to campaigns of torture across the world. As an instrument of fear and control, there are few practices more effective, and authoritarian governments and illegal organizations are well aware of this fact. It survives today because of this, and because of institutional tolerance for people employed in an official capacity acting outside the bounds of the law.

We discuss torture under Intimidation because most modern forms of the practice are explicitly designed not to





leave any lasting physical trauma. It's not about physical harm or death, but about exploiting our innate revulsion to these things. Some of these practices are brutally simple — denial of sleep, stress positions, or waterboarding are all methods of torture that require no tools you couldn't find at a hardware store or big-box retailer, and they work just as well as more direct techniques. Again, that's if your goal is to crush the victim's spirit — you're unlikely to accomplish anything else.

Mechanically, torture is the process of breaking down a person's Integrity systematically by subjecting them to breaking points in a controlled situation. It's similar to the rules in Empathy, above, except that a torturer is unlikely to stop at the point where the Broken Condition is applied. Further trauma might inflict Conditions such as Amnesia, Fugue, Madness, or whatever other Conditions may be appropriate. Healing these wounds, if they ever do really heal, will take years of therapy at minimum.

Was it worth it?

## Persuasion: How to Make Enemies and Manipulate People

Persuasion is the go-to Social Skill much of the time — unsurprising, since it's the Skill most directly concerned with getting your way. Convincing others to see things your way is a highly effective means of negotiation, and all the better if they don't realize you're doing it. So how exactly do you hurt someone with it, aside from taking advantage of them? The answer is simple: Make the alternative to obedience a painful, miserable experience. The following rules augment the existing rules for Forcing Doors and Hard Leverage (see **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 83).

Forcing Doors implies crossing the line, even if the specifics are left to hard leverage. When you're forcing a Door, you're cornering someone, not allowing them any way out of the situation. No one likes being cornered, even if only metaphorically; and if they break through the emotional minefield you've laid out in front of them, they're going to steer well clear of you from now on — hence the immunity from social maneuvering.

Things aren't that simple, though. Threats, of violence or of some other kind of retaliation, are a kind of motivation all their own, and actually going through with the threatened action does have a benefit, opening the victim back up to social maneuvering. They know the character means business, and that simply not talking to her is not an option. This allows a character to re-open "negotiations" with an individual she attempted to force Doors with and failed. Such actions must be breaking points for the character taking them, as per hard leverage. Repeated use of this option on a specific individual will likely require transitioning to the systems outlined under Empathy, above, as exposing someone to repeated trauma is certainly the sort of thing that forms a breaking point.

Persuasion doesn't have to be a hatchet, however. Wielded properly, it's much more like a scalpel. A Manipulation + Persuasion roll, opposed by the target's Resolve + Composure,

can improve the character's impression by one level, or two with an exceptional success. This vastly speeds up the process of opening Doors, and a gifted con man can talk people into practically anything in just a few minutes. However, on a failure, lower the impression by one, and on a dramatic failure, set it immediately to hostile. Regardless of the outcome, this elevated impression only lasts for a scene — no one likes to be manipulated, and when they have a moment to think for themselves, they'll probably realize that they were.

## Socialize: The Odd One Out

There are few forms of violence more pervasive and more accepted than the simple act of ostracizing others. Humans, we are told, are naturally cliquish and tribal, and it's just to be expected that we sort the world into categories of us and them. Regardless of whether this is true or not, it's how our society presently works. You're either in, or you're out. Of course, it's more complicated than that, with overlapping groups and overlapping qualities of acceptance or exclusion, so we're able to cope, more or less. We build our own little social networks — those people I get coffee with, those people I roll dice with every Saturday, and so on. When that rug is pulled out from under us, though, it hurts all the more because we've made the effort to keep it.

Socialize is a great Skill. It's the venue of choice for talking your way into a group, arranging things to your liking, and so forth. It's about how we get along in a group without necessarily working to change it — it's about the daily tidal interactions of human life. It's also a knife that can be ruthlessly wielded to cut someone out of her support network. When you understand how the rules work, the rules become a weapon. Anyone who's attended high school for five minutes knows how little it takes to completely turn the tables.

Convincing a group to exclude someone requires Doors to be opened with a Manipulation + Socialize roll. This isn't about direct physical violence, and it's not about agitating people's worst impulses until they boil over, but about bringing the cold shoulder to bear and marking the victim as an outsider. Success in this endeavor results in the chosen target or targets being considered persona non grata, unable to influence or benefit from membership in the group (including any Merits that may be tied to the group). Failure, conversely, turns the tables, lowering the character's impression with the group to average — a dramatic failure renders the impression hostile, instead.

Being ostracized has a powerful effect on people, and it shouldn't be ignored. It's absolutely appropriate to give Conditions to the victim representing the emotional toll of having her friends or colleagues turn their backs on her, and resolving those Conditions should be tied to winning back the good graces of her former comrades. To do so, she must first elevate her impression from hostile to average, using whatever means work — the Storyteller should provide suggestions for soft leverage. Once they're willing to listen again, she may go on to open Doors until she is once again accepted. This action can use Presence or Manipulation



+ Socialize, depending on the particular method she uses to become a part of the In Crowd again. The person who engineered the exclusion, if he's still putting in appearances with the group, can oppose these rolls with Manipulation + Socialize. Both may interact with any member of the group for any of these rolls, as the target is the group itself and not individuals within it.

## Streetwise: Keeping Your Hands Clean

Not everyone is a killer. In fact, most people aren't. Most people will never have to even think about committing murder. These two populations mostly overlap. Mostly. Some rare people, incapable of taking life on their own or too scared to face the consequences, but still insistent on killing someone, must seek another course of action: Get someone else to do the deed for them. As always, the market will find a niche. In the *Chronicles of Darkness*, it's not that hard to find someone who will kill for money.

The actual process of hiring a hit man can vary, mostly in terms of what resources the hired killer himself can bring to bear. A convicted felon, for example, accustomed to violence and unable to find employment with such a mark on his record, might simply do the deal for cash, handed over in a paper lunch sack in a run-down cafe. More modern, upscale killers work at a further remove, speaking to their clients only through email or phone conversations, possibly even through intermediaries, and demanding payment in exotic goods or difficult-to-trace cryptocurrencies traded over encrypted marketplaces. Ultimately the choice comes down to the means the character has to offer.

Regardless of what sort of killer the character is attempting to hire, the roll is always Intelligence + Streetwise + any applicable Merit such as Allies, Contacts, or Status. The goal is to find someone willing to take the offer. This is just the first step, but a failure here probably means being arrested by the undercover cop you didn't realize you were contracting a kill from, or winding up even more deeply in debt to the killer than you'd anticipated.

That's the thing — when you hire someone to kill for you, they will always have that knowledge to hang over you. Any attempt to contract a killer immediately applies a persistent version of the Leveraged Condition to the character — take a Beat when you comply with a demand, and resolve the Condition by leveraging the contract killer in some way. If the character achieves an exceptional success on the roll to contact a killer, the Leveraged Condition is not persistent — he did his homework and made sure to leave as little evidence of the hire as possible. This Condition might just represent the hitman holding out for a bigger paycheck, or it might be his associates demanding you act as a drug mule, or it could be the police who arrested you forcing you to work as a confidential informant. This is likely to be a long-term situation that will influence the continuing course of the game. Hiring a killer is rarely something that goes well, and most people getting into this hole have no concept of how

## Adapting Conditions

The Hunted and Surveilled Conditions from **Demon: The Descent** represent observation and threats, either implied or direct. These instances of the Conditions, however, represent not the malefic glare of the God-Machine, but of mere mortal intrusion into one's life, legal or otherwise. You can find these Conditions adapted on **p. 150**.

deep it actually is. Still, you didn't have to bloody your hands. Not directly, anyway.

Hiring a contract killer is likely a breaking point — if it isn't, this implies that the character is not only okay with doing so, but has experience. Who have they had killed? Why?

## Subterfuge: The Lie That Tells Itself

Humans are natural gossips. Even those of us who sneer at the practice still listen in when we hear our coworkers gabbing, still re-blog social media posts, still keep an ear to the ground. We're social creatures, and we just can't help wondering what's going on in someone else's life. This tendency is a weak spot in any individual's social armor, because what she doesn't know about, she can't defend against; and by the time someone tells her that everyone's talking about her, it's already too late. Studies have shown that even if misinformation is corrected, people will tend to remember the lie as truth.

Engineering a lie that will grow in the telling isn't particularly difficult, but ensuring that it grows in the way the character wants it to takes a certain amount of skill. To target someone with such a lie, roll Manipulation + Subterfuge, opposed by the target's Presence + Composure. Social media and similar tools for the rapid crowdsourcing of information sharing should provide positive modifiers to this roll. The character may choose the general tenor of the lie, but unless he achieves an exceptional success other details will begin to creep into the story as it travels. With a dramatic failure, the story may be revealed to be a hoax, or the lie may be twisted back to reflect poorly on the one who started it.

The effects of such a lie can vary. Usually, it comes with the Notoriety Condition for the victim. However, the actual content of the lie can steer the effects of that Notoriety well beyond the mere disdain of others. The victim may face legal consequences, loss of employment, and even threats to her life — this is most common when the victim is a member of a marginalized population, but it can occur to anyone. The Surveilled and Hunted Conditions model either law enforcement observation or a lone stalker with violent fantasies. The Storyteller should work closely with the player of the character starting the lie to determine what her goals are, while keeping in mind that few games of Telephone result in a perfect transmission.







# Chapter Three: The Other Side

Wars. Terrorism. Domestic abuse. The world is violent enough on its own. But, just under the surface a different kind of violence exists that isn't as simple as a punch to the throat or a knife between the ribs. The *Chronicles of Darkness* adds countless new ways of hurting people and, of course, yourself. This side of violence isn't taught in a dojo surrounded by your support network of teachers and students. It doesn't draw on methods practiced and perfected across the ages. It shapes itself through the individual experiences of the practitioner. People born with these "gifts" learn to use them in a fight often as a matter of survival. Some take revenge on people who've hurt them before. Others see them as a tool to get what they want, no different from a gun. In a world that doesn't understand them and has no laws to punish them, the supernatural quickly becomes the most effective form of violence around.

## Supernatural Merits

These Merits represent when violence gets weird. Your character is required to remain human to use these Merits, and if he or she ever changes to a different supernatural character type these abilities are lost. As per the Sanctity of Merits, those dots can be reallocated.

"You cut up a thing that's alive and beautiful to find out how it's alive and why it's beautiful, and before you know it, it's neither of those things, and you're standing there with blood on your face and tears in your sight and only the terrible ache of guilt to show for it."

— Clive Barker,  
*The Damnation Game*

### But What If We Want Them Anyway?

We say Supernatural Merits are specifically for human characters. But, is there anything really stopping you from taking one in your **Werewolf: The Forsaken** game? Of course not. The rule is always to do what works best at your table. However, these Merits and similar ones in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook** were written with certain types of chronicles in mind, and certain tones. As with anything, you have to consider its impact in your game. Adding a pyrokinetic character to your **Vampire: The Requiem** game might be a little difficult. Then again, it might be awesome.

Also, it could step on the toes of other mechanics that already exist. For example, in **Secrets of the Covenants** for **Vampire: The Requiem**, there's a power called the Coil of Ziva which allows vampires to learn Supernatural Merits with certain restrictions. Simply allowing them without that power shifts that paradigm, and renders that ability essentially worthless.

So, if you want to allow these Merits for supernatural characters, just be mindful of the complexities it'll add to your game.

## Animal Possession (●● or ●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Animal Ken ●●

**Effect:** Your character is able to take over the senses of her animal companion. This ability supplants the animal's mind so your character's can take over. Her own body goes into a coma-like state and she has no awareness of what it feels or perceives while she is away. Spend a point of Willpower and roll Resolve + Animal Ken. If successful, your character is in control of her animal's body for a scene and has its full range of senses at her disposal. If at any point the animal sustains damage, make a reflexive Resolve + Animal Ken roll with a penalty equal to the amount of damage taken. Failure immediately ejects her from the animal's mind and back into her own.

You may only use this Merit on an animal with which you share the Bonded Condition. With the four-dot version, you can ignore this limitation.

## Apportation (●●● or ●●●●●)

**Effect:** Your character can rip objects through space from one fixed point to another. The more familiar she is with an object the greater the distance she can move it. No mundane barrier can prevent this transference. With the three-dot version, only inanimate objects Size 2 or less can be moved. With the five-dot version she can move objects and living creatures up to Size 5, including herself.

Spend a point of Willpower to activate Apportation and roll Resolve + Occult. She can move an object a number of yards per success. If she wishes to move the same object further, she can spend multiple turns accumulating successes to add to her total. Moving an unwilling target is a contested action versus the target's Resolve + Composure.

**Suggested Modifiers:** Target object is not in your character's line of sight (-2), Target object is moving or a moving part of a machine (-3), Target object is anchored to its location (-4), Your character interacts with the target object regularly (+1), Your character has read the target object with Psychometry in the past (+2), Your character has scanned a living target with Telepathy in the past (+2)

**Drawback:** The process of apportioning an object imparts a great deal of friction on it, leaving it hot to the touch or burned in the process. An item takes one point of Structure damage each time it's apportioned and has a -2 penalty to use for the turn after it's moved. Living creatures take bashing damage equal to the number of yards moved with Apportation.

## Assertive Implement (● to ●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Manipulation ●●, Occult ●●, Weaponry or Firearms ●●

**Effect:** Your character has a weapon with a mind of its own. It could be haunted by a vengeful ghost or possessed by a spirit of violence. When she's using it, the entity inside makes her weapon more effective, so long as its own needs are being fulfilled. Once per scene she can add her dots in Assertive Implement to an attack roll. She can choose to

add a +1 bonus to her weapon's damage for every two dots of Assertive Implement, instead. The weapon is also more resilient than an ordinary tool; it regenerates a point of Structure every night even if it's been "destroyed." If, however, the entity itself is removed through exorcism or other means, then the object is destroyed automatically.

**Drawback:** The weapon is not a servant, it's a partner. If the Storyteller determines that an action goes against the entity's whims, he can inflict a reflexive penalty equal to dots in Assertive Implement. Also, if the weapon has an opportunity to fulfill its needs and your character hesitates, then the weapon can attack on its own using your dots in Assertive Implement as its dice pool.

## Biomimicry (● to ●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Biokinesis ●

**Effect:** Your character's body responds to threats by evolving its own natural defenses. What other animals need countless generations to develop she has in the time it takes to scream — and she will. By spending a point of Willpower and taking a point of lethal damage for each, you may divide the dots in this Merit among the following benefits:

- Natural weapons (such as claws that grow out from underneath the fingernails or a second row of jagged teeth protruding from the gums) that do lethal damage, but treated as 0 lethal weapons.
- Biological toxin (venom sacs in the throat or mucus secreted from the pores) that coats a target with a Dexterity + Athletics roll; target's Defense applies. If successful, it inflicts a moderate version of the Poisoned Tilt on the victim.
- Armor (tumorous growths covering the skin, thick leathery hide, fused bone plates covering vital organs, etc.) with a rating of 2/1, but a -2 penalty to Initiative.
- Camouflage (skin that can change pigment and texture to match the environment) granting the 8-again quality to all Stealth rolls.

These changes last for a scene, but your character can force them back with a successful Stamina + Resolve roll, penalized by the number of mutations taken. Otherwise, her mutations are visible to the naked eye and obviously inhuman. She can still use mundane means to hide them, like heavy layers of clothes.

## Bless Amulet (● to ●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Occult ●●●

**Effect:** Your character can create charms that protect others from ephemeral possession. The ritual requires an object with significance to the ritualist, religious or otherwise. Spend a point of Willpower and roll Resolve + Composure, modified by the ritualist's Integrity as per an abjuration (see the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 140). Each success



prevents the amulet's wearer from having the Claimed or Possessed Condition applied to her for one day. This effect lasts a week with the two-dot version of this Merit, and at three dots the object provides permanent protection to the wearer.

## Camera Obscura ,(••••)

**Prerequisites:** Unseen Sense •• (Ghost) or (Spirit)

**Effect:** Your character is able to capture ephemeral entities on camera, damaging them in the process. Doesn't matter whether it's through the viewfinder of a high-end digital camcorder or a grainy cell phone's front facing camera, this ability is tied to the soul of the character rather than any particular piece of technology. By spending a point of Willpower, she can focus her camera on any un-Manifested entity she is aware of and perceive it through the device as if it were visible. Every turn spent focusing, roll Wits + Expression – the entity's Defense; successes inflict bashing damage.

**Drawback:** Use of this ability immediately causes the Open Condition on the surrounding area for any entity affected for the rest of the scene.

## Consecrate Weapon ,(•••••)

**Prerequisites:** Resolve •••, Occult ••••

**Effect:** Sometimes there just isn't an opportunity to sit down and research the multi-mouthed horror coming at you. Your character knows rituals that make any weapon temporarily effective against ephemeral entities. Spend a point of Willpower and roll Resolve + Composure – the weapon's damage rating. This ritual follows the same rules as abjurations (*The Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 140) for bonuses from channeling the higher self and from a strong psyche. For each success your character's weapon does lethal damage to Manifested ephemeral entities for one turn. It also does lethal damage to entities in Twilight, provided she can detect them.

## Curse Effigy ,(••••)

**Effect:** Whether by sticking pins in a wax doll or cutting up photographs in her burn book, your character knows how to create effigies that can hurt her enemies without physically touching them. This process doesn't require occult training. It can be anything from a tradition passed down through generations of family members to instructions downloaded off the Internet: What matters is her focused hatred toward her enemy.

To create an effigy, spend a point of Willpower and roll Wits + Occult – the victim's Resolve. The effigy requires something personal from the intended victim (a sample of hair or blood), and takes an entire night to craft. For every success, you may inflict one of the following penalties on the subject as an instant action:

- An appropriate Personal Tilt; Arm Wrack Tilt by stabbing the effigy's arm, or the Sick Tilt by coating an effigy in a hospital patient's mucus. This effect lasts for one turn per success used.

- Attacking vital organs with a roll of Intelligence + Medicine – subject's Stamina + Supernatural Tolerance, doing lethal damage.

- Whisper horrible things to the effigy, distracting the victim and reducing the victim's next Social action to a chance die.

Once all successes are used the effigy falls apart and any new ones must be created with a fresh sample. If an effigy is destroyed or the victim gains possession of his effigy, then any remaining successes are wasted.

## Dark Passenger ,(•••)

**Effect:** Your character has grown a second mouth on the back of her head, beneath her hair, that whispers secrets to her. Whenever she meets someone new or visits a new place, you may ask three questions to the Storyteller or a character's player. The mouth answers two of them, but one of its answers is a lie. The mouth also warns her of imminent danger; if she fails the reflexive Wits + Composure roll to detect an ambush she can immediately make a second roll at a –1 penalty.

**Drawback:** Aside from being unsettling to look at, the mouth is constantly hungry. It needs food every hour or it'll begin crying loudly, imposing a –3 penalty to any actions that require concentration.

## Doppelganger ,(••••)

**Prerequisites:** Biokinesis •, Subterfuge •••

**Effect:** Your character has the ability to perfectly imitate others. This goes beyond simple disguise; she studies every detail of her subject's appearance and personality until she can replicate it flawlessly. Spend a point of Willpower and roll Manipulation + Subterfuge. Any mundane attempts to distinguish her from her victim are penalized by dots in Biokinesis for a number of scenes equal to successes rolled.

**Suggested Modifiers:** Victim and character have similar appearances (+1), victim has 10 or more years difference in age with character (–2), victim presents as a different gender than character (–2), character or victim has unhealed damage (–3), character or victim has missing limbs or visible impairments (–5)

## Evil Eye ,(•••)

**Effect:** Your character can inflict paralysis on her enemies with her baleful stare. As an attack, roll a contested Wits + Occult versus the opponent's Resolve + Composure. If successful, apply the Insensate Tilt to the victim for turns equal to successes.


**Drawback:** Sacrifice your Defense any turn you use Evil Eye. If an opponent has charms or other supernatural protection from curses apply a +3 bonus to his contested roll.

## Fated Ferocity ,(Style; • to •••••)

**Prerequisites:** Cursed ••, Stamina ••, Resolve •••

**Effect:** Your character, condemned to die by fate, has turned her ill-fortune into grim purpose. She's going to fight





until the last drop of blood leaves her body, and no one who stands in her way is safe.

**Bucket List (•):** Your character knows the time she has left is precious and anything she accomplishes in it is a victory over fate. Any time she completes an Aspiration, replenish a point of Willpower and add a +1 bonus to her Defense for the next attack against her in the same scene.

**Die with Dignity (••):** Your character's certainty protects her from those who'd steer her from the path. Any attempts, mundane or supernatural, to convince your character to do something which would prevent her from working towards or achieving an Aspiration before she dies automatically fail.

**Limitless (•••):** You push yourself beyond the physical constraints of your body to strike your enemies harder. Instead of an all-out attack you can choose to take any amount of bashing damage (up to her dots in Fated Ferocity); each point of damage adds an additional die to the attack roll, plus one. You must take at least one bashing damage for this maneuver.

**Not Today (••••):** Death knows when it's time to come and claim you and won't waste its energy on anything less. Up to a limit of your character's Resolve in a single scene, any lethal damage that would fill her last Health box instead wraps into aggravated damage. Thus, her last Health box remains open and she can keep fighting.

**Don't Go Gently (•••••):** Your character's final act shows everyone she's not going out with a whimper, but a bang. When confronted with the source of her Cursed Merit she can choose to spend all remaining points of Willpower to gain a bonus equal to her Willpower total for a single action. If this is an attack, upgrade the damage type.

### Hardened Exorcist (•)

**Effect:** Your character stood her ground against intruders from other realms, and despite the toll it's taken on her soul she remains defiant. Add her Occult dots to her Integrity for determining any bonuses to abjuration rolls. You can also use your exorcist's Vice to call upon abjurations without the usual penalty.

### Hidden Variable (••)

**Prerequisites:** Unseen Sense •• (God-Machine)

**Effect:** Your character is a disruptive force to the God-Machine's subsystems. She sees the weak points in Infrastructure. This ability could be innate to her or embedded by the God-Machine's own agents. She gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls when near Infrastructure, and ignores two points of Durability against any object with the Infrastructure Condition. When dealing with mortal Infrastructure ignore two dots of general armor instead.

### Incite Ecosystem (• to •••••)

**Prerequisites:** Animal Ken •••

**Effect:** Your character causes surrounding wildlife to attack her enemies. Spend a point of Willpower and roll

Presence + Animal Ken. She can direct a number of animals or swarms equal to successes, with Size up to dots in Incite Ecosystem, to treat a target as a threat. Note that animals directed this way do not take commands from your character, they only respond to a target the way they would a threat in their natural habitat. The effect lasts for a scene. For larger animals take a penalty to your roll equal to the difference in Size. For example, a bear (Size 7) would require you to roll at a -2 with the five-dot version of Incite Ecosystem.

### Invoke Spirit (••)

**Prerequisites:** Resolve •••, Medium •••

**Effect:** Your character has experienced a trauma that a spirit has latched onto, creating a symbiotic relationship with her. Work with the Storyteller to determine the nature of the trauma and the type of spirit it attracted, but should be only as powerful as Rank 1. Your character can telepathically call upon her spirit to protect her at any time.

**Drawback:** Your character has the Urged Condition for the spirit as long as she has this Merit. The spirit will want to push her towards circumstances that repeat the trauma she experienced so that it can feed off the Essence released.

### Mind Control (••••)

**Effect:** Your character can guide another's train of thought through her own force of will. With the four-dot version of this Merit, she can assume more direct control over his actions. All her commands must be spoken aloud unless she has an ability to communicate telepathically. The subject is unaware of the manipulation as it's happening, but later may remember he acted strangely.

Spend a point of Willpower to activate Mind Control and roll Manipulation + Persuasion, minus the victim's Resolve. If successful, you apply the Fixated Condition (see p. 150) tied to a simple, one-sentence command.

### Phantasmagoria (••)

**Prerequisites:** Telepathy •••••, Expression ••

**Effect:** Your character can create illusions in the minds of others. The victim experiences these visions as if he were dreaming, and to onlookers he seems like he's sleepwalking or in a trance. Spend a point of Willpower to activate Phantasmagoria and roll Manipulation + Occult. The content of the illusion is determined entirely by your character, but the more unbelievable the situation the more likely the victim is to see through it. Make a new roll each turn you change the illusion significantly.

If at any point a victim starts to disbelieve what he's seeing, he can make a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll to snap out of it. Your character cannot inflict damage on a victim by hurting him in the illusion. However, the threat of violence does cause a victim to snap back to his senses suddenly and may impose the Spooked Condition at the Storyteller's discretion.

**Suggested Modifiers:** The changes made in the illusion are very subtle (+1), the illusion takes place in the victim's past (+2),





the illusion takes place in a setting unfamiliar to the victim (-1), the illusion contains elements that are obviously unrealistic or go against the victim's personal world view (-3)

### Psychic Concealment (●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Mind Control ●●●, Stealth ●●●

**Effect:** Your character can move unnoticed by the perceptions of others. This is not true invisibility; her victims are still able to see and hear her. She has just altered their minds not to register the sensory input of her presence. The memories of her activities remain in a victim's subconscious, recoverable by hypnosis or other means. Note that cameras and surveillance equipment aren't affected by this ability.

To activate Psychic Concealment, spend a point of Willpower and roll Wits + Stealth - the victim's Composure. If attempting to activate this ability against multiple targets, use the highest Composure in the group and add a -1 penalty for every additional target (to a maximum -5). Success inflicts the Oblivious Condition (see p. 150) on all targets in the psychic's immediate area.

### Psychic Onslaught (●●●●●)

**Prerequisites:** Telekinesis • or Psychokinesis •

**Effect:** Your character discharges psychic energy from herself with the concussive force of a grenade: smashing windows, crushing bones, and bursting blood vessels. This is not a precise weapon; it radiates out from the psychic annihilating

friend and foe alike. By spending a point of Willpower, this triggers a Damage 3, Force 3 explosion with a primary blast area of the psychic's Resolve in meters or yards. The psychic is at ground zero, but only suffers bashing damage - not lethal. If the damage exceeds a character's Stamina then it applies the Knocked Down Tilt as well - this does not apply to the psychic.


**Drawback:** This power is instinctive to your character's will to survive. The first time in a scene her last Health box becomes filled with bashing or lethal damage, Psychic Onslaught triggers as a reflexive action, without the normal Willpower cost. This occurs even if the damage would render her unconscious or kill her.

### Psychic Poltergeist (●●)

**Prerequisites:** Telekinesis •

**Effect:** Your character barrages enemies with objects from her environment. By activating Telekinesis, she can cause nearby Size 0 or 1 objects to converge on an area like a swarm. The swarm envelops a number of victims equal to her dots in Telekinesis. Each victim within the swarm's area suffers the persistent Distracted Condition (p. 150) until he or she escapes. Additionally, the Storyteller determines an appropriate amount and type of damage from being within the swarm. For example, a cloud of whirling kitchen knives or burning chunks of furniture would inflict lethal damage, while stuffed animals would inflict bashing, if any. This should be limited to a dice





pool equal to the psychic's Resolve. However, victims taking any action besides Dodging cannot apply their Defense against the swarming objects.

**Drawback:** This ability requires the telekinetic's complete concentration. She must spend a point of Willpower every turn and can take no other actions. She can apply Defense to incoming attacks, but taking damage immediately ends Psychic Poltergeist.

## Psychokinetic Combat (Style; • to •••••)

**Prerequisites:** Psychokinesis ••• or •••••

**Effect:** Your character has honed her psychic abilities into a dangerous weapon. All the conditions required to activate your character's Psychokinesis must be present to use any of the following maneuvers. Any attacks subtract the victim's Resolve from the pool, as normal. Each of these abilities requires that your character activate Psychokinesis, or have Psychokinesis already active, but does not incur further cost unless otherwise noted.

**Corona (•):** You surround yourself with a field of energy, affecting anyone who comes too close. Any close combat attacks made against you automatically inflict one point of lethal damage on the attacker; with the five-dot version of Psychokinesis this is increased to two points. If engaged in a grapple, this damage is inflicted every turn. The field lasts for a number of turns equal to successes rolled to activate Psychokinesis.

**Mind Over Matter (••):** When you focus your energy on weak points, even the most well-protected enemy is at risk. Your Psychokinesis attacks now gain armor piercing 2 and are not affected by cover.

**Trapped Potential (•••):** You can turn even the most innocuous items into time bombs of psychic energy. When you activate Psychokinesis, choose any object within yards equal to your character's Resolve. As a reflexive action, you can detonate the object causing three points of bashing damage to anyone close by it and creating a Size 3 patch of force. With the three-dot version this object must have the ability to produce your chosen force on its own, such as a lighter or welding torch for a pyrokinetic, but with the five-dot version any object can be trapped this way.

**Imbue Weapon (••••):** By channeling psychic energy through yourself you can make your weapons more effective. When rolling to manifest Psychokinesis, you may choose to accept lethal damage up to your character's successes, up to your character's final Health box. Each point of damage taken adds one weapon damage to the next attack your character makes. With the three-dot version of Psychokinesis, your character must have a nearby source of energy to draw from to use this maneuver.

**Harvest Psyche (•••••):** You've learned to collect the psychic feedback of others' minds to fuel your own abilities. Each time your character causes damage with Psychokinesis, gain one Willpower.

## Psychokinetic Resistance (•)

**Prerequisites:** Psychokinesis •

**Effect:** Your character has become so attuned with to her source of psychokinetic energy that it no longer affects her. A pyrokinetic could dance in the middle of a bonfire, or an electrokinetic struck by lightning not so much as flinch. Use her dots in Psychokinesis as general armor against any damage taken from her source of energy.

## Sacrificial Offering (• to •••••)

**Prerequisites:** Occult •••, Mystery Cult Initiation •••••

**Effect:** Your character performs a ritual to give her power at the cost of a victim's soul. This ritual must be tied directly to the beliefs of her Mystery Cult. Make an extended Wits + Occult roll, with each roll representing 10 minutes of chanting and preparation. Her victim must be immobilized for the duration of the ritual. The total number of successes determines the benefit given to your character. This benefit lasts for days equal to her dots in Sacrificial Offering.

- 5 successes — A four-dot Merit, or four dots worth of Merits blocked on a target
- 7 successes — Five dots of Supernatural Merits
- 10 successes — Direct intervention by an ephemeral being aligned with her cult

**Suggested Modifiers:** The victim possesses a trait with significance to the cult's beliefs (+1), character is aided by other members of her cult in performing the ritual (+2), victim is a supernatural being (-2), victim is already injured (-2), victim has Integrity 4 or below (-3)

**Drawback:** Every use of this ritual provides diminishing returns. Each time it's used, the number of successes required increases by one, cumulatively. This ritual is always considered a breaking point for those who participate.

## Sojourner (••••)

**Prerequisites:** Apportation •••

**Effect:** Your character's mastery over her powers of Apportation allows her to reach vastly greater distances. As an extended action, she can move an object or person to any fixed point with a target number equal to the number of miles (or kilometers) transported.

## Tactical Telepathy (Style; • to •••••)

**Prerequisites:** Telepathy •••••

**Effect:** You've learned to use your telepathic abilities to coordinate your allies and distract your enemies in combat. To use these maneuvers, all subjects must be within the range of normal Telepathy.

**Of One Mind (•):** Rather than link to each of your allies' minds individually, you can create a network of communication among all of you that travels at the speed of thought. Activate Telepathy normally. You make one roll to connect



to any number of minds at once, but take a -1 penalty for each subject after the first. The effect lasts for the remainder of the scene.

**White Noise (••):** A voice in your head can be an encouraging whisper, or a deafening scream that reverberates inside your skull. With a successful Telepathy roll you can inflict the Stunned Tilt on an opponent in addition to normal Telepathy effects.

**Unison (•••):** When the moment comes, you and your allies act as a single consciousness. All subjects linked by Of One Mind can take their actions simultaneously on your Initiative as long as they haven't acted already.

**Derail Thought (••••):** You fill your opponent's mind with a barrage of conflicting information, distracting him to the point he cannot think clearly. For the rest of the scene, any action taken by an opponent other than Dodging is penalized by the number of successes rolled on Telepathy. He can attempt to shake this effect with an instant action and a Resolve + Composure roll. Successes must meet yours to end the effect early.

**Shared Struggle (•••••):** Your connection with your allies is strong enough that you share each other's inner strength. Characters can spend Willpower reflexively to add the +3 bonus to any roll taken by an ally linked by Of One Mind. Note that this doesn't increase the amount of Willpower that any character can spend per turn, but does allow multiple characters to spend Willpower on one roll.

**Drawback:** This level of interconnection requires intense concentration and must be performed as an Extended Action.

## Technopathy (•• or •••)

**Effect:** Your character has the ability to interface with machines she touches in the way a psychic reads minds. With the three-dot version of this Merit, she can capture information through the electronic signals in the air. Data taken comes in waves of text and visual media in the mind's eye that is overwhelming to the senses, requiring concentration to filter through.

Spend a point of Willpower to activate Technopathy and roll Intelligence + Occult. Interfacing requires touching the device, or a moment of complete stillness if taken from the air. Each success allows you to examine the information contained on it divided among the following parameters.

- Users who've used this device recently.
- Identify a device's function and any devices networked to it.
- Logs of communications made on the device in the past day.
- Any information containing a specific search term.
- Video or other media stored on the device.
- Originator of data signal

- Destination of data signal
- Content of data signal

The knowledge gained this way stores in the character's mind like memories, so an Intelligence + Composure roll may be necessary to recall it later.

**Suggested Modifiers:** Character is familiar with a device's functions (+1), information is publicly accessible (+2), device is old or damaged (-1), information is encrypted (-2), information is corrupted (-4), High wireless communication usage (-1 to -4), Weak signal (-2)

**Drawback:** This ability causes a tremendous strain on hardware. Every use of Technopathy on the same target after the first causes two points of Structure damage on a success, three points on a failure. Devices reduced to 0 Structure this way short out, and any data on them cannot be recovered. For the wireless version: Any attempt after the first to access a wireless data signal corrupts or interrupts the message; the message is lost and the sender or receiver realizes their communications are compromised.

## Telekinetic Evasion (•••)

**Prerequisites:** Telekinesis •


**Effect:** Your character can mentally redirect blows and propel herself out of harm's way. In any scene where your character's Telekinesis is active, spend a point of Willpower to add her dots in the Merit as successes when Dodging.

## Vengeful Soul (••)

**Effect:** Your character is carrying the burden of a loved one's death, and his soul cries out for justice within her. Your character must have witnessed the death or come upon it no later than 24 hours after it occurred, and made (though not necessarily succeeded at) a breaking point roll associated with the death. She can add the 8-again quality to a number of rolls every chapter equal to the victim's Integrity at his time of death. These rolls must involve finding or punishing those responsible. You lose this Merit when the death is avenged to the satisfaction of the victim's spirit (not when your character decides the job is done).

# Supernatural Merit Templates

In *Chronicles of Darkness*, generally characters are either "mortal," which is to say, normal humans, or they have supernatural templates, like the character types featured in *Vampire: The Requiem*, *Mage: The Awakening*, and *Promethean: The Created*. Human characters can adopt Supernatural Merits (like those in the previous section), but supernatural characters cannot. The following templates are a kind of half-way point between the two character types. They're micro-templates of sorts. They're defined by a series of related Supernatural Merits (and some unique mechanics) which makes a human character into something a bit more.



With each of these templates, a single “base Merit” defines a character as a member of that character type. For example, the “Dreamer” template has Subliminal Conditioning as a base Merit. If you wish to feature these character types as a default option in your chronicle, consider offering a base Merit for free. This is particularly so in chronicles where most characters hail from another supernatural type. For example, if your chronicle has three **Changeling: The Lost** characters and one player wants to play a Dreamer, you should give that character Subliminal Conditioning free of charge (and in the case of a multi-tiered Merit like Subliminal Conditioning, up to three dots should be reasonable).

Additionally, if your chronicle focuses on these character types, consider raising the starting Merit allotment from 7 to 10. Not only does it give players more options and allow them to play more rounded characters not solely focused on their supernatural abilities, it puts them a bit more in league with the full supernatural templates, who all receive 10 Merits at creation.

Note that these templates are considered exclusive; if you play a psychic vampire, you shouldn't be allowed Atariya

template Merits. And like other Supernatural Merits, these are restricted from fully supernatural characters.

Each template also features an example character who embodies the general idea of the template, to give you a feel for its potential.

The following Merit is available to all characters with the Supernatural Merit Templates in this chapter, but it can also be extended to other characters with Supernatural Merits.

### New Merit: Supernatural Resistance (• to •••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Mortal with at least one Supernatural Merit

**Effect:** Your character's brush with the supernatural left her with an inborn tolerance for the unknown. This Merit acts as a Supernatural Potency trait for the purpose of resisting supernatural powers. So if a power calls for Blood Potency, Primal Urge, Gnosis, or other traits, use her Merit dots.

## ATARIYA

*Atariya (n): Japanese. A lucky person. A gambler on a hit streak. A extortionist committing insurance fraud by walking in front of cars, for example.*

While this phenomenon is not limited to Japan, it seems to be more concentrated there, though anywhere humans have built shrines or altars to ideas like “general” good luck may produce its share of Atariya.

In short, an Atariya is one lucky rabbit. Most of them live their entire lives never realizing just how lucky they are, as most people go through life without ever facing real threats of violence. (And those who do seldom fall in for the idea of luck to begin with.)

To begin with, all Atariya start the same way. She tosses a coin in a fountain, he pays a priest for a tiny blessing, or she washes her hands just right before entering a shrine. Or maybe he had red hair while walking past just the right ancient shrine. The right shoes, the right time, the right place, and that's all it took to get the blessing that changed everything. Plenty of Atariya couldn't tell you when luck turned that way, or why, even if they do know they're luckier than the average person.

It's not in their heads. It's not just random luck. In fact, each Atariya is literally blessed by fate: Luck as a concept, or a spiritual resonance, or a minor god, depending on whom and when you ask about it. It may never show up as anything but weird coincidence, or it may manifest as an obvious otherworldly entity looking after and even communicating with the Atariya. This is more likely to happen in places where old traditions are still upheld even if only out of habit and superstition. Occultists and scholars aware of this phenomenon debate as to whether or not the lucky “spirits”

that assist the Atariya are really gods, or just manifestations of the Atariya's internal psychic potential. That is to say, the age-old debate between self-actualized, lucky-mother-fucker status, or external benevolent fuckery.

### Being Lucky

At its most basic expression, the Atariya's luck is a weird series of circumstances that result in her not getting hurt, and something else or someone else getting the hurt instead. Luck, good or bad, will find an out. Luck, like energy, can't be created or destroyed, only transferred. It's just that she's a strong vector for it, and it flows toward and away from her at a much faster rate than normal people. Her life, as result, runs like a roller coaster, with highs higher and lows lower. Eventually, an Atariya stops distinguishing between good and bad luck, and learns to ride the wave. Or, tries to keep mundane, as far away from luck and fortune as possible, to try to maintain some semblance of normalcy. This effort rarely lasts for long. Most normal people — boring, dull people — are boring and dull because that's just how they are. Every once and a while, though, the most tragically mundane are living this way on purpose, to keep the flow of luck from sweeping over them and carrying them off who knows where.

### The Downside of Up

It's not the downswing of bad luck that is the ruination of many Atariya. Rather, it's the good luck that screws them in the end. For a character who can step out in front of a bus without dying — maybe it was an accident the first time, but when it turns out to be a really profitable accident, why



## Story Hooks for the Atariya

- Your character finds an area where luck just doesn't happen. Her friends call them "Ansho." Her abilities do not work. Nobody ever draws a flush. Can this be fixed? Should it?
- Your character starts constantly running into people with terrible, utterly atrocious luck. This cannot be a coincidence.
- Your character finds herself a hostage in a bank robbery. The robbers shot the first person who drew too much attention by being in the right place at the right time. Can your character stay unremarkable?

not try it again on purpose? If you can fall out of a building, hit every awning on the way down, and thus only get slight abrasions, there's really no reason to be careful on rooftops anymore, is there? Luck carries the Atariya, and so many of them either grow lazy about basic safety and survival, or else they actively flaunt safety and security leaning heavily on their good luck to carry them through.

Of course, because they are blessed, their luck rarely fails them. Thinking you won't die because luck is on your side does a real number on your survival instincts. Worse still, once an Atariya has had a taste for the brushes with death, the exhilaration of beating the odds, it's very hard to go back to normal life. Winning a small payout with a scratch-off lottery ticket turns into going all-in with a \$10,000 pot at a poker tournament she wandered into by chance pretty fast. And because the odds just favor her, she's got no good real-world consequences to discourage her behavior. Which is where the real problem comes in for the Atariya who chase the edge of fortune.

People love a winner. People suspect, grow jealous of, and eventually hate, a winner who never loses.

*What are the odds?*

*You must be cheating somehow.*

*What are the chances you're still winning?*

*Why is your life so dangerous?*

*I worry every day that she just won't come home next time...*

*How can I trust you? This is too intense. You're too dangerous. Goodbye.*

Many thrill-seeking Atariya end up alone, chasing the edge alone because anyone who might have been along for the ride has died already or can't keep up. All of their winnings mean nothing in the end, because they're too devoted to the thrill to keep track of silly things like bank accounts and taxes. Easy come, easy go. Friends, family, money — an Atariya can always find more, so long as her luck holds out. And why wouldn't it? It's never failed her yet.

## Creating a Atariya

To make an Atariya, a character must have one dot in the Damn Lucky Merit.

Additionally he should now or in the past have a habit of honoring places where luck flows. Maybe he practiced

feng shui in his home because an ex got him into the habit and he never got out. Maybe he habitually avoids cracks in the pavement "just in case." Most Atariya are not actively superstitious, but superstitious by habit. But that habit caused them to enact ancient human luck-drawing rituals enough times that he caught the attention of something, the flow of luck itself. In time, many Atariya do actively practice rituals for good luck, and honor places of good luck, but at that point, it's not about superstition either. It's about maintaining the flow.

### Damn Lucky

(• to ••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Mortal

**Effect:** When taking damage from any source, spend a point of Willpower reflexively to activate Damn Lucky. This Merit "absorbs" up to one lethal damage or two bashing damage per dot, protecting your character from that harm. At any point in the same scene, you may choose another character to suffer that harm. The Storyteller decides just how this manifests. The victim may potentially avoid the harm with a successful Wits + Composure roll, requiring successes equal to your dots in this Merit. If successful, she may act normally (potentially requiring Initiative rolls) or apply her Defense. If the Storyteller needs to make a dice roll for the phenomenon, use twice your Merit dots, but do not apply the successes as additional damage.

For example, if your character has Damn Lucky •••, and takes a bullet to the chest for four lethal damage, you may spend a point of Willpower to activate this Merit. The bullet would only cause one lethal damage; the bullet may have hit the book he's keeping in his coat pocket. You may choose to have that damage apply to his shooter. The Storyteller decides that happens when a ricochet knocks down a chandelier. The shooter's player rolls Wits + Composure, and gets the required three successes. So the Storyteller makes an attack roll for the chandelier, but applies the shooter's Defense to the roll.

If the total damage absorbed is less than your Merit dots, you may absorb damage from multiple sources, but only up to a limit of your total dots in a scene.



## Mr. Lucky / (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Atariya, Damn Lucky

**Effect:** You're still not sure if it's real, but there's this guy, he hangs around. He's always there, smiling, at just the right place at just the right time. Always smiling. But if he's around, you know shit's about to go bad fast. Is he there to help you? Warn you? Or just eat up the bad luck that's about to flow all over the place? Is he even really your friend?

Mr. Lucky can actually manifest in a number of different ways depending on the Meritholder and his cultural references. Universally, though, Mr. Lucky is always smiling, and he/she/it never speaks.

Any time your character would be surprised or put into immense danger, the Storyteller should introduce Mr. Lucky to the scene somehow. You never suffer penalties to Wits + Composure rolls to avoid surprise or ambush, and a single success on such rolls is considered an exceptional success. Your character also receives +2 to any Initiative rolls that follow.

**Note:** Characters with Mr. Lucky may see manifestations or influences of him in other Merits they purchase. For example, a character with Count Down and Mr. Lucky may find that he whispers the number of lives she has left in her ear when she's about to die. Or a character with Sense Flow may see Mr. Lucky leaning on an unfortunate just before he fails.

## Nine Lives

/ (• to •••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Atariya, Damn Lucky

**Effect:** Any time your character might die (or should die) in a scene, you can cash in one dot of this Merit. Fate conspires to save you at the last minute. You're moved up to some stable state and removed from immediate danger. You'll pop up later okay — banged up, whatever, but alive. Characters with this Merit do not necessarily know how many lives they have left. Because of the nature of being lucky, it's very hard to tell if what they had was a brush with death or just a brush with misfortune.

**Notes:** Dots of Nine Lives can only be purchased at character creation. When you cash in a dot of Nine Lives, you can change it out with the Sanctity of Merits rule (see the *Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 43).

## Count Down / (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Atariya, Nine Lives

**Effect:** No one ever sees the bullet with his name on it, but an Atariya with this Merit at least knows how many other bullets are in the chamber. The character is acutely aware of how many times he'll narrowly escape death. This may manifest as a number in his dreams, a mysterious tattoo he doesn't remember getting that changes each time he dies, or Mr. Lucky showing up to hold up fingers whenever the character wonders about it.

**Drawback:** Knowing how many times you can run into a bad situation and live to tell about it has its own internal pressure. Characters with this Merit suffer a Condition related to how they cope with that stress. For example, a



character actively paranoid about his own deaths may suffer a permanent Paranoid Condition.

## See the Flow

### 1 (• to •••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Atariya, Damn Lucky

**Effect:** The Atariya with this Merit have an innate sense of people who are about to experience the flow of fortune, for better or worse. Further, they can declare with startling accuracy when someone is about to pull off something incredible or when they're about to fail hard. Their predictive capability has nothing to do with seeing the future, and everything to do with following luck's flow.

When the player of another character or the Storyteller prepares a dice pool to roll, if it is more than eight dice, the Atariya gets a sense of luck flowing positively for that character. In the same situation, should a dice pool be three or under, the Atariya gets a sense of a rush of bad luck flowing toward that person. Further, if a character has a modified threshold of exceptional success on a roll they are about to perform (as is the case with Merits like Professional Training), the Atariya gets a secondary sense that the chances of something amazing are much higher.

At that point, the Atariya can spend a point of Willpower. If she does, she can reduce or increase the perceived dice pool by a number up to her See the Flow dots. She may use this Merit to affect multiple dice pools in a scene, but only up to her total dots. This isn't the Atariya affecting luck, but more that she's calling out the exceptional fate in the moment. So, for example, a mage able to detect shifts in luck would not detect a change from this Merit.

### Luck Flows Up 1 (••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Atariya, Damn Lucky

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

**Drawback:** Once a victim of this Merit suffers a dramatic failure, he hears your character's name in the back of his mind. Luck has a sense of humor.

**Note:** Your character cannot have this Merit and Thief of Fate (*Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 60).

## Easy Come. Easy Go

### 1 (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Atariya, Damn Lucky

**Effect:** When luck is on your side, you make fast gains and just as fast losses. You might win the lottery today, and get audited tomorrow. It all works out in the end, which is

why you don't sweat the details. So what if your cop friend started hating you for hanging out with a drug dealer? That US attorney who invited you randomly to lunch is a better friend anyway! You can abandon Merits and purchase new ones in accordance with the Sanctity of Merits rule (see the *Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 43). However, you may do this with a given Merit once per chapter, during the chapter, at any time. You can "hot swap" up to five dots' worth of Merits per chapter.

### All-In 1 (•••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Atariya, Resolve •••, Damn Lucky

**Effect:** Most competent characters can all but assure basic success on skilled tasks. Your character can forgo that assurance, and turn an otherwise guaranteed victory into a gambit between catastrophe and miracle. Spend a Willpower point to activate All-In. Reduce your dice pool for a given action to one die. Roll that single die, but with 8-again if you did not already have it. If successful, the action succeeds. If the roll fails, the roll is considered a dramatic failure.

For every two dice removed from your pool (rounded down), a successful roll achieves one additional automatic success. For example, if your character has eight dice, reducing that to one die would offer three automatic successes (seven, divided by two, rounded down), if your roll was successful. If you rolled a single success, this would mean the action succeeds with four successes.


No effect can apply the rote quality to this roll.

## RIO MATSUMURA

*"I wonder what that moaning sound is...I'm going to check it out!"*

**Background:** After her mother and father were killed in separate drink-driving incidences on the same day, her grandmother — who apparently thought she was cursed — took in Rio. (Her older brother had died a year earlier doing something illegal.) Obaachan raised Rio as best she could, having the girl frequently exorcised and practicing vigorous Shinto blessings to try to protect the girl "from her fate." Rio wasn't especially into all the rituals and prayers, but she was obedient and carried them out. It wasn't until she was 20, out too late after karaoke with her friends and pushed onto train tracks by accident, that she discovered she was...special. Somehow, she survived getting hit by a train (the conductor wasn't so lucky), and she's pretty sure she can't be killed. The thrill of it is impossible to resist, and currently, she's dabbling with vigilante-like behavior in and around Tokyo: Harassing abusive drunks, punching out gropers, scaring foreign criminals, and alerting the police to trouble when she sees it. Since the train incident, she's been pushing the envelope a little more each time, trying to find how far her luck will protect her.

**Description:** Rio is a pretty typical young woman in Tokyo; her teeth are crooked in a cute way, she dresses well, but there's nothing about her that stands out in any way. She's not short or



tall, not heavy or especially thin. But she's keen, eyes sparkling, searching the crowds for adventure and excitement.

**Storytelling Hints:** Obaachan is long dead, but Rio keeps up those practices just in case. She's a polite, well-behaved young lady, but that's more out of ingrained habit than desire. The first whiff of danger or excitement, though, and Rio will chase it like a cat chases a cricket.

**Virtue:** Adventurous

**Vice:** Curiosity

**Aspirations:** Risk death, Make your mark, Find a new experience

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

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

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

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

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2 (Parkour), Stealth 1, Survival 1

**Mental Skills:** Academics 1, Computer 1, Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Science 1

**Merits:** All-In 3, Damn Lucky 1, Resources 1, Parkour 2

**Health:** 7

**Willpower:** 6

**Integrity:** 7

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 10

**Defense:** 5

**Initiative:** 6

## THE DREAMERS

The message comes in the flicker between channels 57 and 06. The mission is activated after the cartoon ducks but before the smiling, orange travel host can express his delight at the avocado-eating dog he has found. Do violent movies encourage antisocial behavior? Do comic books create deviants? Chemtrails, demonic backmasking, subliminal messages, vaccinations, water fluoridation. Something has put a mission into your head, and with a single trigger an identity is gone and an asset is born.

Dreamers are the few individuals who remember fragments of their time between mission activation and completing their tasks. She may have been selected for an outstanding service record or lacking anyone who might come looking. Sometimes it is simply about making sure the wrong group is responsible for the right actions. The first step in building the better weapon has never been to encourage independence or morals. When somebody decides to make an elite killing machine for clandestine assassination the first thing to go is always the ego. No two dreamers recall the same things from their programming. Some can recall in stunning clarity the burning in their veins of the injection that came with the new faceless doctor in the ER, but can't recall the date. Some speak of sterile, white lights and surgeries that lasted for hours. There are those who just remember that the ATM told them to go kill somebody. In all cases though they agree that something was added to them that they didn't have before.

### Creating a Dreamer

Dreamers receive a single dot of the Subliminal Conditioning Merit for free. All dreamers great and small

have the ability to draw on the traumatic memories of their training hidden under their day-to-day psyches. The dots in this Merit represent how much training was invested into each individual dreamer, from the lowliest patsy to the top operative of a conspiracy. A single dot in this Merit gives the character access to a pool of Memory which she may use to activate other Dreamer Merits. She may not hold more than her Resolve dots in memories for later use at a time. Memory decays, however, and each point of Memory will only last for her Composure dots in days before it disappears like an unpleasant dream. Even the strongest of wills finds it difficult to obsess over memories of trauma and isolation — eventually the mind just works to suppress the worst of it, along with the opportunity to capitalize on its use.

Dreamers each were programmed with a special mission in mind when they were released back into the larger world. This mission is usually a mystery even to the dreamer, and many dreamers spend all their waking hours trying to discover it. While the mission is certainly a mystery to the character, it doesn't necessarily mean it should be a mystery to the player. The Storyteller should work with the player to decide a mission appropriate for the scope of the planned chronicle. When a dreamer holds Memory he is able to keep himself from fully slipping under the control of the mission parameters. As Memory decays or the dreamer is forced to rely on his training, he comes closer to activating his programming and beginning his mission. When a dreamer has zero Memory, he gains the Missing Time Condition.

### The Mission

Each dreamer is an asset put into the field for the explicit purpose of fulfilling a mission: typically the death of one or



more individuals. There are exceptions to the rule, but dreamers are seldom in a place to appreciate the novelty of electoral fraud. Missions are, on average, things that a typical human being would never agree to follow through with. The fielding of a fire-and-forget sleeper agent means that the powers that be are planning something alarming enough that typical leverage is not an option. Dreamers very quickly come to realize they are the tools of a war that no one would willingly fight.

Very few individuals who have been through the process can agree on who is responsible for their repurposing. There are often rumors spread about groups seeking to create a new world order, but those are only the tamest of suspicions. Alien visitors, time travelers, the Devil, reptilians from the center of the Earth, and even certain copyrighted children's cartoon characters have been blamed. Surprisingly the government and the military are unpopular choices, simply due to their tangible ability to just have someone killed the old-fashioned way, without all the mind control.

Missions are carried out in stages to make sure that the objective action goes off without a hitch. While consciously most dreamers are completely unaware of their purposes, they have been secretly briefed with times and places for their missions. Initial activations often are concerned with familiarizing themselves with mission locations. It is not unknown for dreamers freshly activated to wake up to find themselves gainfully employed at the mission location, or amateur fans of the architect responsible for the building. Missions usually move on to more active tasks of insinuation, removal of mission risks, and control of the objective zone. Positions like stage manager, network administrator, security specialist, and independent contractor are all roles that dreamers might find their unconscious selves have placed them in.

## New Conditions

### MISSING TIME (PERSISTENT)

There is a taste in your mouth like red, red meat. You are somewhere else and you're not sure how you got there. Something else is driving your actions and it has its own mission. At the beginning of a chapter, roll Resolve + Composure – Subliminal Conditioning opposed by the Storyteller with a dice pool of 10 – the Character's Integrity. If the Storyteller succeeds, the next time the character sleeps or loses consciousness he will introduce the new situation the character wakes to. If the chapter opens *in media res* or is continuing from a cliffhanger, postpone the episode to the next dramatically appropriate break in the action.

If the Storyteller succeeds three times then in their fugue the character has carried out enough of their plans to successfully carry out their mission. Resolve Missing Time and replace the Condition with the Endgame Condition.

**Resolution:** The character achieves an exceptional success on a breaking point. The character reaffirms her own identity as an individual instead of an asset (such as by fulfilling an Aspiration). The Condition activates three times.

**Beat:** You wake up to see what actions you have wrought.

### ENDGAME (PERSISTENT)

The character has accomplished the groundwork and her mission parameters are approaching final execution. This is the last chance for a character to prevent herself from committing atrocity. The situation has been primed for her to act – there will be no resistance from security, no amount of trouble smuggling the weapon to the intended point, and the target will be precisely where it has to be. All that is left is pulling the trigger. In hours her programming will be activated and her sole motivation will be the completion of her objectives, known to the character or not. All rolls to complete the mission have the 8-again quality.

**Resolution:** The character somehow prevents her final activation or destroys the chances of her mission. Resisting conditioning is an extended and contested action of Resolve + Composure opposed by the character's relevant dice pool for each step of their mission, depending on the story. This Condition is also resolved if the character successfully completes the mission on her own terms. Your patrons will be in touch.

### Subliminal Conditioning

(● to ●●●●, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Mortal

**Effect:** Your character has been subliminally conditioned by a group to function as a human weapon. With a little effort, you can scratch at the raw wounds left in your psyche to access that training for your own benefit. When the character experiences a breaking point, she is able to briefly focus on the submerged memories of the training and generate a point of Memory. She can only hold up to her Resolve in Memory.

**Basic Control (●):** With basic control, the character generates a single point of Memory when encountering a breaking point, whether she succeeds or fails. She may spend

## Why Don't I Remember?

The Eidetic Memory Merit gives characters access to perfect recall. The question becomes why the Dreamer is only capable of remembering these traumatic moments when in a moment of extreme psychological stress. On a purely biological level, the architecture of storing active memory is a different process than the brain's storage of pain memories. Or it may be a dreamer's patrons are knowledgeable enough about the human mind that they are capable of compartmentalizing these experiences in a place unreachable by even the most active memory, except by using the same fault lines they did.



## Story Hooks for the Dreamers

- A pirate channel is trying to hijack your character's conditioning. The difference is, she can remember this, even if she can't avoid it.
- Your character was chosen for a position within a high-paying sleep lab study. He needs the money, but his dreams grow worse every night as the experiment interferes with his programming.
- A man shows up at your character's door, sweating, panicked. When she answers, he says he needs to tell her everything, that he can't keep the secret anymore. Just as he's starting to reveal the truth, a bullet from a kilometer away takes off the top half of his head.

a point of Memory to ignore penalties equal to her Subliminal Conditioning Merit on an action related to hurting another living person.

**Extended Awareness (••):** Now, she is as vigilant about her surroundings as she is about her target. She may spend a point of Memory to add the rote quality to a roll based on situational awareness and Perception.

**Steady on Target (•••):** The character is a tool meant for targeted violence, not the chaos of an actual engagement. She may now spend a point of Memory during a combat or similarly stressful situation (setting off explosives, running a car off the road, etc.) to avoid collateral damage. She's meant to kill a certain someone, not strangers. However, if the Dreamer has the Missing Time Condition when she uses this power, you must roll again as if it were the start of the Chapter.

**Between the Lines (••••):** At this level, the character has become more receptive to her hidden memories. Each success generated on a breaking point roll generates an additional point of Memory.

**New Parameters (•••••):** At the pinnacle of casual psychosurgery, the character learned to trigger the most essential component of her programming, the "on" button. She may spend a point of Memory to gain the Missing Time Condition and mark a mortal as a target. All combat between the character and that target becomes Down and Dirty Combat (see the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 87).

### A Word from Our Sponsor

(•• or •••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Subliminal Conditioning

**Effect:** The dreamer's programming is pernicious, and long before she realized that she was beholden to someone's will, had already created both local and international business accounts. At two dots a dreamer may spend a point of Memory to recall a password or security question she had set up to access an account or a seller allowing her to purchase any amount of suspicious material without drawing attention to herself and still pass background checks. At three dots, the dreamer's alter-ego has been far more thorough and created entire business connections not just with legitimate businesses,

but also a variety of criminal elements such as arms dealers and drug lords.

### Realpolitik

(• to •••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Subliminal Conditioning

**Effect:** Some dreamers find their missions require them to belong to a certain political affiliations or certain social groups no matter how contrarian it may be to their day-to-day identities. A character with this Merit receives a bonus equal to his Merit rating to all rolls to pass as belonging to a political group when confronted on his beliefs by both group members and outsiders. Additionally, the character can spend a point of Memory to change from a follower to a leader for a scene. He may use his bonus to any roll to influence the group as long as it follows one of the group's Aspirations. This may be inciting police to strike against nonviolent protesters, or causing a survivalist enclave to further radicalize against big government.

### Memory Palace

(• to •••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Subliminal Conditioning

**Effect:** The dreamer has practiced a variety of memory visualization and retaining techniques to preserve her memories longer. For every dot of Memory Palace, the character may store an additional point of Memory.

### The Treatment

(• to •••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Subliminal Conditioning

**Effect:** Your dreamer recalls strange surgeries of writhing, living things buried in her flesh and the consumption of mineral supplements. When purchasing this Merit, choose a substance (like colloidal silver or formaldehyde) and a Skill category. When the character has a few minutes to work with the substance and spends a point of Memory, she can increase a Skill in the chosen category by the Merit rating for a scene (to a limit of five dots). When the scene ends, the dreamer receives a point of lethal damage as her body starts to burn out.



## Not A Bug But A Feature

(•• or •••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Subliminal Programming, The Treatment •

**Effect:** There is something inside the dreamer – something that wasn't there before. Sometimes the programming isn't just in the dreamer's mind. It may look like a chitinous worm that can move in and out of the human esophagus with blinding speed, or it may be some sort of ghastly techno-organic pistol that is extruded from her hand, but it is a weapon and it's hers. At purchase, select an object that the dreamer may manifest by spending a point of Memory. At three dots, it may be Size 1. At five dots it may be up to Size 3. Items that have uses or ammunition come fully loaded when first manifested, but the player must spend an additional point of Memory to allow the character to command the object to regrow, hatch, or harvest additional ammunition. When not manifested, the object will otherwise be unable to be detected even by investigative surgery or X-rays.

## Mephistopheles (••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Subliminal Conditioning

**Effect:** The character has kept her programming controlled by making strides towards completing the mission. As long as she continues to take steps to ensure endgame, she is rewarded with positive reinforcement. A scene where the character has moved forward in her goals of assassination

counts as having indulged her Vice. Additionally, she finds it much easier to channel her training when it is working towards its intended goal. Once per scene, when she makes progress towards the elimination of the target, it generates Memory just like a breaking point.

## Déjà vu

(•, ••, or •••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Subliminal Conditioning

**Effect:** Dreamers are powerful if unreliable. While they have been given impressive abilities they are locked behind powerful psychological barriers that require extreme transgressions on the part of the dreamer to access. Those dreamers trying to make use of their training often seek alternative means of achieving a similar state that takes a lesser psychological toll on them. At one dot, the dreamer finds she recalls memories after receiving a Physical Condition or Tilt. At two dots, many dreamers experience flashbacks during moments of extreme chaos both emotionally and physically, receiving a point of Memory whenever the character dramatically fails on a roll in a high-pressure situation. At three dots, whenever the character suffers lethal damage she gains a point of Memory.


## Field Handler

(•, •••, or •••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Subliminal Conditioning







**Effect:** Your patrons feel the mission you are on is serious enough that they have personally attached a field handler to make sure that your mission is accomplished. Some report their handlers were simply mortal pawns like themselves, while others claim theirs were otherworldly entities in the flesh. Your character's rating in this Merit indicates the lengths that her handler will go to involve himself and ensure the mission happens. It does not guarantee his loyalty, and many handlers can be threats if they realize their dreamers have slipped the leash.

**Pencil Pusher (•):** The handler is either disinterested in the mission at hand or has limited ability to influence the world. Once per story he may provide support equal to your Field Handler dot rating in Contacts or Resources. He will not take tasks that will risk the mission being discovered, and deviations from the intended plan will make him nervous.

**Clock Watcher (••):** The handler might find the Dreamer amusing or at least tolerates her presence. Once per story he may provide advice or help the Dreamer with non-mission critical problems, providing the equivalent of your Field Handler dot rating in the Mentor or Ally Merit.

**Company Man (•••):** A handler of this level is invested in the completion of the objective either ideologically or materially. His influence and investment is such that, given sufficient motivation once per story, he may utilize supernatural abilities to influence or remove threats to the dreamer's mission. It should be noted that "won't" is not the same as "can't," though. Just because a handler won't psychically dominate a police officer for you doesn't mean he can't.

**Bought Out (••••):** The dreamer, through intensive research or just pure coincidence, stumbles onto information about the handler's life or nature. She may leverage this information to force the handler to use any of the handler's abilities a second time per story. The average field handler is no more excited about the prospect of being blackmailed than the average person; he will get even if given the chance.

**Friend Inside (•••••):** The rarest handlers of all are the ones that are able to view their assets as valuable. They may not see what they're doing as wrong, but at least they acknowledge there is some value in retaining the character's services. They will use both their resources and abilities in the interest of protecting the dreamer. Once per story, a character's handler will assist the dreamer even if it would potentially compromise the mission.

**Note:** This Merit may be purchased multiple times to represent different handlers.

## DIANE THAYER

*"We all make mistakes. I just recognize you've made more than your fair share."*

**Background:** Diane has been around the block a few times. She's outlived several presidents — and has her suspicions that she might have killed at least one of them — but that's not something she discusses with many people. She grew up in Lansing and found the Michigander lifestyle to

her liking, until she woke up with several hundred dollars in unmarked bills and a loaded revolver in passenger seat of a stolen Chevy somewhere in the I-5 Corridor of California.

She had just woken up, and she would spend several years of her life trying to understand how she'd crossed most the United States (a three-month stint as an airline attendant), whom she had hurt (a visiting politician seeking a union-friendly image), and who had made her do it (she doesn't know). Years of struggling against programming takes its toll, and Diane has been fighting longer than anyone she's ever met. In 10 long years, she had lost more sympathizers, conspiracy nuts, and fellow loons than she cared to admit, and that's when she decided to change tactics. She retired from both sides.

Using the discipline she learned in her more clandestine wild years, Diane settled down and became a determined wife, a caring mother, and finally a fiercely independent grandmother. There was never a year in her life that she was not pursuing personal projects or making sure that the rest of her family lived up to the standards she set for them. Keeping herself busy almost seemed to work — she didn't disappear from home and she almost never had forgetting spells. Thirty years, and the best advice she had for outsmarting vindictive kill programming was aggressive remodeling of the community park. Lately though, Diane is starting to lose time. At first she worried that she was starting to go senile, but every day she is more certain that with age has come a loss of vigilance and that her programming is reactivating. Her family thinks that the elderly woman is finally starting to show her age and wishes to put her somewhere that she can be watched. Diane wants to make sure she takes her pound of flesh from whoever did this to her before she goes quietly into the night.

**Description:** Diane is an elderly black woman well into her 70s, dressed in formal clothing too nice for the situation. She wears her grey hair short.

**Storytelling Hints:** Diane is not unsympathetic to the plight of others being thrust into the shadowy underbelly of the world, but she has her own goals and those must come first. She's seen enough in her day that she might potentially be able to mentor younger members of the community in what awaits them out there. If they seem particularly competent and can give her answers about her own mystery, then she may decide it's time to outsource her revenge to somebody new.

**Virtue:** Determined

**Vice:** Vengeful

**Aspirations:** Find a new vehicle for her revenge, Commit revenge, Find lost time

**Note:** Diane is an elderly woman who takes great pains to take care of herself. Even with elite sleeper assassin training hardwired into her brain, age has finally started to catch up with her body. She's not likely to go very far outside of her usual routine. It is fully up to the Storyteller if her age makes her an easy mark for the kind of person who kills grandmothers, or if 30 years of learning to harness her programming makes her capable of taking down entire SWAT teams.



# THE INFECTED

There are things we are told not to do in the world. Lessons that are supposed to protect us from the dangers of the outside. In the most practical terms we are told these rules keep us from getting sick and stop our food, our bodies, or our environments from carrying pathogens. Call it a disease if you will. Call it the wrath of a god, a hostile meme, an unstoppable parasite. The Infected can all agree that no matter what form it takes, the Infection is a curse.

At the cusp of the physical world are stranger things that have learned to live off the more esoteric rules of the universe. Thriving in places that are stained with the worst actions of human experience, and on objects that are tainted with occult significance, the Infection is perhaps the first to learn to infect mundane beings. Making the leap to the biological has not been without its problems for both the host and the Infection. The disease needs places or objects pulsating with spiritual power, and the host needs a way to shed the growing infection before she dies.

## Creating the Infected

Infected begin play with the Latent Symptoms Persistent Condition and a dot of the Carrier Merit.

## New Conditions

### LATENT SYMPTOMS

Your character is Infected with something that doesn't behave like any disease should. Though it shows no symptoms now, the character is aware of the Infection. Other toxins and diseases find it incredibly hard to affect the character. He receives a +2 modifier to all Stamina rolls to resist pathogens. When a character receives a Condition related to high emotional stress like Guilty, Embarrassing Secret, or Deprived, then resolve Latent Symptoms and replace it with Acute Symptoms.

**Resolution:** Experience extreme emotional stress as described above.

**Beat:** Locating an occult object for the Infection to spread to.

### ACUTE SYMPTOMS

The character's infection is starting to make itself known physically: Discolored markings in the skin, bleeding through pores, and other blemishes are all common. The character receives a -2 penalty to Social actions except for Intimidation. The disease is fully active and aggressive at this stage, and

lesser diseases cannot affect the character. When the character refrains from using his supernatural abilities for a number of days equal to his Carrier Merit, then he may exchange this Condition for the Latent Symptoms Condition.

**Resolution:** When the character accumulates more than his Stamina rating in damage from supernatural sources in a chapter, then exchange this Condition for the Symptomatic Flareup Condition. The character refrains from using his supernatural abilities for a number of days equal to his Carrier Merit, gaining the Latent Symptoms Condition.

**Beat:** The character accomplishes his goal by occult means even when not strictly necessary.

### SYMPTOMATIC FLAREUP

The Infection is distressingly and abundantly obvious to all onlookers. Strange growths both organic and inorganic, unearthly markings on her body, and other supernatural branding marks the character as being seriously ill. The character adds her Carrier rating to the number of Doors required to socially influence another character. Additionally, the character receives a +2 modifier to rolls related to using or spreading the Infection. When the character reaches both 0 Willpower and marks one of her rightmost three Health boxes with lethal damage, then her health is taxed to the extreme and she exchanges this Condition for the Progressive Infection Condition.

**Resolution:** The character spends a number of days equal to her Carrier dots in rest, or the character's health is taxed as explained above.

**Beat:** Your character manages to acquire a mystic object and allow the Infection to complete its life cycle.

### PROGRESSIVE INFECTION

The Infection has begun to kill the unfortunate host, consuming his body in a desperate attempt to stay alive long enough to complete its life cycle. Very few people will even recognize the character as a human being. All failures on Social actions by the character are downgraded to dramatic failures as the average person is consumed with panic (this does afford a Beat, however). Additionally, the character suffers one point of lethal damage on every active use of his Supernatural Merits as the disease consumes his body to keep itself alive. Additionally, the character is now infectious to other human beings, able to spread the Infection like a supernatural object would. The character's only chance at survival is finding either an individual or an entity capable



## Story Hooks for the Infected

- Your character wakes up fine. Her symptoms are completely gone. This can't be. Is this the final stage? Is something else wrong?
- Someone's following your character. Eventually, he approaches. He knows all about her. He wants the Infection. He says he'll make her life hell, alerting the public health authorities if she doesn't infect him.
- Your character hears word of a cure. But it's in the strangest place — an archaeologist found it in a rainforest temple ruin. Unfortunately, he never made it out: The only record is a final call to his assistant.

of ameliorating the Condition. Alternatively, if a character chooses to try treating himself, he must succeed at an extended action of Intelligence + the lower of Medicine or Occult. The target number of successes is the total number of purchased dots in Infection Merits. If successful, this Condition is replaced with the Latent Symptoms Condition, and the character must accept a Persistent Condition agreed upon by the player and the Storyteller.

**Resolution:** The character dies or manages to put the Infection into remission as described above.

**Beat:** Your character spreads the Infection to new hosts.

### Carrier


(• to •••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Mortal

**Effect:** The character is part of the strange life cycle of the Infection. This Merit functions at any level as Unseen Sense (Suitable Breeding Grounds), allowing the character to know precisely what he is looking for. Infecting an object is a Stamina + Carrier roll with a +1 modifier for every Condition past Latent

## Supernatural Victims

The Infection thrives in places of occult significance, but finds it difficult to find purchase in living supernatural beings. Supernatural creatures in the Chronicles of Darkness do not become true carriers when exposed to the disease through one of the Infected powers, but become asymptomatic vectors for the Infection for a number of days equal to their 10 minus their Supernatural Potency trait. Mortal survivors of an attack by a supernatural creature may find themselves with their own Infection in addition to the scars or blood loss.



Symptoms Condition. For example, a character with Progressive Infection adds +4 to infection rolls. Carrier must always be equal to or higher than the dot rating of all other Infection Merits. For example, the character may not purchase a five-dot rating in the New Flesh without an equal rating in Carrier.

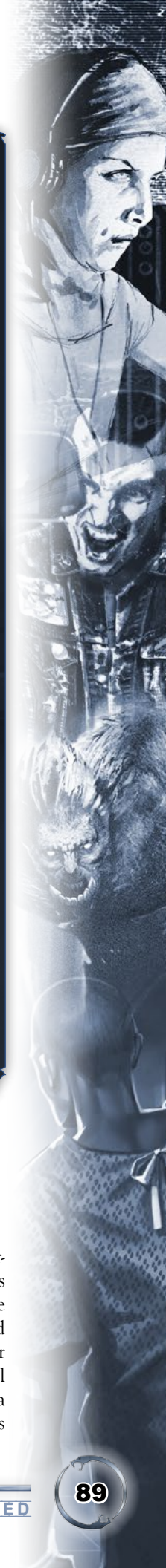
### Bulletman Syndrome

(•••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Carrier

**Effect:** The character's Infection is particularly potent and alarming to onlookers. Rather than biological growths, when the character begins to exhibit physical symptoms





they are made of inorganic materials, predominately metal and glass. The character has his Stamina in armor (1/1 per Stamina dot) at all stages of Infection. If the character displays acute symptoms or higher, then his unarmed attacks deal 0 lethal damage from metal-laced bones or knifelike nails. Each stage of the Infection beyond Acute Symptoms adds +1 lethal damage to his unarmed attacks.

**Drawback:** The character, even when the infection is in latency, sets off metal detectors. His skin mends slowly and painfully, doubling healing times for lethal and aggravated damage.

## The New Flesh

(●, ●●● or ●●●●, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Carrier

**Effect:** The Infected has an inhuman ability to regenerate, both because of the speed and the results. Flesh grows back just as quickly as it is cut away, but usually with a subtle difference, as if the Infection does not quite understand human biology. A one-dot rating halves all healing times for the Infected. A three-dot rating allows the character to heal one point of lethal damage a scene, up to his Stamina in a day. A five-dot rating means that the character regenerates

aggravated damage at the same rate as lethal damage.

**Drawback:** In any scene in which the character has regenerated lethal or aggravated damage, he takes a penalty equal to his Carrier rating to rolls where his strange appearance may alarm people — such as making a good impression on strangers, or explaining to a security guard why he has broken into a museum.

### Patient Zero (••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Carrier

**Effect:** The character has reached an uneasy enough equilibrium with the Infection that she may become asymptomatic for a short time. By spending a Willpower point, the character may force the Infection into a short dormancy lasting no more than her Stamina dots in days. All symptoms, abilities, and drives of the Infection disappear, allowing the character to pass as a completely normal person once again. When the character chooses to reawaken it, or when her time runs out, the disease reemerges at the next stage of Infection.

### Proud Parent (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Carrier

**Effect:** Your character feels an affinity with the Infection, or at least some form of Stockholm Syndrome. Once per story, when the character manages to find a suitably safe place or successfully infects another human being with the Infection, it counts as fulfilling the character's Virtue.

**Drawback:** The character is emotionally attached to his progeny; if something happens to either a site or an individual he has Infected, he must test for a breaking point.

### Bloodkin (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Carrier

**Effect:** The Infected recognize their own, and more importantly, the Infection does too. If a character encounters another Infected who shares a lineage with the character, reduce the number of Doors in a social maneuvering attempt by the difference between their Carrier ratings (to a minimum of 1).

### Virulent

#### (•• to ••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Carrier

**Effect:** The character is able to harness the Infection to cause lesser diseases in those he touches. When a character makes physical contact with a person, spend a point of Willpower and roll Stamina + Resolve – the target's Stamina to infect her with any of the following maladies:

**The Bug (••):** At this level, the character's grip causes a common illness with flu-like symptoms. The target gains the moderate Sick Tilt which dissipates at the end of the scene.

**The Virus (•••):** The character, like something out of the Old Testament, causes pestilence to those he touches.

She may now cause the grave Sick Tilt with a simple touch, which ends at the end of the scene.

**The Pestilence (••••):** The Infected now weaves infections like none that actually exist — the sort of pestilent and violent viruses that are only comparable to something from a Hollywood drama. The character's grip causes the grave Poison Tilt in those unfortunate enough to be targeted by the Infected.

## RICHARD "RICK" STARR

*"It's really not so bad if you don't mind the flaking or the scars."*

**Background:** Rick was all set to make it as a child actor, right up until the testosterone kicked in and he became a far less adorable adult than he was as a kid. He has always had a needy, codependent personality that needed constant attention, much like a neurotic Labrador. He's sought approval from wherever he could find it; and with a dried-up acting career and absolutely no social support network, it's pretty unsurprising he became something of a desperate case.

Richard found the watch when his father died sometime at the turn of the century, and deciding it was probably worth something at a pawnshop, made the excellent life decision of taking it. He knew it was special when he got to relive his wonder years for several minutes. It never worked again. What he did get from the watch was a strong urge to do it again, and a feeling that he needed to find more.

These days Rick isn't sure why he does half of the things he's forced to do. Whatever makes the disease happy makes Rick feel a little bit better. It's almost like having his very own private audience swarming inside of him. When the Infection demands something, Rick complies, because the alternative is a lot worse than the scars he got from the feral thing or the burns he got in the screaming garage. It's not glamorous work, but it's a living, and even if Rick doesn't have quality of life at least he'll have quantity.

**Description:** Rick is 6'2", broad shouldered, and about 30 pounds underweight for a man of his size. He has greasy brown hair and a face that could probably pass for handsome in a rough sort of way if the nose hadn't been broken multiple times and his left ear didn't look partially melted. He wears a variety of thrift store clothing and a battered workman's jacket. He's learned more clothing is better.

**Storytelling Hints:** Rick seeks approval from just about anywhere he can find it. Just because it's a mystic disease instead of a live studio audience doesn't make it any less important. He has minimal self-confidence in all endeavors, and the idea of resisting the Infection instead of spreading it simply isn't something that seems possible from his own worldview.

Beneath the weak-willed exterior is a curious individual who cares deeply about those close to him. He wants to talk with people about what has happened in his life and maybe get some explanations for even half of what he has seen. If he also gets praised by people, he would like that.



**Virtue:** Reliable

**Vice:** Insecure

**Aspirations:** Seek praise, Catch up on TV gossip, Skirt death

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

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

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

**Social Skills:** Empathy 2, Expression 3 (Cutesy Catchphrases), Intimidate 2 (I Do Lift, Bro), Persuasion 1, Socialize 2, Streetwise 1

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 1 (Fake It 'Til It Works), Drive 2, Survival 2

**Mental Skills:** Academics 1 (TV Gossip), Computers 1, Crafts 1, Medicine 1

**Merits:** Barfly, Patient, Resources 1, Carrier 3, Proud Parent, The New Flesh 3

**Health:** 8

**Willpower:** 3

**Integrity:** 5

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 10

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 3

## THE PLAIN

The Plain are an urban movement born out of the online blog written by a small group of ex-Amish young adults in Philadelphia. Born “plain” and raised with ideals like humility and nonviolence, a group of adventurous friends took advantage of their teenage years of “freedom” to explore the big city outside of their rural home in Pennsylvania. At 18, they decided against joining their Church, feeling that sharing their beliefs with the urban world of “the English” was more important than their simple lives. Seven hard-working youths strong, the Plain shared an apartment and worked odd jobs while exploring the city and deciding what parts of their upbringing held up to their new life, and what needed to be discarded.

They came quickly to one simple idea. To be not conformed to this world, the urban one, the Plain had to resist the systemic violence poisoning the urban landscape. Their discussion groups, a sort of god-less church held in their apartment, caught the attention of a few other young men and women looking for another way to live. Soon, someone started blogging the group’s ideas, and branches have popped up in a few major cities. It’s entirely possible that the group won’t survive more than a few years based on its ideals, but for now, it’s having an impact.

Above all, the Plain believe in Radical Pacifism. It is not enough to believe violence is wrong. It is not enough to abstain from militarization. It is not enough to not be violent themselves: They must put their bodies and safety in the way of violence to make radical statements of proactive nonviolence.

Today, membership draws from idealists, iconoclasts of a certain bent, those raised in a shallow religious upbringing, or youths from cultures that have never condoned violence who could not, as a result, naturalize well to urban environments where violence is normalized.

They have no organization, having small “churches” or lone radicals observing based on teachings from the blog or other Plain.


### Being Plain

Being radically pacifist is a difficult prospect. The Plain believe that their message, and their bodies, have to be on the line whenever possible in order to make their statements. At its most mild, this involves peaceful sit-ins or hunger strikes only loosely organized. More frequently, the Plain simply go about their lives watching for signs that violence might break out. When an over-heated sports bar seems about to burst, or a stressed-out cop is harassing young men who have had enough, this is where the Plain try to intervene.

Sometimes that means talking it out or trying to act as a voice of reason. Sometimes simply picking up a cell phone to record the scene and announcing the act can help. (These videos are very popular, shared throughout the budding community.) But when it comes to it, the Plain do not hesitate to put their own selves in harm’s way. To make their message loud and clear, the Plain will take brutal beatings, keeping the ire on themselves, to deflect the rage away from others and make their message at the same time. Violence is wrong. See what it looks like when it is actively resisted. See what you are doing when you are violent. I will not fight back.

And somehow, somewhere between mental preparedness and a fool’s blessing, the Plain survive these encounters. Stories come out of Paris of a Plain who took three bullets to the chest and managed to survive, while his assailant was hospitalized for stress-based exhaustion. Or the Plain girl fleeing Serbia who stood up to, and pushed back, a group of thugs intent on robbing her family as they fled across the Romanian border. The video circulating of her shows a girl walking forward, with no gestures of violence, and the thugs stepping back, recoiling as if forced back by an invisible wall. It may be staged or altered, but it’s a damn good-looking fake if it isn’t real. If the Plain have a secret behind their successes, they don’t know it as anything but the strength of their beliefs.

the plain blog
http://www.theamishapocalypse.tv



**ABRAM**  
POSTED 2/11/16

When I was a boy a biker gang drove through our hometown, stopping in the middle to harass and intimidate the village elders. They wanted to store drugs in our barns, and threatened terrible violence against the children if there was resistance.

My Uncle Jedhai stepped forward and informed the men that violence was wrong, and he would show them. They took this as a threat and tried to beat him into submission. He was beaten, but would not submit. As they beat on him, turning his face to pulp, he did not relent or raise his hands. He prayed for them, telling them that what they were doing was wrong. As if this was the first time anyone had suggested such an idea to them.

They killed my uncle that day. He died from the blows to his head.

But they retreated. His words to them, as they destroyed him with their fists and their rage, changed these men. We do not know what happened to these sad men after that event. We know that they retreated, and these gangs never again approached us again. Showing a violent person the true face of peace and nonviolence will leave an indelible mark on them. That's what we bring to the city. That's what being Plain is all about. Radical, unapologetic, unmoving nonviolence. Peace at all costs.

## The Look and the Lifestyle

Despite their roots, the Plain's focus has moved away from avoiding worldliness. To be plain in an urban environment means blending well with the local culture. Whatever community the Plain live among, they try to dress the part. From hipsters with scarves to neighborhood boys in saggy jeans and hoodies, whatever will make them stand out the least. Because they have changed their definitions of community, however, there are no rules of uniformity. A group meeting at "church" might be a rather eclectic group as many walks of life are drawn to the message.

Likewise, the Amish culture of gendered obeisance has been shrugged aside in favor of obedience only to anti-violence. As the movement grows and matures, the idea of anti-violence is maturing and growing in sophistication as some members question if physical violence is the only thing they must stand up to, or if resistance to corruption and emotional violence is also necessary to change the world.

## Creating a Plain

To make a Plain character, take the Plain Reader Merit. Storytellers may opt to make Plain Reader a free Merit.

## Plain Reader (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Mortal

**Effect:** Your character reads the Plain Blog and has been deeply inspired by its preaching. Your character has decided to try to devote her life to radical nonviolence, no matter what harm it might mean to her body. This is about what good it'll do her soul.

Plain Reader gives your character access to all other Plain Merits.

Additionally, with this Merit, acts of violence are always Integrity breaking points for your character. This statement is ambiguous on purpose, as what violence is can vary from abusive words to throwing punches to participating in capitalism depending, on the character's worldview. By default, assume this means causing direct harm to another person the character is aware is being harmed. The player should volunteer further nuanced readings of violence and fault.

However, win or lose, a Plain character is revitalized by tests of her beliefs. As a result, when she suffers an Integrity breaking point for violence, the character is empowered to try harder, or at least fail harder, in the future. Pass or fail this Integrity test, the character regains one Willpower point. Not every Plain is especially good at the philosophy, but they're trying. Always trying.



## You Are Being Recorded (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Mortal, Plain Reader

**Effect:** When acts of violence might break out, sometimes the best way to deescalate is accountability. A Plain character with this Merit can take out a cell phone, video camera, or other live recording device and announce loudly “You are being recorded,” or something similar, reminding the participants there are consequences for their actions. Roll Presence + Expression. At that point, anyone in the scene can act with violence, but only after a successful Resolve + Composure roll, which requires more successes than the Plain achieved. This counts for any violent action that could be made so long as the Plain is still holding a camera. Repeat attempts can be made to overcome this reticence.

This effect is cumulative. For any other cell phones or cameras that come out to record after the Plain initiates this Merit, rolling Resolve + Composure to act violently suffers an additional -1 penalty. Other participants don’t have to have the Merit to participate

after the Plain initiates the recording. This counts up to a maximum penalty of -5 dice to the roll. Storytellers should consider the fact that random people on the streets are frequently inspired to participate in this sort of citizen activism when they see it.

## I’m Bleeding on You (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Mortal, Plain Reader

**Effect:** It’s difficult to punch a guy who is in your face telling you he won’t fight back. Plain use a series of demands and accusations to force an actor to see and be aware of the violence they’re committing. “You are breaking the nose of another human being. That crack you heard was my nose. I am bleeding. You did this to me.” The Plain’s unflinching observations of violence against him are chilling to say the least.

Characters acting violently against a Plain naturally hold back the worse the fight gets. For every point of damage a Plain takes, any attackers who witnessed the brutality lose -1 die to any further attacks made for the scene.







## Story Hooks for the Plain

- Your character hears from an old friend in the church, who says something completely inhuman, a demon, a monster, is forcing some of the Plain — her friends and family — to violate their tenants and engage in brutality.
- Local lawmakers are in the pockets of weapon manufacturers. They're trying to outlaw non-lethal police tactic and tools such as stun guns in favor of deadlier solutions.
- A local bareknuckle boxing organizer requests your character's assistance in keeping his matches structured, safe, and consensual.

## Most Infected Thing I've Ever Seen (••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Mortal, Plain Reader

**Effect:** Because of their willingness to put their lives on the line, Plain sometimes suffer from the very real and lingering effects of violence. Some wounds will never really heal. But on the other hand, they seem to manage carrying on when others would be hospitalized or dead. How do they do it? They don't even know.

At any point, a Plain with this Merit can swap out Health boxes of damage for a Tilt reflecting the damage they've taken. This Tilt then becomes a Condition the character suffers from instead of the acute injury. Death is shrugged off in favor of lingering, lasting issues. Four or fewer Health boxes creates a Condition that may be satisfied with extensive medical care. Five or more Health boxes must be traded for a Persistent Condition that should be correctable only by a major story event. Tilts selected for Conditions via this Merit should be contextual. If the character had her eye put out, the Condition should reflect that, not simply be a random trade for points.

## Over Before it Started (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Mortal, Plain Reader

**Effect:** Sometimes, it's not the act of violence that matters so much as the consequences. Once per session, a Plain with this Merit can focus the narrative away from inflicting violence and onto dealing with it. In a violent encounter with a Storyteller character intent on causing harm to others, the Plain can intervene. Instead of rolling out the violence, blow by blow, the Plain declares that all violence is inflicted on him, instead. Players may refuse this martyrdom; this negates the Merit's effect. If not, the Storyteller rolls one die for each

combatant who would attack the Plain. The total successes rolled is how many lethal damage the Plain has to contend with. He may mitigate this damage with other Merits, but there is no Defense allowed. He will be harmed, possibly killed, but no one else is harmed and his point is made. Violence is awful. Other Merits that the Plain has which affect the aftermath of violence can still be used.

If the Plain survives the encounter, all of his temporary Willpower is restored.

## Phantom Pain (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Mortal, Plain Reader, I'm Bleeding on You

**Effect:** Facing the reality of human abuse can have devastating effects, especially when it is a Plain you are harming, and she is laying out for you in clear language what you've done.

A Plain with this Merit can inflict phantom damage on an assailant on a point for point basis. The damage is technically lethal, but appears within the narrative as exhaustion or stress. The assailant does not bleed, rupture, or hemorrhage as the Plain does. She just feels like she is. The injuries suffered are psychological, and they fade after the scene. If she takes enough "damage" to suffer a wound penalty, she gains the Beaten Down Tilt (see the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 280). If the "damage" would be enough to render her unconscious, she must also resist unconsciousness. If she falls unconscious, she'll receive a Condition reflecting mental trauma. A common example is Guilty. If she killed the Plain, she receives a Persistent Condition that tends to be a life-changing event for her.

## The Consequences of Violence (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Mortal, Plain Reader

**Effect:** Most of the time, the Plain make their points through their blog or community outreach. Converts come willingly to a gospel of society free of crushing, normalized violence. Sometimes, the weight of the Plain's point of view is a thing inflicted on unwilling assailants as a direct result of their violence.

Anyone who does direct, physical harm to a Plain who is not responding in kind now takes on the burden of nonviolence. Their world view changes, at least a little, and as a result, they now too suffer a breaking point any time they inflict violence as suggested for the Plain in the Plain Reader Merit.

## The Push (• to •••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Mortal, Plain Reader

**Effect:** The Push is only a rumor among the Plain right now, a gossiped-about myth. Most of the Plain don't know they might eventually be able to pull it off. They've seen the



videos from Serbia, but no one is quite sure what to make of it. But they want to believe it. So it's only a matter of time before more try it, and succeed at it.

Simply put, a Plain acting to protect others steps forward, and with each step, her would-be attackers are driven backward, away from those the Plain would protect. She needs to say no words, no threats, simply step forward and drive them back. If the Plain is actively protecting someone else, there is no roll necessary. The assailants step back for every step forward she takes. With each step, assailants may try to attack the Plain (and the Plain only), but they have to succeed at Resolve + Composure rolls first, requiring successes equal to the Plain's Push dots. If they are driven back more than five steps without attempting to or successfully managing to attack the Plain, they must disperse, fleeing the scene.

## AMARR HARROLD

*"You don't have to do this."*

**Background:** Amarr is a good, super-smart kid born the wrong color in the wrong part of the world. Even before he'd come across the Plain blog, he'd taken a few beatings from white supremacists and cops judging him by the color of his skin. He knew violence was wrong. But what he didn't know was that you could stand up without returning the violence to the perpetrators. The Blog taught him how to make abusers see what they're doing without contributing to the cycle of violence. His parents are currently suing the school board for expelling him when he passively interfered in a situation where a younger boy was being beaten up. He never raised a hand, and there is a recording, and it's gaining a lot of local popularity. While he's trying to keep up with his studies, he's spent a lot of his free time at Plain meetings. His local "celebrity" has gotten to the point where he's seriously considering interfering the next time he runs into police violence. But. He's young and the other Plain have discouraged that, but he won't be satisfied with waiting for long.

**Description:** Amarr is a short, small-framed boy with thick glasses and dark skin. His ancestors were Muslim Ethiopians on either side of the family, but that heritage was generations ago. He wears his hair in natural twists. Assuming he doesn't get messed up too badly in his activities as a Plain, he may

grow into a very handsome young man. But, a lot of bad things can happen to a smart kid like him in the meantime.

**Storytelling Hints:** Amarr used to be satisfied with base survival, hoping that if he kept his head down he'd be okay. He's come to learn that patience isn't going to fix anything, and his head-down policy was really just head-in-the-sand. He's eager to take the momentum of his local celebrity to help the movement spread. Because he's young, he can't actually conceptualize that his behavior could get him killed. Or maybe it's that he knows he doesn't have much of a future anyway if things don't change, so why worry?

**Virtue:** Brilliant

**Vice:** Self-Sacrificing

**Aspirations:** Give up something for someone, Spread the movement, Make a memorable moment

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

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

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

**Social Skills:** Empathy 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 1

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Survival 2

**Mental Skills:** Academics 1, Computers 1, Crafts 1, Medicine 1

**Merits:** Alternate Identity 1, Contacts 2, Fast Reflexes 2, Iron Will 2, Plain Reader 1, I'm Bleeding on You 1, Resources 1

**Health:** 9

**Willpower:** 4

**Integrity:** 7

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 9

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 4





# THE LOST BOYS

Is the Delta Protocol a company, an organization, a lone eccentric billionaire with an agenda? Nobody knows. What some know, however, is that this strange group has fingers in numerous world militaries. It develops biological augmentations for soldiers, and sells them to anyone buying. Odder still, it never sells these enhancements for money; it sells them for soldiers. For every soldier the Delta Protocol enhances, the Protocol gets one in return. The Protocol doesn't appear to do anything directly with these soldiers; the warriors are discharged from their military roles, they're not told a thing about the Protocol, and they're expected to live relatively normal lives. Those in the know believe the Protocol is watching these experiments, testing their augmentations, and preparing for...something. Those soldiers, those experiments — they each see eyes everywhere. They live looking over their shoulders, wondering what's happening. Sometimes they awaken stronger, faster. Often, they awaken in pain, needing something chemical. If they're lucky, the Protocol is there to provide it.

Even the name, the Delta Protocol, is simply something that one experimental subject saw on a classified document in passing. But when he told his story online, that name stuck. Now they use it to describe the people they sometimes find spying on them, as well as the process that made them different.

Every single one of these test subjects wonders what the Delta Protocol wants from them. Every single one wonders when the Protocol will call for them with demands.

## Eye of the Storm

The Delta Protocol's subjects have an eye for the strange. This isn't necessarily a supernatural ability, but they are ever exceptional, and tend to find themselves at the wrong place at the wrong time. Most Protocol subjects quickly find themselves exposed to the supernatural. For this reason, they often band together with other investigators of the supernatural, or in some cases within groups of supernatural creatures.

Some of the Lost Boys Network have speculated that this is partly why the Delta Protocol exists; so they can follow their experiments back to greater supernatural creatures. At least one Network member has reported seeing a major medical corporation abduct a vampire with a known Delta Protocol operative in the van.

## The Lost Boys Network

Since the Protocol started some ten years ago, many of the experimental subjects have connected with one another to form makeshift support networks. Now, an online support group exists, with small chapters meeting in various cities all over the world. This network calls itself the Lost Boys, and

provides social, moral, and training support for members. As well, some members have been able to crudely replicate the Delta Protocol's Serum, and network members trade and sell doses through dead drops and mail orders.

While the support network calls itself the Lost Boys, the Delta Protocol has experimented on numerous women as well.

## Creating a Lost Boy

Lost Boys receive one free dot of the Protocol Merit. They suffer withdrawal symptoms when without the Protocol's special Serum.

To remove the Protocol from a character would require a massive, very dangerous medical procedure from an expert in bio-engineering. If a player wishes his character to shed the Condition, this could be the focus of an entire chronicle on its own.

## The Withdrawal

Those subject to the Delta Protocol must have a regular infusion of the Protocol's "Serum" in order to maintain biological stability. After a certain amount of time, a subject's body rejects her augmentations. The amount of time is determined by her Protocol Merit dots; each successive dot makes her body more reliant on the Protocol's drugs to survive. After that amount of time, she suffers the Deprived Condition. After twice that time, she suffers full withdrawal, and begins taking damage dependent on her Protocol dots.

However, when a character is deprived of the Serum, her augmentation inhibitors give up. She can push herself further, longer. Lost Boys call this "overclocking." It usually hurts her in the long run, but can bring her to truly supernatural heights.

## New Merit: The Protocol

(● to ●●●●, Supernatural Merit)

**Effect:** Your character was subject to the Delta Protocol's experimentation. This Merit allows access to Protocol Merits. Every level opens new potential augmentations. The Merit does not directly give any advantages; it simply determines the rate of withdrawal effects, and unlocks augmentations. Characters receive higher levels of the Merit alongside extensive surgeries and operations. Most of these are committed on the character secretly, while they sleep or are drugged and abducted.

**Mk 1 (●):** She suffers Deprived after one month. At two months, she suffers full withdrawal and takes one unhealable lethal damage per week until sated.

**Mk 2 (●●):** She suffers Deprived after one week. At two



## Story Hooks for the Lost Boys

- A powerful monster, like a vampiric Prince or werewolf alpha appears as your character uses her abilities to accomplish a great feat. He drops an envelope at her feet, claps, and says he'll be watching her. Then he disappears.
- Your character finds some former squad mates. They're suffering from a malignant disease of unknown origin. The doctors have no idea what's wrong with them. Signs say they might have been discarded from the Delta Protocol.
- A high-profile lawmaker is trying to cut off your character's pension and medical benefits. One of these benefits is the Serum.

weeks, she suffers full withdrawal and takes one unhealable lethal damage per day until sated.

**Mk 3 (•••):** She suffers Deprived after one day. At two days, she suffers full withdrawal and takes one unhealable lethal damage every twelve hours until sated.

**Mk 4 (••••):** She suffers Deprived after twelve hours. At one day, she suffers full withdrawal and takes one unhealable lethal damage every six hours until sated.

**Mk 5 (•••••):** She suffers Deprived after six hours. At twelve hours, she suffers full withdrawal and takes one unhealable lethal damage every six hours until sated.

### Protocol Fixer (• to •••••)

**Prerequisites:** The Protocol •

**Effect:** Your character has access to a Delta Protocol fixer, who provides the necessary Serum to keep her body from rejecting its augmentations. Without this Merit, your character only receives a single dose per month.

Dots	Doses
0	1 monthly dose
1	1 weekly dose
2	3 weekly doses
3	6 weekly doses
4	10 weekly doses
5	14 weekly doses

This Merit can reflect a Lost Boys Network fixer, who provides substandard Serum as noted below. This requires at least a dot in the Lost Boys Network Status Merit as well (see below).

Additionally, your character can purchase additional doses. An Availability ••• purchase through her Protocol Fixer will net one dose per dot in the Merit.

### The Serum

The Serum is a Toxicity 5 poison (see the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 98). Add your character's Protocol Merit dots to her Stamina + Resolve rolls to resist the Toxicity. Most characters take lethal damage from the Serum. However, characters subject to the Delta Protocol only take bashing damage from it.

Some Protocol subjects have managed to create substitute Serum. While it staves off the addiction and the augmentation rejection, it's not quite as pure as Protocol Serum. It's effectively Toxicity 7 (but the roll to resist Toxicity is only made at -5, not -7). To replicate the Serum requires access to materials with an Availability of ••••, and an extended Intelligence + Science roll. Each roll requires an hour of work, and 15 successes are required. Success creates three doses, plus two for every exceptional success during the extended action.

### Lost Boys Network Status (• to •••••)

**Prerequisites:** The Protocol

**Effect:** This Merit functions identically to the Status Merit, except it pertains specifically to the Lost Boys Network. Members in good standing can call on favors and backup. Additionally, they can receive mentorship and support in trying to deal with withdrawal.

## Augmentation Merits

The following Merits are available to characters with the Protocol Merit. Merits require different rankings in the Protocol to access. Some are marked with "Protocol: Equal Level"; in these cases, your character must have the Protocol at an equal level to the Merit. Many augmentations are permanent effects. Some require expenditures. When your character is suffering the Deprived Condition, each Merit has an additional effect. When your character suffers full withdrawal, though, she loses access to all her augmentations.

### Archangel System (•••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol •••••

**Effect:** The Archangel System is a suite of nerve, muscular, and tissue enhancements which, when activated, push the subject's body to its peak (and beyond). When active, your character has a faint, reddish-gold glow from under her skin as if she held a flashlight under her palm. It doesn't look inherently supernatural unless in a dark place. Activating the Archangel System is reflexive, but costs 1 Willpower. It introduces a series of advantages for the remainder of the scene.





- Ignore all Tilts which would physically impair your character. She suffers no wound penalties.
- Once per turn, your character may take an action that would normally require her to sacrifice her Defense, but she does not lose her Defense. For example, she may make an all-out attack while still maintaining her Defense, or use certain Fighting Style Merits.
- She gains +1 Defense. She does not suffer a loss of Defense for facing multiple attackers.
- Any attack she makes causes one additional damage, or the Knocked Down Tilt. Your choice.
- Her unarmed attacks cause lethal damage.
- Add +2 to her Initiative, and +5 to her Speed.
- She heals one point of bashing damage per turn.
- She gains 1/1 armor. This combines with worn armor.

At the end of the scene, your character becomes Deprived. If she's already Deprived, she suffers full withdrawal. Any lethal damage she suffers at the end of the scene becomes aggravated.

**Deprived:** Increase the armor bonus to 2/2, she heals two points of bashing damage per turn, and her attacks cause both one additional damage and the Knocked Down Tilt.

### Augmented Resilience (• to •••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol: Equal Level

**Effect:** Your character's tissue has been enhanced for durability. For each dot in this Merit, add one dot to your character's Stamina. This affects all derived traits. This can take your character above her normal Attribute limits.

**Deprived:** You also gain 2/1 armor.

### Augmented Speed (• to •••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol: Equal Level

**Effect:** Your character's muscles and reflexes have been tightened, and her body structured to handle greater stress. For each dot in this Merit, add +1 to your character's Speed and Initiative scores.

**Deprived:** Add +2 to Speed instead of +1 per dot.



## Cloaking Device (•••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol •••

**Effect:** Your character has thousands of subtle lenses, prisms, and mirrors carefully installed throughout her skin, which are activated by holding her breath. When active, these devices bend light around her, rendering her nearly invisible. Any attempt to find her by sight loses -5 dice. Surveillance technology like cameras and motion sensors will simply fail to notice her. The technology also confounds thermal imaging and similar devices. This penalty also applies to detecting her ambushes.

Under normal circumstances, your character can hold her breath for 20 seconds per dot of Stamina (or seven turns). During stressful situations (like combat), make a Stamina + Resolve roll every turn, with a cumulative -1 for every 20 seconds that pass. Add an additional -1 each time she takes a physically exacting action such as attacking.

**Deprived:** If your character fails to hold her breath, you may take one point of lethal damage to prolong the effect by 10 seconds (or 3 turns). You may do this once per scene.

## Holdout Storage

(• to •••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol: Equal Level

**Effect:** Your character has a hollowed-out space in her body to hold items. Often, this is used for weapons or hidden messages, but can extend to any object of the appropriate Size. Every dot in this Merit adds 1 Size worth of objects to be concealed. The concealment will fool a metal detector, a casual medical exam, or pat-down. X-ray technology will simply show a gap, not dissimilar from a malignant tumor, but it will not betray the object's identity. Removing the object requires an instant action.

**Deprived:** You may take a point of lethal damage to remove the object reflexively.

## Implanted Interface

(••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol ••

**Effect:** Your character has a complex technological interface laced into her nervous system. Not only does she have full access to satellite Internet with a powerful antenna at all times, along with a personal interface installed in her sensory organs, she has the power of a modern higher-end computer available at the speed of thought. This is considered +3 equipment, and can assist her in wirelessly accessing other technology. While this gives her no formal training in hacking, it does provide scripts to assist in the process; it is often installed in more technologically-inclined soldiers. Additionally, installing upgrades to avoid obsolescence is a simple, five-minute outpatient surgery.

**Deprived:** The computer can be overclocked to a +5 equipment modifier at the cost of one point of lethal damage for the scene.

## Jumper (• to •••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol: Equal Level

**Effect:** Your character's legs have been enhanced to improve her ability to jump, and to handle the landing. Each level of this Merit increases the ability.

**Improved (•):** Double your character's Strength for the purposes of jumping. She takes half damage from falls.

**Enhanced (••):** Quadruple your character's Strength for the purposes of jumping. She only takes bashing damage from falls, and that damage is halved.

**Superior (•••):** Multiply your character's Strength by six for the purposes of jumping. She takes no damage from falls of any height.

**Deprived:** You may take one lethal damage to add twice your character's Strength for one single jump.

## Last-Chance (•••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol •••••

**Effect:** Your character's body has been outfitted with a devastating last-ditch weapon. Usually, this takes the form of ball bearings or flechettes under the skin, which burst out at a moment's notice to eliminate all nearby threats. This is often fatal for the subject.

Activating her Last-Chance weapon requires an instant action and a Resolve + Composure roll, as she's aware of the threat to her body. She immediately takes five points of aggravated damage. Roll five additional dice as lethal damage against her. Make an attack roll against every character within 10 meters (11 yards); Defense does not apply to these rolls, but cover does. The attack is made with her Stamina + Firearms + 5, and is considered a 3L weapon.

Once used, your character must have a minor surgery to reinstall the ammunition, and must have healed all the aggravated damage first.

**Deprived:** The weapon does 4L and gains 3 Armor Piercing.

## Pulse Generator

(• to •••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol: Equal Level

**Effect:** Your character has a battery and wiring matrix in her skin which allows her to create a quick electrical pulse against anyone she touches. Any time she makes contact with another character, she may discharge her Pulse Generator. This causes bashing damage equal to her dots in this Merit, and the Stunned Tilt. This can be combined with an unarmed attack or grapple, or used during more subtle contact like a handshake or when brushing up against someone. It can be used as another character attacks her as well.

She may only discharge the Pulse Generator once per scene. The discharge can also be used to destroy electrical systems; she causes twice her Merit dots in Structure damage in that case, ignoring Durability.

**Deprived:** Your character may suffer one lethal damage to reflexively recharge the Pulse Generator, allowing it to be activated multiple times in a scene.





## Strength Augmentation

(• to •••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol: Equal Level

**Effect:** Your character's been outfitted with stronger musculature, and more efficient arteries. For each dot in this Merit, add one dot to your character's Strength. This affects all derived traits. This can take your character above her normal Attribute limit.

**Deprived:** You may take one lethal damage to add an additional dot of Strength for the scene. This may only be done once per scene.

## Sub-Dermal Armor

(•• or ••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol: Equal Level

**Effect:** Your character has materials laced beneath her skin which protect her internal tissues. At two dots, this is 1/1 armor. At four dots, this is 2/2 armor. This armor stacks with worn armor.

**Deprived:** Increase the armor granted by 1/1.

## Uncanny Perception

(• to •••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol: Equal Level

**Effect:** Your character's senses have been honed to alarming amounts. Add your Merit dots to all Perception-based rolls. Additionally, add these Merit dots to any aimed attack rolls your character makes.

**Deprived:** Double the given advantages. However, any strong stimuli such as air horns or spotlights cause one point of lethal damage to your character and destroy that sense for the scene.

## Voice Box (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Protocol •

**Effect:** Your character can mimic any voice she's heard for a minute or more of active listening. This is effectively fool-proof on a technical level. However, she may require Subterfuge rolls to emulate mannerisms, slang, or other identifying bits of the person's speech.

**Deprived:** Her senses become more immediately aware; she can mimic those she's only heard through telephone or second-hand recordings. For normal speech, she becomes able to mimic after about 30 seconds of active listening.

## STUART OLMO

*"I can help. I might be the only person in the world who can."*

**Background:** Stuart Olmo probably shouldn't have been subject to the Delta Protocol. He was a non-combatant in the Army, a non-denominational chaplain. But for some reason, he woke one day to discharge papers and an order to check in to a private clinic for physical clearance. Now, he's something else entirely.

Quickly after leaving the military, he stumbled upon the Lost Boys Network. He adopted a role very similar to his chaplain work; he provides spiritual support for those struggling with their new lives, and their new addictions. Because of his value to the organization, they provide him with a supply of surplus Serum bought from and donated by other members. He has more than he needs, so he can give it to other members in need.

Most importantly, he's found that his augmentations enable him to do his God's work, helping those less fortunate. He's taken to shaking down slum lords and gang members terrorizing his old neighborhood; lately he's set his sights even higher, looking at organized crime for potential interventions.

**Description:** Stuart is a stocky, serious man with dark skin and heavy hands. He's in shape, but barely impressive. He dresses conservatively and functionally, favoring single, dark colors. His face shows great sympathy, like he's carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders.

**Storytelling Hints:** Stuart wants to do good by the world, and by its people. He wants justice, he wants community, and he wants love to shine. Inequity brings him to great anger, and he always favors action over complacency. Sometimes this can get him in trouble; even though he has great ability thanks to his augmentations, this often gets him in over his head.

**Virtue:** Faith

**Vice:** Responsibility

**Aspirations:** Bring justice, Show restraint, Push augmentation to new extremes

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

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

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

**Social Skills:** Empathy 3 (Religious Moments), Expression 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 2 (Chases), Brawl 2 (Restraint), Firearms 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1

**Mental Skills:** Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Politics 1

**Merits:** Augmented Speed 1, Lost Boys Network Status 1, The Protocol 2, Protocol Fixer 3, Resources 2, Strength Augmentation 2

**Health:** 7

**Willpower:** 5

**Integrity:** 7

**Size:** 5

**Speed:** 9 (12 with Augmented Speed and Strength Augmentation)

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 5 (6 with Augmented Speed)



# PSYCHIC VAMPIRES

Psychic vampires take the vital essence and force of will from their victims, taking it for their own benefit. Most psychic vampires are born with their gifts. Some develop the ability through ancient rituals, curses, strange relics, or other oddness. Some others become vampires by infection; some psychic vampires can pass their condition when they feed from another's life force.

Unlike some of the other groups in this chapter, psychic vampirism is not a group: It's a phenomenon. Some psychic vampires band together into small groups; at least two international networks exist amongst these psychics. While small, these networks do well to educate members. The networks mostly struggle with recruitment; new psychic vampires have no reliable way to discover the networks, so only those vampires caused by Psychic Infection (see below) are likely to connect with these groups thanks to contact with their progenitors. But most avoid their own kind, finding themselves in groups with mundane humans, other non-vampiric psychics, or around other supernatural creatures. Typically, they must keep their hunger a secret.

A psychic vampire learns of her condition usually when it's still quite benign; she causes fatigue and minor illness in her victims. But as she increases in power, as time goes on, she becomes more and more dangerous. The temptation to take becomes too great, as she learns more and more uses for the psychic energy she steals. Then eventually, psychic vampires learn to use their condition for protection, as a weapon.

## Template Features and Merits

Psychic vampires receive their signature Merit, *Psychic Vampirism*, with a single dot for free. If her vampirism is tied to a relic or something that can be taken away from her, gain an additional dot in any of the below Merits for free.

## Ephemera

Psychic Vampirism abilities steal and utilize "Ephemera," a sort of psychic fuel. Her dots in *Psychic Vampirism* determine

how efficiently she can take and use this Ephemera. She cannot store more Ephemera than her *Resolve* dots; additional Ephemera must be used the turn it's acquired, for one of the things she is able to power. The *Ephemeral Battery Merit* can increase this amount.

## Unaging

All psychic vampires can spend a number of Ephemera equal to their current age to not age for one year. For example, a 33-year-old psychic vampire can spend 33 Ephemera to not show the signs of age for a year. This counts her full age, not her apparent age. If she does not continue the unaging effect, she continues aging as normal once the year is up. Theoretically, this could result in eternal youth.

These points do not have to be spent all at once; they can be spent at any time during that year.

## Ephemera Bleed

Psychic vampire characters lose one Ephemera per day. If your character has no Ephemera, she loses *Willpower* instead, and cannot regain *Willpower* until she has at least one Ephemera. If she loses all *Willpower* this way, she begins taking lethal damage instead, and cannot heal until she recovers at least a point of Ephemera.

If your character has no Ephemera, she becomes extremely irritable and volatile. She suffers a cumulative -1 per day to all *Resolve* + *Composure* actions. This continues to get worse until she replenishes at least a point of Ephemera, or the penalty is equal to her *Psychic Vampirism* dots.

## Psychic Vampirism

(• to •••••, Style, Supernatural Merit)

**Effect:** To use *Psychic Vampirism*, your character must touch a victim, skin-to-skin. The *Breath Stealer Merit* alters this. Any use of *Psychic Vampirism* is an instant action, so it cannot be combined with other instant actions, such as

## Story Hooks for Psychic Vampires

- Your character finds a person, a normal person, she cannot feed from. He's alive. But...there's nothing there. He's got nothing to feed from. That's bad enough. But then she runs into a second one.
- In one part of town, your character rapidly loses all her Ephemera. Is it environmental? Is someone targeting her? Is there another, greater vampire?
- A curio shop owner approaches you with an ancient goblet, and offers it cheap. He says it'll feed you like you've never been filled before. Simply fill it with blood, drink from it, and you'll never want again.



## Note on Supernatural Victims

By and large, Psychic Vampirism works on most things in the *Chronicles of Darkness*. However, a psychic vampire cannot steal the life energy of an actual vampire. She can steal Willpower if her Psychic Vampirism Merit is strong enough. Psychic vampires cannot steal the life of ghosts or spirits, unless they have the Soul Eater Merit. Using psychic vampirism on supernatural creatures is slightly tougher; subtract their Supernatural Potency trait (Blood Potency, Gnosis, Primal Urge, etc.) from the roll to activate the power.

physical attacks. However, she can use it as a grappling maneuver (use the grappling maneuver dice pools instead of the normal Psychic Vampirism dice pool in that case).

Use of Psychic Vampirism abilities requires a roll of Intelligence + Occult + Psychic Vampirism – the victim's Resolve dots. Successes determine the level of effect. She can combine effects and divide her successes between points of damage and Willpower.

Each level of Psychic Vampirism has two effects: One enhances your character's ability to feed from Ephemera, the other allows your character to use Ephemera. The Ephemera expenditure ability may be used reflexively once per turn; only one such ability can be used per turn.

**Amateur (•):** With this basic level, your character can cause bashing damage. She causes one bashing damage per success on her roll. Every two points of bashing damage gives her one Ephemera (this can be accumulated over multiple turns). She can use one Ephemera to heal

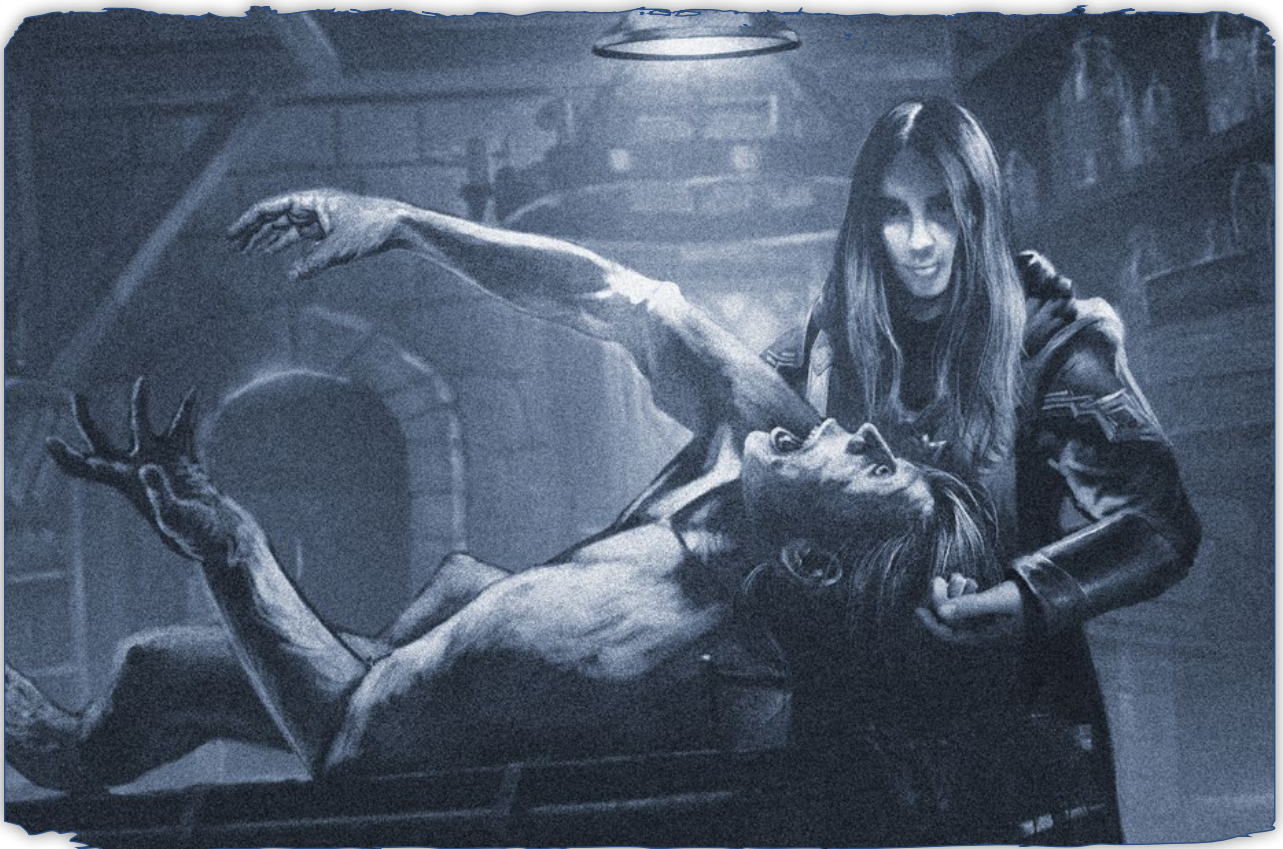
a point of bashing damage, or two Ephemera to heal one lethal damage.

**Dilettante (••):** With this level, she can choose to steal psychic energy from her victim instead of causing damage. For every two successes, she steals one Willpower from her victim and converts it into one Ephemera. For two Ephemera, she can regain one spent Willpower point.

**Practiced (•••):** Now, her ability to harm is intensified. Every success causes two bashing damage or one lethal damage, and gives her one Ephemera. She can heal two bashing or one lethal with a point of Ephemera.

**Accomplished (••••):** Her psychic draining improves. Now, every success drains a point of Willpower from her victims and gives her one Ephemera. A point of Ephemera regains a point of Willpower.

**Virtuoso (•••••):** With this pinnacle of psychic vampirism, the character's ability to steal life becomes utterly fearsome. Every success causes both one lethal damage and one





Willpower loss if she wishes, and gives her two Ephemera. A single Ephemera point recovers a point of Willpower, and one lethal or two bashing damage.

## Breath Stealer

(• to •••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Vampirism

**Effect:** Your psychic vampire may steal breath instead of touching a victim. Each level in this Merit modifies the distance from which she can activate Psychic Vampirism abilities.

**Kiss (•):** Your character must be very close to steal breath. Her mouth must be close to her victim's; she must be able to feel her victim's breath.

**Touch (••):** The range extends. If she could touch her victim with an outstretched arm, she can steal breath.

**Reach (•••):** At the pinnacle of ability, she can steal breath from a number of meters (or yards) equal to her Willpower dots. But to do so, she must spend a point of Willpower in addition to any other costs for Psychic Vampirism abilities. This Willpower enables this ability for the scene.

**Note:** This may limit usage in certain situations. For example, if trying to leech Ephemera from a monster which doesn't breathe, Breath Stealer is useless.

## Burst of Speed (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Vampirism

**Effect:** Your character may use Ephemera to push her body to briefly inhuman speeds. Spend a point of Ephemera to add +5 to Initiative and Speed for a turn, and +1 to Defense. Only one point may be spent in this way per turn.

## Ephemeral Battery

(• to •••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Vampirism

**Effect:** Your psychic vampire may store more Ephemera than most. For every dot in this Merit, she may store an additional point of Ephemera above her Resolve.

## Euphoric Touch

(• to •••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Vampirism

**Effect:** Your psychic vampire's touch numbs or creates euphoria when she uses her gifts. Any time she touches a victim and activates Psychic Vampirism, you may choose to activate Euphoric Touch. Her dots in Euphoric Touch determine her choices; she may administer any or all of her Euphoric Touch abilities at once.

**Numbing Touch (•):** At this level, your character's touch numbs. Victims of her Psychic Vampirism suffer no wound penalties for the scene. Additionally, any rolls to detect by touch — including detecting your character's vampirism — suffer a -5 penalty.

**Sensual Touch (••):** At this level, your character's touch becomes euphoric. Victims of her psychic vampirism gain the Swooned Condition toward her.

**Addicting Touch (•••):** With this level, her touch is addicting. Victims gain the Addicted Condition in regards to her touch.

## Nocturnal Supremacy

(••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Vampirism

**Effect:** Your character has an affinity for the darkness, like the vampires with which she shares a name. When the sun is down and she has at least a point of Ephemera, she gains one of the following advantages, chosen when you take this Merit:

- Her body becomes more robust, more perfect. She gains a dot of Strength and a dot of Stamina.
- She becomes charismatic and sly. She gains a dot of Presence and a dot of Manipulation.
- Her flesh becomes tight as marble, as strong as leather. She gains 1/1 armor, which stacks with any worn armor.
- Her senses sharpen and perfect themselves for the dark. Take +3 to all Perception-based rolls, and take no penalties from darkness. Double the range of all your character's senses. Additionally, your character benefits from the Danger Sense Merit.

During the day, your character suffers a -2 to all actions. If she does not sleep at least eight hours of the day, she suffers the Lethargic Condition (see p. 150).


Dots gained by this Merit affect all derived traits, and can increase Attributes beyond their normal maximums. You may purchase this Merit multiple times, however, each additional expenditure costs an additional dot. So the first purchase costs two dots, the second costs three, the third costs four. However, you may only take a single advantage one time; additional purchases must be allocated to other advantages. As well, the penalties for daylight activity do not stack; your character only suffers -2 and a single instance of Lethargic.

## Psychic Infection (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Vampirism

**Effect:** Your character spreads her vampirism to others. After any scene where a human character without the Psychic Vampirism Merit marks his last Health box because of your character's psychic vampirism, suffers a wound penalty from it, or loses his last Willpower from it, roll your character's dots in Psychic Vampirism. Success means that character gains the first dot of Psychic Vampirism and a single point of Ephemera. If he loses that Ephemera and all his Willpower from Ephemera Bleed before he feeds on Ephemera, the Psychic Vampirism Merit fades. But if he chooses to feed from Ephemera, the Merit becomes permanent.





## Psychic Seduction (•, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Vampirism

**Effect:** Your character's psychic connection subtly but intimately changes his victims. When successfully stealing Ephemera from a victim, you may choose to change her Vice (or equivalent trait). Unlike a normal Vice, this can be highly specific (for example, "submit to me" would be a valid choice).

To shed this Vice, the victim must spend Willpower points equal to the combined lethal damage and Willpower lost to your character's vampirism. These Willpower must be spent for this purpose alone.

The victim may choose to adopt the new Vice permanently and take a Beat. The Vice cannot be changed by any means for at least one chapter.

## Psychic Transference (••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Vampirism

**Effect:** Your psychic vampire may not only heal herself with her abilities, but may transfer life energy from one person to another. Any use of Psychic Transference costs one Ephemera and one Willpower in addition to any other costs; her soul acts as a conduit for vital essence. She must be touching both the victim, and the person she wishes to gift. When activating Psychic Vampirism with Psychic Transference, she may offer Willpower and healing (through spent Ephemera) to the subject, instead of taking them for herself. She spends Ephemera, and the subject heals instead of being drained.

## Shapechanging (•• or •••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Vampirism

**Effect:** Your psychic vampire can spend Ephemera to change into animal forms. Each purchase of Shapechanging allows for a different animal form. Typically, these animals are regionally or culturally appropriate to your character or your character's home: A teenager in Minnesota isn't likely to turn into a howler monkey. Also, while not exclusive, this Merit favors predatory and nocturnal animals. Predatory or nocturnal animal forms are •• Merits; other animals are ••• Merits.

Your character takes the shape of the animal, and all its Physical Attributes. Other Attributes and Skills remain the character's own, while some may be effectively useless (a bat can't likely use Firearms, for example).

As a general guideline, animal attacks cause 0L damage, or 1L damage for large natural weapons (like bear bites). Some especially massive natural weapons, like alligator bites, can cause 2L. Work with your Storyteller to determine other basic traits and advantages animal forms might have.

## Soul Eater (••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Vampirism

**Effect:** Your psychic vampire's abilities extend beyond the physical, and the living. If she touches a ghost or spirit, she can use her Psychic Vampirism abilities on the creature. This requires the creature be Manifest, or the vampire to have another awareness with which to find and touch the victim.

## Unearthly Beauty (• or ••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Vampirism

**Effect:** Your psychic vampire can use her Ephemera to assume an inhumanly beautiful appearance. By spending one Ephemera, she may emulate the Striking Looks Merit at two dots (see the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 54). If she already has Striking Looks at one dot, she gains a second dot, and applies the 9-again quality to all rolls on which Striking Looks applies. If she has Striking Looks at two dots, apply 8-again instead.

With the two-dot version of this Merit, the effect lasts for the full lunar month with each activation, if your character spends one additional Ephemera.

## Vampiric Potency (• to •••••, Supernatural Merit)

**Prerequisites:** Psychic Vampirism

**Effect:** Your psychic vampire can channel her Ephemera into inborn ability. When taking this Merit, choose a single Attribute. At any time, she can spend an Ephemera to increase that Attribute by one dot for the scene, including all derived traits. She can do this to a limit of her Vampiric Potency Merit dots. This can take her above her normal dot limit (usually 5) for Attributes.

**Notes:** You may take this Merit multiple times, each representing a different Attribute. Using this Merit for Resolve allows for a greater temporary amount of stored Ephemera.

### LUCIA MERCHANT-ESPOSITO

*"You don't know what I've lived. I advise you watch your tone."*

**Background:** Lucia was an orphan in Naples; she thinks her family comes from Romania thanks to a pendant that was with her. She has no strong memories of that time; the church that raised her for the first few years sold her off quickly to a farm, where she and many other children worked. Lucia was always defiant, always trying to escape. So in her early teens, she was sold off and smuggled away to New York to serve as a maid, a nanny, or whatever else to a wealthy family. Desperate at 16, she searched for a way out, and found it in Mr. Merchant,



a much older man looking for a trophy wife. While she had no affection for him, she found their arrangement to be a comparatively equitable exchange; she lived in comfort, and only had to attend the occasional event, dress up, smile, and nod. He was barely interested in her sexually, and in her time in the house, she realized that somehow, he was over 100 years old but barely looked 50. Eight years passed without issue.

As Mr. Merchant was deeply entrenched in organized crime, his life came crumbling down when two rival families decided to ally against him. They burned him and his assets, both literally and figuratively. Lucia watched him fight off the gangs' soldiers. She watched him drain their souls before her eyes, healing his wounds rapidly. But it just wasn't enough. As the last soldier fell, Merchant slowly faded from life. With his final breaths, he offered her a choice, a choice to be like him. She accepted. Since, she's attempted to gather her late husband's few remaining resources, and start a life of her own. As she knew his criminal business, she positioned herself to take up where he left off. She kept his name for that reason.

**Description:** Lucia is a lovely young woman of deeply mixed ancestry. She's tall, confident, with dark features and deep olive skin. She grooms herself immaculately, and despises disorder and filth, since it reminds her of her time on the farms. She speaks slowly, with a vaguely European accent that makes listeners wonder and ask questions about her. She often trails off her sentences, seducing her conversational partners into finishing for her, to learn what they want and expect. With her clothing and makeup, she tries to downplay her physical prowess; her years of manual labor have left her rather robust, but she prefers to be underestimated.

**Storytelling Hints:** Lucia lived a hard, complicated life. She never truly felt free until Merchant's death. And she's never going to let it go. She knows it's her time now; she's going to build an empire, and nothing will stop her. She takes an utterly ruthless approach to anything even resembling slavery or indentured servitude. She surrounds herself in the trappings of luxury, both as a personal defense mechanism to assure herself she'll never be poor again, and as a sort of

trap to those she preys on. Before she became what she is, she never really dealt with people; she was always behind closed doors, working. So she's just now learning how to be manipulative. She's learning quickly, but she's not quite there yet. Her psychic abilities will help bring her to that point soon.

**Virtue:** Freedom

**Vice:** Uncompromising

**Aspirations:** Find a new bankroller, Attain power, Reject another's control

**Physical Attributes:** Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

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

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

**Social Skills:** Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1 (Fitting In), Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

**Physical Skills:** Athletics 1, Brawl 2 (Street Fights), Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2

**Mental Skills:** Crafts 1, Investigation 1 (Domestic), Medicine 1, Politics 1

**Merits:** Contacts 1, Nocturnal Supremacy (Strength and Stamina) 2, Psychic Vampirism 2, Resources 3, Street Fighting 2, Unearthly Beauty 1

**Health:** 8 (9 with Nocturnal Supremacy)

**Willpower:** 5

**Ephemera:** 2

**Integrity:** 7

**Size:** 5

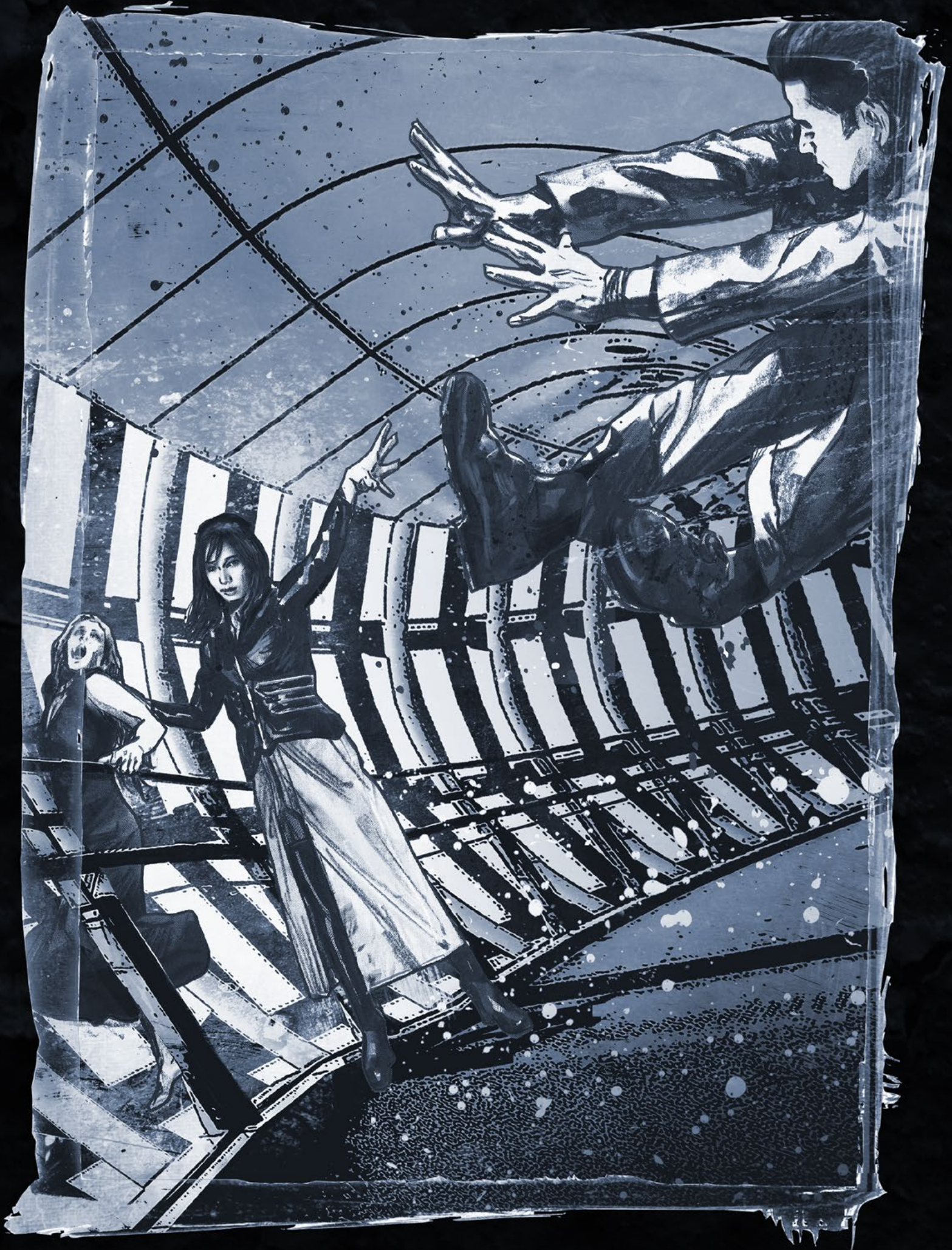
**Speed:** 10 (11 with Nocturnal Supremacy)

**Defense:** 3

**Initiative:** 5









# Chapter Four: Tokyo

Throughout the rest of this book, we've given you a lot of tools for violence in your chronicles. In this chapter, we're showing how some of those tools can be used together to build a chronicle, to build a setting for your stories. While we're specifically addressing some parts of Tokyo, these sections are relatively modular, and easy to adapt to your own stories if you're not set in Tokyo.

If you've read the other **Chronicles of Darkness** games, you may have noticed that Tokyo sections appear in most of them. **Vampire: The Requiem**, **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, **Mage: The Awakening**, **Promethean: The Created**, **Changeling: The Lost**, and **Beast: The Primordial** currently have Tokyo treatments. Each addresses Tokyo from that specific game line's interests, and each builds into a more cohesive meta-setting. These sections address parts of Tokyo from a human standpoint, or at least humans who have seen past the veil into the dark truths of the world. Some of the plot seeds here could work in the other various game lines as well.

## Tokyo: Some Basics

We'll keep this short. This should be enough to get a basic idea of the city, but without extensive detail because frankly, the Internet exists. The Wikipedia entry on the city alone has more words than we can dedicate to the city at large, and Wikipedia doesn't have to talk about monsters and magic and blood and darkness. There's a glut of great information if you want to go into detail about a specific topic. When in doubt, draw from Japanese sources in your research. Cultural biases often show even in academic works.

If you want a basic primer on modern Japanese culture, I recommend the series *Begin Japanology*. It's a television series with over 200 episodes, each clocking in at under 30 minutes – with some five-minute topical shorts as well. Every episode deals with a different topic in just enough detail to give you a broad understanding, and an interest in learning more. Also, you can find almost every episode provided legally through YouTube. Most importantly, it's a Japanese production by NHK World (the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation), targeted specifically to Westerners as an education and entertainment resource.

Tokyo is big. Very big. For some, it's insurmountably big. Depending on your definitions, it boasts upwards of 40 million inhabitants. It's one of Japan's 47 prefectures, as well as a city and the capital of the nation. Tokyo is comprised of 23 wards, 26 other cities, and eight villages each run independently with oversight from the larger Tokyo government. The city is run from offices in the Shinjuku ward. In this particular chapter, we're only addressing a handful of the wards; instead of trying to take a holistic approach to the world's most populous metropolitan area, we're focusing down on smaller areas to give a more personal feel.

## Chronicles in Tokyo

Many readers and players don't know Tokyo well. This shouldn't inherently be a problem; we also don't know what it's like to feast on the blood of the living,

"There's something very spiritual about fighting. It's physically very challenging. It's for killing people, after all, so it's taught me how to look at something head on. It's like living – confronting something."

– Rinko Kikuchi

– Rinko Kikuchi



## Terminology

The following sections feature some simple Japanese terminology. It should all make sense within context, but could provide an easy leap to much deeper, more interesting cultural elements. For example, there's a reference to *heimin* in the Taito ward section later. In simplest terms, it means "commoner." But, in specific context, it means much more. Instead of devoting space to trying to explain that concept, we use the Romanized Japanese terminology to give indication that this is a point worth digging into if you're interested in adding some depth to your chronicles.

but that doesn't stop us. When playing a Storytelling game, we play to find out what happens, to ask "what if," and to explore new things in a controlled environment.

## Inspirations

This brings me to some media inspirations for a Tokyo **Hurt Locker** chronicle. Some of these are more accessible than others. Most have at least moderately available English versions. They're not all violent or supernatural stories, but they each present a complex and interesting view of Tokyo that'll help your stories feel more authentic. This list also favors modern films, to present a more accurate aesthetic.

You might notice a lack of Japanese anime films. I mention a couple. The omission is mostly because I don't watch much anime, so I can't attest for it.

**The Shinjuku Incident:** This is movie inspired **Hurt Locker** in a few ways. It's a Hong Kong film starring Jackie Chan, set in Tokyo. If you've not seen it but you're used to Jackie Chan, don't go in expecting Jackie Chan. It's utterly brutal. It's the story of a vicious clash between Chinese immigrants and Japanese organized crime. It's not a slapstick kung fu flick, nor does it rely on flashy gunfights to get its point across. It's very violent, and every punch, every kick, every shattered bone matters and hurts. It also has a lot of great imagery, dark and menacing.

**One Missed Call:** A supernatural horror film, a ghost story of sorts, about people receiving calls from their future selves, warning them of their impending deaths. This one's very influential, very good, and great *Chronicles of Darkness* fodder.

**Marebito:** This one's a story about exploration into the supernatural. You don't even need to try to make this a *Chronicles of Darkness* story; it's all right there ready for you. It's a great tale of a person who could walk away at any time, but chooses to push on further.

**Ju-On: The Grudge:** You may have seen this brutal, disturbing modern supernatural horror film. Both it, and its

American remake, are set in Tokyo. They share a director, so the imagery is all very appropriate, even in the US version starring American actors. I particularly love this one, because of the menace and dread. It gives a problem that can't be killed, but will not hesitate to kill. The sequels are not great, but not the worst ways to spend a couple of hours.

**An Obsession:** This one features somewhat dated imagery, but I find amazing. It's inspired by Akira Kurosawa's *Stray Dogs*, which is a true classic. The story is about a police detective who has lost everything, chasing down a murderer using the detective's stolen gun. It's not a supernatural story, but the noir elements could easily be shifted into a *Chronicles of Darkness* character exploring the dark side.

**Infection:** Biological/supernatural horror, with shockingly layered storytelling. This story could work as a chronicle on its own; it could also inspire a great *Supernatural Merit Template*.

**Rampo Noir:** This is an utterly fucked up horror anthology, in the vein of *Tales from the Darkside*. It's more weird than scary, but it features four solid shorts that could inspire your chronicles.

**Dead or Alive:** Don't mistake this for the video game series. This is a crime action film set in Tokyo, with a struggle between police, yakuza, and Triads. It's set in Shinjuku, it's very violent, and very in-your-face.

**Dark Water:** This is a disturbing psychological horror piece. If you're interested in exploring trauma, stress, and emotional issues with a supernatural bent, this is a great perspective. I believe this one got an American remake. I can't speak to its quality.

**Like Someone in Love:** This Japanese drama isn't a particularly violent film. Violence does play into the plot, and it hits pretty hard. But, mostly it gives a lot of great imagery and insight into relationships in modern Tokyo that could do well to inspire *Chronicles of Darkness* stories.

**House:** This is an older horror movie, 1977 to be exact. It's a "teenagers go to an isolated place, and terrible things happen" movie. Very harrowing. Very strange. The effects are very grounded in its time; if you like the classic Raimi *Evil Dead* films, this is a good one.

**Paranormal Activity 2:** This isn't an amazing movie. But it's a passable ghost story, and does cool things with a character's wheelchair as a plot device.

**Bounce Ko Gals:** This one's a little older, and shows its age. It features a handful of girls deep into the Tokyo nightlife, who moonlight as escorts to finance their lifestyles. It shows nightlife in Shibuya and Harajuku.

**Audition:** Horror. Disturbing, shocking horror. Not supernatural, but very violent, very dark.

**Tokyo Godfathers:** This list doesn't contain much anime, but *Tokyo Godfathers* I think is a valuable resource for chronicles set in Tokyo. It deals with the homeless of Tokyo, who are somewhat different than in many Western cities. Despite its three protagonists being homeless, it's a rather uplifting story.

**Ghost Hunt:** This is an anime series, largely targeted at teens. But it's full of great ghost stories with emotional



resonance and interesting mysteries. It has an almost *X-Files* feel, with an ensemble cast. It gets goofy at times, but the stories are solid, and could make strong inspiration.

**Train Man:** Many people know of Japan because of its media-obsessed “otaku” culture. This sheds an interesting perspective on that concept, highlighting a character who is fascinated with trains. Being that trains play heavily into this chapter, and indeed in many aspects of Tokyo life, it’s a great piece.

**Tokyo Sonata:** Another drama, this one I feel helps present a very modern view of Tokyo. It deals with a family struggling after the burst of the 1980s economic bubble.

**Honorable Mention:** Other ones to check out include *Pulse*, *Kwaidan*, *Jigoku*, *Ringu*, and *Suicide Circle*.

## Violence in Tokyo

Tokyo, by and large, is remarkably safe. Its murder rate is very low amongst developed nations, and even in Japan, it’s safer than some other cities like Osaka. Criminal conviction rates stand at a whopping 99%. In a place so safe, how do stories about violence work? You can’t just say “Chronicles of Darkness presents a world that’s darker than our own,” and wash your hands of the reality, while still maintaining a sense of authenticity. However, relative safety is still relative.

## Erasure

Things like murder rates and conviction rates don’t account for things like missing persons. In *Chronicles of Darkness*, missing persons are a tragic fact of existence. If a vampire kills her prey by draining all his blood, she doesn’t just leave the body to be found. That’d draw attention. That’d inspire vampire hunters. Instead, the vampire destroys or hides the body. His family hopes he’ll eventually come home, and eventually gives up searching. He doesn’t become one of Tokyo’s roughly 100 murders per year. Without a recorded crime, he can’t contribute to conviction statistics.

Many believe Japan’s unprecedented conviction rate owes some credit to police overlooking crimes they don’t believe they can solve. In **Chronicles of Darkness: Tokyo**, when police have no weapon, no motive, no suspects, a dead body becomes an accident case, not a murder. If someone reports a robbery, then his body turns up in a ditch with an ice pick in his skull, the police just report that it was all part of the same, singular crime.

## The Death of One is a Tragedy

If Tokyo has 38 million people and only 100 homicides per year, that only seems safe and secure if your best friend wasn’t one of those hundred. In a chronicle, the focus tends to be on the scariest patches. So it doesn’t matter if only a small number of terrible things happen; your players get to be front and center for some of the worst.

As a Storyteller, you don’t really have to consider that relative safety, if your players are busy dealing with unholy

## Guns in Tokyo

Long story short: Guns are not at all common in Tokyo. In fact, they’re immensely rare. This isn’t to say that they don’t exist. But, if you want a relatively authentic experience for your Tokyo chronicle, guns should play little or no role in your stories. Most kinds of guns are illegal in Japan, and this isn’t a matter of “just go to the black market.” Japan has about a dozen firearms deaths per year.

Japan’s laws aren’t just strict, they’re strictly enforced. For example, shooting a gun in the city would break three laws even if you hit nothing: possession of a firearm, possession of bullets, and discharging a weapon. That’s just the federal crimes, each of which could mean a (cumulative) 10-year prison sentence. Then, the municipality could fine for damages and public disturbance. This is all before actual violence is even factored in.

Some people have 45-year-old or older rifles, which are grandfathered under Japanese registration laws. However, those guns are confiscated, not inherited; the owner’s children must give up the weapon upon his or her death.

After a complex testing and licensing procedure which includes affirmative proof of mental well-being, and only with rigorous registration which involves regular renewal, Japanese citizens may own shotguns. The gun and ammunition must be registered with their respective locations, and the two cannot be stored together.

Couple these facts with a general acceptance of strong search and seizure policies, and Japan simply does not have a degree of firearm crime comparable to most Western nations.

terrors of the night. When you’re being chased by a rampaging werewolf, you aren’t particularly comforted by high conviction rates. At best, you hope cops might show up to provide a temporary distraction.

## Modern, Global Approach to the Supernatural

Japan has a rich mythological history. One approach to Tokyo would be to simply draw from yokai legends, give them some game statistics, and call it a day. However, in *Chronicles of Darkness*, we tend to take a broader, more abstract approach to monsters and legend. There’s a few big reasons for this.





## Misinterpretation

People don't understand monsters. Legends aren't perfect accountings. If legends were identical to the truths in our chronicles, people wouldn't have so much to fear from the darkness, since many legends explain how to eliminate threats. If a character sees a *kappa*, she might think to throw him a cucumber. After all, the stories say kappa love cucumbers, and that's saved lives in some of these tales. If the kappa in **Chronicles of Darkness: Tokyo** don't care about cucumbers, it's not an issue of "getting the stories wrong," it's a question of stories being mostly fiction. Besides, it's worth the reaction when she tosses the cucumber, and the kappa starts charging anyway.

## Holistic Approach

In real-world myth, *tengu* are strange bird men sometimes, or demons with large noses, protective spirits, dog monsters, eagles, or any number of things. In *Chronicles of Darkness*, they're spirits vaguely related to Roman owl spirits. They're not owls. They're not owl spirits. But they're also not really the things in any given one of those myths. The assumption is, people tell stories to explain *weird things*. Monsters and spirits in *Chronicles of Darkness* are weird things. So for this particular group of spirits, people all over the world have come up with hundreds of different descriptions, myths, and legends surrounding them. None of them are right. None of them are wrong. It's the nature of myth. We take a holistic approach, and assume shreds of truth in some stories, and assume that the reality is always different.

## Things Change

Monsters evolve. Adapt. They form little societies. They travel. They learn. Most of all, they hide among us. If they didn't change with the times, they'd fade into nonexistence as humanity rooted them out and destroyed them. Vampires aren't repelled by crosses, they can cross running water. They don't look like any single culture's perspective of vampires, but instead, they look a little bit like a lot of different stories combined. Did they inspire these stories? Did these stories inspire them? Nobody really knows. All we can say is what vampires are right now, and what they are right now isn't a single cultural touchstone. This applies to other, less widely known creatures as well.

## The Wards

In each ward in this section, you'll find the following treatments. We feature three wards, each with a slightly different approach to how you can portray the supernatural and violence in your setting. We start with Shinjuku, which has a strong sense of urban legendry with ghastly hauntings that influence the organized crime of the area. This section also has more foreign influence than the other featured wards. Then we feature Chiyoda, which is lighter on supernatural

influence, and with subtle effects on the people in the area. This touches on a very modern perception of Tokyo, the way you might see it in 21<sup>st</sup>-century media. We end with Taito ward, which has a more thorough supernatural influence, where we make these influences a little more obvious, and stretch believability slightly for the sake of the weird. This section uses slightly romanticized history to tell stories which are grounded in liberal interpretations of historical elements many people might be familiar with, in the way you might expect in a supernatural anime film.

## Points of Interest

Each of the following sections focuses on one of the special wards of Tokyo. Within those sections, we pay closer attention to a few points of interest and a few neighborhoods with individual story ideas. The idea is to favor useable hooks, as opposed to broader information. These wards are like unto cities themselves; you can easily base an entire chronicle on a given ward and have all the stories you'll ever need with just a little research.

Note that these special wards are not only like unto cities; they're practically cities in many ways. The wards have their own governance, and some boast populations of almost a million residents. Besides those population numbers, a great many people come and go from Tokyo every day. For example, Shinjuku Station has over three and a half million people passing through each day.

## Strangeness

After giving a treatment of the area and some of the points within, we introduce at least one strange, *Chronicles of Darkness* twist. This might be a monster. This might be a supernatural phenomenon. But it's something beyond the ordinary, something beneath the surface. For example, in Shinjuku we discuss phantom trains, and mysterious doppelganger people that replace their victims.

## Violence Groups

Lastly, each section features a group of dangerous characters, much in the vein of those found in Chapter One. While not necessarily restricted to this area, it's either their base of operations, or an integral place for them.

## Shinjuku

Shinjuku: Peak Tokyo, from a certain point of view, filled with corporate skyscrapers, tiny bars, and nightclubs that rise and fall by crushing rents and apex-predator capitalism. Shinjuku smashes together business, power, and sex under neon, as if designed to summarize an entire city, concentrating on the tantalizing and eccentric. But to the extent that Shinjuku serves as a synecdoche for Tokyo as a whole, it does so because of historical processes crossbred with foreigners' fascinations: with soaplands and cyberpunk fantasies of





power, wrapped around the bones of a town long since swallowed by the metropolis.

Romantic, dramatic, sleazy Shinjuku is no lie, but you can criticize the emphasis. Shinjuku contains the Metropolitan Government Building, the Ushigome residential neighborhood, and about a third of a million people who spend their time working, shopping, and indulging in ordinary entertainments, leaving the sex trade and theme bars to tourists and eccentric expats. Shinjuku is probably Tokyo's most famous ward, so tourists from around the world cluster there. Like any other tourist area there's often a sharp contrast between local daily life and what visitors experience.

Shinjuku can be defined in two ways: as a formal ward within metropolitan Tokyo; and as the area around Shinjuku Station, the world's busiest commuter rail hub. In addition to a permanent population of over 300,000, over 3 million others pass through Shinjuku every day, in the time it takes to switch trains. Shinjuku is a place of transitions, where staid people put on their party faces and vice versa as trains take them to places that require these sub-identities.

The ward's character varies wildly from one neighborhood to the next. In Golden Gai you're never far from music as it issues from clustered, two-story buildings and winding alleys: a far cry from the Ministry of Defense's aggressively modernist towers. Shinjuku is also home to Waseda University and its cliques of favored children, obsessed students, and political radicals. Students participate in nightlife and, as in many countries, can sometimes get a bit rowdy. But Tokyo prides itself on being a safe city, and Shinjuku is no exception.

People don't tolerate drunken violence as readily as they might in parts of America.

## Neighborhoods

Shinjuku originally consisted of several towns merged into one village, then one ward in greater Tokyo. Like other wards, Shinjuku is treated as an autonomous municipality in some respects. It has its own elections and mayor separate from Tokyo itself (whose "mayor" is the prefectural governor). History and government encourage distinctive local culture — a tendency magnified in a ward that sticks ramshackle bars near to huge skyscrapers. Don't forget that high-density apartments lie between these areas of interest. Shinjuku's a residential area too.

### East Shinjuku

East Shinjuku is the area east of Shinjuku Station, especially surrounding the old Naito clan holdings. During the Edo period, the Naito maintained an extensive estate which is now the Shinjuku Gyoen public gardens. East Shinjuku contains the city's office, a regular destination for foreign residents who need to update their paperwork. But the eastern ward is better known for containing its most colorful and sleazy neighborhoods.

**Golden Gai:** Tucked behind the Shinjuku City Office, Golden Gai is a series of six alleys with 200 bars, most of which specialize in a certain form of music or style. Many bars host fewer than ten patrons, and frequently change ownership







## Getting Drunk in Shinjuku

Japanese culture tolerates a certain amount of public drunkenness. The bar's a place to get a little silly, and talk about things that might be off limits at school or work. People drink to vent, and it's acceptable to say what you'd never admit to in the cold light of day — and polite to pretend that you never said it, once dawn comes. Western sources tend to call this an exotic trait: a response to group-oriented Japanese formal culture. In many ways it's not that different from other bar scenes around the world. Regular drinking was part of corporate culture, but as lifetime employment and its associated customs decline, Japan's bars have become less likely to host these nightly binges. Tokyo has exceptionally safe streets and a forgiving climate, so public drunkenness isn't as dangerous as it might be elsewhere.

But there are limits. Alcohol is an aggravating factor in violent crime around the world. Tokyo is no different, but its citizens have a lower tolerance for drunken brawling than in the West. The koban system of small, frequent police stations ensures that officers are rarely far from a street fight, discouraging public displays of violence.

On the other hand some situations take people far from police protection, to places where people believe you're going to get what's coming to you. If someone beats the shit out of you because you fell for a bar tab scam in Kabukicho and refused to pay? Are you a foreigner making an ass of yourself? If you can walk away from a beating inflicted by concerned locals, the police might decide you just had an accident. Thieves know how to hit you when nobody's looking. When it comes to drugs, everything that's illegal in the US is illegal in Japan, along with a few extra things, and Japan has harsher, more rigorously enforced laws. The overall attitude in Shinjuku is that nobody should see violence, and nobody should suffer it except as payment for foolishness — but there are plenty of ways to make a fool of yourself.

due to the difficulties of running an establishment on Tokyo's expensive real estate. Golden Gai maintains Tokyo's postwar architecture as it was before massive redevelopment in the 70s and 80s. These worn, two-story buildings persisted in part because residents guarded the neighborhood from yakuza arsonists. The people here still stay alert for troublemakers, including anyone who doesn't look well off enough to pay for drinks.

**Kabukicho:** Kabukicho was originally named after a planned Kabuki theatre. The theatre was never built but the name stuck — and as the largest district for sex-related services in Tokyo, it's still full of people dedicated to drama over reality. Touts promise a variety of sexual pleasures, and the workers can project any demeanor the client demands. Intercourse for money is illegal in Japan, but other forms of sexual contact (through so-called “soaplands” or “health” services) are regulated by the same public morality statutes as nightclubs and arcades — businesses Kabukicho also has in abundance. Yakuza and other gangs used to openly manage Kabukicho but recent crackdowns have imposed a low profile. Nevertheless, Kabukicho is the place to go if you want to get cheated, threatened, or beaten up in the process of securing intimate contact from a partner whose willingness to be with you isn't exactly clear.

**Ni-Chome:** Tokyo's biggest gay district might contain more queer-focused clubs than anywhere else in the world — over 300, according to some estimates. This number is in decline, however. Rising property values and attached upscale housing developments have cannibalized Ni-Chome territory. Police interference hasn't helped. Public morality laws impose

a number of restrictions on nightclubs, including whether dancing is permissible. In the past, police mostly chose not to enforce the law, but since 2010 they've shut down several bars for “illegal dancing.” However, as of 2016, that law is no longer in effect.

**Ushigome:** Beyond the raucous nightlife, Ushigome contains quiet upscale residences. It includes Ichigaya, where the staid headquarters of the Ministry of Defense and a number of manufacturing firms stand. Nearby Kaguragaza contains traditional Japanese restaurants, cafes, and a significant French population. Kaguragaza is also home to some of Tokyo's only remaining geisha houses. Geisha are not sex workers, but complete grueling apprenticeships to become hostesses and entertainers who draw on Japanese traditions.

### West Shinjuku

Nishi-Shinjuku (“Western Shinjuku”) includes Tokyo's prefectural administration, numerous corporate headquarters, and popular hotels. Tourists often stay in Nishi-Shinjuku but venture east for entertainment. The region includes a large number of upscale residences. Nishi-Shinjuku is relatively well-policed, especially near government and corporate buildings.

**Nishi-Shinjuku Downtown:** Despite its diversity, Nishi-Shinjuku often refers solely to the area that includes the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building (sometimes called the “Tocho”) and the skyscrapers that contain headquarters for Japan's various corporations. The Tocho resembles a European cathedral with two towers, and was one of a



number of buildings raised in the 1970s and 80s during Japan's famous period of economic growth. Future plans include taller skyscrapers and luxury condominiums, although development of these stalled in 2010 for unexplained reasons. In the Chronicles of Darkness, corporations with supernatural connections such as Last Dynasty International (see **Mummy: The Curse**) and the Cheiron Group (see **Hunter: The Vigil**) have offices here.

**Okubo:** Tokyo's historic Korean neighborhood has experienced a resurgence as Korean music, fashion, and film have become immensely popular. Japanese and foreign tourists both visit Okubo to shop and eat. Many residents are fluent in Korean, Japanese, and English. Korea's relationship with Japan is complicated by Japan's imperial history and the Korean War. As a result, ethnic Koreans include Japanese citizens, recent immigrants, and individuals who are Japanese residents but legally considered stateless. The situation is too complex to summarize, but currently requires many ethnic Koreans to undergo a naturalization process even if they were born locally, because Japan doesn't automatically grant citizenship to anyone unless they have at least one Japanese parent.

**Totsuka:** This region in northern Shinjuku contains the Takadanobaba and Waseda neighborhoods. Waseda contains Waseda University, and Takadanobaba provides residential and entertainment services for students. Gakushuin University is just one train stop away from Takadanobaba, so their students visit as well. Takadanobaba is considered to be

something of a "student ghetto" compared to places closer to their respective institutions. Many Waseda students have been involved in radical politics. The various Communist factions are known for being highly organized, but fractious. They maintain headquarters and communal residences here and elsewhere, and bear little tolerance for rivals who encroach on their territory.

## Ghost Trains and New Lives

Shinjuku Station can take you anywhere. You might need to make a few strange connections, but the station isn't just a rail nucleus, but a place where the idea of transportation has attained special, mystical weight. Travel means opportunity. New experiences. Escape. In a culture that acknowledges that people wear different faces for different parts of life, travel represents metamorphosis. On trains, students prepare to act like children before meeting their parents. Sober workers plan the particulars of a night on the town, and anticipate becoming barflies.

Shinjuku Station is a massive facility that might support any transformation, including changes too radical for ordinary humans. When people enter the station looking to escape, to become someone new at the other side, the ghost trains reveal themselves.

Perhaps ghost trains are the latest manifestation of a perennial phenomenon. Shinjuku was founded as a postal and transportation nexus, relaying people and information to Edo from all across the country. Before the telegraph, a

## Kishamono Traits

Kishamono know they're not the people they imitate, but look exactly the same and possess the original's memories from the point of view of a third party: someone who witnessed everything the original did, without the same degree of personal investment. They sometime react to friends like actors playing a part, with stereotyped and exaggerated responses. Nevertheless, they feel the same urges, passions, and flaws as the original, but without the same degree of self-control. They quickly grow obsessed, deranged, and unable to blend in to everyday society. Their interests become obsessions.

Kishamono have the same base Traits as the people they imitate, but with the following adjustments.


**Attributes:** Kishamono are stronger and tougher than their predecessors. Add 1 dot to Strength and Stamina. Their poor self-control manifests in a two-dot reduction (minimum 1) to both Resolve and Composure.

**Skills:** Kishamono have the same Skills as the people they replace, but add 1 dot to their Stealth and Subterfuge Skills to represent natural sneakiness.

**Integrity:** Kishamono use the same Integrity scores as the people they replace, but suffer a major impediment: a -2 to rolls to maintain it. Since average kishamono have Resolve and Composure scores of 1 each, this leaves most with a chance die. They fall fast and hard.

**Injury and Death:** Kishamono who suffer lethal or aggravated damage bleed a mixture of blood and a bitter-smelling fluid that resembles machine lubricant. The minor cuts that might accompany bashing damage bleed normally. Only more serious wounds (including some forms of surgery) cause the strange oil to seep out. Furthermore, if the person a kishamono has replaced touches him, the train person suffers one point of aggravated damage and vomits this substance. When a kishamono dies, it turns into a pile of bloody industrial sludge that invariably flows into sewers or soil.





clever forger could change his destiny with a false letter. The modern age has separated physical and information-based connections; so it's possible that as technology increasingly holds people to their identities, something in the trains, railways, and tunnels goes its own way to provide lost freedom. But it's a dark bargain, lifted from secret tracks.

If you want to get away, discarding your old self, superstitious people might say that Shinjuku Station hears your heart's desire and changes to serve you. The power in the station tests you with random-seeming but significant encounters with old lovers, dogged police, and other attachments from your current identity. Press on and you'll find a platform that doesn't show up on any maps, where an unmarked white train awaits you. Take it, and you'll arrive at an ordinary station on a deserted platform, but with a new face and memories, for a new life, with friends and family waiting. They've always known you. You've always been someone else.

## Kishamono

Everybody who tells the tale agrees that once you leave, something takes your place: one of the *kishamono* — the “train people.”

People attuned to the strange side of Shinjuku say that hundreds of kishamono occupy apartments vacated by the people they replaced. Kishamono look and act like their counterparts, but are more selfish, violent, and shy. They're willing to kill if anyone exposes them as doppelgangers, or says too much about them over mass media or the Internet. They overindulge in sex, drugs, food, and alcohol. They don't feel pain or guilt like ordinary people. They develop sadistic habits. To avoid detection, kishamono never use social media, so if a Shinjuku-based friend shuts down his online presence, he may have been replaced by one of them.

## The Tek-Tek

The ghost train is supposed to be a one-way journey and a mercy — normally, the only way to abandon a life is through death. If you try to return to your old life or expose your kishamono, you've spat at that compassion.

You must want to die, instead. The Tek-Tek comes to help you.

Named for the clanking-rail sounds it makes, the Tek-Tek is an *onryo*: a vengeful ghost transformed by age, legend, and secret worship into a spirit of death by train. The Tek-Tek appears to be the top half of a wild-haired woman who was cut in two by a train. Modern legends say she carries massive scissors or a scythe (a newly popular claim inspired by Western depictions of death personified), but occultists say that she slays victims by dragging them to the tracks, where a passing train will do the job, and the whole thing looks like an accident or suicide.

But at least when the Tek-Tek kills you, your kishamono returns to Shinjuku Station, never to return.

Tek-Tek worshipers track rumors of her appearance and honor her with art and symbolic self-harm. Teenage adherents

cut railroad tracks into their arms and post images of her on message boards. They're the main source for rumors about ghost trains and the kishamono. Wong Ng's Titgwai Gang (see p. 114) stands apart from online devotees, and tracks kishamono throughout Shinjuku. It keeps them secret, cleans up after them, and punishes people who try to go back on the implicit contract of the ghost train.

## Red Station and the Titgwai Gang

You've never heard of the brothel called Red Station. There aren't any touts or signs to lead you to a nondescript alley in Kabukicho. Nearby soaplands aggressively proposition visitors, diverting their course. The Titgwai (Cantonese for “train track”) Gang watches over the street and guards its red door. To get in, you need to say you arrived from the white trains on Platform 37 — and keep in mind, Shinjuku Station only has 36 platforms. Red Station's for kishamono or people connected to the gang — nobody else. That's a big enough group that bluffing and knowing the right things to say might get you inside, but if you reveal yourself to be the wrong sort of person the penalties range from a beating and future stalking to death, depending on what you saw.

## Inside Red Station

Kishamono need Red Station. Rapid psychological degeneration destroys their old relationships. Boyfriends avoid them; bars kick them out. But they still want to fuck, eat, drink, and get high. The Titgwai Gang looks after them as part religious duty, part enterprise.

If you can talk your way in, a bouncer at the club's red door searches you and sends you up dimly lit stairs, one at a time. Another bouncer opens the inner door for you — or if there's an extreme enough problem, chooses a baseball bat or cleaver to solve it. (There's a sawed-off rifle hidden beneath a loose floorboard too, but the gang will only deploy it in an extreme emergency — illicit firearms send you to prison for a long time.) After that, you can drink at a bar that's only big enough to serve a dozen people — half at the bar, half at a single worn booth that looks ripped from a fast food restaurant.

The whole place is decorated with railway artifacts and purloined bits of Shinjuku Station, from pictures of trains to framed schedules. Despite its size, the bar is well-stocked with everything from cheap shochu to the same Hennessy cognac Kim Jong Il used to drink. There's no food on the premises beyond dry snacks, but kishamono can request almost anything and eventually, the dumbwaiter behind the bar will produce it. A floor down, Titgwai members take food deliveries from all over Tokyo and send them up to Red Station's clients.

These arrangements are designed for private indulgence. At the bar, kishamono can eat and drink the point of vomiting. Sometimes drugs come up the dumbwaiter as well, but the gang avoids keeping illicit substances at the club. Japan



has strict laws about drugs, and even though the Titgwai Gang knows how to manage the police to a certain extent, turning Red Station into a drug den makes it a far too tempting target for certain detectives. For some kishamono, violence is an indulgence as well. The gang doesn't get between brawling train people unless things escalate to weapons, at which point they throw the participants out. They'll also let kishamono lay the odd beating on unimportant people who enter through gang connections. Titgwai members tell victims to keep their mouths shut, pay their tabs for the evening, and drive them home — or dump them in front of emergency rooms outside Shinjuku.

Beyond the bar, four rooms host Red Station's sex work. The back area also holds a cramped toilet room, and separate area for showers and bathing. Recruited by the gang from connections with other organized crime groups, the men and women who provide sexual services are usually veterans of other establishments who make a deal for short-term, highly-paid periods at the brothel, with an understanding that they'll get out of Shinjuku when they're done. Many of Red Station's sex workers accept the arrangement to make extra money before leaving the trade for good. Once they're in, the gang strong-arms them into staying for the full term of their "contracts" if they object to anything they're asked to do for kishamono clientele. Nevertheless, Titgwai minders (there are usually two in the hall at any time) draw the line at blatant assault — not because they're particularly compassionate, but to avoid situations where sex workers might go to the police.

The gang clears clients at 5 AM, cleans the place — vomit, piss, and shit often accumulate after kishamono entertain themselves — and meet to worship and plan. Sometimes they'll invite a kishamono to stay, or just let him stay put if he's passed out, but only if they have to eliminate him. Sometimes loving the Tek-Tek means cleaning up after her.

## The Titgwai Gang

Although the Titgwai or Train-Track Gang has nearly 30 members, only 13 sincerely worship the Tek-Tek. Leader Ng Wong believes powers of three are lucky, so he has three close lieutenants, each of whom has three enforcers. They're called "Threes" and "Nines," respectively. They sometimes refer to Wong as "Comrade Five" to confuse people and refer to his given name (Ng is "Five"). Each of the Nines supervises one or two of the remaining casual members. Wong manages Titgwai members based on what he knows: military discipline and bullying. The gang operates in an organized fashion with schedules planned to the minute, but punishes errant members with an inconsistent mix of fines and beatings. Arriving late, shirking duties, loose talk, and disrespecting the Tek-Tek are all cause for punishment. Less devout members pray to her when told and generally keep their mouths shut. Most members are male, but Wong doesn't tolerate discrimination against women — in that, he's still a strict Communist.

## Typical Titgwai Gangster

Titgwai members usually dress in slightly loud men's fashions, but senior members tone it down lest they get disciplined by Wong Ng. Beyond Red Station they can be found on trains, scouting out burglaries, or leaving kishamono homes with protection money in hand.

**Burglary (6 dice):** Titgwai members are excellent burglars. They know how to spot promising homes, break in and escape with swift silence.


**Indecipherable Slang (5 dice):** Gangsters speak an odd mix of Cantonese, Hakka, Japanese, and English. Even fluency in these languages doesn't guarantee listeners will understand, but Titgwai members aren't perfect at it — thus, the dice pool.

**Riding and Running the Rails (6 dice):** To devout Titgwai members, trains and subways are moving temples. They usually know local train schedules and how to time the perfect ride. Furthermore, they know of service entrances and unguarded ways to tunnels and tracks, and how to use them to get across Shinjuku quickly, without being seen.

Two-thirds of the Titgwai are illegal aliens from Guangdong and Fujian who walked away from temporary visas. Wong occasionally advertises for workers in southern China. He fronts them plane tickets along with covers as tourists or temporary workers, and expects them to work it off, with interest. The final third are Japanese pulled into the gang's orbit by an encounter with the Tek-Tek or kishamono, or petty criminals of all kinds who fall in with other members. Most speak Cantonese or Hakka, and all learn a certain amount of multilingual slang to confuse outsiders. Wong wants members to blend in and avoid a common style, but human nature defies him; most dress in loud, trendy clothes. A few of them have small tattoos of the character for "iron" (*kurogane*), and the characters for steam train (*kisha*, although that word isn't used for the modern electric trains that run through the station) surrounded by a stylized flame. Titgwai gangsters know the trains well, including how to escape pursuit through tunnels and tracks or take a well-timed route through Shinjuku Station.

The gang targets wealthy homes and cash-rich businesses for swift, quiet burglaries. It also engages in smuggling and shakes down independent crooks for cash. Crews led by a Three or Nine can undertake these ventures independently, as long as Wong or all Threes know of them, and the perpetrators follow rules that boil down to: Go in with a plan, and don't piss off other gangs or cops. They split earnings among themselves, plus two other shares for the gang. But they get their bread





and butter from kishamono. The train people pay inflated prices at Red Station, and give the gang 20% of their incomes for protection. (Half of this gets split among members, while the rest gets saved for various projects.) The gang cleans up instances of poor impulse control, scares curious people away, and deals with anyone who returns from a ghost train trip. When kishamono go too far — and they all eventually do — a Three, Nine, or Wong himself kills them. Some kishamono know about it, but most of them believe they'll be the exception, keep a lid on things and they'll avoid being put down. Insistent ghost train refusers also face death. Trusted Titgwai either kill them or bring them to the Tek-Tek for disposal.

Nines and Threes meet Wong for nightly worship at Red Station. Their rituals are variations on funeral sacrifices, but instead of sacrificing representations of things for the deceased, they burn them to give them to themselves, in future lives granted by reincarnation of the ghost trains. Sometimes they sacrifice errant kishamono. Nothing usually happens, but sometimes the Tek-Tek appears, says something indecipherable, and the gang looks to Wong for meaning.

The gang has grown into a low-level Mystery Cult, though initiates can only purchase the third-dot rank of the Merit. Merit Benefits are: Streetwise Specialty: Railways (Merit rank •), Anonymity (••, one-dot version of the Merit), and Eye for the Strange (•••).

## WONG NG

When Hong Kong returned to China, Wong Ng was a penniless teenager. He joined the People's Liberation Army to get a leg up in the new order, but found himself transferred to a unit dominated by farmers from the center of the country. Poor as he was, they treated him like a bourgeois invader nonetheless. Wong responded by becoming a hard-ass close-quarters specialist to get them off his back, and a deserter to *really* get them off his back. Selected for a training mission to penetrate Japanese waters, he went the extra kilometer, literally — he dropped overboard and swam to Hokkaido.

Wong used survival training and connections with Chinese gangsters to make it to Tokyo. To his disappointment, he ended up in the same predicament he was in with the PLA: Cantonese muscle taking orders from the Putonghua-speaking bullies who dominated Chinese gangs. He wanted out again, and heard rumors about Shinjuku Station's ghost trains. Wong made it to the secret platform, but instead of a train, he found the Tek-Tek. She needed an agent to mind the kishamono and help the people they replace die, should they return. After his service, she'll grant him a new life of privilege — one he fine tunes with acts of worship, and also promises to members of his Titgwai Gang.

Wong is short but thickly-muscled, built like a fighter. He still wears parts of his PLA uniform (it was stripped of insignia back during the original mission). He still has his Type 95B carbine and a few grenades, too, but he'd have to be in serious trouble to pull those from their hiding place. He wears his gray hair in a shaggy cut.

**Aspirations:** Dominate other Chinese gangs in Tokyo (short term). Earn a new life from the Tek-Tek (long term).

**Virtue:** Stubborn

**Vice:** Pride

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

**Skills:** Computer 1, Investigation 1, Occult 2, Athletics 3, Brawl 4 (Martial Arts), Drive 1, Firearms 3, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 3, Weaponry 1, Intimidation 3 (Physical), Streetwise 3 (Railways), Subterfuge 2

**Merits:** Anonymity •••, Close Quarters Combat •••, Eye for the Strange, Firefight •, Grappling ••, Martial Arts •••, Mystery Cult Initiation ••, Professional Training (Soldier: Firearms, Survival, Brawl at •••) •••, Language •••• (Cantonese Native, Putonghua, Hakka, Japanese, English), Resources •••, Tolerance for Biology

**Integrity:** 4

**Willpower:** 6

**Defense:** 6

**Initiative:** 6

**Health:** 8

**Portraying Ng:** At his most relaxed he only looks at ease, military style: standing alert, ready for action. Wong Ng speaks in a sharp, direct fashion, as if on the verge of shouting at subordinates. He reacts to disrespect with a torrent of verbal abuse followed by a throw and a sharp kick. He's even been known to do this when someone bumps into him the wrong way on the street, but he's aware of his temper and tries to avoid mixing with normal people. He restricts his rage to intruders, foolish kishamono, and the lowest punters in Kabukicho. Controlled anger masks anxiety and sadness. He doesn't want to be here. He wants the new life the Tek-Tek promised him, and he'll do anything to get it. This life is a placeholder, a waiting period. It helps him stay effective from the shadows, because he has no long-term ambitions.

## THE TEK-TEK

She remembers something of life, but not her name. Why did she fall in front of the train? Then pain, severing, and a great gray gulf. Once she was a ghost and there were fewer trains, but other people died by suicide, murder, or misadventure on the tracks. They became ghosts too. She got hungry and ate them, making them part of herself until she became less a ghost than an idea about death. She forgot her name but knew how to make the noise of a train on the tracks to announce her arrival: *tek-tek*. She learned to answer to it, along with the other names living people gave her, such as Kashima Reiko, a play on Kamen Shinin Ma: "Mask of the Demonic Dead One."





Yet she never forgot mercy. Indeed, when she tended the tracks she made sure that anyone who fell on them died swiftly instead of from some slow, crushing injury. When people wanted to die she drew them to a secluded platform where they could jump in peace. She settled at Shinjuku Station, an ideal place for her work, but after spying on the mass of commuters she realized that many who sought solace beneath trains didn't really want to die, but live differently. She sacrificed a fraction of her powers to change the secret machinery of the world, creating a platform and train capable of taking people away.

The kishamono aren't her doing. They seem to be a function of the process: a necessary balance. She tried to destroy them immediately, as they crawled out of Shinjuku Station, but the thing behind them sent more. It would not be satisfied until the kishamono truly replaced those who used the ghost trains. When the original people return the Tek-Tek feels terrible agony, as if she were trapped under the trains that initiated her into death. She knows the power behind the kishamono is to blame. She recruited Ng Wong to help manage the situation and promote her worship so that she not only escapes the unknown god's discipline, but might grow powerful enough to ignore it.

The Tek-Tek appears to be a disheveled young woman in an outfit that might have been a school or naval uniform, but is now too ragged and stained to definitively reveal its age or origin. She has wild, long hair and a pale, haggard face. Her body's been cut in half; strips of skin mingle with her rags, but she doesn't bleed. She can run faster than any person on her arms, which elongate to match a human stride. Her hands have splintered black claws the color of rusty nails. Sometimes she appears with a lower half but walks strangely.

Top and bottom don't quite look aligned. The legs fall away when she no longer feels the need to disguise herself.

**Rank:** 3

**Power:** 8

**Finesse:** 5

**Resistance:** 7

**Corpus:** 12

**Essence:** 16

**Willpower:** 10

**Initiative:** 13

**Defense:** 5

**Speed:** 25

**Size:** 5

**Ban:** The Tek-Tek cannot cross any exposed or plant-covered soil more than six feet deep except within train stations and railways.


**Bane:** The personal possessions of anyone killed by a train.

**Influence:** Railways 3. In such places, the Tek-Tek can cause trains to arrive unpredictably or even derail, making her extremely dangerous to confront.

**Manifestations:** Fetter, Image, Materialize, Reaching, Twilight Form

**Numina:** Blast, Dement, Left-Handed Spanner, Mortal Mask, Regenerate





**Portraying the Tek-Tek:** Although she's reluctant to harm anyone, the Tek-Tek acts ferociously when called to duty. She feels betrayed by mortals who go back on the opportunities she gave them to start new lives. Finally, she's troubled by what she doesn't know. Although she's a spirit of death, she knows little of the underworld. She remembers being far more powerful, but not why she lost her strength. She doesn't know where the kishamono come from, or what tortures her when something goes wrong with ghost train passengers.

## Chiyoda

A shogun built a beautiful castle once near a fishing village, and soon the Tokugawa shogunate became the center of Japan, and so this castle and the district around it became the center of Japan. Without the castle and the Chiyoda district, Tokyo would not be what it is today.

The imperial family has lived in Chiyoda since the Restoration, and even before that the place was home to the shogun and acted as the seat of his political and military power. Today, most major political action happens here at the Diet Building or in the many Ministries in the district. Chiyoda is the home of secular, modern, and historical power in Japan going back hundreds of years.

The district holds a great deal of social and spiritual capital as well. The moat around the Imperial Palace is visited by millions every spring, as it is considered the spot to see the best cherry blossoms. Shrines and temples exist all over Tokyo, but here is the number one shrine for love and marriage, as well as the powerful and controversial shrine for those who fell in war. The district is home to the Tokyo Museum of Modern Art and several universities. In many ways, Chiyoda is a microcosm of Tokyo itself. Or at least, an idealized Tokyo.

## The Lonely Spirits at Tokyo Daijingu Shrine

For people in the know (and there aren't many of them), there are whispers about Daijingu Shrine. They say, don't go to a wedding there stag. Ever. It's appropriate, of course, to go there single to pray for luck in love – but if there's a wedding ceremony, be careful.

Why is never explained. In fact, most people who would give this advice don't themselves know why, but the saying still floats around among the elderly.

Daijingu Shrine was established in 1880 as a satellite shrine to the larger Grand Shrine of Ise for worshipers who wished to avoid having to travel across the bay. The shrine houses five kami, the two main being Amaterasu-Sume-Ohkami, the Sun Goddess, and Toyouke-no-Ohkami, a deity of agriculture.

The first Shinto wedding ceremony was held here, and since, modern Shinto wedding traditions come from the practices that started and grew here. It's said that weddings held here are strong and happy. Suffice to say, the wait list

and costs to be married at the shrine mean it's a sought after and fashionable place to get married.

And not just among humanity.

Secret binding ceremonies happen between denizens of the darkness at this shrine by special aware priests in the dead of night under a new moon.

But none of that has anything to do with the warning.

Since the first ceremony held there, lonely spirits are often drawn to the shrine. Dead youths who went before knowing love's first blush, those wronged and murdered with their hearts full of hopeful affection, and those driven to suicide from longing often find they are drawn to the shrine in the hopes of having one last chance at one of the most basic of all human needs. Japanese culture puts a huge emphasis on heteronormative ritual and family, and so these ghosts often suffer from the lingering binds of societal expectations in addition to their own soulful longings. Most Shinto ceremonies involve cleansing and warding against unwelcome spirits; however, perhaps because of that pressure, the ritual simply doesn't push away the lonely dead.

And since ghosts aren't the only ones who experience these pressures, it isn't uncommon for a single woman or young man to find him- or herself miserable at a wedding, wishing dangerous things like, "Just anyone would do at this point." That dangerous wish calls the attentions of the spirits.

At that point, spirits move in close to the person. He will feel a chill that no one else does, and hear whispers only meant for him. If he is not frightened off by these strange occurrences, the priest's words will bind him to the spirit, and it will be free to leave the shrine with its new spouse.

What happens from there depends entirely on the spirit in question, and the person now unwittingly "wed" to it.

## Areas in the Ward

Chiyoda is in the dead center of Tokyo, and in many ways, the dead center of Japan itself. From the Imperial Palace to the Diet Building along with offices for many Ministries, it is the seat of much of Japan's politics. Since Tokyo began to grow from a simple fishing village, Chiyoda has been a huge part of that history. Today, it's home to shopping, culture, and religion in addition to big business. The residential neighborhoods in Chiyoda are upper-income and highly fashionable areas in which to live.

## Akihabara

After World War II, Akihabara became Akihabara Electric Town as it grew to be Tokyo's main shopping area for technology and black market goods. By now, in addition it's become a sort of giant bazaar of technology new and archaic, manga, comics, video games, and all manner of idle pleasures.

**Yellow Submarine:** Across the street from a Maid Cafe, next to a drug store, and of course, across from that ten-story arcade is a tall narrow building with a used electronics store on the first floor, an "import" (read: knock-off) purse and women's accessories store on the second floor, and



somewhere up on the eighth floor is a little shop called The Yellow Submarine. A favorite of otakus and tourists, it's a popular game shop so stuffed full with media-related toys, games, statuettes, dvds, comics, and assorted other random geeky goods that it's difficult to walk up and down the aisles. The store's customer base is a good mix of kids, typical Tokyo residents, foreigners, and the typical quasi-creepy otaku.

Then there's the back room. Behind a wall of glass cases full of busts and statuettes of attractive men from popular shojo comics is a door with no markings or signage. Considering every other surface of the shop is covered with products or posters for other products, if you see the bare door, it's a little disconcerting.

Occasionally, customers come out of that unmarked door with brown paper bags or else black plastic bags not marked by the shop. They are not otherwise what one would expect to see shopping at a geek store in the geekiest part of Tokyo. They're young, fit, professional looking, but clearly working hard to avoid direct attention. Staff of the shop don't notice, or admit to ever noticing, people coming or going from the "stock room."

**Hideyo's:** In a small, open-front store stuck between several other cramped electronic shops just like it, is Hideyo's. Distinct only if you know to look for it, Hideyo's has a number of random electronic and computer components on the sidewalk out front. At a glance, the only thing about it is that a number of the products appear to be makes that never went to market, or from manufacturers no one has ever heard of. It's said that you can find anything at Hideyo's, as long as it's lost and hard to find. Hideyo himself will tell you many of the things he has for sale don't exist, and that he gets them as gifts from the angels. He'll also tell you "my god is Ultraman," if you hang around long enough to talk to him.

**Happy Kitten Pancake Café:** Maid Cafes dot the shopping district and run the spectrum from cute, colorful shops that cater to middle- and high-school-aged girls, to much more adult locations with much more adult interactions between clients and the staff. Happy Kitten Pancake is somewhere in between. The staff and owner appear to be pleasant, good-humored women who dress up as typical quasi-Edwardian maids (so long skirts, not short), and serve "the best pancakes in Tokyo." Happy Kitten Pancake does not, however, put up with crap from clients. In the past year, eight men have been taken to the hospital from the Café having been beaten nearly to death. None of them will say what happened nor are they willing to press charges. The owner, Emi, simply says "boys can't be rude here." She is all of 150 centimeters tall, and none of her staff are much bigger. How these men end up in the hospital is anyone's guess.

## Kitanomaru Park

If Chiyoda is in the center of Tokyo, then this park is in the heart of that center. Surrounded by the moat and other fortifications of what was once the Edo castle, Tokyo became Tokyo because of this location. The moat, for example, is the

favorite place in Japan to view the dazzling cherry blossoms in spring. The park houses several museums, music centers, and sports complexes. What's more, the Imperial Palace (once a part of Edo castle) is here. From the park, you can also access Yasukuni shrine.

**The Imperial Palace:** At the end of the Edo period, as a new Emperor took power and the Meiji Restoration began, Edo castle became the Imperial Palace. It is currently an important location in Japan, both for its historical significance and for housing the royal family. Twice a year, the grounds are opened to the public when the royal family greets the citizens of Japan. But that is not the only way in. Rumors persist of a secret entrance to the Palace available only at certain key times in spring, near the moat. The rumors further suggest that if one were to enter the Palace in this way, the royal family is bound to greet you and share one meal with you. What happens after that is anyone's guess, as no one has claimed to have done this and returned.

**The Kyobashi Building:** Inside the park is the Museum of Modern Art, moved into the area after World War II. The museum consists of several buildings focusing on various aspects of modern art inside and outside of Japan. The Kyobashi building focuses largely on animation. They have preserved over 40,000 samples of Japanese animation. With countless visitors to the location every year, is it any wonder that sometimes the visitor queues are a little strange? Still, rumors persist that over the last six years, more people leave the Kyobashi Building than enter it.


**The Yasukuni Shrine:** Controversial and moving, the Yasukuni Shrine is a Shinto shrine meant to honor the dead who served Japan in wartime. Not just warriors or soldiers, though, the shrine represents civil servants, widows and orphans, and others who died in service to the Nation during wartime. Even non-Japanese are enshrined here, including Koreans who, according to some, did not serve willingly. Others point to war criminals enshrined at Yasukuni as a major issue. Consider the ghosts who are drawn to this place. Imagine the ghosts who are now trapped here, forever, created in the midst of violence and chaos. Imagine what the spiritual reflection of this place must look like, and pray that it is a peaceful place, or if it is not, that you never have to see it yourself.

## Daisuke Shiori

Dljinshi, or self-published manga, is a decent market in Akihabara; and in some ways, Shiori is a newly crowned queen of the medium. Along the streets of Akihabara you'll find tables and stands of independently produced manga, sometimes hosted inside manga shops nearby official published works. These things run the gambit from great artists and writers who just don't fit in a big publishers niche, to works specialized in taking favorite characters from other manga and putting them into mature or bizarre situations outside of the professional manga they come from.

Shiori got her start in this second kind of dljinshi; in specific, she built a following writing and drawing highly





pornographic versions of popular manga with a specific mindset of satisfying women readers. There was a sort of upper limit on this practice, and only so far you can go with it. Shiori didn't lack for talent and creativity, what she lacked was confidence.

That is until fans of hers came across sketches she was doing for an original and independent horror comic highlighting one of the many urban legends that have risen up in modern Tokyo. Unlike the general stories like Teke Teke or Kuchisake-Onna, Shiori's stories were strangely specific. A particular corner. A particular bar. A nameless but familiar guy everyone has seen lurking around behind that one toy store near the arcade. Most stories were appeared like a slice-of-life set in Akihabara, until something strange happened. They felt real. Her fans went crazy for them. Unable to let her fans down, she started releasing the *Dark Tales of Aki* and her fan base grew. She's since developed a local fan base to rival some big-name manga artists, and she's been invited to have a table at two of the biggest conventions in the city. She's even been scouted by some publishers.

There's a very good reason her comics feel so true to life, however.

They are completely true. Every supernatural event, every monster she's inked on a page, has been real, and has really happened. So far, the occult inhabitants of the ward haven't noticed how dead-on her stories are, but once they do, it will raise a lot of questions. She's depicted Kindred, Forsaken, ghosts, spirits, and even the Lost with incredible accuracy. She doesn't know what she's writing is 100% true. They're just stories that come to her. She may be psychic, she may simply be more observant than she realizes. Some of her fans have suggested that she actually pens her manga before the events take place, and that she might actually be in a limited amount of control of the neighborhood, but there's no real proof. In this way, Shiori has become her own sort of urban legend.

The young artist can be found all over Chiyoda, not just in Akihabara — sitting near the gates of the Imperial Palace, soaking up the sights and sounds of Hibiya park, or sketching spirits she think she's dreaming up at various shrines all over the ward. Her eyes are wide and dark and unattractive in their intensity. Beyond that, she could be just about any other fujoshi in and around the center of independent manga.

## Ugly Americans

This is one interpretation and analysis of the relationship between Japan and foreigners, for good or bad. It is not an exhaustive exploration of the topic.

It's complicated, because Japan loves foreigners. And Japan hates foreigners. Japan needs foreigners to survive, and Japan would be fine without them. Depending on whom you ask and who's the current Prime Minister, and where you ask, the relationship between Japan and foreigners is wonderful, dire, important, unimportant, and totally conflicting because it's complicated. There is no absolute truth, and despite how it comes across sometimes, every single Japanese person has his or her own relationship and opinions as to the state of

foreigner relations. Not to mention the difference between the perceived and real bias in favor or against American or European foreigners versus those from Korea, China, or the Philippines, for example. While most foreigners come and go unnoticed by the population at large, everyone in Japan has a story about the one time he, or her best friend, or his cousin, ran into a really rotten example of outsider behavior. And that story colors his or her opinion, naturally. This encounter is one of those stories.

## Foreign Money. Foreign Power

Economies ebb and flow, of course, and at the time of this writing, Japan's economy is not looking amazing. An aging population, a small population largely centered in one city, and the effects of post-war reconstruction mean that Japan needs outside money and commerce to hold together. That's not to say that tourist dollars are what keep the country afloat, far from it. Rather, trade and global economic activities are a part of the Japanese economy. Tourist money is nice, but what ultimately matters is not visiting college students so much as visiting CEOs and bankers who come to be wined and dined and seduced into favorable deals with the Japanese companies courting them. The tradition of powerful men being able to do whatever they want is different in its expression than in some other countries because of cultural taboos and ideas about responsibility and community. The conflict grows from this. Japanese businesses want foreign money and deals, need them even, and thus pull out all the stops when visitors from these foreign powers come for a visit. These people take full advantage in ways few would even consider. They go home and tell stories, which leads to....

## Misconception

In the West, a lot of what we initially learned about Japan did not come from primary sources. Sailors, merchants, imperialists, and then later, countries that have been at war with Japan. After that? Soldiers, and decades later, opportunists and hotshot executives. They all bring back over-the-top stories of exotic Japan and exotic practices and exotic people, and of course, their conquest of these things. Soldiers came back home with stories of exotic "geisha," and so the next round of men goes with this image in their heads, no matter how dramatized or exaggerated. No experience can match these tall tales, so men return with more lies and exaggeration, and the cycle continues. Meanwhile, inside Japan, stories get passed around about how "rude" or violent or opportunistic Westerners are. Since foreigners are few and far between (they comprise less than 1% of the total population in Japan), and the well-behaved visitors to the islands go unnoticed, misconceptions abound.

## Omotenashi

Another thing to consider is the Japanese concept of *omotenashi*, which is similar to the Western idea of hospitality. The concept, however, is much more serious than its



Western counterpart, especially to an American understanding. Omotenashi is something that is felt deeply, and it is meant to be a part of your personality and not just a put-on for guests. This shows in the kindness and bright attitude of many convenience store employees. It shows in the depth of service provided for people doing a home-stay, living with a Japanese family while on vacation or at school. It shows in the way many Japanese people will drop what they are doing to help obvious tourists looking at their maps for even a second too long. If a guest or customer is in need, omotenashi demands that you do something. Within Japanese culture, it's natural and expected to go out of your way for strangers because the society is built on the idea of paying it forward. Living under a social debt means that it's safe to reach out to guests, because it makes the society work. Foreigners often don't understand this debt and don't know to, or won't stay long enough to pay back that debt, leaving a poor impression. Or worse, those opportunists who came because they'd heard some stories about being able to get away with murder take advantage of omotenashi and misconceptions to feed further into the love and hate of foreigners.

## Predator or Prey

Japan is not entirely populated by honorable nobles who practice omotenashi to the point of risking their lives. Many people do the best they can to rise to the ideal, some can't be bothered to worry about it, and some few but cunning people see predatory foreigners for what they are: ideal marks.

Many members of violence gangs are also fiercely nationalistic, and have strong opinions about foreigners. Some of these opinions are unfair, and some of them rise up out of the same bad encounters more honest citizens might run into. Rather than shrug these encounters off with a sigh and "it can't be helped," some Japanese criminal types act on both stereotypes and experience to take advantage of tourists and other short-term visitors. Black companies, borderline criminal enterprises, rise up and hire foreigners to work in subpar conditions illegally, taking full advantage of the language gap and misunderstanding of Japanese social order. Some young people will come to Japan to teach English in conversation schools and find themselves trapped, in debt and working impossible hours because a black company took advantage of them. On a smaller scale, occasionally stories circulate among foreigners of lock-ins, where a wealthy looking foreigner will wander into a small bar, over-indulge, and then be threatened or beaten to pay a huge bar tab, trapped inside by the crooked owner. It even happens when foreigners pick out foreigners to pickpocket or otherwise take advantage of, because they know the Japanese system just a little bit better.

## On the Prowl

If you're in a place like Akihabara or the other famous tourist spots in and around Chiyoda, you're going to see tourists. Most of the time they'll vanish into the crowd, lost. Sometimes, though, they stand out. Their intentions are both clear and less than noble. They're on the hunt, looking to

live out puerile fantasies and see how much they can get away with. They usually have money and are from some kind of privilege back home; they tend to think they're invincible. Because they've heard that they can do anything, the limitations of this imagined invulnerability either drive them off fast – or if they're drinking, drive them to rage. This is not always white men from the US and Europe. Plenty of people the world over have a rotten idea about what they can get away with on Japanese soil. Maybe they had a bad run-in with criminals targeting foreigners looking for trouble, or maybe they were simply put in their place by a local, but whatever the reason, these tourists won't be satisfied with anything short of a perverse experience. Assuming they don't pass out drunk in public or get arrested first.

## What Do They Do?

They might harass locals or push too far at a hostess club. They might hassle high school girls. They may go too far at a maid cafe, mistaking it for a brothel. They might try to pick fights with cosplayers or otaku. They might get conned by a clever gangster or they might try to sexually assault someone while hiding behind "cultural misunderstanding" if they're caught red-handed. They'll throw their money at people, cops if necessary, in the hopes of being permitted to do whatever they wanted. What they do is test boundaries and try to force their preconceptions on the people they encounter.

## Consequences for Characters

This might be as simple as a fist fight breaking out at an inopportune time, or as complicated as a chain of events where the lads pull on their privilege to cause foreign trouble, often financial, down the road. If the characters are locals, interacting with lads, getting in a fight, can be a serious embarrassment or perhaps used by social competition to get a one-up for failing to behave properly.

Worse, the spirits of the soil are often very set in their ways; a dust-up with foreigners in the wrong place at the wrong time could attract supernatural attention. And unfortunately, there is often fallout in these cases. Just being there when a local entity gets riled up might be enough to get the characters cursed or worse.

## The Lads

A group of lads includes at least three young men of means and at least two young women every bit as up for causing trouble as the young men. They're fashionable for their home country, with some Tokyo trappings like Hello Pancakes T-shirts and strange English phrases on baseball caps. Their movements are pack-like and predatory. They're sniffing and looking and flicking their noses, practically salivating for a fight. It's easy enough to tell they've got big heads of steam going. It's hard as hell to get high in Tokyo, but they've managed it, and followed it up with a lot of sake and shochu. Note: The names provided below are typically American, but these lads can be from anywhere.



**Group Aspiration:** The lads want to have the best story ever to take back home.

## GARY

Gary's the de facto leader of the group. His older brother went to Singapore before going to grad school and has a dozen tall tales of his conquests and successes there. Gary's not going to grad school, and so wants to balance that out with an even bigger, greater bullshit story to bring home and carry him through into a rather boring future at his father's firm. He doesn't want to embellish more than he has to, and so he's doing whatever it takes to get him and the lads into some real trouble.

**Aspirations:** Find a chick that's less uptight (short term). Get as close to getting arrested as possible without actually going to jail (long term).

**Virtue:** Confidence

**Vice:** Arrogance

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

**Skills:** Academics 1, Athletics 1, Computer 2, Expression 2 (Inspiring), Intimidation 2, Politics 3 (Global Corporate Politics), Socialize 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2 (Legalese)

**Merits:** Contacts (Bankers) 1, Inspiring 3, Resources 3,

**Integrity:** 5

**Willpower:** 4

**Defense:** 3

**Initiative:** 4

**Health:** 7

**Portraying Gary:** Maybe in the confines of his own society, Gary is way more behaved because he understands the systems and consequences for his actions. Here, he really believes there are no consequences, and any attempts to show him there are limits are met with cognitive dissonance and of course anger.

## STEPHANIE

Like Greg, Stephanie has an inkling that her life is at its peak and her future is likely to be a dull suburban life married to a distant husband with a bunch of kids who will grow up to be the same kind of brat she is. Stephanie doesn't want stories she can brag about with the boys, though; she wants something secret and dirty and utterly shocking she can remember when she's having boring sex with her boring husband in the future. She wants something that, years from now, in a dull PTA meeting, she can just remember back, rub the scar on her thigh, and get chills of excitement.

**Aspirations:** Have some kind of illegal sex (short term). Get away with murder (long term).

**Virtue:** 15-Year Plan

**Vice:** User

**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3, Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

**Skills:** Academics 1, Athletics 1, Computer 1, Medicine 2 (Inflicting Pain), Politics 3 (First Lady Breeding), Socialize 3, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2 (Bless Her Heart)

**Merits:** Professional Training (Busybody; Investigation, Stealth) 2, Resources 3, Trained Observer 2, Contacts (Congressional Hopefuls) 2

**Portraying Stephanie:** On the surface she should come across as just another spoilt brat with no concept of her own mortality. In fact, she is far more methodical. There's something darker under the surface there. Stephanie has plans; she knows where she's going to be in six years, and what she'll have to do to get there. She knows what she wants to do tonight, too; and whatever it is, it involves the degradation of other human beings, just to see if she can.

## MARK

Mark is here because his buddies are here, but Mark is also here because he's got some very specific and heavily biased opinions about Japanese culture. He can say a few phrases in passable Japanese, but most of his understanding of Japan comes from white men. He's read *Shogun* eight times and totally believes the idea that a white guy can show up in Japan, be awesome, and be named samurai (if only in spirit). His intention is pretty straightforward: show all the locals what an amazing understanding of Japan he has and soak up their admiration. Of course, in reality, the locals are laughing at him, and though they're trying to be polite about it, he's starting to take notice. And he's fucking pissed.

**Aspirations:** Punch a "yakuza" (short term). Be shown "true keigo" (respectful language) (long term).

**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

**Skills:** Animal Ken 1, Athletics 3, Brawl 2 (Grapple), Drive 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Investigation 1, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Weaponry 1 (Improvised)

**Merits:** Fast Reflexes 1, Grappling Style (Aikido) 3, Professional Training (Thug; Brawl, Intimidation) 2

**Integrity:** 7

**Willpower:** 5

**Defense:** 6

**Initiative:** 7

**Health:** 8



**Portraying Mark:** Of the three, Mark is probably the most approachable, and maybe the easiest to talk down. His intentions are a lot less malicious than some of his buddies, but he's a follower and unlikely to interfere without some strong external inspiration. He's also a pretty easy target: If anyone in the group can be easily taken advantage of, it's probably the guy wearing "please love me, Japan" on his sleeve, so to speak.

## Everyone Else

The rest of the lads are mostly just tourists pumped up on Gary's stories of conquest, Stephanie's desire for vice, or Mark's idealistic superiority. They're a pretty good example of okay people swept up in bad behavior. If things get really dark, they'll probably get involved, sure, but they're also pretty likely to get scared off easily and head back to the hotel before anything really rotten goes down.

## Taito

Taito has been many things over the years. It was once full of brothels, being home to many pleasure houses during the Edo period. It has been full of theatres, and indeed, many streets still have many comedy clubs and theatre houses. It is a place full of ancient temples, monuments to past deeds, and a rare home to gods almost forgotten in the modern age. On top of everything else, it is a land that welcomes others to see what it has to offer and a place for people to relax.

Once home to numerous *onsen*, or bath houses, Taito was a wealthy neighborhood where workers could go to relax. The city did not approve of this trade, but as time went on it did not hinder it, and even in modern nights Taito is still home to several bath houses and brothels that skirt the law and survive.

Today Taito is a city of differing ages, offering delights to all no matter what their pleasures are. Those who wish only to shop find the many businesses and stalls as inviting as those seeking the carnival food at the local amusement park. Those who seek a quiet stroll in the park to look at the beauty of the cherry blossoms blooming are as content as those who pay respects to the many temples in the area.

## Death by Nostalgia

The history of Japan is full of many great events, from the unification of the country, its gifts to the arts and sciences of the world, and its effect on modern politics. It is a land often remembered for its samurai and great castles more than its towering skyscrapers and modern engineering. To some, its golden age is long behind it, as many begin to cling to the past or at least, the past they believed happened – as opposed to the past that did happen.

The past of Japan is more than warriors in armor dueling in rice fields under the light of the full moon. It is more than geisha playing instruments in teahouses and the codes of honor exemplified by the samurai. Like other nations, it is full of the

good and bad parts of a nation's history, such as the struggles of the *heimin* under the caste system the samurai enforced, or the horrors Japan was guilty of during the Second World War.

But for some this was still a better age than what is going on now, and they will fight for a return to the old days.

Right-wing extremists are not new to Japan, as the Gen'yosha (or Black Ocean Society) laid the foundations for many current groups by being staunchly anti-foreign influence and striving to keep Japan pure. The current groups see immigrants from China and Korea as a disease, and object to the government extending rights and welfare to them. Demonstrations in public parks and streets are becoming more common as the Zaitokukai, a political party descended from the Gen'yosha, works towards preventing the government from giving citizenship to foreign nationals.

There are others who long for a return to the old ways. Powerful organizations from across the sea seek a return to a more noble country, and are spending large amounts of money and political capital in influencing politicians to peel back reforms. These visitors claim to be descended from those who left the country years before, but whose family lines are unknown. It is almost as if their families disappeared overnight.

The dead in Taito also yearn for a return to the old days. The living who come to pay their respects honor the shrine built to honor the first Shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu, but at night the spirits of the Tokugawa and their loyal vassals cringe at the Tokyo that has risen up around them. They miss the days when the fortress of Edo dominated the land, and when their strict hierarchy kept order among the people. Their spirits wander around Ueno Park wistfully as they seek one last task that will help them earn glory and possibly remembrance.

Nostalgia has begun to spill into the streets as well. Though cinema has long influenced people into thinking that sword fights in the street are an honorable means to settle disputes, the prevalence of swords have begun to trickle into the streets. Firearms are hard to find and highly illegal within Japan, leaving many disputes settled with fist and blade, but the rise of the ideal that a true man settles his disputes with violence has spread throughout the city. Even large knives and swords require rigorous registration; owning one without proper license is a serious offense authorities never take lightly.

Though fighting is kept to a minimum, the nationalists have begun to spread their ideology to the teenaged youth of Japan in order to raise the next generation with their mindset. These teens, disaffected by promises of reform or a bright future of service to a company until they die, are buying into the ideology of these extremist groups and are beginning to worship a glorified version of the past – a past which has all of its sins and problems washed over and sanitized into a utopian example only found in comic books and video games.

## Areas in the Ward

The following areas are some points of interest in Taito.

**Asakusa:** A beautiful and scenic part of Taito, Asakusa is renowned as one of the quieter entertainment districts







of the city, and seen as an area where everyone can go to have a good time. Originally built as a place where workers could spend their money in its many brothels and theatres, Asakusa now boasts modern theatres, shopping centers, and sacred temples.

**Kaminarimon:** A magnificent temple dedicated to four gods, the Thunder Gate is an ancient temple with a troubled past. It has burned repeatedly throughout its existence, with great fires consuming the large red lantern at the center of the temple and spreading out from there. The temple honors the kami Fujin and Raijin as well as the Buddhist gods Tenryu and Kenryu. The gate leads to the Nakamise-dori, a street full of shops and businesses.

**Yoshiwara Soaplands:** A poorly kept secret of the Taito ward is its bath houses and brothels that have been the mainstay of the city since the Edo era. These businesses exist in a gray area between the law and common sense; the government has outlawed prostitution under very specific stipulations, but blind eyes and loopholes leave it a strong industry.

Some of these bath houses appear seedy, but most are elegant and largely exist for tourist consumption.

On the eastern edge of the Taito district there exists a place called The Fox Sister's Water House. To those who do not know better, it appears to be another brothel taking up residence in the ward. In truth it is a sacred temple all to itself, where ancient rites venerate the goddess Inari Okami, who brings good will, plentiful food, and the fulfillment of desire. This isn't wildly uncommon; some 10,000 shrines in Japan are dedicated to her. But this water house is something more.

Frequent visitors to the temple often find themselves initiated into the temple hierarchy. Though predominantly female, they are willing to train anyone as initiates into the priesthood, and many who join find themselves caring for the temple grounds or serving outside the temple. This includes those who help the temple gain legal protection against government officials looking to boost their careers by shutting them down, to helping to upkeep the local neighborhood and clean the city streets and walls of trash and graffiti.

A benefit to worshiping at the temple is that those who enter and behave honestly and truthfully find that good fortune follows them when they leave the temple. Those who behave rudely and inappropriately inside find that their advances are turned away, but ill fortune plagues them for weeks afterwards. For a slight offender, a hard drive crashes or his subway car is later than it should be. For a ruder, more violent offender, she finds that her own secrets are brought into the light, as her Internet history and past crimes are brought to the public's attention and shame is visited upon her family.

**Asakusa Engei Hall:** Among the bright lights of modern Japan sits an old theatre dedicated to comedic performances. Unlike modern comedy clubs, Engei Hall features both modern comedians and older performances



## Manzai and Rakugo

Manzai and Rakugo are two of the more popular styles of performance one might see Asakusa Engei Hall.

Manzai is a two-person performance style where one person plays a logical, rational role, and the other plays something of a fool. The two bounce jokes back and forth with a conversational rhythm. If you're familiar with Abbott and Costello, it's a similar framework. Manzai is largely associated with Osaka, but not at all limited to that city.

Rakugo is a one-person style of storytelling comedy. The one actor plays numerous parts, using different pitch, tone, accent, and inflection to portray different characters, often changing out at fast pace.

Both of these styles are very distinct and can be a great way to get players into the setting. You can find great examples of both on YouTube. Particularly with Rakugo, you can find full English performances. Manzai is slightly less popular, but many performances have subtitles.

such as jugglers and comedic plays to entertain the crowd. The manager of the hall, known to the locals as Old Hamaki, will frequently perform juggling tricks and tell jokes outside of the hall to draw people in. Though the club has seen its attendance drop in recent years, it is seeing more and more foreigners visit the club.

The hall's performers pride themselves on keeping alive plays from the Edo era, where comedic circumstances played for the delight of the audience. Actors move about on stage, emphatically exaggerating emotions and moves for the delight of the audience as they play out ancient stories from the past.

Recently a new performer has begun to draw in the masses. No one knows where he came from, and his Japanese his spoken with an odd inflection, but his knowledge of theatre is superb and he knows even the most obscure plays. Many of his references appear dated to customers, but his enthusiasm keeps bringing them back. The performer, known only as the Tanuki Bard, performs six days a week but never on Fridays. When sought out on Friday he is nowhere to be found.

**Hanayashiki Amusement Park:** Few could imagine an amusement park inside of a city as dense as Tokyo, but the Asakusa Hanayashiki is a dazzling display of lights, rides, and performances all set against the backdrop of the city. Considered the oldest amusement park in Japan, its brightly painted rides and numerous food stands make it popular for families of all ages in the city.

## Ueno

Ueno is a beautiful part of the city, with many temples, parks, and schools. When tourists visit the city they are drawn to the beautiful temples that still receive visitors, and the many museums bring foreigners to the ward. It is also home to many of Tokyo's homeless denizens who are fortunate enough to be fed by the area's monks, but not fortunate enough to receive charity from the many workers who walk through Ueno. It is no coincidence that Ueno was once considered to be part of the Shitamachi district of Japan; it was regarded as a working class area where poverty was common compared to the more noble parts of the city.

**Benten-Do of Benzaiten:** Sitting next to a small stream in the hills around Ueno Park is the Benten-Do of Benzaiten. Visitors come to seek her blessing, hoping that she will bestow upon them a greater understanding of the world.

Her blessings come in many different guises. If a visitor brings a loved one who is ill to the shrine, he may find time has slowed around them to give them more time together before the loved one dies. If a father is concerned about providing for his family, he sees a glimpse of how to invest for his family that will pay off for them in years to come.


Monks look after the temple grounds, but few dare to spoil the grounds due to the legends associated with it. Some say that to desecrate the sacred temple of Benzaiten is to lose their own ability to flow with the world. Artists who are disrespectful of the temple find their art no longer comes from their fingertips as it once did, and public speakers find themselves afflicted with a stutter when they did not have one before.

**Kan'ei-ji:** A temple, mausoleum, and once center of the Ueno district, the Kan'ei-ji was once the center of a massive complex that held the tombs of many Tokugawa shoguns. Today the temple complex is all that remains of burial grounds meant to honor them. It was destroyed during the revolution, which saw the final defeat of the Tokugawa; and the defenders who once barred its gates saw the destruction of not only their temple but their way of life.

The pagoda is a landmark that documents the successes of the Tokugawa shogunate, and inside visitors can see many artifacts from that era. The temple itself is not the original, as the original burned in the Battle of Ueno, where modern firepower devastated not just the defending Tokugawa soldiers but destroyed the surrounding homes.

On certain nights, when thunderstorms roll through the area, it seems that the lightning in the sky tells the story of the battle. Those who stand inside the temple pagoda can hear the explosions of the US-made artillery crashing into the temple grounds, and very briefly one can see soldiers fighting in the courtyard when lit by glow of lightning.





As for the temple's holiness, it stands near the former location of the northeastern gate into Edo Palace, a location said to be unlucky and often referred to as a Demon's Gate. The flow of energy through this street is said to allow dark spirits into the region, though the power of the temple repels their entrance into this world. If the temple were to ever close or be destroyed the demons may find a way back into the center of the city. Whether or not this is true is open to interpretation, but what is true is that Beasts feel a calling to the area; and though they may walk inside the temple they find themselves simultaneously repulsed by its presence and driven to an even deeper hunger.

**Ueno Park:** Full of groves of cherry blossoms and other trees, Ueno Park is the most popular park in the city, attracting millions of Japanese and tourists each year. Built to Western specifications it is built upon the site of the old northeastern entrance into Edo and its lands make up much of what was once the larger Kan'ei-ji temple. Today it has many temples, and visitors love walking the grounds seeing the many festivals that take place in the park.

The park also contains a statue to Saigo Takamori, regarded as Japan's Last Samurai (and not portrayed by Tom Cruise). Said to have been a great leader and tactician, the statue depicts Saigo with his hunting dog. Many see the statue to be a symbol of the honor and glory of old Japan, and many worshipers pay their respects to it each year.

Those whose paths have them set against great evils or who find themselves facing monsters that lurk in Japanese society often pay their respects to this statue, believing that the statue may convey blessings upon them in battle. What is ironic is that there are many creatures that also pay their respects to Saigo's statue, and late at night shadowed figures kneel silently before the statue, laying their weapons at its feet and praying for strength.

Many who believe that Saigo relied solely upon traditional weapons may be surprised to find that in the years approaching his death he fought in many rebellions against the Japanese government using modern weapons. When his forces stood against the Meiji government they were armed with rifles and artillery, and many pictures of Saigo from the time depict him in a modern military commander's outfit.

## The Ravenous Blade

Towards the end of the reign of the Tokugawas, the swordsmith loyal to the last shogun forged him one last sword meant for the shogun's son. This blade was made of the finest metal, and as the swordsmith hammered its steel he whispered into the blade that it was meant for great things. The blade began to take shape quickly, as if preparing itself for the day when it would be wielded in battle against the enemies of the Shogun, and dreaming of the stories it would write with their blood.

But the sword never saw combat; it never even left its sheath save for when the Shogun inspected its blade. His son took no interest in the blade and supported the

modernization of his country's army. The blade went from a gift to a curiosity exchanged amongst family members, until it was misplaced among the palace's archives, forgotten on a shelf by a careless servant whose memory of the blade disappeared like the blade's future.

When the time of the Pacific War came, the blade was rediscovered and turned in to the armory. Its fate was the same as many family heirlooms that came before it; it was stripped of ornamentation, its hilt was replaced with a saber grip, and it was given to a *Gunso* in the Imperial Army.

The blade changed hands many times but was recovered by Yatakono Akono's grandfather before the war ended, and it was secreted away back to the mainland. His grandfather, feeling shame over the surrender to the Americans, locked the blade away in his footlocker and never looked upon it again. That changed when Akono, desperate for money to pay his rent, searched through his grandfather's belongings and found the blade.

Whether the blade is exerting its control over Akono or Akono's warped personality is only bolstered by the blade is unclear — but what is clear is that Akono's fate changed that day. No longer content with working in an electronics shop for low pay, he decided he would step up and speak out against his government.

Using the local Wave Men gang to handle his dirty work, Akono calls for a return to a more militant Japan. He has led demonstrations against the Japanese government, calling for it to break off the shackles the United States forced upon it and to rebuild its army. He encourages his fellow citizens to reject foreign influence, and he views South Korea and China as competitors to his nation's rise to power. Though considered a radical, many view Akono as another politician claiming to know what is best for his country.

What few know is that Akono wears the sword in his belt when he is not in public, and that he treats the blade with great reverence. Those who fail him or stand in his way find themselves before him, after being beaten severely by the Wave Men, and he allows the blade to wet its metal with their blood. Akono wields the sword with the skill of a duelist, though he is always careful to massage the blood of his victims into the blade's metal before cleaning it and returning it to his scabbard. In this way the blade's call upon Akono is appeased, though it thirsts for more than just blood; it thirsts for the blood brought about by great feats of glory.

## YATAKONO AKONO

His father promised Akono that he would inherit everything that he had, and that he would have a bright future ahead of him. At the age of 24 his family was broke, his parents had died, and he was barely making ends meet by working at a local electronics shop where he would sell manga and games to teenagers who viewed him with contempt.

Thanks to the sword's urging, Akono has radically changed from who he once was. Though short and rail thin,



he carries himself like a soldier and never appears relaxed or disheveled. He no longer keeps his hair short and now keeps it combed neatly behind his head. Gone are the graphic shirts portraying stylized mecha or warrior schoolgirls, and in their stead are expensive suits and leather shoes. He is not just a man changed by his outer appearance; his insides have hardened, and his mind has become as sharp as a hawk.

Akono is grateful for the sword entering his life and knows that it has played some part in his change, but he also fears where that change is taking him. He feels the power rising up within him when the blade is in his hands, but he feels fear when forced to be apart from it. Increasingly he finds his thoughts drift in political debates, to the point that he can barely get through any verbal altercation without imagining killing his opponent.

**Aspirations:** Rise to hold political office (short term). To take part in a glorious battle and wet his sword with the blood of his enemies (long term).

**Virtue:** Confidence

**Vice:** Pride

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

**Skills:** Academics 1, Athletics 2, Weaponry 3, Martial Arts 2 (Aikido), Politics 2 (Criminal Law), Drive 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 3, Survival 1

**Merits:** Resources 3, Fighting Style: 3, Contacts 1 (Police)

**Integrity:** 7

**Willpower:** 4

**Defense:** 4

**Initiative:** 6

**Health:** 7

**Portraying Akono:** Akono is often quiet and reserved, keeping to himself and watching the situation before voicing his opinion. He is very vocal about the past and the Tokugawa in particular, often portraying the past through rose-colored lenses and flat-out bullshitting when he needs to. When flustered he thinks of his sword, and when he feels threatened he will often put his hand upon it reassuringly. He views himself as a man on a quest to restore a kingdom, and anyone who stands in his way as an obstacle to be overcome and, if need be, destroyed as part of his legend.

## The Wave Men

Warriors without a state, the motorcycle gang known as the Wave Men believe themselves to be modern day Ronin (the literal translation of the word). Their beliefs are inspired by the old Gen'yosha secret society and draw from many right-wing groups across Japan; the Wave Men want nothing less than a return to traditional Japanese morals and respect for the purity of their culture. The fact that they will beat the

shit out of anyone who gets in their way and run protection rackets in Taito is just a happy coincidence for them.

The Wave Men are the ruffians seen in Ueno Park at night, or the motorcycle riders tearing up the highways around the city. Wearing black motorcycle armor with leather jackets around their shoulders, they give off the appearance of modern samurai save for their tendency to wield knives and broken bottles instead of daisho. They take great pride in their rides, and most of their shares of their protection racket go towards making sure each member has a motorcycle cool enough to inspire envy in others but loud enough to inspire fear in people as they tear up the street.

At the forefront of every protest, the Wave Men will have several of their members at attention with bokken swords at their sides like modern-day samurai. Occasionally they will bring real weapons to their demonstrations, but the local prefecture is always quick to have police on hand to prevent any violence. When the public's eye is on them, they act very cool and calm, portraying themselves as a group that wants to support the security and traditions of Japan.

That's the most insidious part about the Wave Men; they make everything they do seem so cool. Teenagers are warned by their parents to keep their distance from them and yet the motorcycles, the cool outfits, and even the violence makes them seem so bad ass. Even teens who have found themselves the victims of these punks still think they are cool, and each year more and more youth join up with the Wave Men.

Their brutal ways and hatred for the current government has put them at odds with the police, but their connections and pockets go very deep, and many times their members are released without any crimes charged against them. The local prefecture has appealed for outside help, and there are rumors that an FBI task force from the United States has been brought in to investigate the gang, but so far the Wave Men have prospered.


## Pay to Play. Give to Live

The Wave Men pay for their flashy appearance by existing on charity and generosity from their community, which is to say they do not exist on charity at all. They have built up a reputation that forces other businesses to cave to their demands and pay them protection money, or risk having the Wave Men vandalize their businesses or harass their clientele in the street.

Though some consider this behavior to be completely dishonorable, the Wave Men consider themselves modern-day samurai who are collecting taxes owed to them by their vassals. The Wave Men do not just take this money and offer nothing in return. In exchange for handing over a percentage of that week's profits, the Wave Men keep their community safe from others. Rival gangs hoping to set up shop in Taito have met more than just harsh words and a brave front put on by the gang. The gang will often display captured pieces of clothing or motorcycles at their local hangouts as proof of their ferocity.

The gang does try to portray itself as inherently noble. The gang will check in on elderly members of the neighborhood and help clean up parks and businesses vandalized by





rival gangs. They will escort people home from bars if called upon, and stand up against oppression and dishonesty. The gang will expect those favors be repaid, considering it a service owed to their gang. If they protect a kid from being beaten in the street by bullies, they will call upon the man to do a task for them. No one can refuse them.

Perhaps ironically, this fringe gang pushes more traditional gangs toward more rational behavior. Some organized crime groups have taken to great acts of philanthropy in opposition to the Wave Men, and have offered protection to some local businesses. Long-standing groups object to the Wave Men's more radical methods, which they fear will only provide short-term gains, but will cause massive law enforcement and community crackdowns in the long term.

## What Do They Do?

The Wave Men are not a typical motorcycle club. They do prefer motorcycles and often wear jackets with their gang label sewn onto it, but the similarities end there. The Wave Men survive by actively offering their support to right-wing extremist groups, and have no qualms about hiring themselves out to politicians needing "volunteers" to help keep crowds in line.

They will rarely try to hide themselves in public, and will race down the streets with their engines blaring as loud as they can. The gang is always given a wide berth by those who walk on the streets, and every so often they those living in the neighborhood will bow before them as a sign of respect (even if it's less respect, more fear). The gang uses this as a way to gauge who fears the gang and who may become a problem. The gang is not above beating someone in the street and forcing him to kiss its members boots as a public display of authority, and any who attempt to film them on their cell phones will be next to be beaten.

## Consequences for Characters

The Wave Men are territorial, and if they see anyone acting strangely in their neighborhoods they will show off their strength by physically harassing them. Though the Wave Men are smart enough to leave figures of authority or the law alone, they will remember incidents and look for ways to get back at them.

This interest in protection rackets and transporting illegal goods will also put the Wave Men at odds with anyone who tries to bring their own gear through the area, even if they are just passing through. The Wave Men have been known

to raid Cheiron Group and Division Six (See **Hunter: The Vigil**) warehouses hoping to gain rare tech that they can sell or use. If the gang gets wind that a secret shipment is moving through its area and it is not slated to receive a cut of it, it will attempt to take it.

## MATATOSHI JOTO

The son of a local ward manager, from a young age Joto has hated the life his parents groomed him for. His parents stressed to him the importance of being a model citizen, but he saw past the lies they tried to sell him. He hated the Japan that changed around him, and as he read through the history of his homeland he felt a longing for how he feels things should be. The Wave Men give him the outlet he needs to get the violence out of him and into others. He wants nothing more than to be known as the face of the Wave Men, and whenever cameras are around he makes sure they are always focused on him.

**Aspirations:** Beat up a celebrity, preferably an American one (short term). Burn down a college building and get caught doing it (long term).

**Virtue:** Fortitude

**Vice:** Rage

**Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 1, Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 1, Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

**Skills:** Athletics 1, Weaponry 3, Brawl 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 2, Intimidation 2 (Threats), Drive 3 (Motorcycle), Streetwise 2,

**Merits:** Fast Reflexes, Resources 1, Fighting Style: 2, Integrity: 7

**Willpower:** 3

**Defense:** 3

**Initiative:** 6

**Health:** 7

**Portraying Joto:** Joto always approaches every situation like he is in charge. He will quickly try to dominate the room with his personality, verbally abusing anyone who may disagree with him and using threats of violence to keep others in line. He's very cunning, and knows when to play it cool and knows when he has met his match. He views himself as a leader, but not a stupid one.



# Appendix One: Equipment

## Modern Weapons

Weapons are a staple of horror stories. Human monsters wield them to terrorize their victims. Inhuman beings shrug off attacks that should kill any living creature. Whether it's a torch and pitchfork, a rusty machete, or a loaded revolver, player characters and their foes often carry or have access to weapons. Guns are nearly ubiquitous in some countries. In others, they are much more tightly controlled, so knives, brass knuckles, and other weapons become more prevalent. Devious terrorists and arson-minded folk make homemade bombs in their basements, while the black market weapons trade is more profitable than ever.

Characters can acquire weapons in any number of ways. Prices fluctuate, and in the worst cities, firearms dealers rarely question proper licenses in the face of cold, hard cash. Theft and extortion also pry weapons away from cold, dead fingers. Acquisition might be as simple as going to the local general surplus store, or it might involve midnight meetings at the docks. The arms race is fraught with peril, certainly, but whoever has the biggest gun has the loudest voice. This of course all depends on location. In our Tokyo chapter, for example, finding a handgun can be nearly impossible, and the consequences are nothing short of draconian when it is used in an urban area.

## Range

Range in the *Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook* is an abstract measure of distance to the target. Exact measurements of meters, feet, and inches rarely matter. More often the unfolding narrative of a scene requires generalized ranges. Is the target close enough to touch? Is the target at short range or medium range? The difference between 16 meters and 20 meters (17.5–21 yards) is often academic. Most scenes need only a simpler understanding of relative distances between actors and objects. In *Hurt Locker*, we measure these distances in range bands.

Bands describe an area's layout from a specific perspective, usually that of the characters. For example, a character standing in an alley just beside the back door to a nightclub is at close range from the door, medium range to the street at the end of the alley, with buildings across the street and beyond standing at long or greater ranges. Range bands can cover vertical distances as well as horizontal. In our example, the character would be considered at medium range from the roof of the nightclub. An unseen crow with unnatural intelligence circling high above could be at long or even extreme range from the alley cat. Many weapons and supernatural powers operate at range, as well. The range band descriptions below include loose approximations of distance for reference, but Storytellers should by no means feel constrained to use these numbers. Use them as a guide, give or take 25%. This is all about intuitive, quick calculation that makes narrative sense.

Note that this describes the maximum range before accuracy suffers so much that attacking becomes improbable, rather than the absolute limit of a projectile's flight.

The root of  
the evil is  
not the construction  
of new, more dreadful  
weapons. It is the spirit  
of conquest.

– Ludwig von Mises



## Close Range

This is the realm of fisticuffs, knife-fights, and savage animal attacks. It's no more than a few meters (or yards) between objects, within the distance of a bounding leap or a surprise charge. At this range, firearms attacks are still deadly, but combatants have a chance to dive for cover, maneuver around the shooter, or wrestle for the gun. Opponents gain a Defense equal to the gun's (Size + 1) against close combat firearms attacks. The target may spend Willpower to add to this Defense as normal, or may Dodge, doubling this number and rolling it as a dice pool. Each success reduces the shooter's total successes; if it reduces the attack's successes to zero, the shooter misses entirely. Close range generally covers anywhere between personal space and five meters (5.5 yards).

## Short Range

Short range is more than a few meters between objects, but no more than 30 meters (roughly 33 yards) – about the distance between bases on a baseball field, or from one end of a suburban backyard to the other. Most thrown weapons operate at this distance, while close combat requires combatants to approach one another in order to fight. Close combat attacks at this distance are impossible without some form of supernatural enhancement. Some Horrors have unnaturally long arms or necks that allow them to strike at short range, for example. As a general rule, short range covers between 5 and 30 meters (5.5–33 yards). Hearing someone speaking at normal volume is difficult at this range, but raised voices or raucous laughter carry easily across the distance.

Targets do not gain Defense against firearms attacks made at short range or beyond. Concealment and cover function normally.

## Medium Range

The distance covered by medium range equals about the length of a high school football field. This is shouting distance. Only thrown attacks made by athletic people (or those boosted by occult power) occur at this level, unless an object is specifically designed to be aerodynamic. Most ranged weapons easily cover this distance, although the shooter's accuracy begins to suffer. Attacks and abilities used at medium range usually function at a distance of between 30 and 100 meters (33–109 yards).

Ranged attacks made at medium range targets suffer a –1 penalty. Most Perception rolls suffer this penalty as well. Noticing something the length of a field away is a challenge for all but the keen-eyed, while hearing is difficult unless sounds are loud. Attempting to see or hear (or smell, in some cases) fine details may suffer additional penalties at the Storyteller's discretion. Concealment penalties to medium range attacks worsen by –1. Cover functions normally.

## Long Range

Long range is the purview of rifles, highly trained archers, and powers based on perception of a target. This is

generally between 100 and 300 meters (109–328 yards), but can vary based on the scene's setting. While many powers and weapons can easily reach this distance on their own, accuracy suffers unless it's a Perception-based attack. This is generally the limit of such abilities. Ranged attack rolls and Perception rolls made at long range suffer a –2 penalty. Attempting to notice fine details may suffer additional penalties at the Storyteller's discretion. Shooting at distant targets in cover is more difficult. Concealment levies an additional –2 penalty to long range attacks. Cover functions with an effective +1 Durability.

## Extreme Range

The longest distances (300+ meters, 328+ yards) generally exceed the range of most attacks. Without the use of high-powered equipment or supernatural abilities, if a weapon can reach this distance at all the attack roll is reduced to a chance die. Some rare weapons naturally reach extreme range, such as artillery or sniper rifles. Ranged attack rolls made at extreme range (if the attack in question can even reach it) suffer a –4 penalty. Perception rolls suffer a similar penalty; those made to notice fine details are reduced to a chance die at best. Concealment penalties worsen by an additional –2. Cover functions at +2 effective Durability.

## Thrown Weapons

Characters may only throw objects with a Size less than their Strength. Most thrown attacks (those made by characters with Strength 3 or less) have a distance of close range. If the object is aerodynamic, add one range band. Characters with Strength 4 or 5 can throw at short range, or medium range if the weapon is aerodynamic. Only characters with vast superhuman strength (7+) or some form of powers (such as a witch's space-warping spell) can throw objects at extreme range.

## Range and Movement

If range bands are an abstraction of distance, how does movement work? Characters have a Speed rating that determines how many meters they can travel in a given turn. Normally, characters can move their Speed in addition to an instant action during a turn. By sacrificing their action to move at a run, they can move at twice their Speed. When using range bands, exact Speed ratings matter less for the purposes of movement (although they work as normal for chases). Assume that each successive range band takes longer to move through than the previous one. For example, moving from close to short range can be done with a single movement, but moving from medium to long range requires two. Storytellers can use the following guidelines if they want Speed to play more of a role in moving range bands. Note that this is the total number of movement actions, whether they're part of an instant action, taken as part of a charge, or simply a double move.



## Speed and Movement

Speed	Close to Short	Short to Medium	Medium to Long	Long to Extreme
5–9	1	2	3	4
10–15	1	2	2	3
16–20	1	1	2	3
21–30	1	1	2	3
31–40	0*	1	2	3
41–50	0*	1	2	3
51–60	0*	1	1	2
61–70	0*	1	1	2
71–80	0*	1	1	2
81–90	0*	0*	1	1
91–100+	0*	0*	0*	1

\* A rating of zero means that the character can move straight from that range band to another range band without technically using up a “move” action. Thus, a character with a Speed of 45 can move straight from close range to medium range in a single move, or to long range by forsaking her action for movement instead.

## Ammo and Capacity

In **Hurt Locker**, ranged weapons have a capacity trait, which measures how much they may be used within a scene. Note that a single attack roll doesn’t always represent a single shot, especially without the Trigger Discipline Merit (p. 143). An untrained victim trying to ward off a Horror with a handgun is likely going to fire many times, rather than just once. A skilled shooter wastes less ammo and knows how to get the most out of her weapon.

A character may acquire extra “reloads” for a weapon at an Availability one dot less than the Availability rating of the weapon itself. These last for the scene in which they’re acquired (or the one immediately after, if that is the action scene in question). She may also make a Wits + Firearms roll to recover ammunition during a scene, if the opportunity presents itself (such as scrounging from the bodies of fallen enemies). Finally, she may also use the Loaded for Bear Merit (p. 143) to have extra attacks with a weapon in a scene. Reloads used this way require an action. If a character otherwise fires her weapon more times than makes sense (such as a lucky streak without failures) before reloading, players and Storytellers may assume that the character is reloading during the scene as part of her attack action.

### High Capacity

High Capacity weapons include most fully automatic firearms. They typically contain large clips (or in some cases, batteries or fuel tanks). High capacity weapons only run out of ammo following a long burst, two medium bursts, or three short bursts. On a dramatic failure, they jam instead, requiring a Dexterity + Firearms roll to fix. They are usually capable of short, medium, and long bursts.

### Medium Capacity

Most pistols and combat shotguns are medium capacity weapons. They are usually capable of short and medium bursts. Medium capacity weapons empty following a medium burst, two short bursts, or on a dramatic failure.

### Low Capacity

Shotguns, most rifles, bows, and crossbows are low capacity. They can perform short bursts only, representing a frantic emptying of the weapon against the target or a rapid series of shots in desperation. Low capacity weapons empty on a short burst or a failure on the attack roll.

### Single Shot

Many explosives fall into this category. This means that the weapon has a single use in a scene unless additional shots are prepared (see the Loaded for Bear Merit, p. 143) or acquired during the scene.

### Burst Fire

Most ranged weapons (except for single use, of course) are capable of bursts. This doesn’t necessarily mean fully automatic fire. Rather, it means a character fires off as many shots as possible in a few seconds. It might be several sustained bursts of automatic fire, or a handful of shotgun blasts pumped rapidly into an approaching monster. Burst firing quickly drains a weapon’s ammo, following the rules described above for capacity.





# Firearms and Ranged Weaponry

Guns are common in most of the Western world. At the extreme end, in the United States alone some estimates claim that one in three households owns a pistol – not all of them legally. For some, gun ownership is a matter of pride and practicality; the right to bear arms is one of the most basic freedoms afforded a citizen. Others simply desire to own one for protection, and fervently hope every night they walk the streets that they'll never have to use it. For entirely too many, the luxury of choice vanishes in a puff of smoke. Oppressive regimes arm their soldiers and hold their frightened citizens at collective gunpoint. Insurgents use ill-gotten weapons (often supplied by foreign militaries at a high price) to wage war on one another and ideological enemies.

Guns are the most popular ranged weapons in many chronicles, though not the only ones. Bows are a popular choice for hunting enthusiasts and archery contests. Thrown knives are less common outside of novelty acts, while in some parts of the world people use bolas and thrown nets in hunting and fishing. In *Chronicles of Darkness*, ancient vampires and devoted monster hunters might incorporate some of these archaic ranged weapons into their arsenals as a matter of preference or efficiency. With the horrors that lurk in the night, sometimes the best weapon is the most unusual.

The traits listed below assume a more generic view of each type of weapon. In the *Storytelling System*, the differences between two 9mm manufacturers is largely a matter of flavor. The listings below favor a simpler view. For example, a "Light Pistol" might be a Beretta 9mm Luger, or a Glock 17. Their game traits remain the same regardless of model, although for style and descriptive purposes, each group or individual might emphasize different models. Players and Storytellers are encouraged to further modify these traits to suit their needs.

## Handguns

Pistols are the most common choice of defensive firearm. Used by law enforcement, street thugs, cautious citizens, and most members of organized crime, pistols are versatile, easily concealable, and effective. They come in many sizes and shapes,

from semi-automatic pistols (also called "autoloaders") to cheap and durable revolvers. Autoloaders offer the advantages of versatility, greater ammo capacity, and ease of use. Revolvers are more rugged (offering a +1 bonus to any rolls made to fix the gun) and reliable, often cheaper, and easier to maintain.

## Shotguns

Shotguns provide powerful close-quarters firepower. They generally employ two types of ammo: shells containing small pellets called "shot," or solid slugs. Like handguns they come in a variety of shapes and sizes. The pump-action is perhaps the most iconic shotgun, but they also come in double-barreled, breech-loaded, semi- and fully automatic, even bolt- and lever-action forms. Shotguns inflict heavy damage with less precision required than a handgun. As such, they are ideal for both hunting and defensive purposes.

## Rifles

Rifles are the quintessential long gun, offering long-range firepower with accuracy. They come in forms ranging from hunting rifles to powerful sniper rifles, and fully automatic assault rifles. Favored by marksmen and military, rifles typically provide high stopping power at a distance; but some, like assault rifles, offer devastating close-quarters combat utility. Rifles can support a wide variety of calibers, from lighter target-shooting models up to anti-tank rifles capable of penetrating the thickest armor.

## Bows and Crossbows

Bows and crossbows are used for hunting, target practice, and athletic events the world over. An ancient weapon, the bow's relative simplicity offers several advantages over conventional firearms. Many models are cheaper than guns and easier to maintain; the simplest bows and arrows can be constructed by those skilled in *Survival*. This requires an extended *Dexterity + Survival* action, with a target number of 5 times the bow's minimum *Strength* in successes. Each roll represents about four hours' work. A basic bow attack uses *Dexterity + Athletics* or *Firearms* – the player may choose. A bow's *Damage* rating depends on its *Size* and the user's own *Strength*. Crossbows use their own mechanical action to determine *Damage*, and use *Dexterity + Firearms* to attack.

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## Guns Don't Work That Way

We feature rules and examples in here that aren't meant to model real-world firearms usage. So, you may look at these rules and know that the real weapons don't necessarily work that way. This is intentional. We're modeling horror stories here, and guns rarely serve an identical function in horror stories to their real-world counterparts.

For example, with our *Capacity* rules, guns may fire more than they would realistically. That's because running out of bullets is less a tactical consideration, and more something that delivers drama to the scenario. Running out of bullets should be more about "oh shit" moments than meticulous counting.

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## Ranged Weapons

Type	Damage	Ranges	Capacity	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Tags	Example
Light Pistol	+1	Long	Medium	0	2	1	••	n/a	Glock 17 (9mm)
Heavy Pistol	+2	Long	Medium	-2	3	1	•••	n/a	Desert Eagle
Light Revolver	+1	Medium	Medium	6	0	2	••	n/a	SW M29 (.38 Special)
Heavy Revolver	+2	Low	Long	6	-2	3	••	n/a	SW M29 (.44 Magnum)
SMG, small	+1	Medium	High	-2	2	1	•••	n/a	Ingram Mac-10 (9mm)
SMG, heavy	+2	Medium	High	-3	3	2	•••	n/a	HK MP-5 (9mm)
Rifle	+4	Extreme	Low	-5	2	3	••	n/a	Remington M-700 (30.06)
Rifle, Big Game*	+5	Extreme	Low	-5	3	4	•••••	Stun	Winchester Model 70 Classic Safari Express
Assault Rifle	+3	Long	High	-3	3	3	•••	9-again	Stern-Aug (5.56mm)
Shotgun	+3	Medium	Low	-4	3	2	••	9-again	Remington M870 (12-gauge)
Short Bow	+2	Medium	Low	-3	2	3	••	n/a	
Long Bow	+3	Medium	Low	-4	3	4	••	n/a	
Crossbow	+2	Long	Low	-5	3	3	•••	n/a	
Pepper Spray	+0	Close	Low	0	1	1	•	Slow	
Stun Gun**	+0	Close	Medium	-1	1	1	•	Slow, Stun	

**Damage:** Add this number of bonus successes to a successful attack. Firearms and bows deal lethal damage, unless some equipment or power indicates otherwise.

**Range:** The weapon's normal maximum range. Shooters may make an attack at up to one range band beyond the maximum, but the attack is reduced to a chance die.

**Capacity:** A measure of how often the weapon can be used in a scene, and its burst ability.

**Initiative:** The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the gun.

**Strength:** The minimum Strength needed to use the gun effectively. A wielder with lower Strength suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls.

**Size:** 1 = Can be fired one-handed and hidden in a pocket or the like; 2 = Must be fired two-handed and can be hidden in a coat; 3 = Can be fired two-handed but not hidden on one's person.

**Availability:** The cost in Resources, or level of an appropriate Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

**Tags:** This lists the weapon's tags, if any, denoting its special qualities.

**Examples:** This is an example of this type of weapon.

\* Big game rifles and other heavy weapons suffer from high recoil. If not properly braced and set to handle the recoil, the shooter takes 1 bashing damage and suffers the Knocked Down Tilt.

\*\* Bonus successes don't add to damage



**Bow:** Damage is equal to the bow's minimum Strength or the archer's own Strength, whichever is lower. Penalties for insufficient Strength are doubled. Most bows have low capacity and a medium range. "Reloading" consists of drawing and readying another arrow. Compound bows, made to use pulleys rather than raw strength, add a range band. Bows can be used to deliver a stake through the heart of a target (-3 penalty to the attack roll, with 5 damage required).

**Crossbow:** Crossbows have a long range but low capacity. Crossbows can stake targets using the same rules as bows described above. Crossbows always use the Firearms Skill, not Athletics.

### Submachine Guns

True to their name, submachine guns are miniaturized machine guns designed to be fired by an individual. Submachine guns, or "SMGs," fire pistol ammunition at fully automatic rates. SMGs see use in law enforcement and criminal enterprises for their greater ease of use over assault rifles. Though SMGs pack less punch than assault rifles, they function well in close-quarters urban environments.

### Nonlethal Weapons

Police and citizens without licenses (or the desire) to carry firearms can employ nonlethal weapons. Stun guns, pepper spray, Tasers, all of them are effective at stopping an opponent without killing him. Weapons like Tasers (and their melee-ranged cousins, the stun guns) use electricity to

disable targets. Pepper sprays assault the eyes and nose with extremely acrid chemicals capable of incapacitating most normal people. In both cases, the effects are temporary, but usually enable the wielder to apprehend or escape her target. The efficacy of these weapons varies greatly against supernatural entities.

### Heavy Weaponry

Heavy weapons like flamethrowers, grenades, and mounted machine guns are difficult and illegal for civilians to acquire. Even police special responses units rarely have access to such firepower. These weapons are powerful but very flashy and expensive. Characters using these are sure to draw attention from local authorities.

### Explosives

Explosives inflict heavy damage over a large area. In addition to grenades, homemade bombs, and the like, characters can sometimes improvise explosives, such as shooting a gas tank. Explosives work differently from other weapons, because they are not often used to attack single targets. All explosives possess the following traits:

**Damage:** Damage represents the initial detonation. At ground zero, this is aggravated damage automatically inflicted on everything in the radius. Objects downgrade a number of levels equal to their Durability; any remaining aggravated damage bypasses Durability entirely. Victims caught in the primary blast area suffer



## Grenade Chart

Type	Damage	Initiative	Blast Area	Force	Range	Strength	Size	Availability	Tags
Frag, Standard	+2	0	10	3	Thrown (A)	2	1	• • • •	Knockdown, Stun
Frag, Heavy	+3	-1	5	4	Thrown (A)	2	1	• • • •	Knockdown, Stun
Molotov	+1	-2	3	2	Thrown	2	2	•	Incendiary
Pipe Bomb	+1	-1	5	2	Thrown	2	1	•	Inaccurate, Stun
Smoke	+0	10	—		Thrown (A)	2	1	• •	Concealment
Stun	+0	0	5	2	Thrown (A)	2	1	• •	Knockdown, Stun
Thermite	+3	5	4		Thrown (A)	2	1	• • • •	AP 8, Incendiary
White Phosphorous	+3	5	4		Thrown (A)	2	1	• • • •	AP 3, Incendiary, Concealment

this rating in automatic lethal damage instead. Anyone caught in the secondary blast area takes this amount in bashing damage.

**Blast Area:** This is the diameter (in meters or yards) of the explosion. Explosives have three blast areas: ground zero, primary, and secondary. The number listed is for the primary blast area, while the secondary blast area is twice this range. This trait is listed in three values separated by slashes. The first number is the ground zero blast area, the second number is the primary blast area, and the secondary blast area is twice this range.

**Force:** All victims hit by an explosion suffer additional damage based on its Force rating. Roll Force as an attack dice pool. Defense does not apply to this attack unless bolstered by supernatural speed. Mundane armor only counts as half its ballistic rating when protecting against explosions. If the roll is successful, add the explosive's Damage rating in automatic successes for additional damage. The damage type is determined by the blast area.

Explosives also inflict Tilts on their victims. Those that inflict damage all inflict the Deafened Tilt in addition to any other tags they possess.

**Range:** The typical Range of the explosive. Only explosives capable of being fired or thrown will have ranges. Thrown explosives use Strength or Dexterity + Athletics to attack, while fired explosives use Dexterity + Firearms. Lacking a Heavy Weapons specialty imposes an additional -1 on the attack roll when firing man-portable artillery. An (A) listed next to the range denotes that the weapon is considered aerodynamic.

**Initiative:** The Initiative penalty suffered when wielding the weapon.

**Strength:** The minimum Strength necessary to use the explosive weapon. This trait only applies when wielding an explosive capable of being fired or thrown.

**Availability:** The cost in Resources or levels of an appropriate Social Merit to obtain the explosive. Note that most

of these weapons have a very high cost, representing the difficulties associated with their acquisition on the black market.

**Effects:** This lists any special effects pertinent to the weapon. Note that any weapons listed as Armor Piercing only apply their AP values to the primary target, except for white phosphorous and thermite ordinance. Those weapons scour through everything in their blast area with equal ease.

## Grenades

As portable explosive firepower, grenades are essentially small handheld bombs activated by pulling a pin and releasing a handle. The military employs them, and police often use variants like tear gas grenades or "flashbang" grenades. They come in lethal and nonlethal varieties as shown below. Special rules for different types of grenades are detailed in the following section.

Hand grenades have a throwing range as described earlier in this chapter. They are considered aerodynamic.

**"Cooking" Grenades and Time to Explosion:** After the pin is pulled and the handle released, a grenade detonates in 3 to 5 seconds. Typically this means that a grenade explodes at the beginning of the thrower's next turn. The delay potentially gives targets an opportunity to react. To limit this, characters can "cook off" a grenade, by holding it even after the handle has been released and burning up some of the timer before throwing it. Effectively the character arms the grenade but delays throwing it until a later Initiative. He can even hold it into the next turn. The grenade gains an Initiative equal to that of the character who armed it. The character chooses the Initiative at which he will throw it, delaying his action. He can even hold it until the next turn, throwing it to explode at the character's original Initiative, detonating before anyone slower can react.

Grenades are unpredictable and "cooking" a grenade can be dangerous; on a dramatic failure, the grenade explodes in

## Grenade Launchers

Type	Ranges	Capacity	Strength	Size	Availability
Stand-Alone Launcher	Long	Low	3	3	••••
Under-Barrel Launcher	Long	Low	2	2	••••
Automatic Grenade Launcher	Extreme	High	n/a	4	•••••

**Note:** Stand-alone launchers suffer the same heavy recoil as big game rifles.

## Grenade Ammunition Chart

Type	Damage	Blast Area	Force	Size	Availability	Tags
Baton*	+1	—	5	1	••	Knockdown, Stun
Buckshot	+1	10	4	1	••••	Knockdown
HE	+3	10	4	1	••••	Knockdown
HEDP	+2	10	3	1	••••	Knockdown, AP 4
Smoke	(as hand grenade)					
Stun	(as hand grenade)					
Tear Gas	(as hand grenade)					

**Note:** \*No explosion

## Flamethrowers

Type	DMG	Initiative	Ranges	Capacity	Strength	Size	Availability	Tags
Civilian	Special	-4	Short	High	3	4	•••	Incendiary
Military	Special	-5	Medium	High	3	4	•••••	Incendiary

the character's hand, putting him at ground zero. This almost certainly inflicts the Arm Wrack Tilt permanently upon the character, and probably worse.

**Fragmentation Grenades:** "Frag" grenades spray shrapnel in all directions. While the blast is harmful, the burning hot sharp fragments are the deadliest part of the explosion.

**Stun Grenades:** Also called "flashbangs," stun grenades give off a blinding flash and deafening bang (earning their nickname) upon detonation. They produce no shrapnel and are designed instead to disorient and incapacitate targets without killing them. Police SWAT units and counter-terrorist units make use of flashbangs. Monster hunters sometimes use them as a nonlethal means of acquiring supplies, or as a way to disorient their foes before closing in. Stun grenades have short fuses, and if the Storyteller uses the optional rule above, detonates on the Initiative after the grenade's handle is released. Otherwise, they blow up at the end of the turn in which they are thrown. Stun grenades do not inflict damage, but instead force targets in the primary blast area to roll Stamina + Resolve at -4 or suffer the Blinded, Deafened, and Stunned Tilts. Anyone caught at ground zero makes the same roll with a -5 penalty. Targets in the secondary blast area roll at a -2 penalty instead, and only become Blinded and Deafened.

**Incendiary Grenades:** Incendiary grenades contain chemicals that ignite and produce extreme temperatures upon detonation. They continue to burn for 30 to 45 seconds (10 to 15 turns) after exploding, and as a result quickly burn through most non-resistant materials. Variants include thermite grenades, which are designed to destroy durable objects (as anyone who has seen videos of thermite burning through an engine block in seconds can attest) and other obstacles. The molten iron produced by thermite grenades burns at 4000 degrees Fahrenheit, scouring straight through armor and object Durability. The chemical fire is considered to have Armor Piercing 8, with only supernatural armors resulting from force fields or the like providing any protection at all.

Another type of incendiary is a white phosphorous (or "Willy-Pete") grenade, designed to start fires and create obscuring smoke clouds. The fires created by the Willy-Pete grenade cover its entire blast area, with an Armor Piercing 3 effect; and the device also functions as a smoke grenade.

All types of incendiary grenades count as inferno-sized chemical fires for the purposes of damage (usually 6 lethal damage per turn to anything caught in the blaze). They are difficult or impossible to extinguish over an area without the use of occult powers, but a burning character can sometimes douse herself by rolling on the ground, diving into water, or similar methods.



**Smoke Grenades:** Rather than exploding for damage, smoke grenades release thick smoke upon ignition. Colored smoke grenades serve to mark specific locations to other observers, while white smoke grenades are used to hide an approach or escape attempt. The cloud lasts 2 minutes (40 turns) without accounting for strong winds or similar conditions. Smoke grenades fill the primary blast area with smoke that inflicts the most severe Blinded Tilt on anyone caught in the cloud. Victims in the secondary blast area suffer the lesser version of the Tilt. Attacks made on targets hidden by the smoke suffer a -4 penalty. Escaping the cloud ends the Tilt.

**Tear Gas Grenades:** Tear gas grenades function identically to smoke grenades, but instead use tear gas. The gas itself acts like a poison with a Toxicity of 3-5; failure to resist the gas with a Stamina + Resolve (minus Toxicity) roll causes victims to suffer its Toxicity in penalties to all actions until free of the gas.

**Improvised Grenades:** Pipe bombs are not technically grenades but function similarly. Usually the wielder lights the fuse and throws the bomb at the target. Pipe bombs are typically constructed out of simple materials, and thus are a favorite of insurgents and would-be monster hunters: gunpowder in a length of pipe, supplemented by nails or bits of metal to increase the deadliness of the explosion. Lighting the fuse takes an action, and the bomb is ready to throw on the following turn. It detonates at the same speed as a grenade.

Molotov cocktails are bottles full of gasoline, with a gas-soaked rag for a wick. Once lit and thrown, they break upon impact and spread fire over the blast area. They do not use the optional grenade Initiative rule, instead functioning like pipe bombs: light the wick on one turn, throw it the next, and it detonates immediately upon impact.

## Grenade Launchers

Hand grenades are limited by how far a wielder can throw them. Grenade launchers exist to launch grenades at greater distances than a human can throw. They fire similar types of grenades as hand grenades, but because the projectile might travel for several seconds in midair, they use impact fuses instead of time delays.

Grenade launchers use Dexterity + Firearms. The launcher itself has no Damage bonus because it does not add to its user's accuracy. Successes on attack rolls still add to the damage inflicted against the primary targets and secondary targets (with the addition of Force ratings), as usual.

**Stand-Alone Launchers:** These are large, bulky firearms that shoot four-inch grenade rounds.

**Under-Barrel Launchers:** Some grenade launchers come in the form of underslung rifle attachments. They function like stand-alone grenade launchers in most ways except that they are attached to an assault rifle.

**Automatic Grenade Launcher:** Grenade machine guns fire grenades at fully-automatic speed. They require heavy tripods or vehicle mounting, and cause catastrophic damage to their targets.

Most launchers can shoot equivalents of normal grenades, but launchers have access to several unique types: high explosive (HE), illumination, baton, and buckshot rounds. HE

and high explosive dual-purpose (HEDP) rounds (a variant designed to penetrate armor) use powerful explosions to inflict heavy damage. Illumination rounds are parachute flares, while baton rounds function as bludgeoning, nonlethal projectiles. Buckshot rounds act much like oversized shotgun shells, decimating opponents up close.

All launched grenades except baton and buckshot rounds have a minimum arming distance of 15 meters (16.4 yards). If they strike a target inside this range, they will not explode, although they still inflict serious damage (like a big shotgun slug).

## Flamethrowers

Flamethrowers shoot streams of ignited liquid from a pressurized fuel reserve through a gun housing. An ignition system at the end of the spray nozzle ignites the fuel as it leaves the weapon, dousing the target in flame. Civilian models are used to clear brush or start controlled burns, but work just as well against vampires, werewolves, and other creatures of the night. Military-grade flamethrowers are used at greater distances, primarily to burn out fortifications.

The size of a fire sprayed by a flamethrower is equivalent to that of a bonfire (Damage 2) and burns with the heat of a gasoline fire (+2 Damage). Attack rolls use Dexterity + Firearms, but the user suffers a -2 penalty to attack if she does not possess a Heavy Weapons Specialty in Firearms. When using the flamethrower for a long burst, Defense does not apply to this spreading attack. Armor only helps if it's some kind of flame-resistant suit. If the attacker gains one or more successes, she inflicts damage up to the maximum the fire can inflict (4), as well as sets the target ablaze (inflicting the Burning Tilt).

## Melee Weaponry

From knives to saps, brass knuckles to crowbars, and good old-fashioned clubs, melee weapons have been used since antiquity. Their widespread availability even in modern times makes them ideal for use in self-defense, criminal activities, or confronting Horrors in the Chronicles of Darkness. They can be crude, hand-fashioned implements, or blades forged in a process refined over generations. While knives and brass knuckles are common and available at many places (of varying legalities), oddities like swords and axes tend to draw attention from local police. Vampires and other ancient creatures may favor archaic melee weapons, but most of them tend to occupy spaces in museums or private collections.

## Blunt Weapons

Hammers, clubs, brass knuckles — blunt weapons smash things, to put it simply. They're great for destroying objects, and crush flesh and bones with equal ease. Hammers come in nail-driving and sledgehammer varieties, police officers often use batons ("nightsticks"), and even a baseball bat can make for an effective weapon at need. Most blunt weapons have the "Knockdown" special quality, and some have the "Stun" quality, being especially good at knocking targets for a loop.



## Melee Weapons

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Tags	Effects
<b>BLADED WEAPONS</b>							
Battle Axe	+3	−4	3	3	• • •	9-again, Two-handed	
Fire Axe	+2	−4	3	3	• •	9-again, Two-Handed	
Great Sword	+4	−5	4	3	• • • •	9-again, Two-Handed	
Hatchet	+1	−2	1	1	• •		
Knife, Small	+0	0	1	1	•	Thrown (A)	
Knife, Hunting	+1	−1	1	2	• •		Enhance: Crafts or Survival
Machete	+2	−2	2	2	• •		
Rapier	+1	−2	1	2	• •	Piercing I	
Sword	+3	−3	2	3	• • •		+1 Durability (katana) or +1 Initiative (long sword)
<b>BLUNT WEAPONS</b>							
Brass Knuckles	+0	0	1	1	•	Brawl	
Metal Club	+2	−2	2	2	•	Stun	
Nightstick	+1	−1	2	2	• •	Stun	
Nunchaku	+1	+1	2	2	• •	Stun	−1 Damage and Initiative without Dexterity 3+
Sap	+0	−1	2	2	•	Stun	
Sledgehammer	+3	−4	3	3	•	Knockdown, Stun	
<b>EXOTIC WEAPONS</b>							
Catchpole	+0	−3	2	2	•	Grapple, Reach	
Chain	+1	−3	2	2	•	Grapple, Inaccurate, Reach	
Chainsaw	+3	−6	4	3	• • •	Bleed, Inaccurate, Two-Handed	
Kusari Gama (chain)							Functions as chain
Kusari Gama (sickle)							Functions as large knife
Shield (small)	+0	−2	2	2	• •	Concealed	
Shield (large)	+2	−4	3	3	• •	Concealed	
Stake	+0	−4	1	1	n/a		
Stun Gun	+0	−1	1	1	•	Stun	Bonus successes don't add to damage
Tiger Claws	+1	−1	2	2	• •	Brawl	
Whip	+0	−2	1	2	•	Grapple, Stun	Dexterity + Weaponry to attack



## Melee Weapons (Continued)

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Tags	Effects
<b>IMPROVISED WEAPONS</b>							
Blowtorch	+0	-2	2	2	• •	Incendiary, Piercing 2	Inflicts Blinded Tilt on attacker and target unless either or both take a -1 penalty to Defense
Board w/Nail	+1	-3	2	2	n/a	Fragile, Stun	
Improvised Shield	+0	-4	2	2	•	Concealed	
Nail Gun	+0	-2	2	2	•	Inaccurate, Piercing 1	Strength + Firearms to attack
Shovel	+1	-3	2	2	•	Knockdown	
Tire Iron	+1	-3	2	2	• •	Guard, Inaccurate	
Spear	+2	-2	2	4	•	Reach, Two-Handed	
Staff	+1	-1	2	4	•	Knockdown, Reach, Two-Handed	

**Type:** A weapon's type is a general classification that applies to anything your character picks up. A metal club could mean a hammer, a metal baseball bat, or a crowbar, while a hatchet could be a meat cleaver or an antique hand-axe. Likewise, a machete can also represent small swords. The differences between weapons of these types are as much a matter of description as anything else; use the closest appropriate listing, and feel free to modify the trait by a point or two here and there to represent differences. Usually, increasing the weapon's Availability can also add a point to its Damage rating, lessen the Initiative penalty, or add a feature like Knockdown or Stun, representing the cost and benefits of acquiring a real quality weapon, instead of a replica.

**Damage:** Add this number of bonus successes to a successful attack. Weapons always deal lethal damage.

**Initiative:** The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the weapon. If using more than one weapon, take the higher penalty and increase it by 1.

**Strength:** The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with lower Strength suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls.

**Size:** 1 = Can be hidden in a hand; 2 = Can be hidden in a coat; 3+ = Cannot be hidden.

**Availability:** The cost in Resources dots or levels of appropriate Social Merits needed to acquire the weapon.

**Tags:** This lists the weapon's tags, if any, denoting its special qualities.


**Examples:** This is an example of this type of weapon.

## Bladed Weapons

Knives are ubiquitous weapons anywhere people live — hunting knives, switchblades, pocket knives, Leathermans, they come in thousands of varieties. Axes combine elements of blunt and bladed weapons. Swords rarely see use outside of dusty collections, but some ancient beings or those who fancy themselves a bit more refined (and crazy) wield them against one another. Most of the larger weapons are difficult to conceal, but can quickly cripple opponents by striking at vital points.

## Exotic Weapons

Chain weapons, whips, and exotic blades imported from other cultures make up the category of strange weapons characters might encounter. Few people use these in modern nights, but the eccentric creatures of the night might employ them to sow confusion, terror, or simply for a style their enemies have rarely encountered. A vampire Embraced centuries ago might be skilled with a kusari gama, which consists of a heavy weight attached to a length of chain and a straight-bladed, handheld sickle. Such weapons, often adapted from



farmer's tools or primitive weapons, make for memorable encounters when used in a modern setting.

**Catchpole:** Used to catch animals, this device is an aluminum pole several feet in length, with a cable noose at its end. Animal handlers loop these nooses around an animal's head, and a button in the handle allows them to tighten the cable. These poles can be used against people, as well. The catch pole uses Strength + Weaponry to attack, with a called shot penalty for targeting the creature's head. Once caught, a victim can try to escape by making a Strength + Brawl roll, but it suffers an additional -2 penalty (maximum of -5) from the wire cable around her neck. She can also try to destroy the catchpole, instead of escaping.

**Shields:** Few people in the modern day outside of SWAT officers and reenactors use shields. A character wielding a shield defensively adds its Size to her Defense, and uses its Size as a concealment modifier against ranged attacks. Shields can also be used to bash, but cannot be used defensively in the same turn in which they're used for attack.

**Whips:** A whip is 6 to 10 feet long, made of braided or corded leather, and sometimes tipped with metal. Whips use Dexterity instead of Strength to attack, since the precise snap of the whip's tip requires deftness instead of brute strength. The weapon can be used to grapple (but not once in a grapple), or can target an opponent's weapon. This suffers a penalty equal to one less than the normal called shot penalty for the targeted area (usually a hand). Success means the opponent must succeed on a reflexive Strength + Stamina roll, minus the attacker's Dexterity, to retain hold of the weapon. If the opponent fails, he drops the weapon but takes no damage.

Unlike most weapons, a whip inflicts bashing damage unless tipped with something metal. In that case, the whip's Damage bonus becomes 0, but it inflicts lethal damage instead.

## Improvised Weapons

Improvised weapons include any weapon modified from a common object, such as a broken chair leg, or the use of a non-weapon tool like a shovel or nail gun as a weapon. In some cases, these weapons function as appropriate weapons of another type (like the aforementioned chair leg serving as a nightstick), but suffer a penalty of -1 to Damage and Initiative ratings compared to those weapons. Some improvised weapons have additional rules, described below.

**Blowtorch:** A blowtorch can inflict horrendous damage thanks to a focused jet of fire, but it is difficult to wield and can blind the wielder as easily as it does her victim. Both the attacker and her target must either suffer a -1 penalty to Defense while in close combat as they avert their eyes, or else both suffer the Blinded Tilt. The damage a blowtorch inflicts is fire damage, and thus it poses a great threat to creatures vulnerable to fire. Using a blowtorch is dangerous, however; on a failed Strength + Weaponry roll in a grapple, the user suffers one point of lethal damage.

**Board with a Nail in it:** A trusty weapon for those without the luxury of time or money to acquire a real weapon, this represents

a 2x4 or similar with a nail hammered through the end of it. While it is effective, it is also fragile: each point of damage in excess of the weapon's Durability also applies to its own Structure.

**Nail Gun:** Nail guns are difficult to use in combat. They require pressure against the target, which means a successful Strength + Firearms attack, against which the opponent's Defense applies. Nail guns can be used in grapples. They can also be modified (with a Wits + Crafts roll) to function as though the contact guard is always depressed, and so be fired like a handgun. If successful, the nail gun functions as a light revolver (but retains its Armor Piercing quality) and uses Dexterity + Firearms to attack.

It's possible to pin an opponent's appendage or clothing to a surface with a nail. Doing so as a called shot requires a -3 penalty if attempting to nail a hand or a foot, or a -5 penalty if attempting to pin via loose clothing or the like. The attacker's Defense also applies to this roll, even if the nail gun has been modified to shoot. If the attacker succeeds and inflicts damage equal to or greater than the victim's Stamina (or succeeds at all, if targeting clothing), the victim is pinned to a surface and suffers the Pinned Tilt (see p. 143).

## Armor

Armor comes in many forms, from antique sets of plate armor to modern Kevlar and riot gear. Soldiers wear the latest in maneuverable but durable ballistic armor, and so do private security forces. Armor is expensive and noticeable, but clever or well-connected characters can acquire it. Police and other authorities are likely to take a very suspicious view of anyone openly walking around in armor, making it difficult to go unnoticed when armored up.

Armor provides two ratings separated by a slash. The first number is general armor, reducing the total damage taken by one point per level of armor, starting with the most severe type of damage. The second number is ballistic armor, which applies to firearms attacks. Each point of ballistic armor downgrades one point of damage from lethal to bashing.

If the armor has both ballistic and general ratings, apply the ballistic armor first. For example, a punk shoots an armored SWAT officer (wearing a Kevlar vest) with a .22 for three points of damage. The Kevlar vest is rated 1/3, which means that the ballistic armor downgrades all three points of damage to bashing, and then the general rating subtracts one from the total damage dealt. In this case, the officer takes two points of bashing damage — painful, but better than a collapsed lung!

A successful attack always inflicts at least one bashing damage to an armored mortal target. Vampires, mages protected by spells, and werewolves with thick hides weather damage more easily and aren't subject to this restriction.

**Reinforced Clothing:** Thick leather jackets and pants can help turn aside knives or soak up a little of a gunshot's force.

**Sports Gear:** Cheap and easily obtainable, sports gear is designed to protect players from harsh impacts. Because players must remain mobile, sports equipment is designed to be the least cumbersome possible.



**Kevlar Vest:** A vest capable of stopping bullets with interwoven plates of Kevlar. Does not protect the head or face.

**Flak Jacket:** The listing below describes modern flak jackets with true bulletproof protection. Original flak jackets were ultimately ineffective at stopping bullets and have become outmoded.

**Full Riot Gear:** Full riot gear offers the ultimate in protection. Soft, flexible Kevlar plating repels bullets and protects all extremities. Riot gear sometimes comes with large bulletproof shields, which function as large shields except that they have a ballistic armor rating of 2 (which stacks with the armor's ratings).

**Bomb Suit:** These tremendously bulky suits made of Kevlar are made to protect wearers from explosions, but also work well against rifle rounds. They can absorb a single explosion before degrading to half protection value, but work exceedingly well at saving the wearer's life.

**Leather Armor:** Leather armor consists of hardened leather shirts and leggings. It provides good protection against blunt attacks.

**Lorica Segmentata:** This armor consists of segmented metal plates, made famous by Roman legionaries. The vampires of the Lancea et Sanctum still fashion and wear this armor in their ceremonies and sometimes into battle.

**Chainmail:** Fashioned of interlocking metal rings, chainmail protects the wearer's torso better than leather armor. A full suit of chain mail can protect the entire body at an additional cost of one dot.

**Plate Mail:** Plate mail is heavy and cumbersome, consisting of thick metal armor fitted to the body. It protects the wearer to a great degree (rivaling that of modern armor), but also slows her down. It's quite ostentatious, but sometimes creatures of inhuman age and tastes will favor it over more practical armor.

## Equipment Tags

The modern world hosts a staggering variety of weapons, each with their own characteristics. Some are better suited for urban combat, while others are exceedingly destructive in close quarters. Many weapons have tags, which represent the special qualities inherent to that weapon. For example, a sledgehammer is especially good at knocking targets down. Knives can be throwable, and some weapons have an armor-piercing quality. This section details the tags shown in the weapon charts earlier in the chapter. Many tags don't directly modify the damage or efficacy of an attack, but instead alter the results. A few tags apply to defensive equipment instead.

**8-again:** Rare and powerful weapons have the 8-again quality, re-rolling any successful dice until they no longer show successes.

**9-again:** The weapon's user re-rolls 9s and well as 10s on the attack roll.

**Accurate:** The weapon adds +1 to attack rolls, including rolls to use the weapon in a grapple.

**Bleed:** The weapon doubles its bonus for purposes of the Bleeding Tilt.

**Brawl:** The weapon uses Brawl to attack and may be enhanced by anything that affects unarmed attacks. The weapon still inflicts lethal damage.



## Armor

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Availability	Coverage
MODERN						
Reinforced Clothing	1/0	1	0	0	•	Torso, arms, legs
Sports Gear	2/0	2	-1	-1	•	Torso, arms, legs
Kevlar vest	1/3	1	0	0	•	Torso
Flak jacket	2/4	1	-1	0	••	Torso, arms
Full Riot Gear	3/5	2	-2	-1	•••	Torso, arms, legs
Bomb Suit	4/6	3	-5	-4	•••••	Torso, arms, head
Helmets*	Special	2	-1	0	•••	Head
ARCHAIC						
Leather (hard)	2/0	2	-1	0	•	Torso, arms
Lorica Segmentata	2/2	3	-2	-3	••••	Torso
Chainmail	3/1	3	-2	-2	••	Torso, arms
Plate	4/2	3	-2	-3	••••	Torso, arms, legs
Helmets*	Special	2	-1	0	•••	Head

**Rating:** Armor provides protection against normal attacks and Firearms attacks. The number before the slash is for general armor, while the number after the slash is for ballistic armor.

**Strength:** If your character's Strength is lower than that required for her armor, reduce her Brawl and Weaponry dice pools by -1.

**Defense:** The Defense penalty imposed while wearing the armor.

**Speed:** The Speed penalty imposed while wearing the armor.

**Availability:** The cost in Resources dots or level of appropriate Social Merits needed to acquire the armor.

**Coverage:** The areas of a character protected by the armor. If an attacker targets a specific unarmored location, the armor's protection won't apply. Wearing a helmet increases the armor's coverage to include a character's head.

\*Helmets extend armor's protection to the head. Wearing a helmet usually confers a -1 to sight- and hearing-based Perception rolls. The protection provided is half that of the armor's normal ratings (rounded up).

**Concealed:** A character who bears a shield but doesn't use it to attack can add its Size to her Defense. Its Size also serves as a concealment modifier against ranged attacks.

**Enhance (Type):** This weapon provides a bonus (usually +1) to a specified type of Skill rolls other than attacks. The weapon must logically be able to provide aid as a tool in this manner.

**Fragile:** The weapon has -1 to its Durability.

**Grapple:** Add the weapon's dice bonus to your dice pool when using it as part of a grapple.

**Guard:** Wielding this weapon adds +1 to Defense.

**Inaccurate:** The weapon levies a -1 penalty on attack rolls, in addition to any improvised weapon or unskilled penalties.

**Incendiary:** The weapon causes the Burning Tilt.

**Knockdown:** Double the weapon bonus for purposes of the Knockdown Tilt.

**Piercing:** The weapon is effective at piercing armor. Subtract its Piercing quality from the target's armor (ballistic

armor is reduced first, then general armor) or an object's Durability.

**Reach:** A weapon with reach gives its wielder +1 Defense against opponents using weapons of smaller Size (including unarmed attacks). This bonus doesn't apply while grappling, and in fact the weapon (if it can be used at all) suffers a -1 penalty to grapple actions.

**Slow:** The weapon is either slow and cumbersome or obvious enough that a defender gains full Defense against the attack. Ranged weapons only.

**Stun:** Double the weapon bonus for purposes of the Stun Tilt.

**Thrown:** The weapon can be thrown, following the rules for thrown weapons and Range. An (A) after the Thrown tag denotes an aerodynamic object.

**Two-Handed:** This weapon requires two hands. It can be used one-handed by increasing the Strength requirement by 1.



# New Merits

## Trigger Discipline (•)

**Prerequisites:** Wits ••, Firearms ••

**Effect:** Your character is a disciplined shooter, able to maximize her shots and conserve ammo appropriately. Choose a type of firearm when you choose this Merit: Pistol, Shotgun, Rifle, Thrown, Heavy Weapons. Increase the weapon's effective capacity in your hands by one level. For weapons already at high capacity, this allows an additional long burst. You may choose this Merit multiple times, each time selecting a different category of firearms.

## Loaded for Bear (• or ••)

**Prerequisites:** Athletics •, Survival •

**Effect:** When you go into a situation expecting trouble, you come prepared. Extra ammo, pipe bombs in cargo pockets, a bandolier of grenades, whatever it takes. With one dot of this Merit, you gain an extra free "reload" of a weapon, including single shot weapons, during a scene. Taking two dots in this Merit allows two free "reloads" after running out of ammo, whether by rolling a dramatic failure or following burst fire.

# New Tilts

The following Tilts apply when using specific weapons or modes of fire. Most of these are personal, but one (Hail of Gunfire) is an environmental Tilt.

## BLEEDING

The character bleeds profusely from an open wound. If she doesn't staunch the blood flow, she may soon pass out from shock and blood loss.

**Effect:** Bleeding characters suffer a -1 wound penalty (or have existing wound penalties increased in severity by +1). Additionally, each turn that she remains bleeding, she suffers one automatic point of bashing damage.

**Causing the Tilt:** Firearms or bladed weapons that score more damage in a single attack than the victim's Stamina can inflict this Tilt.

**Ending the Tilt:** If the character takes a turn to apply pressure and some sort of cloth or tie a tourniquet around the bleeding limb, she can stop the flow of blood and end the Tilt. Any form of accelerated healing, even a single point of bashing damage, will stop the bleeding as well. For obvious reasons, the undead are immune to this Tilt.

## BURNING

You have been set ablaze and will continue to burn until you somehow douse the flames.

**Effect:** You take automatic damage each turn equal to the 1 + the heat level of the fire, in addition to suffering the Blinded Tilt.

**Causing the Tilt:** Being in the blast radius of an incendiary weapon or flamethrower stream, or being covered in gasoline and set aflame.

**Ending the Tilt:** You must take at least a turn to douse yourself in water or some suitable substance. You can drop and roll on the ground, which lessens the heat of the fire by one level of intensity each turn you do so until it's finally out. Others can put out the fire by smothering it or beating it out with rugs or the like, taking an instant action to do so and reducing the heat by one level of intensity each turn.

## PIERCED ARMOR

Repeated rounds or devastating attacks have rent your armor.

**Effects:** Your armor is damaged and functions at reduced effectiveness. Halve its effective values, rounded down, until you have had time to repair or readjust the armor.

**Causing the Tilt:** Suffering more damage than your armor's general rating in a single attack from high-caliber weapons or stabbing instruments.

**Ending the Tilt:** Taking at least a few turns to replace the armor, or repairing it outside of combat. Supernatural forms of armor might automatically repair themselves or be immune to this Tilt at Storyteller discretion.

## PINNED

One of your appendages or a piece of your clothing has been pinned to a surface. To get free you must tear away, potentially inflicting more damage in the process.

**Effect:** The target is pinned to a surface and may not move. Her Defense is halved and she cannot take actions that require full movement of her body, like Athletics rolls.

**Causing the Tilt:** Piercing weapons and some improvised weapons, like bows, crossbows, and nail guns, can pin a target's hand or foot to a surface. Spears can do it, too, but the attacker must relinquish use of the weapon to do so. Attackers can target an appendage (at a -3 penalty on top of the target's Defense) or clothing (at a -5 penalty on top of the target's Defense). If targeting a body part, inflicting damage equal to or greater than the target's Stamina will leave her pinned. If targeting clothes, one success is enough.

**Ending the Tilt:** Removing the pinned appendage without tools requires a Strength + Stamina roll with a -3 modifier. If successful, she takes one point of lethal damage as she rips her hand or foot away from the impaling object. If done surgically or with tools, a Strength + Crafts roll is required instead, suffering only a -2 penalty, with no additional damage done if successful. Removing a pinned article of clothing requires an action to rip or slip free of it.



# Gear and Accessories

Humans have used tools since primitive tribes first adopted spears and stone-tipped arrows to hunt their prey. In modern nights, equipment aids detectives on the hunt for criminals, helps those criminals in their illicit endeavors, and helps all manner of people accomplish everyday tasks. This section details a great number of such tools and provides all the rules players need to use them and gain an edge over their rivals. Some of these items are modifications to existing tools and weapons, while others are self-contained devices that allow for functions not otherwise possible without them. You'll also find a selection of equipment that interfaces with the supernatural in some way...for better or worse.

The gear listed here assumes ideal functioning conditions. A given scene's conditions might levy penalties or bonuses to their use. Increasing the cost in Resources or Social Merits needed to obtain the item can provide a higher-quality example or one toughened against harsh conditions.

## Firearms Accessories

The following equipment includes gunsmithing kits, tripods, scopes, and more, all geared toward improving the functionality of guns.

### Bipods

Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 4, Availability •

A bipod helps stabilize a weapon when shooting at long range. It attaches to the bottom of the rifle and folds up beneath the stock. Using the bipod reduces the penalty for firing at medium or long range by one. Bipods also reduce the penalties for burst firing an automatic weapon at multiple targets by one.

### Ear Protection

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Shooters wear ear protection to keep from being deafened by firearms discharge. The protection comes in the form of earplugs or earmuffs, and does its job well, but imposes a -3 penalty to all sound-related Perception rolls.

### Gunsmithing Kit

Die bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 4, Availability ••

Gunsmithing kits provide all the tools one needs to properly maintain a gun: bore cleaners, Allen wrenches, calipers, rags, etc. The actual cleaning, repair, or modifying of a firearm requires an extended Dexterity + Crafts roll (each roll represents 15 minutes), with a +2 bonus from the kit itself. Cleaning a barrel or replacing a grip needs only 5 successes. Replacing a critical part might need 15 successes instead.

### Light Mount

Die bonus +1, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Light mounts are basically flashlights mounted onto a gun's barrel. Mounts exist for most gun models, and the light subtracts its die bonus from any penalties for darkness or adds to rolls to search in the dark. At an increased cost (Availability ••), higher-intensity halogen or LED lights have a die bonus of +2 instead. Light mounts can be used to blind a target like a flashlight can, but also give away the shooter's position (and thus subtract from darkness penalties on attacks made against the shooter by others).

### Reloading Bench

Die bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 5, Structure 6, Availability ••

A reloading bench provides space and supplies to load bullets: gunpowder, shell casings, bullet press, polisher and more. With a bench, the character can load her own bullets at home — the cost and time required are far greater than if she were to buy them at a local store, but perhaps she wants to arm herself in secrecy, or make special kinds of bullets not found in stores.

### Reloading Bullets

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Crafts + equipment

Action: Extended (6–10 successes; one roll represents 30 minutes of work)

Reloading bullet casings is an extended action. Normal bullets and shotgun shells only require 5 successes, but more complicated rounds (including “special” bullets like those a monster hunter might employ) require as many as 10 or more. Meeting the required amount of successes yields about one box of ammo, approximately 30 shells, but unlike some extended actions, the process is not all-or-nothing. Each successful roll yields about 5 normal bullets or 2 custom shells. Attempting this action without the proper tools (like a reloading bench) incurs a -5 penalty.

#### Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** A dramatic failure results in a handful of faulty bullets. They appear functional until fired, where they misfire and potentially injure the shooter as well as damage the gun. Roll the weapon's Damage rating as a dice pool. Any successes inflict lethal damage to the shooter, most likely wounding her hands, and also damage the gun itself (ignoring its Durability).

**Failure:** The character might create several bullets if her player scored any successes (and at the Storyteller's discretion). Otherwise, no bullets are made.

**Success:** The character reloads a box of ammunition, about 30 rounds of normal ammo or 24 rounds of unique ammunition.

**Exceptional Success:** The character creates the ammo faster and more efficiently than expected.

**Suggested Equipment:** Reloading bench (see above), high-quality shells and bullets (+1), quiet work area (+1), Crafts Specialty in Firearms (+1), detailed guides (+1)

**Possible Penalties:** No reloading bench (-5), no Firearms score (-1), loud noises or distractions (-1)



## Sighting Tools

Die bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Normal wear and tear diminish a gun's accuracy over time. With proper tools a character can maintain and realign the gun's sights (a process called "sighting in"), restoring proper accuracy. This is an extended action using Wits + Firearms, with a bonus provided by the sighting tools. Ten successes are required.

Successfully sighting in a gun provides a +1 bonus to all medium- and long-range attacks. This effect lasts for a number of uses equal to twice the weapon's Damage rating (where one "use" is considered a single attack).

## Sights

Gun sights help a shooter find her mark at range, and come in many forms: Telescopic sights, laser sights, thermal, night vision, and more. Each type presents its own capabilities and uses. The most common types are listed below.

### Fiber Optic

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Fiber optic sights use colored lights to help the shooter line up a more precise shot. She gains an additional +1 bonus when aiming. These illuminated sights glow red in the daytime and green or yellow at night, making them useful in any conditions. Fiber optic sights apply to any type of firearm, as well as bows.

### Laser

Die bonus +1, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability ••

Laser sights greatly improve accuracy at short and medium ranges. They have no effect on long range shots. Add the sight's bonus to the attack roll.

Laser sights produce a visible red dot. If the shooter is attempting a surprise attack, her target gains the die bonus to his roll to avoid surprise. In foggy or dusty conditions, the entire beam becomes visible, and anyone who might notice the beam gains a +1 bonus to avoid surprise.

Some laser sights use infrared beams (at an additional dot of Availability), which can only be seen by night vision goggles or sights. Characters can benefit from both infrared laser sights and night vision scopes.

### Telescopic

Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability •

Mounted atop a gun, telescopic scopes provide magnification over long distances of a tightly focused area. Using a scope allows the shooter to ignore penalties for shooting at medium range and halves long range penalties.

### Telescopic (Night Vision)

Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability •••

Night vision scopes work like regular scopes, but use infrared lenses to provide superior night vision. Using the night vision scope allows the shooter to ignore darkness penalties at short and medium range, and reduces the long range penalty by one (to a total of -3). Night vision lenses are sensitive and the device

automatically shuts down when exposed to harsh lights, returning to functionality one turn after exposure ends. At a greater price (Availability ••••), characters can purchase advanced day/night scopes that work normally in both light and darkness.

### Telescopic (Thermal)

Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 4, Availability •••••

Thermal scopes show warm targets in bright white against a cooler blue background. They work in both night and day (though some ambient light is required). Shooters using thermal scopes suffer no medium or short range penalties and reduce long range penalties to a -1. Note that thermal scopes only help when shooting at warm targets; the scope offers no help against the undead or entities only as warm as the surrounding environment. At night, the thermal scope negates the penalties for medium range and halves long range penalties.

## Speedloader

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Unlike magazine-fed pistols and rifles, revolvers and action-fed weapons (including some rifles, autoloader shotguns, etc.) must be reloaded one bullet at a time. Speedloaders are tools that exist for many weapons, allowing a character to quickly reload them without having to sacrifice her Defense. It allows the character to load bullets in by small ammunition carousels or load proper shotguns and rifles four rounds at a time.

## Collapsible Stocks

Durability 2, Size n/a, Structure 3, Availability ••

Folding or telescoping stocks allow the wielder to collapse in the butt of a firearm, making the weapon more compact. Collapsing the stock reduces the weapon's Size by 1 (to a minimum of 2). Guns with standard stocks may be refitted with collapsible stocks. This requires a Dexterity + Crafts roll, with each roll taking 15 minutes, and 5 successes are required. A gunsmithing kit (see above) adds its die bonus to this roll, but without one, the character suffers a -1 penalty instead.

## Suppressor

Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4, Availability •••

Called "silencers" in popular culture, suppressors are slim barrel attachments that dissipate some of the pressure of a discharging firearm. The effect dampens the noise and flash of a firing gun, but not completely. Suppressors can't muffle sonic booms from supersonic ammunition, so in order to be effective the shooter must use smaller caliber rounds or those specifically designed to be subsonic. Bystanders within 50 meters (55 yards) suffer a -4 penalty to their hearing-based Perception rolls to notice a shot. Using supersonic ammunition only levies a -2 penalty to Perception rolls on all bystanders within 100 meters (109 yards). The flash suppression makes it difficult to pinpoint the shooter's location, inflicting a -3 penalty on Perception rolls to do so. Using a suppressor with a revolver incurs only a -2 penalty to notice the sound, as revolvers are more difficult to silence effectively.







Crafty characters can jury-rig a suppressor from PVC pipe, cans, rubber tubing, and the like. This requires a Dexterity + Crafts roll as an extended action requiring ten successes. Each roll represents 15 minutes of work. Success yields an effective suppressor, though it's not as durable as a well-made market version. A failed suppressor will still silence the weapon, but also reduces the Damage by 1. A dramatic failure on the construction creates a suppressor that looks fine but bottles up the barrel and destroys the gun as soon as the character fires it.

## Surveillance Gear

Characters use surveillance gear to spy on their enemies, secure important locations, and track or identify the things that roam the night. Many of these items are available on the market at high prices, while some are more difficult to acquire without drawing suspicion.

### Binoculars

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3, Availability •

Binoculars provide magnification over great distances. Normal sight-based Perception rolls suffer penalties beyond long range. With binoculars, the viewer can see clearly up to extreme range, though she loses clarity beyond long range. At long range, she suffers only a -1 to sight-based Perception rolls, but at extreme range she suffers a -3. Night vision binoculars (Availability •••) incur similar penalties and negate penalties for darkness.

### Bugs (Listening Devices)

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability ••

Bugs are small audio devices (1-2 inches, 2.5-5 cm in diameter) that transmit sounds to distant listeners or recording devices. They're small enough to be hidden in a room or upon one's person. Police use them frequently in sting operations, criminals use them to gain advance warning of police actions, and jealous spouses use them to spy on their partners.

Because of their small size, bugs can be concealed in ceilings, walls, houseplants, even taped or glued beneath desks and tables. Some bugs use wires (giving rise to the phrase "wearing a wire") when concealed on the body or in small items like pens and buttons. Bugs relay audio via radio frequencies up to a distance of a quarter-mile (402 meters), but these frequencies are themselves susceptible to notice by outside listeners.

Planting the bug requires a Wits + Larceny roll. Attempting to find one uses a contested Wits + Investigation (or Composure, whichever is greater) roll against the planter's Wits + Larceny roll. If the searcher wins, she finds the bug. Smaller devices exist that are more difficult to find (Availability •••, -1 to Perception rolls made to find the bug).



## Bug Sweepers

Die bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •••

For the paranoid or simply pragmatic, bug sweepers scan for audio and video recording devices. The devices look like small walkie-talkies. They scan for radio frequencies and electromagnetic radiation and display anything they pick up through a series of lights. The bug sweeper adds its die bonus to the Wits + Investigation roll to find the bug.

## Disguised Camera

Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Hidden cameras come in many disguises, from clock radios, “nanny cams” hidden in stuffed animals, smoke detectors, air purifiers, and more. These devices all function perfectly in addition to being cameras, so for example a clock radio will still tell time as well as record video. Smaller devices (Size 1 and Structure 2) exist but are more expensive (Availability •••).

Hidden cameras record video to internal storage, rather than transmitting it to a monitor. The resolution usually isn’t the greatest, and the camera can only record up to about two hours at a time. More advanced models can record more data or at higher resolutions, and even send wireless transmissions, but these can be very expensive (Availability ••• or higher). Attempting to find a hidden camera requires a Wits + Investigation roll, with a penalty equal to the Availability cost of the item.

## Tracking Device

Die bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •••

Tracking devices come installed on cars, phones, and electronic cuffs worn by ex-cons. Worried parents can buy them for kids, pets, and valuable electronics. Many such devices are tracked through a third party or a website, or report the location through a phone call. Some use GPS coordinates transmitted to handheld devices (like smartphones) instead.

With an extended Intelligence + Crafts roll (each roll takes half an hour), a technologically-savvy character can reconfigure law enforcement tracking devices to trace them herself. The actual tracking device itself is a tiny microchip, which can be surgically implanted or installed into a larger device like an electronic cuff or collar. These devices are larger (Durability 2, Structure 3) but cost the same since they are less concealable.

Hiding a tracking device requires a Wits + Larceny roll with a +2 bonus due to the size of the chip. Surgically implanting a chip instead uses an Intelligence + Medicine roll, while installing one into an existing device like a car or phone uses Wits + Crafts instead. Finding a hidden electronic tag requires a Wits + Investigation roll made against the initial roll to conceal the device.

## Keystroke Logger

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

A keystroke logger, true to its name, captures the keystrokes used by a keyboard’s operator. The small flash drive-like device plugs into the computer port and the keyboard

plugs into it. A log of the keystrokes pressed on the keyboard is kept in the device, which the user can later retrieve as a text file on (presumably) another PC. The information recovered includes passwords (even BIOS passwords), emails, account numbers, everything the user typed. It’s a simple Wits + Computer roll to install the device surreptitiously.

## Reverse Peephole

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

These surprisingly common devices look like a jeweler’s loupe and allow the user to look in through a peephole by fitting over the existing peephole. It doesn’t offer any better a view than a peephole normally does, but if she is looking for something specific that might be visible from the door, the character can make a Wits + Investigation roll at a –4 penalty. Real estate agents, police officers, and some criminals carry reverse peepholes.

## Spyware

Die bonus +2, Durability n/a, Size n/a, Structure n/a, Availability ••

Ubiquitous in the modern Internet-using world, spyware often infects non-savvy users. The software then proceeds to track and monitor computer usage and often spams the user with targeted advertisements. Spyware can be deliberately employed by an individual to record keystrokes, web and document history, and chat logs. Installing the spyware on a target computer can be done remotely over a network or from physical media; the former requires a hacking attempt, with bonuses or penalties based on the computer system used, contested by an administrator or security system.

## Wi-Fi Sniffer

Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

A small device that scans for wireless networks within medium range. A display shows the signal strength of any present networks. Sniffers are far more discrete than laptops and phones that scan for available networks. The sniffer doesn’t allow access to the networks by itself, but the user can access the available networks via other devices like phones or laptops.

## Wiretap


Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability ••

When installed in a phone or on a phone line, wiretaps transmit phone conversations to third-party listeners or devices. Placing the tap requires an Intelligence + Larceny roll, contested by a Wits + Investigation roll if a target suspects the presence of a tap. Once in place, the tap allows listeners to monitor any conversations made over that phone line.

## Survival Gear

Sometimes characters find themselves caught in perilous survival situations. A shipwreck or plane crash might land them in the middle of the wilderness. They might have fled the confines of the city in order to escape some foe. They might





even be lost in or beneath the city itself, or cast out into the vagrant-filled underground of some urban center. Knowing the proper survival skills like building shelters, catching food, and purifying water are only part of the key to survival; the gear to weather urban decay, environmental conditions, or deal with insurgent warfare is vital in keeping a character alive.

## NBC Suit

Die bonus +5, Durability 1, Size 5, Structure 6, Availability ••

Similar to a HAZMAT suit, NBC suits (which stands for “Nuclear, Biological, Chemical”) safely shield the wearer from exposure to harmful agents. The suit is a bulky plastic bodysuit with a built-in gas mask and air filtration unit. The suit offers its die bonus to all rolls made to resist harm from or contracting NBC agents, including radiation poisoning. While the suit offers top-notch protection, it can only endure for so long, and remains fragile to tears. A single point of damage that could puncture or tear the suit negates its protection entirely, and after 5 days, its die bonus diminishes by one each day until it can no longer protect the wearer.

## Potassium Iodide (Bottle)

Die bonus +1, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability ••

Potassium iodide is used to protect against radiation sickness, both long term and short term. Two pills a day confer a +1 bonus to any rolls a character makes to withstand up to a level three radiation environment. The pills must be taken at least four hours before exposure.

## Survival Kit (Basic)

Die bonus +1, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability •

Survival kits contain the basic items a character needs to survive in the wild: a sleeping bag, canteen, flashlight, glowstick, food and water to last one person a whole day. Add the kit’s die bonus to any Survival rolls and Stamina + Resolve rolls made to resist harm from exposure.

## Survival Kit (Advanced)

Die bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 4, Availability ••

Advanced survival kits includes all the items found in a basic kit, along with gear like a compass, small tent, solar blanket, heating pads, multi-tool, rope, and survival guide. Food and water included with the kit allows a single person to survive two days. Add its die bonus to any Survival rolls the character makes, as well as Stamina + Resolve rolls made to resist exposure. Proper use of an advanced survival kit allows the character to negate the effects of a level two environment (except for radiation).

## Survival Kit (Superior)

Die bonus +3, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 5, Availability •••

Superior survival kits offer everything the lesser two kits provide, in addition to GPS devices, water filtration units, portable fishing rods, machetes, cables, emergency ponchos, survival guides, four-person all-season tent, and food and water for a week. Add its die bonus to any Survival rolls the character makes, as well as Stamina + Resolve rolls made to resist harm from exposure. This kit can negate the effects of up to a level three environment (except for radiation).

## Survival Kit (Urban)

Die bonus +3, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 4, Availability ••

These kits are made for urban emergencies: city-wide blackouts, chemical attacks, natural disasters. Also called “Go Bags” or “Bug-Out Bags” (BOBs), they contain the items of a basic survival kit as well as some gear tailored to urban conditions: radio, city maps, waterproof matches, antibiotics, flashlights, emergency blankets, protective masks, food and water for up to three days. Add the kit’s die bonus to all Survival rolls and any Stamina + Resolve rolls made to resist harm from exposure. The urban kit can be used in the wilderness, but at reduced efficiency, providing a +1 bonus instead.

# Other Sources of Harm

Characters in the Chronicles of Darkness encounter more than mere weapons in the night. Diseases, ancient curses, and dark powers may all wreak havoc on the body. For mortals, the scars of grievous trauma often leave permanent marks, but some creatures have an unnatural ability to heal themselves. The following presents a selection of both threats to health and ways in which the supernatural beings of the world may recover from them.

## Regenerating Limbs

Wounds like the Arm Wrack or Leg Wrack Tilts caused by aggravated damage permanently cripple mortals. Creatures with superhuman healing abilities, like werewolves or vampires, are not so easily laid low. They may heal the Arm/Leg Wrack Tilts in place of healing lethal damage, over time or in an instant (fueled by Essence or Vitae) if they choose. Arm Wrack counts as one point of damage for healing purposes, while Leg Wrack counts as two. If the Tilt is caused by aggravated damage, the character may heal the damaged limb, or regrow a new one entirely, when she heals the associated damage. Changelings, demons, and similar beings with healing powers may regenerate limbs in the same way; mages have their own spells for restoring the body to its prime.

## Regaining One’s Senses

Similar to regenerating limbs, healing powers can speed a character’s recovery from sensory overload. Healing the Deafened Tilt may be done in place of bashing damage, counting as a single point of damage for those purposes, while healing



## Example Toxins and Contagions

Source	Toxicity	Time per Roll	Successes Required
Common cold	1	1 day	5
Cancer	5	1 month	30
Chemical fumes	3	1 turn	0*
Cyanide	7	1 turn	5
Venom	3 to 7	1 turn to 10 minutes	5 to 10

\* Characters must escape the source of the toxin in order to end any recurring damage.

the Blinded Tilt is treated as though recovering lethal damage. Tilts that affect other senses follow the same rules as Deafened.

## Defeating Disease

Mortals have developed ever more advanced medical techniques to treat or prevent poison and disease. Supernatural beings often have their own protection against such toxins. In the event they suffer exposure, many can diminish or eliminate the effects with their powers of healing. This requires healing a total number of points equal to the toxin's Severity as though they were lethal damage. Vampires are the exception, capable of simply flushing out most toxins by spending a single point of Vitae. Note that vampires are rarely affected by poisons or disease, although they can become carriers. Even terminal diseases can be cured this

way, though they are treated as aggravated damage for the purposes of healing them.

## Enduring the Elements

Extreme environments kill the unprepared every year. Even those who take the proper measures find that things can go wrong. Equipment fails. People panic. Strange beasts attack in the night. Mortals must brave these conditions with equipment and grit, but supernatural creatures may endure more easily. Vampires and werewolves resist elements that would lay even the strongest mortals low. Changelings make bargains to walk among the elements as is told by legends of the fae. Even warlocks have a long history of commanding the elements to do their bidding.

Undead creatures, like vampires and mummies, have nothing to fear from hypothermia or heat stroke. Air pressure means a mild discomfort, or at most a small amount of bashing damage. Radiation poisoning, desert exposure, and toxic fumes are of little concern, save for vampires and the desert sun. These beings suffer the same effects of heavy snowfall, rain, and high winds as mortals do, but their powers give them an edge. The undead suffer no ill effects at all from extreme environments up to level three, and suffer level four environments as mortals do lower-level conditions (i.e., bashing damage equal to the environment's level once per hour, after a number of hours equal to the character's Stamina). Even then, their undead bodies resist such conditions to an incredible degree, subtracting their Supernatural Tolerance trait from the damage sustained.

Werewolves, certain changelings, and mages have varying levels of resistance to these environments. Their healing and defensive powers afford them certain protections that mortals lack. Unlike humans, they may heal damage caused by extreme environments while immersed in those environments. Werewolves, demons, and similarly durable creatures subtract one level from the extreme environment for the purposes of its effects on them.



# Appendix Two: Conditions

## FIXATED

Your character focuses on a single thought or command. She takes a -2 penalty to all actions for the rest of the scene or until the command is completed. If the command is not something she could conceivably do in that time and place then the effect lasts one turn as her mind wanders in aimless confusion. Multiple applications of this Condition on her in the same scene can add more commands, but the penalty is not cumulative.

**Beat:** Your character does something that goes against her Virtue to fulfill the fixation.

**Resolution:** Your character satisfies the command.

## HUNTED (PERSISTENT)

Someone who poses a serious threat to the character's safety and well-being, physically or emotionally (or both), is after her. They may be intent on direct violence, or simply wish to torment her.

**Beat:** The character's persecutors find her.

**Resolution:** The character stops her persecutors, either through legal means, changes in lifestyle that deny them access to her, or through more direct means, typically violence.

## LETHARGIC

Your character is drained and lethargic, feeling the weight of sleeplessness. With this Condition, your character cannot spend Willpower. As well, for every six hours he goes without sleeping, take a cumulative -1 die penalty to all actions. At every six-hour interval, make a Stamina + Resolve roll (with the penalty) to resist falling asleep until the sun next sets.

**Possible Sources:** Psychic vampire fighting sleep.

**Resolution:** Sleeping a full day, from sunrise to sunset.

## OBLIVIOUS

Your character is not paying attention to what's going on around her. Her mind is wandering. She might be day-dreaming or just staring off into space, but although she's

completely aware of her surroundings she's not processing consciously what's happening in them. All of her Perception rolls are reduced to a chance die until this Condition is resolved.

**Resolution:** Your character is alerted by a loud noise or is attacked.

## RELUCTANT AGGRESSOR

The character really doesn't want to hurt her victim, but she's going to anyway. She may be under immense peer pressure, it may be her duty, or perhaps she's coerced into the violence. Whatever the case, although she sees the victim's humanity, she's going to force herself to make him suffer.

The character must spend a point of Willpower each turn to attempt an attack. She can defend herself as normal even if she can't (or won't) spend the Willpower.

**Possible Sources:** Peacemaker Merit (p. 42)

**Resolution:** The character doesn't encounter her victim or his associates for a chapter, or the victim is the aggressor in targeting the character, her friends, or allies. If the Condition fades after a chapter, it does not award a Beat.

## SURVEILLED

The character is being watched in a not-so-subtle way. She may expect to see unusual vehicles parked near her home or place of work, her garbage to be rifled through, or even for her home to be broken into. At the beginning of each chapter, the Storyteller should roll a pool of dice equal to the successes on the roll that created this Condition. Once ten successes are accrued, this Condition resolves.

**Beat:** N/A

**Resolution:** The Storyteller's pool reaches ten successes, or the character somehow exposes or otherwise actively stops the surveillance. If she is being surveilled by the state, she may need to exercise legal options, if any such options exist.



# Chart Quick Reference

## Speed and Movement

Speed	Close to Short	Short to Medium	Medium to Long	Long to Extreme
5-9	1	2	3	4
10-15	1	2	2	3
16-20	1	1	2	3
21-30	1	1	2	3
31-40	0*	1	2	3
41-50	0*	1	2	3
51-60	0*	1	1	2
61-70	0*	1	1	2
71-80	0*	1	1	2
81-90	0*	0*	1	1
91-100+	0*	0*	0*	1

\* A rating of zero means that the character can move straight from that range band to another range band without technically using up a "move" action. Thus, a character with a Speed of 45 can move straight from close range to medium range in a single move, or to long range by forsaking her action for movement instead.

## Example Toxins and Contagions

Source	Toxicity	Time per Roll	Successes Required
Common cold	1	1 day	5
Cancer	5	1 month	30
Chemical fumes	3	1 turn	0*
Cyanide	7	1 turn	5
Venom	3 to 7	1 turn to 10 minutes	5 to 10

\* Characters must escape the source of the toxin in order to end any recurring damage.

## Ranged Weapons

Type	Damage	Ranges	Capacity	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Tags	Example
Light Pistol	+1	Long	Medium	0	2	1	••	n/a	Glock 17 (9mm)
Heavy Pistol	+2	Long	Medium	-2	3	1	•••	n/a	Desert Eagle
Light Revolver	+1	Medium	Medium	6	0	2	••	n/a	SW M29 (.38 Special)
Heavy Revolver	+2	Low	Long	6	-2	3	••	n/a	SW M29 (.44 Magnum)
SMG, small	+1	Medium	High	-2	2	1	•••	n/a	Ingram Mac-10 (9mm)
SMG, heavy	+2	Medium	High	-3	3	2	•••	n/a	HK MP-5 (9mm)
Rifle	+4	Extreme	Low	-5	2	3	••	n/a	Remington M-700 (30.06)
Rifle, Big Game*	+5	Extreme	Low	-5	3	4	•••••	Stun	Winchester Model 70 Classic Safari Express
Assault Rifle	+3	Long	High	-3	3	3	•••	9-again	Stery-Aug (5.56mm)
Shotgun	+3	Medium	Low	-4	3	2	••	9-again	Remington M870 (12-gauge)
Short Bow	+2	Medium	Low	-3	2	3	••	n/a	
Long Bow	+3	Medium	Low	-4	3	4	••	n/a	
Crossbow	+2	Long	Low	-5	3	3	•••	n/a	
Pepper Spray	+0	Close	Low	0	1	1	•	Slow	
Stun Gun**	+0	Close	Medium	-1	1	1	•	Slow, Stun	

**Damage:** Add this number of bonus successes to a successful attack. Firearms and bows deal lethal damage, unless some equipment or power indicates otherwise.

**Range:** The weapon's normal maximum range. Shooters may make an attack at up to one range band beyond the maximum, but the attack is reduced to a chance die.

**Capacity:** A measure of how often the weapon can be used in a scene, and its burst ability.

**Initiative:** The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the gun.

**Strength:** The minimum Strength needed to use the gun effectively. A wielder with lower Strength suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls.

**Size:** 1 = Can be fired one-handed and hidden in a pocket or the like; 2 = Must be fired two-handed and can be hidden in a coat; 3 = Can be fired two-handed but not hidden on one's person.

**Availability:** The cost in Resources, or level of an appropriate Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

**Tags:** This lists the weapon's tags, if any, denoting its special qualities.

**Examples:** This is an example of this type of weapon.

\* Big game rifles and other heavy weapons suffer from high recoil. If not properly braced and set to handle the recoil, the shooter takes 1 bashing damage and suffers the Knocked Down Tilt.

\*\* Bonus successes don't add to damage



## Grenade Chart

Type	Damage	Initiative	Blast Area	Force	Range	Strength	Size	Availability	Tags
Frag, Standard	+2	0	10	3	Thrown (A)	2	1	• • • •	Knockdown, Stun
Frag, Heavy	+3	-1	5	4	Thrown (A)	2	1	• • • •	Knockdown, Stun
Molotov	+1	-2	3	2	Thrown	2	2	•	Incendiary
Pipe Bomb	+1	-1	5	2	Thrown	2	1	•	Inaccurate, Stun
Smoke	+0	10	—		Thrown (A)	2	1	• •	Concealment
Stun	+0	0	5	2	Thrown (A)	2	1	• •	Knockdown, Stun
Thermite	+3	5	4		Thrown (A)	2	1	• • • •	AP 8, Incendiary
White Phosphorous	+3	5	4		Thrown (A)	2	1	• • • •	AP 3, Incendiary, Concealment

## Grenade Launchers

Type	Ranges	Capacity	Strength	Size	Availability
Stand-Alone Launcher	Long	Low	3	3	••••
Under-Barrel Launcher	Long	Low	2	2	••••
Automatic Grenade Launcher	Extreme	High	n/a	4	•••••

**Note:** Stand-alone launchers suffer the same heavy recoil as big game rifles.

## Grenade Ammunition Chart

Type	Damage	Blast Area	Force	Size	Availability	Tags
Baton *	+1	—	5	1	••	Knockdown, Stun
Buckshot	+1	10	4	1	••••	Knockdown
HE	+3	10	4	1	••••	Knockdown
HEDP	+2	10	3	1	••••	Knockdown, AP 4
Smoke	(as hand grenade)					
Stun	(as hand grenade)					
Tear Gas	(as hand grenade)					

**Note:** \*No explosion

## Flamethrowers

Type	DMG	Initiative	Ranges	Capacity	Strength	Size	Availability	Tags
Civilian	Special	-4	Short	High	3	4	•••	Incendiary
Military	Special	-5	Medium	High	3	4	•••••	Incendiary

## Melee Weapons

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Tags	Effects
<b>BLADED WEAPONS</b>							
Battle Axe	+3	-4	3	3	• • •	9-again, Two-handed	
Fire Axe	+2	-4	3	3	• •	9-again, Two-Handed	
Great Sword	+4	-5	4	3	• • • •	9-again, Two-Handed	
Hatchet	+1	-2	1	1	• •		
Knife, Small	+0	0	1	1	•	Thrown (A)	
Knife, Hunting	+1	-1	1	2	• •		Enhance: Crafts or Survival
Machete	+2	-2	2	2	• •		
Rapier	+1	-2	1	2	• •	Piercing I	
Sword	+3	-3	2	3	• • •		+1 Durability (katana) or +1 Initiative (long sword)
<b>BLUNT WEAPONS</b>							
Brass Knuckles	+0	0	1	1	•	Brawl	
Metal Club	+2	-2	2	2	•	Stun	
Nightstick	+1	-1	2	2	• •	Stun	
Nunchaku	+1	+1	2	2	• •	Stun	-1 Damage and Initiative without Dexterity 3+
Sap	+0	-1	2	2	•	Stun	
Sledgehammer	+3	-4	3	3	•	Knockdown, Stun	
<b>EXOTIC WEAPONS</b>							
Catchpole	+0	-3	2	2	•	Grapple, Reach	
Chain	+1	-3	2	2	•	Grapple, Inaccurate, Reach	
Chainsaw	+3	-6	4	3	• • •	Bleed, Inaccurate, Two-Handed	
Kusari Gama (chain)							Functions as chain
Kusari Gama (sickle)							Functions as large knife
Shield (small)	+0	-2	2	2	• •	Concealed	
Shield (large)	+2	-4	3	3	• •	Concealed	
Stake	+0	-4	1	1	n/a	See staking rules (p. XX)	
Stun Gun	+0	-1	1	1	•	Stun	Bonus successes don't add to damage
Tiger Claws	+1	-1	2	2	• •	Brawl	
Whip	+0	-2	1	2	•	Grapple, Stun	Dexterity + Weaponry to attack



## Melee Weapons (Continued)

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Tags	Effects
<b>IMPROVISED WEAPONS</b>							
Blowtorch	+0	-2	2	2	• •	Incendiary, Piercing 2	Inflicts Blinded Tilt on attacker and target unless either or both take a -1 penalty to Defense
Board w/Nail	+1	-3	2	2	n/a	Fragile, Stun	
Improvised Shield	+0	-4	2	2	•	Concealed	
Nail Gun	+0	-2	2	2	•	Inaccurate, Piercing 1	Strength + Firearms to attack
Shovel	+1	-3	2	2	•	Knockdown	
Tire Iron	+1	-3	2	2	• •	Guard, Inaccurate	
Spear	+2	-2	2	4	•	Reach, Two-Handed	
Staff	+1	-1	2	4	•	Knockdown, Reach, Two-Handed	

**Type:** A weapon's type is a general classification that applies to anything your character picks up. A metal club could mean a hammer, a metal baseball bat, or a crowbar, while a hatchet could be a meat cleaver or an antique hand-axe. Likewise, a machete can also represent small swords. The differences between weapons of these types are as much a matter of description as anything else; use the closest appropriate listing, and feel free to modify the trait by a point or two here and there to represent differences. Usually, increasing the weapon's Availability can also add a point to its Damage rating, lessen the Initiative penalty, or add a feature like Knockdown or Stun, representing the cost and benefits of acquiring a real quality weapon, instead of a replica.

**Damage:** Add this number of bonus successes to a successful attack. Weapons always deal lethal damage.

**Initiative:** The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the weapon. If using more than one weapon, take the higher penalty and increase it by 1.

**Strength:** The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with lower Strength suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls.

**Size:** 1 = Can be hidden in a hand; 2 = Can be hidden in a coat; 3+ = Cannot be hidden.

**Availability:** The cost in Resources dots or levels of appropriate Social Merits needed to acquire the weapon.

**Tags:** This lists the weapon's tags, if any, denoting its special qualities.

**Examples:** This is an example of this type of weapon.

## Armor

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Availability	Coverage
MODERN						
Reinforced Clothing	1/0	1	0	0	•	Torso, arms, legs
Sports Gear	2/0	2	-1	-1	•	Torso, arms, legs
Kevlar vest	1/3	1	0	0	•	Torso
Flak jacket	2/4	1	-1	0	••	Torso, arms
Full Riot Gear	3/5	2	-2	-1	•••	Torso, arms, legs
Bomb Suit	4/6	3	-5	-4	•••••	Torso, arms, head
Helmets*	Special	2	-1	0	•••	Head
ARCHAIC						
Leather (hard)	2/0	2	-1	0	•	Torso, arms
Lorica Segmentata	2/2	3	-2	-3	••••	Torso
Chainmail	3/1	3	-2	-2	••	Torso, arms
Plate	4/2	3	-2	-3	••••	Torso, arms, legs
Helmets*	Special	2	-1	0	•••	Head

**Rating:** Armor provides protection against normal attacks and Firearms attacks. The number before the slash is for general armor, while the number after the slash is for ballistic armor.

**Strength:** If your character's Strength is lower than that required for her armor, reduce her Brawl and Weaponry dice pools by -1.

**Defense:** The Defense penalty imposed while wearing the armor.

**Speed:** The Speed penalty imposed while wearing the armor.

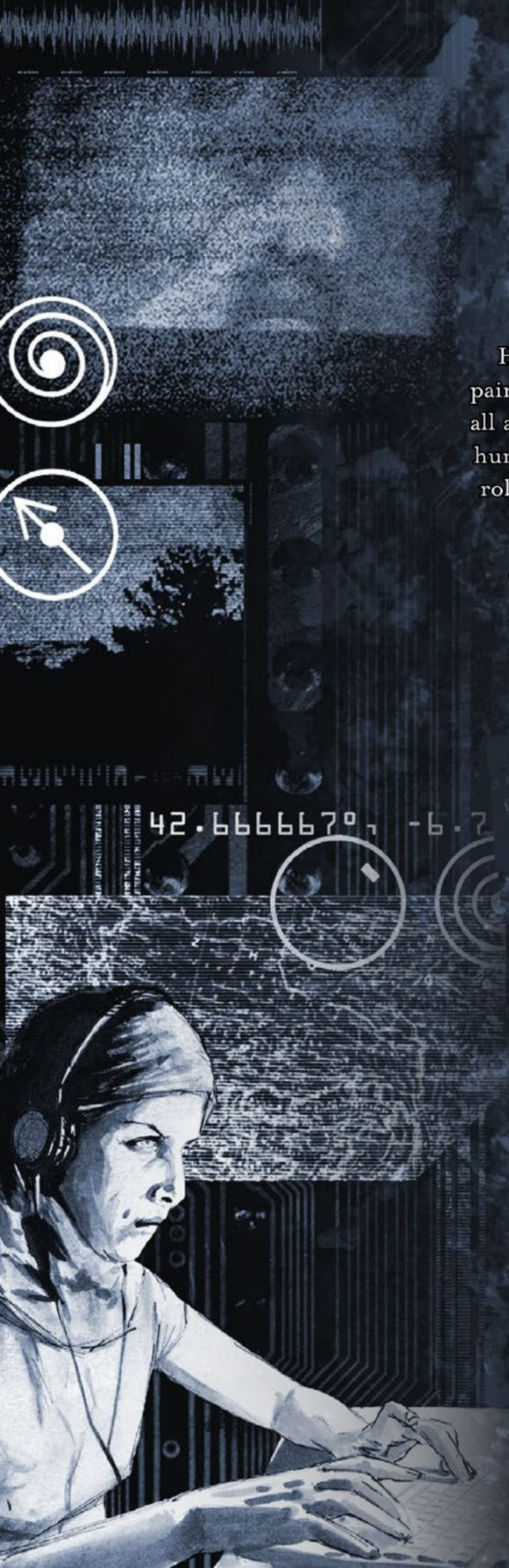
**Availability:** The cost in Resources dots or level of appropriate Social Merits needed to acquire the armor.

**Coverage:** The areas of a character protected by the armor. If an attacker targets a specific unarmored location, the armor's protection won't apply. Wearing a helmet increases the armor's coverage to include a character's head.

\*Helmets extend armor's protection to the head. Wearing a helmet usually confers a -1 to sight- and hearing-based Perception rolls. The protection provided is half that of the armor's normal ratings (rounded up).







"Of course it hurts.  
Everything hurts.  
If you're alive, you hurt.  
Don't think of yourself  
as bleeding out;  
think of yourself  
as more alive."

Horror is all about the stakes. And most commonly, pain, injury, and death are those stakes. **Hurt Locker** is all about the stuff that hurts. We talk why it hurts, how it hurts, and how to deliver pain at your table beyond just rolling the dice and marking health boxes.

Hurt people hurt people. We're talking ramifications of violence and how pain perpetuates pain down the line. We're talking about how even after wounds heal, scars always remind you.

Hurt Locker features:

- Treatment of violence in the **Chronicles of Darkness**. Lasting trauma, scene framing, and other tools for making your stories *hurt*.
- Many new player options, including Merits, supernatural knacks, and even new character types like psychic vampires and sleeper cell soldiers.
- Expanded equipment and equipment rules.

Hurt Locker requires the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook** or any other standalone **Chronicles of Darkness** rulebook such as **Vampire: The Requiem**, **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, or **Beast: The Primordial** to use.



Chronicles  
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