

A SOURCEBOOK FOR VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE

BLOOD-STAINED LOVE

VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE



CAN THE KINDRED EVER TRULY LOVE?

Expand your game of personal and political horror to include wide-eyed lovers and manipulative monsters. *Blood-Stained Love* tackles the sensitive issue of romance in **Vampire: The Masquerade**, giving you the chance to star in your own romantic vampire story. The book is for Storytellers and players alike, giving you tools, techniques and advice on how to bring romance to the undead.

This book includes discussions on how to:

- Play your own romance stories
- Build your chronicle from the ground up to maximize or minimize romance
- Comfortably include sensitive topics at your table
- Add six fully-detailed Storyteller characters to a new or existing chronicle
- Run six detailed stories featuring Kindred romance
- Extend your play beyond the tabletop
- Augment players' and storyteller characters with new merits, flaws, and Discipline powers

For use with **Vampire: The Masquerade**.

This book features mature topics that can cause discomfort and tools for dealing with those emotions. Reader discretion is advised.



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Vampire: The Masquerade



VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

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My childe,

You have found your place among our Kindred, as I always knew you would. You're as safe and secure as any of us can be in these dire, difficult times. This means it's time to turn your attention to the pursuits that make our existence worthwhile.

They say vampires are immortal. That's a lie. We can be burned the same as any mortal. But we don't age. We have oceans of time, as the cliché goes. What to do with it all?

My answer has always been love.

I've heard many of our kind say that we don't feel love, not after the Embrace took our humanity from us. That we just got through the motions, nostalgic for the emotions of our breathing days.

Maybe it's true. Who cares? What I'm saying is this: Romance is great fun. It fills the nights when everything has become stale and boring. Just when you thought you'd seen everything, some ardent little fledgling will kidnap you and try to force you to love them. You humor them for a week or two just because you want to see where they're going with it.

Of course, you end up killing them in the end. These fledglings tend to become boring once they've used up the one idea they had.

Anyway. Romance! Such a lovely thing!

Sometimes I enjoy watching younger Kindred flit about the Elysium. They're so refreshingly serious! Falling for each other, having their secret trysts, Embracing their mortal lovers without the permission of the Prince.

That's one of the many ways we die for love. Executed because we decided to curse the ones we love the most to eternal Hunger. And sure, I've done it too, a few times. Or many times. It never works out unless you use the Blood Bond, and where's the fun in that?

I want you to make all these mistakes, and more. If you manage to do it without getting executed, so much the better. If not, at least you were destroyed in a manner befitting my lineage.

Personally, I prefer lovers who are free to stab me in the back. The emotions are just so delicious. Jealousy, betrayal, guilt, anger... I play my part but I rarely feel vengeful for long. I know that if I see them decades later, odds are they've become just another grey and joyless Camarilla functionary.

That's what I want to help you avoid!

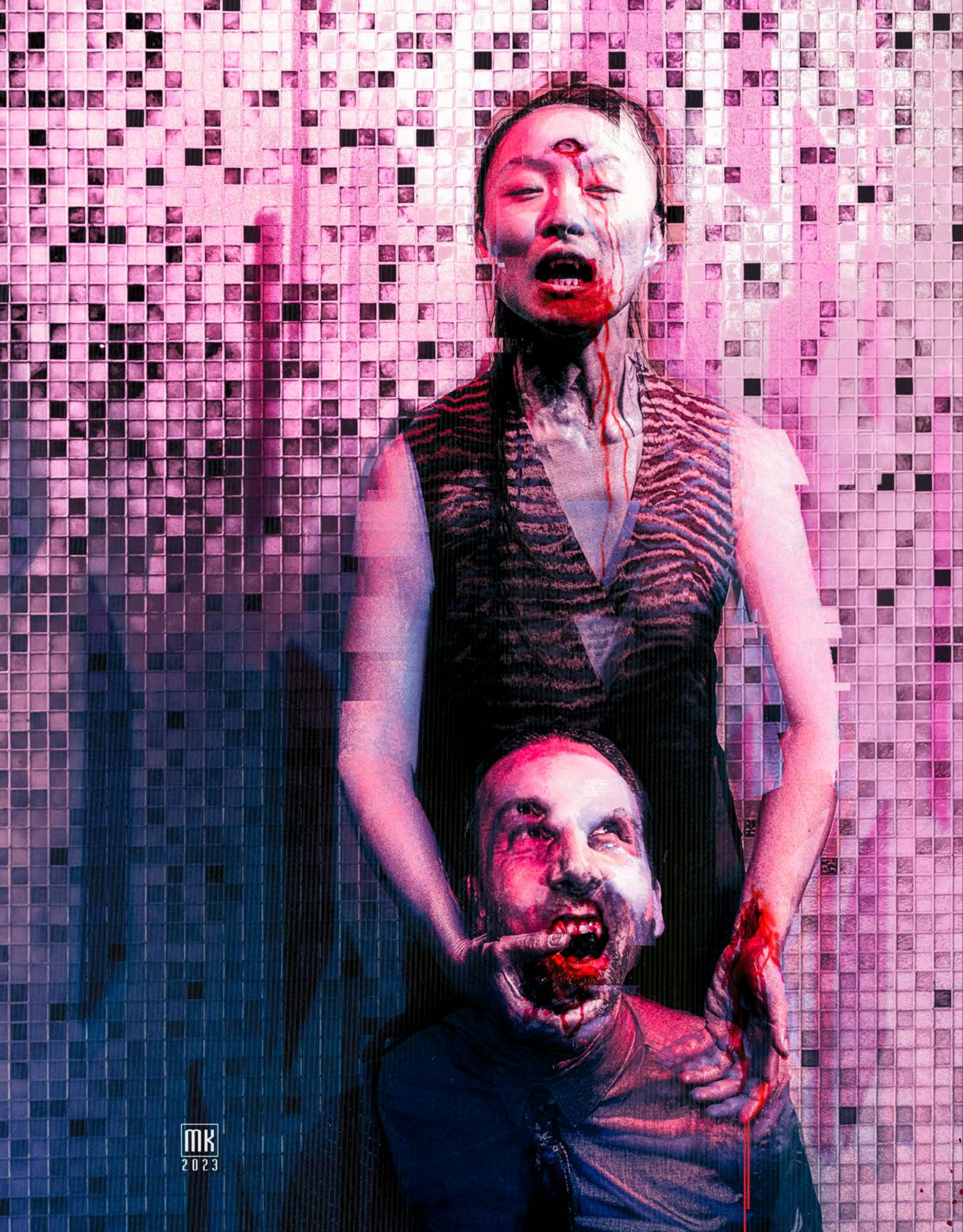
I always try to feel everything, even the bad things. It's a rare situation where I couldn't leave if I wanted to but I usually take my time. Feel it, the love, the pain, the betrayal, even the hatred of a former lover.

The only flaw I confess to is that I can't deal with boredom. If it's no longer interesting, I go. They're always so shocked when that happens as if they were watching a film and an actor suddenly stepped off the screen and walked to the exit.

A reminder that with age comes the power to decide who the protagonist of this story is.

It can be you if you decide to play the game that way.

Your loving sire,
Victoria Ash



MK
2023

Introduction


You can't get his taste from your mind. All mortals taste different and each have their own subtleties. It's rare to get caught in any specific flavor and even the most delicious are just curiosities that you can pass onto an older vampire for a favor.

But this one... He was different. The taste haunted you, and with the taste came everything he was. His face, his voice, his very presence.

How could a mere mortal have such an effect on you? Someone you had a random fling with, for no other purpose than feeding. You met him in a hotel lobby, went up to his room, went through the motions of love, drank from him. An encounter like countless others.

Only this one didn't fade from your mind with the rising of the sun. You needed to find him again. The only trouble was, on your way out you'd met one of the Anarchs who claimed the hotel as their domain. She complained you'd been feeding on their territory and you flippantly said: "There's a pretty tasty mortal in room 521 if you're interested."

You desperately hope they weren't interested.



Vampires and love stories are a classic combination. Many of the most famous vampires in modern pop culture are from stories of dark romance, tragic yet intriguing presences lurking at the limits of the lives ordinary mortals lead.

In **Vampire: The Masquerade**, you play a vampire, often navigating within a secret society of your Kindred corrupting the city. There are many kinds of love stories open to your character, from the classic setup where you fall for an innocent mortal to the depraved games of affection and manipulation beloved in Elysia worldwide.

Young fledgling vampires become enamored of each other, trying to recapture past passions and exploring the new sensations of sharing and drinking blood. Elder Kindred try to feel young again by acquiring a neonate lover who tries to hide their mortal fiancée from the ancient's jealous eyes. The Prince's lover is an Anarch gang boss and the Tremere Regent's dead heart has been lost to a Nosferatu punk.

Passion among the Kindred takes many forms. The purpose of this book is to enable you to explore as many of them as you want to.

Your Romance

You are at the center of your romance if you so choose. The beauty of roleplaying games is that all of this happens to you. (Or to your character, to be precise. More about emotional bleed between player and character on page 18!) You don't have to watch a perfect Hollywood couple fall in love. You can have your character fall for someone and experience it all directly through them.

This is why the focus in this book is in romance that your character is part of.

You see the mysterious stranger at the Elysium and decide that you have to try to seduce them. You drink from a drunken mortal and end up making a pass at your worst enemy. To your great

surprise, they flirt right back. You develop feelings for a coterie-mate you've spent decades with after realizing they have been the greatest constant in your life and subsequent unlife.

These are your love stories. Like love in real life, they can be messy and confusing. They can be tragic. Roleplaying thrives on improvisation and emergence, surprising events coming seemingly out of nowhere, brought forth by the dynamics of the game. Sometimes you see a Storyteller character and simply know that your character would fall for them. Or you can decide that making your character attracted to the haughty Keeper of the Elysium could lead to a lot of funny and poignant roleplay. You can lead with your intuition or go with your sense of what would be interesting to play, for yourself and for the others in your troupe.

The most meaningful, nuanced and deep love stories tend to happen between players' characters. They benefit from having a single person portraying each of the characters full-time, giving them their full attention. Such play can be emotionally intense and benefits from discussions between the players and the use of the calibration mechanics featured in this book (page 21) as well as in *Vampire: The Masquerade*, page 421.

Vampires are often depicted as the tragic protagonists of doomed love stories. Your character can be one too!



CONTENT WARNING!

Vampire: The Masquerade is a game of personal and political horror where you portray a blood-sucking monster in a world resembling our own. Characters routinely deal with activities typical of vampire fiction: violence, seduction, lying, murder, and taking advantage of people.

This book presents vampiric romance in all its messiness. Fans of the romance genre already know what to expect, but if you're not familiar with vampire romance, you'll find references to unequal power dynamics, unnatural age differences between partners, gaslighting, sex, kink and BDSM, drugs, alcohol and other substances, self-harm and suicide. Be sure to check out "Advice for Considerate Play" in *Vampire* p. 421 and the tools for calibration presented in this book, p. 21.

Action

Romance and all the associated feelings, from love to jealousy and lust, motivate action. Characters overcome by emotion go to extremes no sensible person would ever contemplate. This applies to vampires too. If you want to know why one of the Kindred would risk their ageless existence, the answer is often tied to an affair of the heart.

Most vampires are aware of the danger of falling to the Beast, losing their humanity and becoming nothing but animals. Many feel that love is one of the things that keep them connected to the people around them, whether mortal or not. Those vampires who have lost their connection to humanity remember the feelings they used to have, the affection and warmth, tempering the unyielding Hunger. Or were those feelings only there when they were still mortal? Still, one way to grasp at their lost humanity is to try to love once again.

To find a young Kindred and seduce them, as much as an ancient corpse can seduce anyone.

While pining for your lost love is a traditional romantic act, this book is about scenes where characters do something about it. What happens if you go to find your lost mortal lover on her deathbed and Embrace them before they die? Will your love survive the Embrace or will the vitality granted by the Blood corrupt your lover? Does it matter that her body shows its age while you remained young?

In a roleplaying game, actionable emotions are always best, and in this regard, romance reigns supreme. Kindred are cautious by nature and elders keep their hold on existence by not doing anything stupid, yet powerful emotion makes everyone into the dynamic engines of action you want them to be in your game.

Dark Romance

Traditionally, many stories of vampire romance have serious issues if you look at them through the lens of real-life relationships. Many of these scenes and scenarios would be no fun at all if you experienced them for real. Yet the great thing about roleplaying is that it's make-believe. Crucially, the consequences for whatever terrible choices our characters make end when the game ends.

This is one of the key reasons why roleplaying romance is fun. You can fall in love with a dangerous hot rebel and take stupid risks for the sake of passion. You can give it all up because you love someone so very much. You can hit on a Ventrue elder famous for being a jealous monster just to see what happens.

It's fun because you can do all those things you might not do in real life. It's fun precisely because it's not real.

Exploring dark, bizarre romantic themes in a roleplaying game is fine as long as everyone present consents and there are appropriate calibration

mechanics in use so that participants can maintain their boundaries. Unless you're making an actual play, it doesn't matter what random people on social media would say as long as all the people in the room with you are happy with how the game is going.

If you are streaming, making an actual play video, or otherwise playing in public, there are external considerations to think about. More about this on page 21.

Vampire: The Masquerade is a horror game about bloodsucking monsters existing as parasites on the body of human society. This means it's not difficult to come up with romantic scenarios with huge imbalances of power, malignant ulterior motives and destructive impulses that doom even those with the best of intentions. Lean into this aspect of the game and you'll find that it's liberating to play romance where everybody is a disaster waiting to happen.

What's the mistake you wish you'd made in your own life if good sense hadn't stopped you? You can make it in the game instead.



Freedom From Fear

One key fantasy in playing **Vampire** is simply that you are a vampire, a dangerous creature of the night. You exist in a world of danger but many of the fears ordinary mortals have to contend with are just not that important to you. Usually, you can be certain

that the most dangerous thing walking down a dark alley is you.

This freedom from ordinary fears is important in terms of how to play romance. It means you can take stupid risks, flirt with violent killers and still expect to return to your haven in one piece. Vampires have to fear many things, from the Second Inquisition to the sun, but a mortal ex-boyfriend turned stalker is usually not one of them. The Blood provides an arsenal of means to take care of such problems, especially if you're past caring whether you want to do it humanely.

If the players in the chronicle want to go wild with romantic risk-taking, the Storyteller has to decide how they want to play it out. If flirting with strange vampires leads to your character meeting final death in a Sabbat ritual, there's not going to be that much spontaneous romance. The game punishes the players for it, often framed as a consequence for "being dumb."

But sometimes love is stupid, and stupid love is fun to play. This means that for it to flourish, the consequences should be calibrated toward interesting, not lethal. Players should feel that when they make their characters follow their hearts, the result is excitement, drama and tragedy, not deariness and death.

As the Storyteller, you are responsible for the consequences of player actions. You ask "What do you do?" and they respond with whatever makes sense for their characters and their feel for what's interesting in the game and for everyone else in the troupe. The consequences shape what they'll try next.

If a character hits on an elder, only to find themselves entangled in an age-old love triangle between morbidly romantic ancients who fantasize about their own youth, the play can be dark but it will also be fun and interesting. Things happen, the player's character go from one dramatic scene to the next and hopefully they'll have agency to make meaningful decisions. That's the goal to strive for, in romance and other types of play as well.

THE VERMILION WEDDING

Two great Kindred sects, the Camarilla and the Ashirra, sought to symbolize their union through the wedding of two luminaries, one from each sect: Victoria Ash of the Toreador and Tegyrus of the Banu Haqim. A grand Blood Wedding took place, revitalizing the fashion for formalized unions among the Kindred. Or at least those among the undead who took their cues from the highest levels of vampire politics.

The Vermilion Wedding is a great symbol of Kindred romance because you can choose to see it as a love story for the centuries or a cynical political ploy. Perhaps it's both, for the Kindred have always been gifted at navigating multiple truths simultaneously.

Somewhere, there's a fledgling wondering whether Victoria Ash and Tegyrus love each other. Do they hunt together? Do they share a common haven? Do they kiss each other before they go to sleep as the sun rises?

If a cynical Camarilla functionary could be made to make an honest guess, they'd probably answer no to each of those questions. A Blood Wedding involves a Blood Bond but that bit of Blood-derived emotional manipulation doesn't mandate a shared unlife.

Yet there are romantics too, among the Kindred. For them, the Wedding represents the triumph of love over the ennui of the centuries, an example of how power politics can co-exist with the most delicate intimate emotions. This might all be a fantasy, an example of flimsy projection on the part of the young and the naive, but such dreams motivate people to extraordinary lengths. It remains a fact that recently the number of Blood Weddings has surged in many domains.

The Blood Bond

When you drink the Blood of another vampire three times in a short period of time, you develop a Blood Bond. You become emotionally attached to them, even feeling something like love.

There's a lot of variety among the Kindred over the terms in which the Blood Bond is seen. For some, it's a form of domination. Regnants use their Blood to emotionally make others into their thralls, servants whose allegiance is carved in stone. For others, the Bond enforces love and loyalty. A vampire might seek to forcibly Bond a former lover to themselves as a form of twisted revenge.

Among Kindred who care for love and romance, there are a lot of conflicted feelings about the Blood Bond. Some romanticize it, especially in the context of a Blood Wedding where both (or all) participants Bond themselves to each other, making the feelings mutual. Others see the Blood Bond as a poor man's version of real love, a forced perversion of true, genuine emotion. What does it say about you if the only way you can make someone love you is through the force of your Blood?

For players of **Vampire: The Masquerade** interested in romance, the Blood Bond presents interesting opportunities. How does your character think about it? Among the Camarilla, many sires routinely use it on their childer while among the Anarchs it's openly reviled as an oppressive, immoral practice. Does it feel like an imposition, a facsimile of real emotion or is it a chance to make your love last forever?

It adds tension to sex and intimacy. Among the Kindred, these often take the form of biting each other and drinking each other's Blood. This is a very quick way to a mutual Blood Bond unless precautions are taken. For the Blood Bond to work, you have to drink straight from the source. This means that if the lovers are careful, they can let the Blood into a glass and drink it from there. But who has the patience for things like that when your

passions are roiling hot and you want nothing but to sink your fangs into the neck of your lover so they can feel their dizzying taste on your tongue?

Safe sex is a thing, even among the dead.

There are many ways to cope with the reality of the Blood Bond. Some try to share their intimacies with as many other vampires as possible, making sure that they don't share Blood with the same partner too often. For an older, less humane vampire, the Bond can come to represent the chance for real love despite their inability to grasp such human emotions. They try to Bond themselves to someone as a shortcut on their road away from the Beast.

It's hard to say if that really works but it can lead to a bizarre situation for the object of their affection, suddenly finding themselves the regnant of an old, low humanity vampire.

Despite constant Camarilla propaganda on the subject, the Blood Bond is not eternal or inviolate. A few, rare mortals and Kindred are immune to it. It tends to fade with time if it's not reinforced. Such decline in the strength of the Bond tends to happen faster if the regnant is abusive or otherwise offensive to the thrall.

Most dramatically, sometimes the emotions engendered by the Bond singularity fail to produce the loyalty and obedience usually ascribed to the Bond. A suitably deranged Blood Bound mortal can kidnap a vampire and try to get them to love them back, serial killer style, without understanding that their feelings are caused by the Blood.

*Safe sex is a thing, even
among the dead.*

HUMANITY

A vampire's Humanity (*Vampire*, p. 236) has great bearing on how capable they are of romance. Or rather, it applies to how they come across when they try being romantic.

A high Humanity (from 8 to 10) means you have an easier time interacting with mortals since it's less obvious that something is wrong with you. You're able to have sex the mortal way in addition to vampiric blood sharing.

Once your Humanity goes down to 6 or 7, you'll have to start faking sexual interactions. Only the sharing of Blood gives you true pleasure. At Humanity 5 you can still fake sex but interacting with mortals becomes harder.

At the lowest levels of Humanity, from 1 to 4, you come across as off-putting to mortals and it is extremely difficult to engage in romantic pursuits, at least if you wish to be charming and seductive.

All this doesn't mean that romance is only the preserve of the humane. An older vampire who's lost their connection to mortals can still find understanding and intimacy with a fellow predator. Two vampires with low Humanity can make for a wonderfully creepy couple.

Furthermore, being an off-putting creep doesn't stop Kindred with low Humanity from trying to be romantic. They can be threatening, terrifying and oppressive even as they attempt to rediscover their lost romantic sensibilities. Such attempts tend to end in tragedy, which may cause the vampire's Humanity to degrade even further.

New Merits on p. 151 may help with maintaining mortal relations.



The Toolbox

This book is not just about the external accoutrements of vampire romance. It's about how to make it part of the unives of your characters. If you're a player, how to get involved in a hot vampire romance of your own? If you're the Storyteller, how to build your chronicle so that your players can have fun romancing the undead?

Because the focus in this book is on how to make romance happen in a game, we place less emphasis on genre markers, except when they're applicable to actual roleplay. The conventions of romance matter when they get your character into an emotionally fraught romantic scene.

The first chapter, "Playing Romance", is about how to navigate romance as a player. It contains calibration tools and ideas on how to discuss romantic play with your troupe. It deals with romance between players' characters and the finer points of emotional bleed between player and character. Most of all, it helps you with the concrete actions you can take in the game to make romance happen.

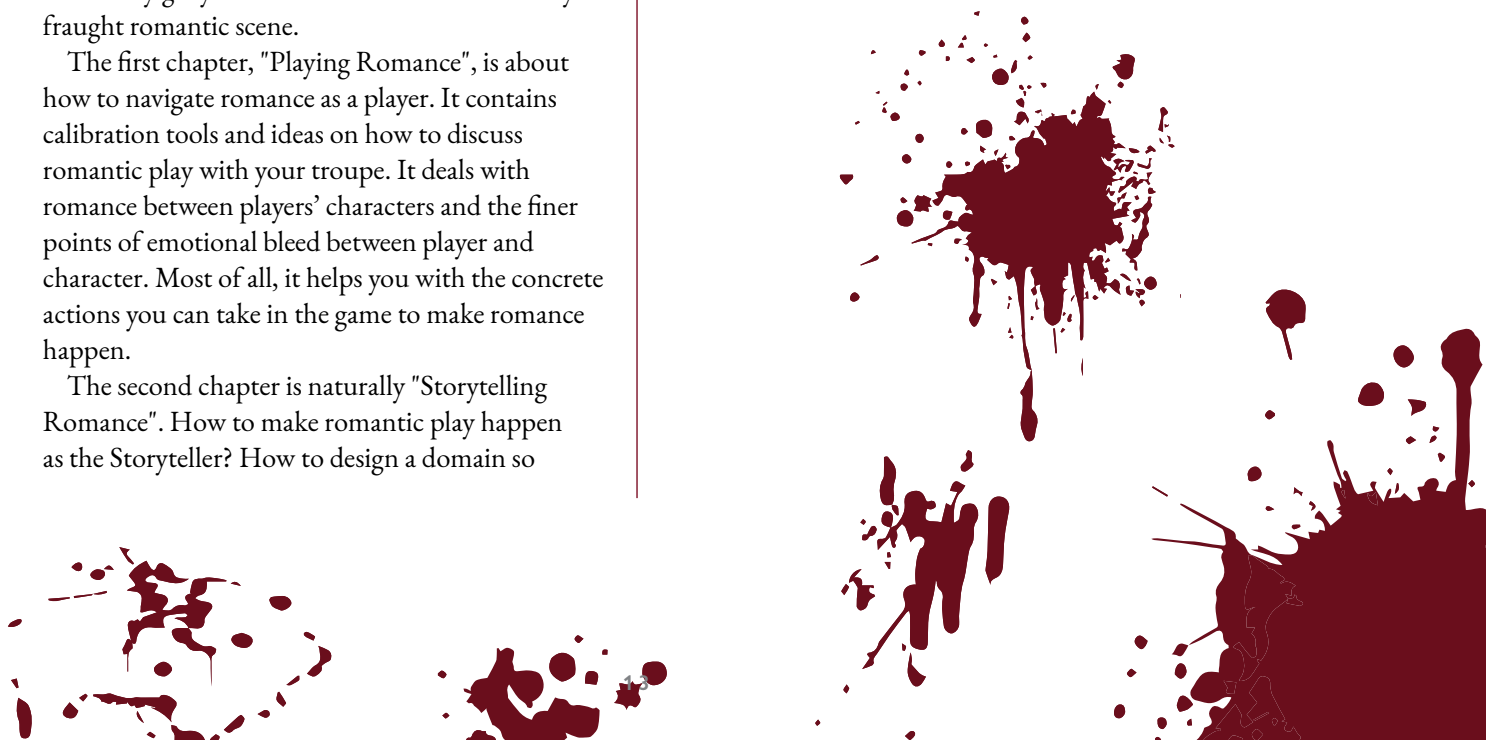
The second chapter is naturally "Storytelling Romance". How to make romantic play happen as the Storyteller? How to design a domain so

that it's conducive to romance among its various inhabitants? How to design laws that limit love for the domain, for the paradoxical purpose of making love happen? How to make playing relationships interesting, from problems between the lovers to all the ills caused by a meddling world?

Love stories need characters and that's what we provide in the third chapter, "Love Interests". Creating Storyteller characters fit for romance is an art unto itself and the goal of the chapter is both to provide characters for you to use in your games and showcase different approaches to creating romanceable supporting characters.

In the fourth chapter, we move from characters to love stories themselves. The chapter, "Stories of Love And Romance", provides a selection of short stories you can play with your troupe. Some are fit to be used in an existing chronicle while others require a more specific setting. In each, the goal is to get the players' characters involved in the romance.

Finally, the fifth and last chapter, "Other Ways To Play With Romance", looks at alternate modes of play such as playing by letter or on Tiktok. While these work wonderfully with love stories, they can also be used for other types of roleplay.





ONE-ON-ONE

One of the most intimate ways you can play a romantic game of Vampire is with just two people. One of you can be the Storyteller and the other can play a character. Alternatively, you can both play characters and share Storyteller duties between you.

When you play one-on-one, the game feels much more emotionally intense than with a larger troupe. The alibi provided by the context of a roleplaying game is weaker and it feels much more like being on an actual date. Or at least it can feel like that if the characters in play hit it off. Because of this, playing a two-person game can be a fun date activity if both of you are into roleplaying.

You can also improvise one-on-one games with a friend, a lover or a spouse whenever you need to kill time. It's a fun activity for long car rides or on intercontinental flights, although if the content of the game gets particularly explicit, you may wish to consider other people within hearing distance.

One-on-one play is further discussed in *Vampire Players Guide*, p. 197.

Desires

What do you want to get out of the roleplaying games you play? What kind of romance is fun, interesting or meaningful for you?

Once you figure out the answer to these questions, you also figure out what kind of romantic play works best for you. Maybe you do it for self-exploration, to discover new things about yourself without the consequences of actual, real-life romance. Or play could be just that, play, something you do for fun, your character getting into bizarre romantic scrapes because you find it entertaining.

You might even enjoy helping others play the scenes that they've always wanted to experience. When everyone does this for each other while maintaining their boundaries, you have the makings of a troupe cohering into a well-oiled machine of fun roleplaying.

It's also possible that when you consider what you'd like to play, you find yourself uncertain. That's fine! None of us are born with absolute certitude about our tastes. In this case as well, you can play to find out. It's not rare to discover new things about your character, about yourself and about the game while it's running. Such discoveries can be a blessing; new things you can learn to enjoy and play with.

If done right, your troupe can become a safe space where all of you can explore ideas and emotions in an atmosphere of trust. ■



mk
2023

Chapter One:

PLAYING ROMANCE

Romance is one of those areas of roleplaying where you can take great initiative as a player. If you decide that your character falls in love with an important Storyteller character, the texture of the story you're playing changes dramatically. You don't have to wait for the game to give you romance. You can take it and make it your own.

That's what romantic stories usually start with: Emotion and motivation. You can decide how your character feels but your character can also make you feel, sometimes surprisingly strongly.

Some Kindred use their Blood to influence their lovers. You should think about that, and what it says about them. Forcing some poor soul into a Blood Bond because you can't seduce them on your own. It's an embarrassment.

Just consider: All those Kindred who entrance their victims, what are they really saying? That they can't do it on their own. That is the message.

I've been here long enough to have heard all the counterarguments. A Ventrue friend once told me he prefers to use the blessings of the Blood when he hunts because he finds mortals so tedious. Listening to their concerns, pretending to empathize with all their troubles and all the rest when you really just want to sink your fangs into their neck.

I suppose that's why he's struggling to hold onto what remains of his humanity. It's easier to stay connected to the mortal world if you care.

The game is only fun if you risk losing. That applies to romance as much as it applies to everything. I don't use my Blood when I seduce a mortal. Or a neonate, or an elder. I use what I had when I was still mortal and make it work for me.

I know what people think when I talk like this. I was gifted so generously even in life that there's no way I'd ever lose a game of romance. And it's a fair point. Who wouldn't want to be in a dalliance with me?

That's why when I go out, I often do it in disguise. I pretend to be a mortal or an unknown neonate and see how far I can get.

I remember one sweet Anarch boy who found me out after we'd already spent months together in a simple and innocent relationship. Well, as innocent as it could be considering that he was teaching me how to hunt among the students in the city college. He was so proud of the tricks he'd come up with. It was really quite amusing.

But then one night, one of my clan came slumming to the bar we used to go to and recognized me.

My lover was aghast. "Why did you deceive me like this?" he kept asking.

He just didn't get it. I didn't have any malign plans. I didn't wish him ill. I was just toying with him, that's all. Is that so wrong?

— Victoria Ash

Bleed

Roleplaying tends to involve a variety of emotions. Feelings of success and failure, loss and affection, cringe and laughter. Games make us feel, and games of romance more than most others.

The term bleed, coined by the game designer Emily Care Boss, means the transference of emotions from your character to you and vice versa. Your character gets dumped by their lover and this makes them feel sad. The mechanism of emotional bleed means that as the player of your character, you might feel this sadness as well.

(Bleed is also discussed in the *Players Guide*, p. 204.)

Bleed works the other way around too. If you're angry at an enemy in the game, it's not so rare that your character would become angry as well.

When it comes to player motivation, there's another relevant term, coming from the Nordic Larp tradition: bleed hunting. This means purposefully playing in a way that maximizes bleed. This is what you do if you enjoy roleplaying as a way to experience strong, powerful feelings arising from play.

Bleed is one of the big reasons why romantic play is fun. It means we can taste emotions and experiences outside our normal life through the fictions we create together while we roleplay. Understanding bleed is useful in figuring out why some game experiences hit us as hard as they do. After all, it may feel strange to be sad because you broke up with your pretend persona's pretend boyfriend. Yet because of bleed, emotions experienced through a character may feel real even though they're from the context of fiction.

The fact that fiction can create emotions in us should not be so strange. We cry and laugh at the movies as we witness the happy and sad fates of fictional characters. In roleplaying games, the difference is that because each player usually emotionally identifies with a single character, that character's joys and sorrows tend to affect us more strongly than if we just watch a movie.

Of course, sometimes the emotions we feel while we roleplay have nothing to do with our own character. Perhaps we witness another player's character try to seduce a Brujah revolutionary, only for the attempt to end in a miserable failure. We emphasize and feel the embarrassment of the situation even though we're just bystanders. Or perhaps a coterie of Storyteller characters gets treated unjustly by the Prince, making us feel righteous anger even though it's just something that happens in the background.

Emotions from fiction affect us, whether through character-based bleed or other means. This is one of the joys of make believe.

PLAYING FOR BLEED

Here are a few ways you can maximize the bleed you're feeling in a game:

Familiarity: Make a character similar to yourself, who wrestles with issues that you know from your own life. When these issues show up in the game, you now have emotional responses to them from lived experience.

Relatability: You'll experience more bleed if your character is someone you relate to, even if they're not actually similar to yourself. For example, there might be a type of sexuality or gender expression that you find emotionally relatable even though it's not your own.

Interesting Emotions: Create a character prone to emotions that you're interested in and steer them in a direction where those emotions can come into play. For example, you're struggling with anger. You decide to steer your character into situations where anger is a possible response, to explore the emotion and see what you can do with it.

Here are ways to minimize bleed and keep the emotional impact of play at an arm's length:

Unrelatable Character: Create a character you have difficulty relating to so that you have to play them more as an abstraction than a person you emotionally identify with. If you have trouble grasping the emotional lives of the privileged rich, play a character who was born with a silver spoon in their mouth.

Circumstances Which Fail to Resonate: You always identify powerfully with circumstances where you or your loved ones are subjected to injustice. You don't want to have to care quite so much in the game so you decide to play a frivolous fop who is rarely subjected to injustice, and blind to it if he witnesses it around him.

Cool: Your character is so cool, they're impervious to powerful emotion. They're so cool, they're unaffected by emotional displays from people around them. This too makes a character less prone to causing bleed. You don't feel anything when there's nothing to feel.

Bleed and Calibration

Roleplaying games can make us feel and sometimes they make us feel things too intensely, or in ways we don't like. For example, perhaps the events of a game make you feel helpless, like you have no agency whatsoever. While such emotions can be interesting for some players to explore, many, perhaps most, would rather avoid them. This is why it's useful to consider how much emotional intensity you're interested in experiencing in romantic play.

This is something you can do both individually and as a troupe. You can do a round where each participant, Storyteller included, talks about what kind of emotional play they're interested in and what they're comfortable with. Many are fine with being present for intense play from other participants even if they don't want to play in such scenes themselves.

One of the factors that often affect how intensely we feel the emotions arising in play is age and consequently experience. Of course, people are different and there are no rules that apply in all circumstances, but it's common for younger players with less experience with real-life romance to be strongly affected by the emotions involved in this type of play.

A player in their forties, with a number of real-life romantic relationships behind them, can relate the events of the game to their actual experiences. Sometimes this makes bleed stronger but it can also give better tools for dealing with the emotions at hand.

Bleed is not an uncontrollable force. It's possible to consciously play to increase or decrease bleed, both as individual players and as a troupe. For more on this, check the sidebar "Playing For Bleed" on page 19.

Playing For Emotion

The play is shaped by what the players are trying to do. Here are a few common examples:

Win: You want to win at confrontations, whether physical, social or mental.

Succeed At Tasks: You want to fulfill the tasks your characters have set for themselves or received from someone. This is the foundation of mission-based play.

Feel Effective And Competent: You want to feel your character is cool and competent, in control of situations they're in.

In a sense, all of the above are variations on the same theme, where success equals fun.

It's important to consider what your troupe is interested in going for because sometimes when you play for maximum emotion, you may end up running counter to all of the above goals. If that's what everyone wants, it works fine. If there are different player goals at play, the result can be frustrating.

For example, let's say that your character has been sent to wrangle a political favor from their lover, an important Malkavian ancilla. This is necessary for the characters' mission to succeed. However, while you play the scene with your lover, you get sidetracked because of the prospect of emotionally interesting play. The scene becomes a confrontation between lovers and your character leaves in a huff. No favors are gained.

If everyone is playing for high drama, this is great stuff. Such a scene can be followed by another between the players' characters where accusations fly and emotions run high. But if the players are operating on the assumption that everyone should work to make the coterie succeed, this can become a problem.

Fortunately there's room for compromise even if different playstyles and motivations are in effect. For example, let's say you want to play a disaster of a character always prone to messing things up

in a chronicle about high-achieving Archons on an undercover mission. The solution could be the same as in many movies and tv series: You're professionally hyper-competent but your personal life is an absolute mess.

Whatever you decide to do, the main thing is that everyone in the troupe is on the same page.

Calibration

How to calibrate your play so that you can have the experience you want while maintaining your boundaries? This section builds on the tools and concepts given in *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 421. You'll find descriptions of core techniques such as Lines and Veils and the X Card there. They apply to romance as much as they do to all **Vampire** roleplay.

Sometimes these tools are also grouped under the umbrella term "safety" but the intent here is to showcase that they can be used in a broader set of circumstances. Roleplaying romance has its own pitfalls but it tends to be significantly safer than actual, real-life romance.

The first thing to consider is the context of play. Here are a few examples:

An ongoing, private chronicle among friends: In terms of building trust among the participants, this is the format with the most potential. You all know each other, you know where your boundaries are and you have enough shared history to help when you have to resolve problems. You're only beholden to the people in the room. If they feel safe and comfortable, it's all good. The main issue you may face is that a player might not want to leave the game even when it stops working for them because they don't want to be excluded from the group. This means that even though you know each other, you shouldn't take that as an excuse to stop listening. Sometimes the people we know the best surprise us and we should always be ready to readjust so everyone feels good about the game.

Starting a chronicle with new players: You intend to keep playing for a number of sessions and you don't all know each other so well. This is where some of the group calibration methods discussed in the next section on come onto their own. The goal is that you can get to know each other as fast as possible so that you have a solid understanding of each other's boundaries and preferences.

A Convention One-Shot: You're playing a short game at a convention with strangers. In this context, it pays to play it safe both as a player and the Storyteller. You should use the tools provided in *Vampire: The Masquerade* (p. 421) allowing for calibration of the experience on the fly. If you want romantic content in the game, discussing it beforehand might be a good idea, depending on your local play culture. It's unlikely you'll have time to build trust among the participants using the same in-depth process you'd use when starting a chronicle because it's so time-consuming.

A Streaming Game: Your game is public, watched by an audience ranging from a few dozen to tens of thousands of people, depending on your reach. This type of game requires you to consider an entirely new level of possible issues. All of the people participating in the game might be okay but if the audience sees something they violently dislike, there might still be serious consequences.

The *roleplay* safety theorist Johanna Koljonen uses the following categorization:

Physical Safety: Are the players physically safe in the game? In the case of most **Vampire** games, this is not a prime concern. Our living rooms and convention floors tend not to be immediately hazardous although it always pays to know where the nearest first aid kit is located.

Mental Safety: This is what we usually mean when we talk about safety in roleplaying games. When we violate each other's boundaries and fail to respect calibration mechanics, we've made the game unsafe in a mental sense.

Community Safety: Do the events of the game have a wider impact on the level of the community?



If you play in the privacy of your own home, this level of safety might not come into play at all. However, if your game is public, it's possible the people around you may have opinions about it. This is why you may wish to consider the nature of your audience and calibrate your game accordingly to make sure that you don't get unwanted community repercussions. This is especially relevant in a game like *Vampire* where we play characters who may engage in morally repugnant acts, such as killing people in a Hunger-driven Frenzy. It's not a given that this causes trouble, but it's something to consider because it makes the safety dynamics of a public game decidedly different from those of a private session.

(Running Actual Plays is further discusses in the *Players Guide*, p. 200.)

While the Storyteller is probably the one who takes the lead with questions of calibration, it requires buy-in from all participants to truly work. Everyone in the game must decide that they're committed to the well-being of each other. Depending on your play culture, this may be a no-brainer or something you need to state out loud so that everyone has a chance to adjust to these priorities.

Calibration, group cohesion and trust are useful things to have for any roleplaying game but they're particularly relevant in games involving romance. Like horror, romance is a genre that benefits from emotional involvement, and those emotions can make us vulnerable. If we feel unsafe or insecure, we're afraid to let our guard down and really get messy with the game. This is why calibration tools make your game better in addition to making it safer. Players who feel secure are able to go further than players who don't.

Preparing To Play

Mutual trust and understanding of each other's boundaries are key components of roleplaying romance successfully. Here's one way you can go about establishing trust among your troupe:

1. Do a round where each player (always including the Storyteller) says how they feel about romance as a topic for roleplay.
2. Do a round where everyone says what they're afraid of happening during the game.
3. Do a round where everyone says what they hope happens in the game.
4. If you have the time, you can do bonus rounds:
5. What kind of romance is each player interested in playing or finds thrilling?
6. What kind of emotional resonances are people looking for? Happy? Sad? Tragic? Cringe? Funny?
7. Each player tells a story related to romance from their own lives.

The purpose of these rounds is to structure discussion around roleplay, romance and your game. The idea is that everybody gets to speak and all can listen to each other. Indeed, listening to each other is at least as important as speaking yourself. Maybe more important.

After trust and understanding has been established by doing the rounds, you can introduce the Lines and Veils tool (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 423) and go through it with each participant, including the Storyteller.

Different Troupes

Circumstances among different troupes vary wildly in terms of what the participants are comfortable with and want out of the game. Romance requires considering things that may not come up at all with other types of play.

One of the most important aspects is simply one of comfort with romance as a playable subject. Some

players may prefer talking through romantic scenes in the abstract, just describing what's happening to their characters and keeping themselves at a remove. Others may be perfectly comfortable looking another player in the eyes and saying: "I love you."

Both are fine! Trouble comes if the comfort levels among different players are wildly divergent and players don't take the time to lay out where their boundaries lie. Obviously, the intensity of play should follow all the boundaries and preferences set out by different players, whether it's about specific subject matter or questions of style.

Roleplaying games can be played by people of all ages but **Vampire: The Masquerade** is an adult roleplaying game. Considerations of age may come up with romance as well. If your group has players of wildly divergent ages, and particularly if you have young players, you may wish to keep romantic subjects limited. (But if you're a group composed solely of twentysomethings, go nuts!)

If you want romance to play a role in an ongoing or future chronicle, discuss the matter with your co-players and consider going through the following topics:

- Who is interested in playing romance and who isn't?
- What kind of intensity feels comfortable? (Remember that a player who doesn't want romance for their own character may still be perfectly comfortable with watching intense play from others.)
- What kind of boundaries do different players have especially regarding romantic play? (For example, a player might say that they don't want to play scenes where their character gets cruelly dumped.)
- How they wish to play scenes involving intimacy and sex?

It's important to have these discussions with the entire troupe present because it helps players learn each other's boundaries and preferences. Their comments may also spark reflection in each other, bringing up more relevant points.

Sometimes a player may have a concern that they feel unable to share directly with the rest of the troupe. The Storyteller should make a point of giving the opportunity to communicate such issues in private and then taking them anonymously to the rest of the group. And remember, the Storyteller is a player too and gets to maintain their own boundaries.

Preferences

Player preferences shape all roleplay. We like what we like and naturally gravitate towards it, whatever it is. This is particularly relevant with romantic play.

If the players know each other and if the Storyteller has a general sense of what each wants to play, it's easier to craft experiences that work. Sometimes this is quite basic. A gay player may gravitate toward gay love stories. A lesbian player might enjoy lesbian love stories. A player who's long entertained the fantasy of a secret vampire lover takes to a mysterious and initially foreboding Tzimisce.

Sometimes, especially among players who don't know each other so well, individual preferences can lead to surprises. A Storyteller tries to create romantic play for a player they assumed was gay by introducing the sexiest possible pretty boys only to discover that the player was in fact straight.

Yet it should also be remembered that player preference doesn't necessarily always map to character preference. Many times we create characters who have different desires than we do, and we do it for varying reasons. Sometimes we do it to explore ourselves and try out different facets. Maybe I'm not straight but bisexual? I could try things out by making a character who's bisexual and feeling what it's like to play him. Or, more often, we can do it just to explore different types of characters, without any particular personal motivations.

The interpersonal dynamics in your troupe can also influence what kind of romance works best for you. If two players discover that their characters have

great romantic chemistry, that's fun to explore. Even bad chemistry can be a story, if you feel like it. Perhaps an elder Toreador is playing the matchmaker, trying to force two players' characters together, to their mutual embarrassment. They pretend to be lovers at Elysium and conduct their real romances in secret.

TRUE LOVE

Noel: I hate it when I have to listen to some of the ancillae talk about love. And the elders, they're the worst! They make it sound like we're all dead inside.

Dee: But we are...

Noel: No we are not! How can you even suggest that? You're not some withered corpse. You still remember what it was like to be mortal. You haven't been a vampire much longer than I have.

Dee: I was like this when I was mortal too. I don't think I changed all that much.

Noel: You did. You changed. We all did. When Victoria Embraced me...

Dee: Don't tell me. You thought she loved you and you would be together for all eternity?

Noel: ...yes. I was naive, okay? Don't judge me.

Dee: I'm not judging you. You're not the first and you won't be the last. She does that, or so they say.

The real question is...

Noel: What?

Dee: Did she taste good?

Noel: Come on! Not everything is about what the Blood of some old vampire tastes like.

Dee: She did, didn't she?

Noel: Yes, she tasted wonderful. But I'm not like you. I'm not going to mistake that for true love.

Dee: You already did. Until she dropped you.

Character Creation

Let's say you want to play romantic stories in a game of **Vampire: The Masquerade**. How do you take that goal into account when you're creating your character?

As you go through the character creation process (outlined in *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 136), consider these additional issues:

Core Concept: Is your concept aligned with the kind of romance that you find interesting to play? Sometimes this is extremely obvious and simple but if you don't think about it, it's possible to accidentally create a character not fit for purpose. For example, you come up with a stoic, withdrawn Gangrel who has no time for emotional frivolity. Yet you find lighthearted flirting the most fun part of playing romance. The character can still be good but it won't give you the thing you want.

If you're uncertain what kind of play you'd most enjoy, it's good to create a character who's open to new things and experiences. This way, the character's journey can mirror your own as you develop your taste and preferences.

Clan And Sire: The various clan stereotypes each have their romantic implications. You can choose to play according to type or against it, depending on what you find interesting. The easiest and most obvious clan for romantic protagonists is the Toreador, the clan of artists and lovers. Playing a young Toreador artist who falls in love with a different person each week can be great fun!

The identity of your sire may have romantic implications, or it may not. You can choose whether you would find it interesting to play on romance between your character and their maker. If yes, then perhaps your sire fell in love with you when you were a mortal and decided to Embrace you. How do you feel about it now that they changed you irrevocably?

The sire is also a good way to introduce the theme of romance to your character even if you don't want to play on the relationship too much. If the sire made you out of love, you can reject them and seek your own way.

Attributes: Consider what kind of romance you wish to play. If you want to be a seductive, dangerous social butterfly, Social Attributes should be high. If you're going for the sincere heartbreak

of those who see love as a rare possibility for light in the crimson darkness, you can make the character relatively socially awkward and foreground other Attributes instead.

Skills: When considering your skills, you can think about what sort of romantic shenanigans your characters might engage in. You need Athletics to climb to the balcony of your lover and Brawl to punch a rival suitor. Etiquette is a must if you intend to navigate the treacherous waters of the Elysium.

Disciplines: Some Disciplines, especially Presence, have applications relevant for romance. However, remember that their use tends to lead to sad, abusive, one-sided romance where the dynamic only works through mental control. Before choosing them you should think about how your character sees the gifts of their Blood and how they apply to their love life. Is your character the type to rely on them or do they prefer to seduce unassisted? Even if your character is someone who thinks using Presence in this situation is okay, you should consider how it relates to Chronicle Tenets and Stains.

Predator: The choice of Predator Type (*Vampire*, p. 175) is very telling in terms of how your character relates to the mortals around them. Some, like the Consensualist and the Siren, can be directly relevant to your character's love life. Others, such as Osiris and Scene Queen give you a context in which your feeding habits can have romantic repercussions.

Convictions And Touchstones: If your character has a Conviction related to their love life, that aligns them strongly for romantic play. "All is fair in the name of love" is a classic. Giving your Touchstones a romantic dimension is a possibility but it's rarely a good idea to make everything about your character romance-related even if that's what you want to play. You need other types of relationships and connections too to have a well-rounded character.

Sea of Time: Are you playing childer, neonates or ancillae? This has an enormous bearing on how your character understands love and romance. A young vampire probably sees it much the same

as they did before, with the added horror of their vampiric nature complicating things. Can they trust themselves to stay in control when in bed with a mortal lover full of tempting blood? For older vampires, love can be about nostalgia for human emotions or a desire to connect with others in an effort to regain one's humanity.

If you're looking to play romance, the key to character creation is to regard your character as a tool you use to access the themes, scenes and stories you want. If you give your character the right motivations, play follows almost automatically. Here are some sample motivations, concepts and personality types:

The Sensitive Thug: You're an aggressive badass but it's all a cover for how deeply sensitive you are inside. You're afraid the world won't respect feelings and seek to hide them under a blustery exterior.

Keeping Score: When you were still human, you never got as much out of life as you wanted to. You missed out on all the experiences people around you seemed to be having. No more! You will love, make love and flirt as much as you're able, keeping score of your accomplishments to make sure you're doing it all.

Afraid of the Beast: You feel the Beast lurking deep within you, ever ready to tear you down and turn your existence into a sordid spectacle of pain and callous destruction. To forestall such a fate, you must focus all your attention on cultivating the most delicate, fragile feelings you're capable of.

The Serial Dater: You don't like being alone so you make sure you always have someone. Or more than one. What matters is that if you feel lonely, you can call them up and find someone to be with.

The Matchmaker: You love getting into other people's business. You have a lot of opinions about who belongs with who and are not afraid to try to make them a reality. If you end up in a relationship yourself, you're surprisingly ill-equipped to deal with it.

Being Bored: You need things to happen. Otherwise, you start to feel bored. You're great at the beginning of a relationship but once things settle down, you start to come up with drama just to keep yourself entertained.

The Martyr: You derive masochistic enjoyment from sacrifice. As a lover, this means you're always willing to do whatever it takes to make it work, even if it happens at your expense. Especially if it happens at your expense.

The Taste of Love: For you, the higher emotions of love are impossible to separate from the sheer physicality of it all. When you were alive, sex was supremely important to you. Now that you're dead, it's often a question of the taste of their blood. If it works for you, you can ignore everything else.

The Tragedy of Undeath: You sincerely believe that as a vampire, you exert a malign influence on everyone who gets close to you. Yet you also fall in love at the drop of a hat and can't stop yourself from pursuing your current crush. As a result, you engage in a lot of mordant soul-searching.

The Egotist: You're deeply, profoundly in love with yourself. You're the smartest, funniest and most beautiful person you know. You need lovers who look good standing next to you. They have to validate your self-perception and if they don't, you become surprisingly needy.

These are all starting points. It's possible that your character's journey during the chronicle leads to personal change, either for the better or (because this is **Vampire**) for the worse.

Sometimes it pays to pose the romantic goals of your character as a question. That way, as you play, you can steer your character into situations that may shed light on the answer. For example, you can ask: "Is love possible for the Kindred?" Then as your character witnesses thin-bloods helping each other survive, you may conclude that it is. Or if you see emotionless elders using their lovers as pawns, you may think that it's not, that vampire love is merely dressed up lust and Hunger.

Romance and the Clans

Here's how the different clans are often viewed through the lens of Kindred stereotypes. These are the kind of opinions different vampires may hold so it's fine if your conception of your character is completely different. In **Vampire**, as in real life, stereotypes rarely capture the full breadth of our experience.

"The Banu Haqim are so intense, taciturn, and you never see them engaging in romantic frivolities. That makes them a challenge! Anybody can seduce one of us. You know it's true. But seducing one of them is a real accomplishment!"

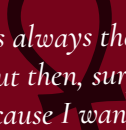
—VIVIANA FUENTES, A TOREADOR SOCIALITE

"Okay, so I was sharing Blood with this Brujah and it was pretty hot. He tasted so good and he was just intense. Passionate, exciting, he made things happen. But then just as I was drinking from him, he started talking about the inherently exploitative nature of Kindred influence on mortal communities."

—WEASEL, A NOSFERATU COURIER

"I had a Caitiff lover once. I know, I know, they're a lowly bunch. She didn't even know who her sire was. But I thought maybe it would make her feel good about herself if she was seen with me. I wanted to give her that. It ended with me breaking things off because she was just too ungrateful. She didn't grasp what I was doing for her."

—TERENCE PHILBY, A VENTRUE COURTIER

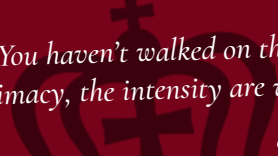
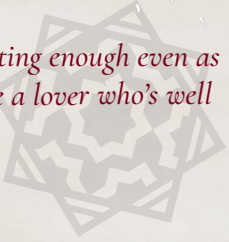


It's always the same thing with the Gangrel. You think you're going on a date just the two of you but then, surprise! You're meeting all their friends in some damp forest! But I'm sticking with it because I want to know if all those stories about the Gangrel and their animalistic kinks are true.

—JESS “GRUNT” WALKER, A CAITIFF LEG BREAKERR

The Hecata... I know what everyone is saying. Too corpselike, too frigid. Not exciting enough even as a challenge. But, and I'll try to say this circumspectly, some among us appreciate a lover who's well and truly undead.

—CHIMÉNE SAHRAOUL, A BANU HAQIM DIPLOMAT



You haven't walked on this earth until you've experienced a Lasombra lover. The passion, the intimacy, the intensity are what make the Lasombra the greatest lovers among the Kindred. Truly, anyone who experiences one of us is blessed.

—PAOLO DA CARRARA, A LASOMBRA BUSINESSMAN

The Malkavians are just so high maintenance! Date one of them and you have to be at their beck and call every night, all night. Unless, they're the type to withdraw into deep depression, which makes it even harder.

—LINE FALK, A SALUBRI THIEF



The Ministry are always playing an angle! Sure, they say they love me when I'm in bed with them, sharing a mortal, but I don't think that's true. Or when they tell me they're feeling vulnerable. They're probably just manipulating me. Or when they tell me their intimate secrets. They just want something from me!

—JOSÉ THE OWL, A RAVNOS CAR MECHANIC

Hear me out! Who among the Kindred should you date? I'll say the Nosferatu. Sure, they have awful reputations as lovers. Most of us won't even look their way. But I've always found they're a clan of hidden gems, wonderfully passionate vampires who take your breath away when given the chance!


—BOGDAN IONESCU, A TZIMISCE GANG BOSS

I shared Blood with a Ravnos once! It's true, I'm not just bragging. Alright, I'm bragging a little bit. How many can say that? They're so new, I think I must have been one of the first in our domain!

—BAI ZHANG, A TREMERE RESEARCHER

My unlife is such a mess. I just can't deal with the Hunger and my relationships with my mortal family are close to destroyed. But if I get a Salubri lover, their wisdom and understanding will guide me on my path! I just know it.

—ST. NICHOLAS, A THIN-BLOOD MESS



It's making me so paranoid! I got together with a thin-blood and now I'm constantly asking myself what do they do all day anyway? I feel I can't trust them because they're not even a real vampire. But I admit there is a certain scummy attraction to it too.

—AGATA STAREK, A BRUJAH REVOLUTIONARY

They're so gorgeous and desirable! The Toreador are the clan of lovers, everybody knows they're great at flirting, passion and beauty. They're also great at betrayal and cruelty. I had a Toreador paramour once and we had a huge row at the Elysium. I was so shocked, pleading, crying, but later I realized she'd done it just because she was bored.

—THYLANE CHAPMAN, A MINISTRY GOLD-DIGGER




The Tremere are so kinky. All that talk of hierarchy and obedience means intense depressurization in the bedroom.

—RAZI CLARK, A GANGREL COP

The idea of dating a Tzimisce is terrifying but some of us appreciate the idea of romancing one for just that reason. Who wouldn't want to date a possessive monster who can shape flesh, yours and their own?

—SERENITY, A MALKAVIAN INGENUE



Dating a Ventrue is always about politics. Is this for love or are you just cementing a dynastic alliance between your two factions? Yet sometimes the Ventrue need an escape from all the pressures they're under, and that's when they can really surprise you.

—DR. LIISA KOSKI, A HECATA DOCTOR

Actions

You have your character ready, and tonight's game is starting. What can you do in the pursuit of romantic play, concretely speaking? Which actions can your character take?

Here are example actions to consider:

Act Out: Sometimes love makes us do stupid things. You can cause a scene at the Elysium after you've been dumped. You can make a public spectacle of begging your ex to take you back and cause maximum cringe among the other players in the chronicle as you do so. You can get mad at everyone except the person actually responsible for your woes.

Break Your Heart: You realize they don't love you anymore, or perhaps never did. Among the Kindred, one of the worst ways to break your heart is when you realize that you're not capable of love anymore, that you've become too degraded, your humanity too meager to sustain such lofty emotions. Heartbreak can motivate all sorts of actions, from revenge to reflection and violence to a desperate attempt to find a new lover as fast as possible.

Cheat: If you've made a serious monogamous commitment with a loving partner, you can cheat on them by having sex with someone else, or even starting a new relationship with a secret lover. Then you can enjoy all the sneaking around and keeping secrets this requires. The crime of cheating doesn't have the same cachet among the Kindred as it does with many mortals. Vampires expect each other to be untrustworthy and the expectation of exclusivity feels strange to many, given that they all drink blood from mortals in often intimate encounters every night. Cheating acquires another dimension if there's a significant power differential between the characters in the relationship. An elder requires strict monogamy but their neonate partner needs to have another relationship just to stay sane.

Confess Your Sorrows: Talk about your feelings, your loves and disappointments with someone. This works very well if you do it with a

coterie-mate. You can ask for advice or just vent about how awful it is to seek love among the dead. Alternatively, you can play your confession for a different effect by making it to your ill-treated ghoul servant or even a mortal you were planning to feed from. Sometimes we unburden ourselves to random people and it can make for a fun situation to play.

Date: You like someone and ask them out. They accept. What does this mean for the Kindred? Do you go out hunting together? Do you share particularly delicious mortal vessels? Do you enjoy daring each other to break the Traditions or make love in the office of a powerful politician, just because you can? What kind of romantic adventures open up to you when you have all the powers of the night at your disposal?

Fall For Someone: Look at the Storyteller characters seen in the game so far. Look at the characters of your fellow players. Is there one or more who is your character's type? If yes, fall for that one. This is a great first step! Then you can figure out what your character would do if they felt like that. Take the initiative? Brood? Talk to their coterie mates? You can also decide how serious your character is about falling for someone. For some it can be an earth-shaking emotion, while others fall in love with someone new every day.

Flirt: Flirting is one of the core actions of romantic play, and there's a broad range of situations where you can have fun with it. You can flirt with mortals, people you're attracted to, but also elders at the Elysium, your enemies, werewolves, whoever you want. The consequences may be surprising. Flirting can be something you do for its own sake because it's fun. Or you can make it into an invitation for whomever you're doing it with. Sometimes the most surprising people can take you up on that invitation.

Get Ready To Go Out: Getting ready to go out is a distinct action from actually going out because it's a chance for the players' characters to discuss what they want, help or criticize each other, comment on each other's dress sense and otherwise calibrate where they are with their aspirations for the night, romantic or otherwise.

Ghost: It's an unfortunate fact that the Kindred are rarely the most principled or considerate of all the beings populating the world. This means that sometimes you know you've been dumped when you can no longer reach your lover. They've ghosted you. To make sure they don't have the chance, ghost them first. Of course, few Kindred react to being ghosted with grace so be prepared for the consequences.

Have Sex: For the Kindred, there are complexities to sex beyond those experienced by mortals. The kind of lusts that animate the living may wane in the Embrace but for many vampires, the act of drinking blood is sensual in itself. Having two vampires drink from each other is an act of mutual sharing and intimacy even some of the more bestial Kindred are capable of. Having sex with mortals can be pleasing for vampires for many different reasons. Some want to feel physical intimacy with someone alive while others are just playing with their food.

Hit the Town: Go out, party and meet people. For many Kindred, this is something they do practically every night to hunt and find the blood they need to survive. If your character does this, they are meeting new people all the time, whether you play out all those interactions in the chronicle or not. You can also decide to play out a scene where the troupe's characters go out together, not to hunt but for some other reason. Perhaps to get laid, find someone warm with whom you can pretend to be mortal.

Marry: The Blood Wedding is one of the grandest Kindred ceremonies, usually involving a mutual Blood Bond between the principals. Although anyone can marry any way they want, the Blood Wedding as a vampire social occasion tends to be a Camarilla phenomenon, often involving lavish parties that last for a number of nights. As an Anarch, you might want to have a wedding but not in the style of the Camarilla, so you can end up with your own, a newly invented model for what commitment means to the Kindred. And of course,

if your Mask is exceptionally strong, you can even marry a mortal in the usual way of the living.

Misunderstand: Stable, functional and trusting relationships with great communication are wonderful in real life but they tend to be somewhat boring to play in roleplaying games. If you feel like your character's romance needs a bit of extra drama, you can always misunderstand something. Take their gift as an insult, their absence as a sign that you've been abandoned. Assume they're conspiring behind your back and make baseless accusations. Soon enough your relationship is full of highly destructive excitement. It sucks when it happens to you but can be quite entertaining when it happens to your character. (Note: If you're playing a romance with another player's character, it may be wise to calibrate off-game before you go for this sort of thing. It's best to keep misunderstandings in the fiction and strive for maximum understanding between players.)

Seduce: Try to get someone to fall for you by mustering all the charm that you have at your disposal. Among the Kindred, seduction can happen for many different reasons. Sometimes it's perfectly honest: You find someone attractive and would like for them to find you attractive as well. But quite often it's happening for reasons such as boredom or an attempt to get one over a rival. Similarly, success at seduction can be a trap in itself. That Toreador ancilla you seduced is just playing along to see where you're going with this.

Start a Relationship: Get together with someone, or someones if you wish to discard the stale constraints of monogamy. You have to decide what that means for yourself as a vampire as there are fewer cultural templates to model yourself on. What kind of things do committed vampire lovers expect from each other? What's a violation of trust and how can it be redeemed? Do you share a Haven and go hunting together every night?

Getting Involved

There are many different actions that allow you to play on romance even if your character is not personally involved in any romantic situations:

Be the Wingman: When your coterie-mate goes out for the purpose of finding love and affection in the sordid wastelands of urban nightlife, you can be there to help! Make them look good, talk them up and retire discreetly when things get going.

Gossip: Why talk about the threat of the Second Inquisition or wonder about the occult conspiracy brought to light among the city's Kindred when you can exchange rumors about the love lives of everyone you know? If there's no salacious gossip to be had, you can just invent something. Surely the Anarch gang bosses and Camarilla Primogen won't mind if you spread entertaining fake rumors about them?

Meddle: Why should you focus on your own love life when you can meddle in those of others? Whether it's other players' characters or supporting characters, you can always start involving yourself in the romantic affairs of someone else. You can give advice, help arrange dates or otherwise make yourself a party to something that doesn't involve you.

Play the Matchmaker: Your character tries to set up other characters for a date or other romantic situation. You can play a matchmaker for Storyteller characters or other players' characters. You can do it with a serious purpose because you think that these two characters could be good for each other. Or you can do it with some other goal, such as comedy or for malevolent purposes.

Sabotage: Try to destroy a relationship or stop it from happening in the first place. You see two people dancing intimately, obviously attracted to each other. You bump into them, spill your beer onto one, and then when they are cleaning up in the bathroom get the other high by offering them drugs. Whatever it takes. If your targets are in a relationship, you can spread rumors of infidelity or even try to seduce one of them yourself and get them to leave their partner.

The Storyteller can take any of these actions and use them for supporting characters as well. The players' characters visit the Prince on an important task but he refuses to listen to them, instead unburdening himself about a romance that just ended. When the characters insist, he says he's too heartbroken to think about anything as trivial as politics.

Just as the characters think the audience is over, the Prince asks them to take him on a night out on the town, pretending to be a mortal. Maybe a sordid one-night stand would help him get out of his funk? ■





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Chapter Two:

STORYTELLING ROMANCE

Storytelling love stories have a few special challenges. More than most types of stories that can take place in a **Vampire** chronicle, romance relies on chemistry and attraction. A plot involving a villain none of the players really like can still limp along to a conclusion but a love story where the player just ignores the supposed object of attraction is dead on arrival.

This means that as the Storyteller, you should know your players and know what works. If what you introduce into the game doesn't work, you have to discard it and try something else. The idea of forcing your players into romantic plots won't lead to good roleplaying. You have to entice them. Seduce, even.

Love stories work best when the players take the lead. You as the Storyteller should create the conditions in which they can do so.

I like stories of love. There's something comforting about them. The particulars may change but the broad strokes are the same as they ever were.

Sometimes I think the best romances are the ones that leave me with the best stories to tell afterward. It makes for a fun competition. Who can experience the most interesting love story and survive to tell the tale?

Among the Kindred, there is only one clan you go to when you are faced with a challenge like this. One clan so superior in all matters of romance, of strange attractions and beguiling passions, that there isn't any other choice.

I'm not talking about my own clan, the Toreador, although we are often famed for being the masters of romance among the dead.

No, I speak of the Tzimisce.

I remember one time years ago... Or to be honest, centuries ago. I attracted the attention of a Tzimisce lord, a voivode as they call themselves. He sent me love letters of the most grotesque kind, full of fantasies of death, pain and ashes. He said he wanted to touch something beautiful before he'd succumb to the sun, becoming one with the homeland he so dearly loved.

Now, you must understand that when a Kindred talks like this, you can't take them at face value. They wax poetic on the weight of the curse and their need to escape it, even if it means their final destruction, but then the next night they're back out there, hunting. I've found that the taste of blood washes away the nagging doubts plaguing our consciences.

Still, I liked how dramatic he was being. I liked the putrefying imagery of his florid poetry. It was different from the other prospective lovers around me!

I traveled to his domain and such amazing sights awaited me. He'd used the powers of his Blood to craft his servants into my likeness. They had my face, my body... At least, as he imagined I looked like. He didn't have a good reference picture so they were all a little skewed.

Now, many among us describe the Tzimisce as monsters. Yet, what a gift! To be changed so that you look like me! It's a rare vampire who grants their servants a blessing of such value.

Some among the ungrateful wretches dared to beg to be returned as they were. Such insolence. Still, I couldn't bear to ask him to punish them for their transgressions. That would have to mean marring a thing of beauty.

We had a torrid affair lasting all summer long. He declared that even his best efforts at fleshcrafting couldn't match what God had given me but he came up with the most imaginative presents. Peasant girls and boys made into beautiful, short lived things.

I did leave him in the end. Why?

Well, truth be told, he really was entirely monstrous. I felt my connection to humanity ebbing a way with each atrocity I accepted to be with him. I felt myself losing that which I treasure most of all, my relationship to the mortal world around me. The times we all exist in. The now.

The Tzimisce are reputed to be possessive, and he lived up to the stereotype. He tried to imprison me, fleshcraft me into a monstrosity, stalk me across Europe... That's when it became fun again. He was such a great romantic villain! Who knows, maybe he's still out there, among the Sabbat or in some small domain of his own.

Is this story true? Of course it is. That's one thing I've learned about love. The stories that have neat endings, where the virtuous get their just rewards and the beautiful and the innocent live happily ever after are all lies. The ones that are messy, ugly and weird... Those are the love stories that tell you what really happened.

— Victoria Ash

Classic Romance Tropes

If you want to spice up your campaign or one-shot session with some romantic content, and you don't want to use a pre-written story or want something more tailored to your specific group, there's a whole world of classic romance tropes you can take inspiration from.

A trope can be a commonly used theme or plot device, such as "heroes walk away from explosions" or "vampires have fangs". It doesn't always have to hold true but it's been used so much, it's become recognizable. And often for good reason! A trope can be an efficient and interesting way to change a story.

Here, we present some of the most commonly used romance tropes and give you some tips on how to get them to fit your story. There's an extended list of tropes at the end of this section, but even so, you can probably think more yourself. Your imagination is really the only thing setting the limit on which bits and pieces from the history of romance you introduce to your story. Read a romantic book or watch a romantic movie and use the bits that feel like they'd work in a game of **Vampire**.



General Tips

Introducing a romance trope comes with certain expectations for the plot that follows. Depending on your storytelling style, your players may be mistrusting of a tall, gorgeous stranger looking for their one true love, or they may be ready to romance away. Use this to your advantage!

Just because a trope is recognizable, doesn't mean it has to be a cliché. A unique combination of characters or an unexpected twist can change everything.

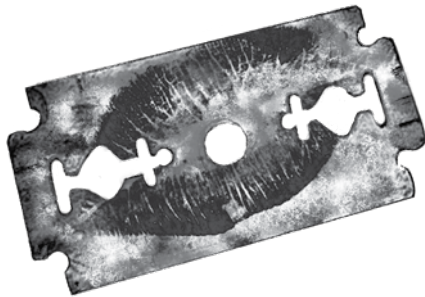
If the romantic content involves characters your players are already invested in or is tied to pre-existing plot, it'll be more tempting to engage with.

Don't force romance plot onto your players but keep an eye on when it might be opportune to offer it as an option. You can do this indirectly by introducing romanceable characters and optional questlines.

You can easily combine several tropes or disguise one trope as another.

Involving Players' Characters: The tropes below can all involve one or more players' characters directly, or they can be used as plot devices involving the coterie as allies or enemies in the romantic drama that unfolds.

Choosing the Setting: These tropes all work in almost any given setting, as long as you modify them to fit with the context. For instance, Forbidden Love can just as easily take place in 14th Century Verona between feuding families as it can play out in modern-night Brazil between competing Camarilla domains.



Using the Memoriam Mechanic: The Memoriam mechanic (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 311) is a great way to give weight to a new romance by giving it a past. When the players' characters are directly involved in a romance, have them enter Memoriam to remember when they first met their new potential partner and how it was in some way special. This mechanic can also allow them to discover red flags they may otherwise be blind to.

The Love Triangle

The sweet pain of the Love Triangle is that two eligible suitors both want to be with the same protagonist who has to choose between them. The choice is always difficult, and it always drags out; otherwise, it wouldn't be a Love Triangle.

For added drama, the two suitors may have a close pre-existing relationship that is being threatened by their affection for the protagonist. Maybe they are siblings, blood brothers, childhood friends, or escapees from the same cult. Or, they could have a pre-existing rivalry—they could be competing over a business empire, a political post, or have been in love with the same person before.

Both rivals should be deeply attractive to the protagonist, but they should also speak to different parts of the protagonist's self and who they want to become. For instance, they can represent romance vs. sexual chemistry, stability vs. adventure, family vs. individuality, power vs. humanity.

Example

Two sisters were given the Embrace at the same time and have sworn never to let anyone come between them. Sarah gets to know them individually and happens to fall in love with them both. She makes the difficult choice to end it with one and start a relationship with the other, but as soon as she's done so, the truth comes out. Now neither sister wants to let go, and Sarah has to see the one she tried to end it with all the time. She doesn't know what to do.

Hook

A player's character can be the protagonist of the Love Triangle or one of the rivals. But an entire coterie can also get dragged into a bloody and heartbreaking Love Triangle as supporters of either rival. Perhaps one of the coterie's sires conscripts them to an involuntary clan war as he finds himself in love with a vampire who's already got an immortal lover — one he deems not good enough.

Scenes

- Rival One decides to sacrifice their own happiness and tearfully ends it with the protagonist. The idea of never being together gets too much for both parties, though, and the final goodbye takes the shape of a passionate make-out session.
- Rival One and Rival Two get into a fight over the protagonist. Depending on their powers, the fight may have terrifying consequences.
- Rival One and Rival Two ask the protagonist to choose between them.
- Rival One has finally convinced the protagonist that they are right for each other, and the protagonist has rejected Rival Two for good. However, Rival One soon after does something to betray their trust, making them question everything.

Tips

- Don't let a Love Triangle protagonist go back and forth too many times, or the story loses its power and the rivals likely lose interest.
- The two relationships can begin at different times. Maybe you start the love story with an intense Enemies to Lovers romance only to introduce a second viable match, making it a Love Triangle. If your protagonist isn't the type to get tempted once they're in a relationship, make sure they have a pre-existing history with the second option — it would be difficult to outright reject your soulmate who you thought was dead just because you got a new cute boyfriend in the meantime!
- Make sure there is something at stake! Maybe one choice starts a war or makes your friends turn against you and the other requires you to become someone's thrall.

Twists

- The rivals are actually happy to share the affection of the protagonist, and the choice is forced upon them by an outside force.
- Deep down, the rivals also have feelings for each other.
- Perhaps the Love Triangle doesn't start out with love but with the rivals competing for the protagonist's influence, blood, or connections.



Enemies to Lovers

Two characters hate each other with a burning passion but over the course of a story, they become reluctant allies and finally lovers. Maybe they were only ever enemies for outside reasons, like opposing alliances, or maybe they have much more personal reasons to hate each other. But in either case, they eventually turn one type of passion into another.

The characters can be very similar, recognizing themselves in each other, or they can be complete opposites and learn that their differences actually make them stronger together.

Example

Both proud and headstrong, Viktor and Anthonia were bitter rivals as members of different Tremere Houses. Their relationship worsened considerably when one supported the schism and helped bring down the Pyramid, while the other remained a steadfast traditionalist. Now they find themselves serving the same Prince, and surrounded by outsiders, they slowly realize they have more in common than they thought.

Hook

If the players' characters are not directly involved in the romance, they can get dragged into it through their alliances. Perhaps one of the lovers is an enemy of a coterie ally, who eventually turns turncoat and betrays the coterie for love.

Scenes

- The enemies are prisoners in the same cell and the only way to escape is to work together. They agree on a temporary peace for the common good.
- The enemies discover that they both have an ally they care for deeply and who needs them both.
- One enemy manages to grievously hurt the other but in doing so realizes they don't actually want them to die. Is it too late?

Tips

- Make sure there's a good reason for the enemies to be enemies.
- Create opportunities for them to meet and get close, since it won't happen automatically.
- Even though there may be a power difference between the enemy-lovers, they should be equal in most ways that count. Mutual respect feeds this type of romance.

Twists

- Combine with a Mistaken Identity, Forbidden Love, or Fated by Destiny.
- Make the obstacles between them grow as their attraction grows. Make sure they always have something to fight for and about.
- Misunderstandings can help add tension.
- The enemies don't have to be enemies from the start. They can start with attraction and then turn against one another.



DISILLUSIONMENT

Noel: What I don't get is that she has such strong opinions. She either loves or hates everything. She talks about beauty, refinement...

Rudi: Your sire is a Camarilla vampire. It's not so rare for them to be raging elitists.

Noel: I know, but the thing is, Victoria... The way she talks about Anarchs is really quite insulting.

Rudi: If I'd get all emotional every time someone like her insulted my sect, I'd never have peace. Come on. What is this all about? What are you doing hanging out in an Anarch bar anyway?

Noel: Why does she have Anarch lovers if she hates the Anarchs?

Rudi: Ah. Okay. I understand.

Noel: I know it sounds stupid. Like I haven't gotten over her.

Rudi: You know what would help? If you got an Anarch lover of your own.

Noel: What? But how...

Rudi: You're a beautiful man, Noel. Victoria Ash is many things but she does have taste. Some among us might enjoy playing with her toys.

Noel: I'm not her toy.

Rudi: Prove it. Kiss me.

Forbidden Love

Otherwise known as "star-crossed lovers", the characters in "Forbidden Love" are deeply smitten with each other, and probably there would be no issues with their romance if it not for one big obstacle. Their sects are sworn enemies, one of them is promised to another, they've taken vows of celibacy, or their relationship is considered to be against the law in the time and place where they live because of their gender or skin tone. The whole world seems to be against them — making their love so much more intense and their stolen moments all the more enchanting.

This type of romance is great for tension and suspense, as the insurmountable odds keep the romance exciting without any of the everyday difficulties of a real relationship. It lends itself well to historical settings and settings where society is generally very formal.

Example

Petrus and Marcus belong to the same monastic order in the late 1500s. Their friendship has been allowed to blossom but their love is not accepted by the order or their faith. When Petrus is given the Embrace, he thinks they can finally be together. But Marcus is unwilling to give himself to the Devil for the sake of love, and their relationship remains impossible.



Hook

For a sweet side quest with a tragic twist, let the players' characters think the lovers are headed towards Happily Ever After and get them to help the lovers get together — only for it to end with terrible consequences for everyone involved.

Scenes

- The lovers meet for the first time. It could be Love at First Sight (see Additional Tropes) or it could be the first sparks that light the fire. They may not know that they are supposed to be enemies initially.
- The lovers share a stolen moment, but are almost discovered and have to focus on making their escape in separate directions.

- The lovers gain an ally who promises to help them but, through malice or clumsiness, only makes their situation worse.
- One of the lovers gets caught by the allies of the other and taken prisoner. It's up to their partner to choose between love and loyalty.

Tips

- To keep the stakes high, make sure the outcome of the lovers getting each other will be catastrophic and that the reasons they can't have each other are weighty and not primarily of their own making.
- If the lovers are players' characters, have your players write love letters in between sessions.
- *Forbidden Love* easily becomes Destructive Romance. The stakes are so high that the lovers have no way back once they've chosen each other.
- *Forbidden Love* can also include incest, adultery, abuse, large age-gap relationships and similar issues, making the line between romance and horror thin. Treating abuse as romance can be a sensitive issue for some players, and you may want to check in with your troupe if you're thinking of taking this path.

Twists

- The coterie has good reason to be against the lovers uniting and is actively working to keep them apart.
- Only one of the lovers is actually aware that the relationship is forbidden, as they're pretending to be someone else when they communicate with their partner.



Destructive Romance

Two characters are locked together in a relationship that is good for neither one, yet they can't let go of each other. They probably try over and over again, but every separation only makes them more desperate to reunite, and their attraction feels transgressively passionate because it is also deeply unstable.

The Destructive Romance is a typical outcome of the Blood Wedding, but one doesn't have to be supernaturally linked together for eternity to trauma bond. All that is needed for that is that every hurtful separation, every earth-shattering argument or cruel wounding is sooner or later followed by a tearful and promising reunion. At the edge of the horizon, the light of Happily Ever After (see Additional Tropes) always looms, but it is never reached.

Over time, this romance breaks down one or both of the lovers until they are a shadow of their former selves. They may not realize how bad their situation is, or they may not care. And if they should, finally, decide that they want out, the price to pay will be terrible.

Example

Sebastian and Avery have been dating each other for a century. They also see other people, but it's clear that they are the only ones who really matter. They've been very passionate for the last few years, but recently Avery discovered that Sebastian has been lying. All the old fears are returning, and Avery has decided to test his lover's loyalty.

Hook

Put the coterie in the middle of the brewing trouble by getting one of the players' characters to go on a few dates with one of the Destructive Romance partners. Don't let the coterie find out that the

Kindred they thought was a potential ally and relatively charming date actually has a wickedly jealous primary partner... until it is way too late. Let the coterie become pawns in the relationship game between the older and more powerful couple and let them struggle to figure out how to get out of it with their fangs still attached.

Scenes

The lovers haven't seen each other for a long time, but suddenly one of them pops in to visit the other, demanding to be fed whatever friends they have for a snack.



The lovers have agreed to break up and one of them convinces a player's character that it's for good and they are ready to settle down with someone new: them.

One of the lovers sacrifices themselves to save the other. Or, at least they make it look like that. When the other one runs after them out into the sun, they are finally free.

Tips

The Destructive Romance easily becomes very self-centered. Make it inclusive by involving the players' characters directly and making the actions of the supporting characters grandiose and outward-directed.

In fiction, the Destructive Romance can sometimes be fixed by supernatural means. In **Vampire**, becoming undead tends to exacerbate problems rather than make them go away. Play with expectations by letting your group think that helping the lovers become more powerful will fix their relationship.

Twists

- The relationship is a polyamorous triad or quad.
- The lovers think their relationship is healthy and consider themselves a power couple.
- There is an outside reason the couple can't split up. Maybe one of them is a Ventrue who thinks their partner is the only one they can feed from.



Additional Tropes

Romance is a well-established genre and there's a wealth of additional tropes that you can adapt for the purposes of your game. Here's a selection:

Altar Diplomacy: Two characters enter a marriage of convenience only to discover that they really do have feelings for each other.

Amnesiac Lover: A character suffers amnesia and forgets their past, including their romantic partner, who they have to get to know all over again.

Belated Love Epiphany: A character doesn't realize who they truly love until it is too late.

Beast and Beauty: One is a destructive monster, the other is smart, beautiful, and has empathy enough for the both of them. At least, that's what they tell themselves. Also known as Bad Boy, Good Girl but badness doesn't have to be gendered.

Damsel, Dude, or Domitor in Distress: A character needs saving and gets emotionally attached to their savior.

Fated by Destiny: The characters are destined to be together or believe they are.

First Love: The characters were dear to each other once upon a time in the past but lost touch. Finding each other again is like remembering a youth they'd thought forever lost.

Fish Out of Water: A character has to learn to survive in a new environment, and just when they need it the most, a dashing hero helps them out.

Forced Proximity: Due to outside circumstances, the characters are forced to spend time together, giving them the opportunity to **discover their feelings for each other.**

Friends to Lovers: Long-term friends discover that they feel something more for each other.

Happily Ever After: All of the characters' problems seem to disappear once they finally get each other. Of course, sometimes there's a lot more to come after the end.



If I Can't Have You, Nobody Will: A character obsesses over another to the point of wanting to destroy them to keep the idea of them pure.

Imaginary Love Triangle: Two characters think they're in a love triangle, but actually they both only want each other.

Love at First Sight: It feels like fate when the characters first meet. But maybe only for one of them.

May/December: Two characters fall in love despite their age difference. Perhaps one is a fledgling and the other a neonate.

Mistaken Identity: One character gets mistaken for another and romance develops, or is delayed, by the misunderstanding.



Opposites Attract: Sparks fly between two characters with utterly opposite temperaments. Ultimately, they may discover that their differences make them stronger together than apart.

Rags to Riches: A character gets lifted out of poverty, scarcity, and hunger by a charming, and rich, individual who enchants them with glamour and special treatment.

Redemption Through Love or Love Through Redemption: A sinner seeks absolution and finds it through love or seeks love and finds absolution.

Scarred by Love: A character has been deeply hurt in a previous relationship but learns to trust and love again.

Second Chances: A former couple find a way to try again.

Secret Identity: The love interest turns out to be a secret billionaire, royal, Camarilla Prince, or SI agent.

Separated by a Secret: The characters can't be together because one or both of them has a terrible secret.

Suddenly Parents: Two (or more) characters discover that they are going to have responsibility for a child(e) together!

The Fake Relationship: Two characters pretend to be in love but make-believe becomes real, and when it's time to separate neither of them wants to.

Trouble in Paradise: An unexpected problem occurs in an otherwise happy relationship.

Uneven Power Dynamic: One character has power over the other and uses it to seduce them — or resist them because of it.

Unrequited Love: A character feels deeply for someone who does not (seem to) return their feelings.

Will They, Won't They? Two characters can't figure out if they want each other or not.

Relationships

Let's say that a player's character is in a relationship with a supporting character. How do you as a Storyteller play this?

There are a few different approaches and you can choose the right one depending on what's best for the game and for the player in question.

Let Them Be Happy: The relationship is fine. They're content. You play out mostly positive scenes and keep the supporting character as part of the game's regular cast of characters. This works great for players who don't particularly enjoy drama and who like the idea of their character in a largely difficulty-free relationship. However, you should note that playing out scenes in a relationship like this quickly becomes one-note and repetitive and it's probable that the relationship is effectively moved to the sidelines from the principal substance of play.

Internal Problems: If the player in question enjoys drama and difficulty in an in-game relationship, you can respond by making the relationship stormy and full of emotion. The lover you play as a Storyteller character gets jealous and misunderstands the player's character's intentions. They betray and tearfully beg for forgiveness. They make choices that directly impact the relationship, such as switching sects or joining the Bahari. For these lovers, there's a new problem every night.

External Problems: But maybe the player in question would like to play on the relationship, but does not enjoy making it difficult. Still, to have something to play, the drama has to come from

somewhere. The solution is external problems, issues not caused by the lovers themselves but by the people around them. Perhaps they belong to different sects or faiths and face their disapproval. Maybe their enemies try to play them against each other. Whatever it is, it represents outside forces trying to tear the lovers apart even as they cling to each other.

Destroy: The player in question has portrayed their character like a total disaster of a lover and enjoys high drama. In this case, you can respond to the demand by making sure the relationship implodes in the most dramatic fashion possible, with betrayals, teary-eyed promises, reconciliations and dramatic exits. You can see how many other characters you can draw into the mess.

There are a few things you should avoid when a player's character is in a relationship with a Storyteller character. You should note the player's emotional investment in the situation and respect it. This does not mean that you have to keep things happy and boring. Rather, it means making sure that whatever happens, it provides meaningful play.

- Don't kill or kidnap the player's character's lover for a cheap effect. If you feel that the lover must die or disappear, give it emotional weight on the level of the player's investment in the situation.
- Be very careful with betrayals and character turns. Sometimes realizing that your lover worked for the enemy all along makes for great drama but it works best if the emotional weight of the relationship doesn't just disappear with the revelation. Maybe the lover is conflicted about their betrayal and can be won back.

Of course, if the player is not invested in the in-game relationship at all, you can treat it in a much more cavalier manner.

Internal Problems

What kind of issues crop up in a relationship between a Storyteller character and a player's character? Of course, the purpose of all of these is

to provide interesting, dramatic play. All assume that the lovers continue to love each other. It's just that their personal choices and emotional responses create problems for them.

Not all of the things listed here are crises or problems. Some are just situations that have to be resolved and which provide interesting situations. All have been framed from the perspective of your Storyteller character.

Ambition: You want something more than you currently have and your ambition directly impacts your lover. Perhaps you just want to have a fancier Haven or maybe you're making a play to become the Prince. Whatever it is, it means your lover has to accommodate themselves to your new plans. Your ambition may even be romantic in nature. You can start a conversation with the words: "Do you think our relationship has become a bit stale? Do we need something more to keep things exciting?"

Betrayal: Betrayal is a tricky business if you intend to keep the relationship viable. The easiest context for this is if the lovers are from opposite sides. If you're a Camarilla ingenue and your lover is an Anarch bad boy, perhaps he fails to tell you about the imminent Anarch raid on the Elysium. He just schedules a date for the night it will happen to make sure you won't be caught in the crossfire. Betrayal works best if it feels like the lover kept the interests of the player's character in mind.

Experimentation: You've decided that you need to experience something more, whether with your partner or alone. Maybe you want to try out new hunting methods, join a Kindred faith or test experimental ways to have vampire sex. Whatever it is, you're not happy without it. Does your partner come along for the ride?

Failure: You fail and your failure has repercussions on the relationship, both internally and from the outside. Your failure saps away at your sense of self-worth, making you snappy and prone to overcompensating. You try a desperate gamble which may fail even more spectacularly. You resent the successes of your lover. You become jealous

much more easily. Or perhaps you fail in your attempt to oust the Prince and suddenly you have a Blood Hunt on your head.

Jealousy: You suspect your lover of betraying you in some way. The way this plays out depends on the nature of the relationship, of course. Few Kindred would get jealous over their lover hunting from mortals even though that's an act of intimacy. Yet if their lover goes to the same mortal every week, perhaps they would prefer someone who still breathes? From that, it's a short step to: "Don't you love me anymore?"

Sexual Incompatibility: Sometimes our sexual tastes just don't match. You can make the discovery on the first date and call it off then and there, but this can also be something that slowly comes to light over the course of a longer relationship. You want something that your lover doesn't want to or is unable to give you. How do you deal with it? Cheating? Accepting that each will have other lovers? Trying to make the sex work despite the fact that it doesn't? In the case of the Kindred, the blood can both help overcome these differences and create new ones. You may find yourselves incompatible but sharing Blood still provides the familiar thrill. Alternatively, you may find that differences in Humanity mean that one character is still yearning for a mortal-style sexual high while another barely remembers what their sex organs are supposed to do.

Success: You experience amazing success in something that you try. Your plan to become the Prince succeeds, you establish a blood cult and your Haven is a palace. What does this sudden shift in status mean for your relationship? Do you still have time for your lover? Do they become jealous of all the beautiful things suddenly flitting about you? Does your success make them feel inadequate?

Switching Allegiance: You decide that you've had enough in the Camarilla or the Anarchs. You need to switch sides. Of course, you do it very dramatically, burning bridges and making enemies all along the way. This is somewhat inconvenient for your lover with whom you used to share a sect.

Do you try to recruit them to come along? Convert them now that you have seen the light?



External Problems

The world is making things difficult for the lovers. These work well if you want to add complications to the relationship while keeping it essentially positive. Here are a few ways how:

A Jealous Ex: Either you or your lover has a jealous ex lurking somewhere in the background, always ready to cause trouble. Just when you think they finally called off their vendetta, they show up at the Elysium with yet more lies and insinuations about you. What the jealous ex hates most of all is the idea of you being happy together.

Fashion: The Kindred follow fashion the same as everybody else and this can have strange effects on a romance. If your love story happens to be in line with the current fashion, you'll receive positive attention but people around you will assume that you're just faking it, the same as them. If your love is unfashionable, you get sneered at and lose status unless you keep it secret.

Laws of the Land: The laws and traditions of the domain conspire to sabotage your love.

The specific kind of relationship you're in may be explicitly illegal, or perhaps it just becomes very difficult because of rules that don't necessarily have anything to do with love. If the local Camarilla forbids all interactions with the Anarchs, it becomes hard for a Camarilla/Anarch couple to see each other.

Miserable And Jealous Ancillae: Local ancillae are offended by the very idea of Kindred in love. How ridiculous! Everyone knows that vampires are incapable of such emotions, and are better off because of it! If they discover you and your lover, they're certain to try to make sure your unlife will be as hard as possible. After all, their miserable, cynical worldview is all they have. It won't do to have you around demonstrating that there's another way.

Rival Factions: The classic Romeo & Juliet problem. The characters belong to different factions who don't accept their relationship. The Anarchs consider your Camarilla lover a spy who needs to be eliminated. Her Camarilla allies see you as scum to be wiped off the streets. Or perhaps you're of different Kindred faiths, one belonging to the Church of Caine and the other a Bahari. Whatever it is, problems ensue especially when you try to take part in Kindred society together. This could lead you in the direction of a third faction that would welcome you both.

The Mission: There's a great cause sweeping the domain, something that inspires Kindred all around you to forsake their old goals and focus their attention on the collective effort. Maybe one of the vampire faiths manages to ignite religious fervor, making local Kindred feel like the Church of Caine or the Bahari hold all the answers. Or perhaps the goal of Golconda and reclaiming one's humanity feels like it's within reach, attainable through the efforts of all the Kindred around you. Can you really focus on something as selfish as romance when the great work starts?

War: Not every external problem has to be because someone objects to the romance. It may be that the circumstances around the characters are so

overwhelming that they cause trouble through sheer force. One such circumstance is war. In the case of **Vampire**, this means clandestine war between sects, gang war among Anarchs or similar discreet but deadly operations. It can even mean war with the Sabbat, a horrifying occurrence that tends to leave a lot of corpses in its wake. How do you feel when your lover's haven was raided by the enemy and there's no sign of them?

The problems listed here fall into two rough categories. Sometimes a specific person decides that your romance is a problem for them and makes your life difficult because of it. The other category consists of characteristics of Kindred society and the world around you that just happen to cause great difficulty. In many ways, it's easier when someone specific is acting malignantly towards you. Then at least you have the possibility of doing something about it. Perhaps if you can get that person to desist, your problems go away.

Finally, there is the problem of the general depravity of Kindred society. Even if you have the two most innocent fledglings conceivable trying to hold onto whatever feelings of love they remember from their mortal days, they're always in danger of getting sucked into the sordid spectacle of vampire social existence. Eventually, experiencing anything as positive as love starts to feel impossible. Nights at the Elysium become tired orgies, everyone around the characters betraying each other at the drop of a hat, every Kindred around the characters on a collective death spiral of humanity, determined to see who's the first to become a wight.

Tragedy

Vampire love stories are often tragedies. The vampire is a poisonous figure, destroying everyone they purport to love. Even when their intentions are good, their very nature makes them likely to destroy the very things they care about.

Vampire's game mechanics drive toward tragic ends. Messy criticals, Stains and Humanity loss all

point the way towards catastrophe. An unlucky roll of the dice in the presence of your lover may let the Beast out, revealing some of the ugliness of every vampire's nature.

The key to a successful tragic love story in a roleplaying game is to make it emotionally satisfying, dramatic and suitably drawn out. It works best if the players whose characters are involved actively drive towards a tragic end to the story, although it's naturally up to them whether they want to do that or not.

The main risk with tragic stories is imposing them as the Storyteller on players who actually want something different from their in-game romances. Perhaps the player enjoys the idea of a simple, functional romance and is disturbed by theatrical melodrama. Because of this, it's best to get to know the tastes of your players so you can intuit what kind of romances they like.

If tragedy indeed does work, here are a few ways it can strike:

Feeding Accident: The simplest and most common way a vampire's love story turns tragic. You're feeding on a mortal and accidentally kill them.

The Beast Ascendant: One or both lovers lose touch with their humanity to the degree that the romance no longer matters to them. Or perhaps they start to see it as a possession, something that they must keep like any other trophy.

Self-Sacrifice: One of the lovers decides to sacrifice themselves for their values or for someone they care about. Perhaps their shared Haven is assaulted by a Second Inquisition agency and one lover holds off the SWAT team so the other has time to escape.

Punishment: The characters' love is a crime and must be punished. The Prince executes one or both of them. Note that if you do something like this, you should do it for the sake of the drama, not to create motivation for another plot. This way, you respect the emotional investment the players involved have with the romance.



Lack of Trust: The characters are vampires, and vampires are untrustworthy. The idea that vampires are unable to love becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy if the characters continually second-guess each other, taking for granted that their loved ones are intent on betraying them. Suspicion tears the lovers apart.

Sex And Sharing Blood

Sex scenes mean something a bit different in **Vampire** than they do in most other contexts. The ability of the Kindred to engage with mortal-style sex and sexuality depends on their Humanity. As a vampire's connection to their mortal framework ebbs, so does their ability to connect with other people in a sexual sense. However, what the Kindred lose in terms of sexual desire they gain in the intimacy of sharing Blood. It's common for mutual drinking of Blood to spice up, complement and eventually replace mortal sex acts in a vampire's repertoire as they sink into their new existence.

In this book, sex often refers to this broader understanding of the Kindred, their intimacies and desires.

Different troupes vary tremendously when it comes to playing out sex scenes. Some prefer to gloss over them while others are happy to go beat by beat. For the purposes of the game, sex scenes are like any other type of roleplayed situation: You play it because you find it interesting or fun.

If you're uncertain what level of detail is appropriate for your troupe, you can discuss these three options together with the players:

No Sex: You actively steer play away from sex and sex scenes.

Fade To Black: The characters have sex but you don't play it out, cutting the scene when things are about to get hot and heavy.

In Detail: The characters have sex and you play

out the sex scenes to the extent it's interesting for the game.

Assuming that your players are happy to play out sex scenes in some detail, here's a good rule of thumb for when you should cut away:

Play the sex scene for as long as it reveals something interesting about the characters.

When it stops doing that and all participants can guess how it will go, fade to black.

In practice, the comfort of your players is another significant factor in determining when to cut. If they look relaxed and interested, you can delve deeper. If they start to appear uncomfortable, you can cut away. Of course, players can and should use the calibration tools in *Vampire* (p. 342) to maintain their boundaries but it's also part of the Storyteller's skill to judge when sordid detail is called for and when it isn't.

Here are examples of sex scenes that could be interesting to play out:

New Lovers: Two characters have started to flirt with each other and eventually end up in bed. How does it go? Does the attraction hold or will increased intimacy reveal something surprising? Is your new crush an amazing lover or will they turn out to be terrible in bed?

Seducing the Powerful: A character successfully seduces a powerful member of the local Kindred community, ending up sharing Blood with them. This is a great opportunity for the Storyteller to introduce surprising new character traits and details. What do a Prince or a Baron sound and feel like when they're vulnerable and being intimate?

Secrets: A character is having sex with someone they've been intimate with before, but now one or both of them have a secret that threatens to change their dynamic. Does it come out in the midst of their lovemaking? Is it possible to lie to someone who knows you well when you're having sex with them?

On the Prowl: Many Kindred use sex for the purposes of hunting. What happens when a mortal victim falls heedlessly in love and lust with a vampire while they're having sex? Or perhaps the mortal

surprises the hunter with unforeseen kinks and predilections, changing the dynamic entirely.

Fuck the Enemy: The Kindred are a fractious lot, with endless vendettas between various groups and sects. They're also relentless backstabbers and double-dealers, but none of that stops them from being intimate with the people they supposedly hate. In fact, sometimes mutual hatred adds a certain spice to a sexual encounter.

IN PORNOGRAPHIC DETAIL

You can play Vampire in many different contexts, including for the purposes of sexual titillation.

One way to do this is to play the game with your sex partner on a one-on-one basis (or with more consenting, informed sex partners), using the sexual exploits of your characters as a form of foreplay.

A World Full of Romance

Romance differs from many other types of thematic content in roleplaying games in that it requires even more dynamic player buy-in. As the Storyteller, you can engineer a combat scene by having thugs attack the players' characters, forcing them to fight back. In all likelihood, this simple setup means combat will occur in your game.

In contrast, you can't force romance. It often works best if the players' characters actively initiate romantic scenes and situations, and this requires the players to have internalized a mindset where this is both possible and fun.

One tool in the Storyteller's toolbox to facilitate player buy-in is to portray the game's setting as a place where romance happens. By making the theme encompass the entire Kindred domain, the players see that this is normal. They can copy ideas from Storyteller characters, react to their advances, and hit

on them if they feel like it. They can get embroiled in the jealousies and crushes of Princes and Primogen or witness a hapless Brujah losing themselves to the Beast after getting dumped at the Elysium.

The basic mechanism is simple: If everyone is having romantic adventures, why not the characters as well? Like all humans, players are social animals and it's easier for them to play romance if the setting actively supports and validates it.

Note that this is a method for building a **Vampire** domain presented with a specific goal: Making it easy for players to actively initiate romantic play. It's not the only way to work romance into the chronicle as the Storyteller and indeed it makes some romantic stories impossible. If your players are self-motivated to play romance, you can craft a beautiful if sad chronicle about lovers trying to find one last spark of beauty in a cold, cynical world.

It's easier for them to play romance if the setting actively supports and validates it.

Romantic Ideals

What do the Kindred in your domain think about love? Do they believe that vampires are capable of having genuine loving relationships with each other? Or do they argue that love died with the Embrace, leaving only lust, desire and nostalgia in its place?

This is not about what you as the Storyteller or your players think that vampires really are in the World of Darkness. Rather, it's about how the Kindred of this domain see themselves. They talk about romance and what it means to them, expressing ideals and shooting them down depending on who they are and what they want.

Some of the domain's biggest divides can be drawn over questions of love and romance. For example, the Camarilla Prince believes that Kindred

should only form attachments to their own kind and leave the kine to their own devices. The Anarchs want to hold onto their mortal lovers even though navigating the Masquerade is a tricky proposition. Scandal erupts at the Elysium when it's revealed that the Prince had a mortal lover all along.

Different groups and organizations can have their own, unusual opinions about what love between the Kindred means. The Church of Caine is a big proponent, as long as it's understood that all Blood Weddings should be held under their auspices. Or perhaps the local Church is staunchly against vampire blood-sharing, arguing that it disrespects and defiles the proud legacy of Caine. Less worldly Kindred might say that it's impossible for vampires to have any sort of carnal relations with mortals even as young Anarchs explore new avenues of physical intimacy with their partners, lovers and blood dolls.

Some of the things local Kindred believe can be flatly untrue. Perhaps it's widely rumored that mortal love allows a vampire to reach Golconda and become mortal again. This may not be true yet still motivate dramatic actions on the part of both supporting and players' characters.

If a players' character actually attempts to genuinely reach Golconda through love, the Storyteller has to adjudicate whether that's



genuinely possible. Since **Vampire** is a game of tragedy, it may be that the true substance of such a quest is on the discoveries, breakthroughs and disappointments along the way.

Forbidden Fruit

Counterintuitively, one of the most effective ways you can bring romance to the center of your domain is to have laws that forbid it. If you frame it right, forbidding something makes it feel desirable and attractive, something that the characters want to take risks for. And if not them, then supporting characters will!

If Blood Weddings are forbidden by the decree of the Prince, a young Anarch can get caught after marrying a Toreador socialite in secret. At the Prince's court, he makes a stirring speech about how the love he felt was the only thing keeping him from the Beast. Once he's finished, the Scourge executes him, leaving his blood bride a widow.

After a dramatic scene like that, it's important how the rest of the domain's Kindred react. If they flee to their Havens and swear they'll never so much think of love again, it will have a dampening effect on romance. If the popularity of Blood Weddings explodes in the domain now that they have the frisson of danger, players' characters are much more likely to become interested.

The best laws against love are tied to the stories that ripple through your domain, revealing interesting things about supporting characters. Why does the Prince seem hell-bent on preventing Malkavians from experiencing any sort of affection at all, even at the cost of looking like a cold-blooded tyrant? Why do the laws against dating mortals have exceptions for specific Anarch gangs?

A good rule is that laws against love should be irrational, personally motivated and at least a little weird. This way they function best in their intended role: as story catalysts. They're not sensible rules in the mode of the Tradition of the Masquerade but bizarre decrees made by a Prince ruled by emotion.

Crafting laws around romance builds on the idea that all the different vampire domains across the World of Darkness have their own, unique cultures and rules. These have not been handed down from some abstract Camarilla authority but instead instituted by specific Kindred with their own agendas and idiosyncrasies. If the characters should happen to travel from one domain to the next, they might find a completely different set of rules.

You can exploit this even inside a single city if it's split into areas controlled by different sects. If the Camarilla controls half the city and the Anarchs the other half, both can have their own unusual laws controlling who you can love and desire. This can lead to Camarilla Kindred slipping over to an Anarch bar just because it makes it possible for them to have a date with someone they're not supposed to be in love with.

The ultimate in using laws against love to shape the themes of your game is to put the players' characters in charge of enforcing them. You may need to have the Prince argue that the rules they have in effect are motivated by a high-minded desire to protect the Masquerade and avoid repeating specific past incidents. The characters could be a Sheriff and their retainers, at first hounding down Kindred who have confessed everything about their vampiric nature to their mortal lovers. As the chronicle progresses, the situations become increasingly dodgy, and the Prince's motivations are more and more questionable.

From the point of view of drama, the best outcome is, of course, for the characters themselves to start breaking the laws they're meant to be upholding. Hunting down the mortal who learned of vampires from their lover, the Sheriff instead falls for them and chooses to try to protect them from the rest of the city's Kindred.



Laws Against Love

Examples of arbitrary, possibly cruel laws regulating love in a given domain are presented here. The purpose of such laws from the Storyteller's perspective is to make romance illicit and exciting, possibly even revolutionary.

TABLE I: Laws Against Love

| Law | History | Resistance |
|--|---|--|
| No Malkavian is allowed to have a Blood Wedding. | A Malkavian broke the Prince's heart. They reacted by banning Blood Weddings for the whole clan. | Malkavians hold secret Blood Weddings. |
| All romantic relationships with mortals need explicit permission from the Prince. | Local Kindred made a sport of competing for the affections of specific mortals. It got out of hand and resulted in Masquerade breaches, illegal childer and bloody vendettas. | Now you need a fake mortal lover to show to the Prince and a real one you see in secret. |
| Blood Bonds are only allowed with members of your own clan. | Making a play for influence by seducing and Blood Bonding members of other clans has been a source of strife in the domain. | The inter-clan Blood Bond has gone from a tool of oppression to an exciting and illicit thrill, no matter the consequences. |
| No sire may have a romantic relationship with their childer. | Local Anarchs don't accept using the relationship between the sire and the childer for romantic leverage, arguing that it's fundamentally unbalanced. | Brave neonates point out that local Anarch ancillae have many such relationships and they've gone on for decades. |
| Mortal lovers must be put down once the relationship is over. | Too many former mortal lovers who know about Kindred left to their own devices after a vampire gets tired of the romance. It's a threat to the Masquerade. | Secretly leaving your mortal lovers alive because you're too sentimental to kill them. |
| Only the Prince is allowed to love the descendants of the Toreador Methuselah Helena. | The Prince says they once saw Helena at Elysium centuries ago and fell in love. They're jealous if the progeny of Helena gets intimate with anyone else. | Every time someone has a petty grievance with the Prince, they get back at them by hitting on Helena's progeny. |
| If a Nosferatu wants to make a public appearance with a lover from another clan, they must first make a petition before the Keeper of the Elysium. | A cruel Toreador Keeper seeks to humiliate the Nosferatu for fun. | An Anarch revolution in the domain. |
| The Tremere Regent has the right of refusal for romantic relationships with members of their own clan. | The local Tremere Regent is a controlling tyrant who sees their own clan as a private romantic preserve. | Members of other clans gallantly volunteer to romance local Tremere in secret. |
| Romance between Kindred must always happen between three or more vampires. | Ideologues in this Anarch domain successfully argued that love between just two vampires was a Camarilla holdover. | Some romantic arrangements between local vampires consist of a pair of lovers and a friend who pretends to be a lover with both of them. |
| Blood Bonds must be limited to those between a vampire and a ghoul. | Local Anarch leaders decided that Blood Bonds between vampires are unbecoming and morally wrong. | Local ghouls realize they've been had, organize and kidnap a number of vampires as sources of Blood. |

| Law | History | Resistance |
|--|--|---|
| For neonates, your sire must vet each of your lovers, personally and intimately. | Local ancillae pushed through this law just to play cruel games with younger Kindred. Jealousy is so amusing when you're bored and there's nothing to do at the Elysium! | Some neonates have fought back by seducing the lovers of local ancillae. |
| Embracing a human lover is forbidden. | The Prince has decreed that the best and the brightest must be Embraced after a period of sober reflection. Embracing in the throes of lust goes against this idea. | Kindred seek to hide their romances from the Prince and pretend that the criteria they have for choosing childer is meritocratic, inventing talents for their lovers that they don't really possess. |
| All Blood Weddings must be public and held at the Elysium. | Local Camarilla courtiers are really into holding public spectacles at the Elysium. They resent the idea that someone holds a private wedding and denies them the opportunity to get involved. | Some Kindred find the idea of making their love vulnerable to the monsters at the Elysium too horrible to contemplate. They hold a secret Blood Wedding in private before doing a second one for the whole court. |
| Ghouls must petition for any changes in their romantic arrangements from a panel of Kindred. | The leaders of the local Anarch domain became concerned that ghouls would breach the Masquerade in the throes of passion. As a solution, they came up with a volunteer panel of Kindred who evaluate each request to start or end relationships. | Humiliated ghouls plot bloody murder. |
| Kindred are not allowed to have sex, mortal style or by sharing blood. | The Prince believes that carnal desire pollutes the spirit and makes it harder for Kindred to resist the Beast. | Having sex now has the added thrill of being an offense with a possible punishment if discovered. |
| Mortals must be made to forget any intimate encounters with the Kindred, through whatever means available. | The Prince envies younger Kindred and the happiness he thinks they experience in the arms of mortals. By arguing that it risks the Masquerade, he seeks to stifle it. | Many Kindred seeking to love mortals make a bad job of clouding their memories, sometimes not even on purpose. As a result, many mortals have ague and confusing memories of blood-soaked passion. |
| An old Toreador has the right to request a single date with any new neonate in the domain. | The Toreador elder seeks to reconnect with their youth through romance and used their immense political power to acquire this privilege. | Navigating the date is difficult for the neonate. If they wish to avoid any further contact with the elder, they must make it bad but not offensively so. |
| The Primogen act as matchmakers, deciding who must have romances with whom during the next season. | In their arrogance, older vampires genuinely think they know better than the neonates whose unives they mess with. | Kindred who have to engage in fake romances come up with strategies of how to conduct their actual love affairs while pretending to be with their assigned partners. |

| Law | History | Resistance |
|--|--|---|
| All local Kindred engaged in a romance must visit the Tremere Regent and submit to an occult examination of their blood. | The Prince believes that Kindred are incapable of love and considers the emotion to be a bizarre holdover from mortal days. They want to find out why it keeps popping up in their domain and have sought help from the local Tremere. | But... What if the Prince is right and everyone's just fooling themselves? |
| Blood Bonds must be limited to those between a vampire and a ghoul. | Local Anarch leaders decided that Blood Bonds between vampires are unbecoming and morally wrong. | Local ghouls realize they've been had, organize and kidnap a number of vampires as sources of Blood. |
| For neonates, your sire must vet each of your lovers, personally and intimately. | Local ancillae pushed through this law just to play cruel games with younger Kindred. Jealousy is so amusing when you're bored and there's nothing to do at the Elysium! | Some neonates have fought back by seducing the lovers of local ancillae. |
| It's only acceptable to have a romantic relationship with a mortal if you seek to Embrace them. | The Prince is a romantic soul who loves stories of eternal love. This decree seeks to impose such narratives on an unruly and messy population of Kindred. | Sometimes love goes sour but the Prince insists you Embrace your terrible ex. The only thing to do is to plan a terrible accident for them. |
| Romance between neonates and older Kindred is forbidden. | Older Kindred used to date new vampires and dump them after they got bored. The practice riled up the local Anarchs to such a degree that it was forbidden to eliminate resentments. | The culture has changed so that local Anarchs think that romancing ancillae and elders is revolutionary. |
| Love must serve the revolution. It's unacceptable to love anti-Anarch Kindred. | Local Anarchs came down hard on their compatriots who had secret affairs with Camarilla Kindred. | Torrid love affairs between enemies have become even more fraught than before, and thus more appealing. |
| Romantic rivalry must be resolved in public at the Elysium. Rival lovers must fight a duel, with the loser conceding the matter. | Local courtiers enjoy the spectacle of rivals fighting for their passions. | Some Kindred try to deal with their issues like emotionally mature adults. This is rare. |

Lovers One and All

The more supporting characters are concerned with romance, the more important it feels like to the players' characters. You can use this mechanism to adjust the importance of romance in your chronicle up and down. If romance is meant to be extremely important, pretty much all supporting characters talk about their love life constantly. If only a minor theme, perhaps it's relevant for a few of your many Storyteller characters.

Romantic motivations show up in the fabric of the domain and between supporting characters. For example, if the Primogen features three of the Prince's ex-lovers, it brings a specific atmosphere to the whole domain. The mysterious animosity between the Sheriff and the Scourge turns out to be because they both vied for the affections of a young Toreador who didn't care for either of them.

The romantic inclinations of supporting characters go beyond individual design when they have an impact on how the domain functions as a whole. If you create a Ventrue who's a jealous lover, that can lead to interesting scenes with the players' characters but has no systemic import. If the Ventrue has a lot of power in the domain and subjects all neonates to ridiculous surveillance at the slightest suspicion of having a tryst with their lover, it starts to shape the culture of the entire domain.

Similarly, if a Toreador elder takes it upon themselves to act as a matchmaker to younger Kindred, forcing them into Blood Weddings in lavish ceremonies that form the backbone of the domain's social calendar, that's probably what people will remember from that particular city.

Since vampiric organizations and institutions tend to boil down to the passions and ideologies of individual Kindred, the same should be true of the domain's history. At first, the players' characters might imagine that the local war between the Camarilla and the Anarchs is because of irreconcilable differences concerning how to coexist with the mortals. Then they realize that it's

actually just about hunting territory, something older Kindred loathe to give up. And finally, they grasp that it wasn't really about that either, but instead something pettier: The desire of the local Camarilla elite to make sure that if they can't make a relationship with a mortal work, then nobody can.

Villains

Can you romance the opposition?

Who are the main enemies of the Kindred in the domain, and the players' characters specifically? These two don't have to be the same, of course. If the official enemies of the Prince don't seem all that bad to the characters, a chance for illicit passion immediately presents itself.

For romance to work, enemies should be humane enough that it somehow makes sense. If the domain is beset at all sides by completely monstrous Sabbat vampires, it's unlikely love stories would get very far. (Although sometimes people fall for serial killers too, so perhaps some kind of a weird, possibly one-sided Sabbat romance would be possible, at least for the limited time it can exist before the Sabbat kills you.)

This is why the basic split between the Camarilla and the Anarchs presents the most obvious framework for antagonism and hostility. The enemies are Kindred like you, just a little differently organized. That means that your side can hate them, but you can also date them.

Creating romanceable enemies can lead to interesting, thematically rich events in the game. Once you fall for the wrong person, questions of loyalty come to the fore. Who are you willing to lie for? Will you cover for their actions? This is why it's good if the enemies don't immediately stop all their villainous activities the moment the romance commences. It's better if they remain on the other side of the fence, to make sure the relationship is as fraught as possible.

Another classic enemy type is, of course, werewolves. They can be somewhat tricky for a romance story because you need to balance

between what's interesting for the characters and the plausibility of the setting. Many werewolves detest vampires and are pretty good at recognizing them. Hitting on a lupine while pretending to be mortal won't carry very far.

At the same time, werewolves are individuals, the same as the Kindred. An individual lupine can decide to go for a vampire the same as anyone else. This can lead to a story where the werewolf's own kind turn against them for their unnatural dalliance,

causing them to question their feelings. What will be more important, values and community or what they feel deep in their heart?

Using the Second Inquisition in a story like this works too, although it's better if the individual hunters in question belong to one of the organizations with a looser structure with individual agents and cells, rather than a government agency where everyone goes to work nine-to-five. In this case, too, the hunter obviously risks the censure of their own kind.

Can you romance the opposition?

CALIBRATING

Here are a few benchmarks for how big of a role you wish romance to have in the domain where your chronicle takes place:

No Romance

- Nobody talks about romance or is motivated by love or intimacy.
- Taking risks for love leads to failure and ridicule.
- Supporting characters never make romantic overtures and reject any made by the players' characters.

Some Romance

- A few notable supporting characters are motivated by romantic impulses and talk about them.
- You can do stupid things for love without getting killed immediately, even if there are repercussions.
- You see supporting characters falling in love with each other and some flirt with the players' characters too. Many are receptive to advances from the players' characters.

A Lot of Romance

- Pretty much all Storyteller characters are involved in something romantic, even if only as enablers.
 - The domain's powers that be are forgiving of romantic fools, up to a point. Punishment is poetic instead of lethal, so instead of killing your mortal lover, the Prince Embraces them.
 - The players' characters can hit on pretty much anybody and something is guaranteed to happen, even if it's not always what the character hoped for.
-

Example Domains

These domain concepts have been designed to allow for a variety of romantic themes. Each seeks to give specific context to any romantic relationships characters might have.

The Masquerade Above All

The Prince and the Primogen agree on one thing: In the age of the Second Inquisition, all conceivable measures must be taken to preserve the Masquerade. Nothing is too outlandish.

It's a well-known fact that fraternizing with the kine is how Kindred break the Masquerade. Make a mistake and a mortal will figure out there are monsters prowling the night. This is why the local Camarilla has instituted extreme measures: No relationships of any sort are acceptable with mortals beyond the bare minimum required by the hunt. No new ghouls may be created.

This means that neonates with mortal friends and relatives from before the Embrace must abandon them and nobody is allowed to fall for anyone who's still breathing. Thin-bloods are forbidden just on general principle.

Obviously, this kind of regime is untenable from many different perspectives. Without their connection to their Touchstones, the Kindred risk falling to the Beast. Attaining influence becomes very difficult for everyone except those who already have it.

What happens when the players' characters try to exist under impossible rules? This works best if the Camarilla regime is powerful enough to enforce its ideas, perhaps originally prompted by a horrifying Second Inquisition agency raid. They can always say: "Remember what happened when we weren't careful?"

Yet everyone will end up breaking the rules, granting a frisson of excitement even to the most trivial relationships with mortals, to say nothing of

a little dalliance. As time goes on, more and more of the domain's Kindred end up breaking the rules, in the end destabilizing the formerly secure role of the Camarilla.

Fashion Forward

The domain is ruled by the social butterflies populating the Elysium. The Prince is weak, the Primogen are divided and the Anarchs fight each other. The superficial and proudly trivial rumormongers of the city, many of them Toreador, are often backed up by significant material wealth, making them difficult to bypass or ignore. If the socialites populating the Elysium decide to focus their attention on you, you can't ignore them.

The relationships among Kindred are a main topic of conversation among the city's undead social elite. Who has a Blood Bond with whom, who got dumped, who has a crush on some unattainable object of desire? If the Harpies are not fed with gossip, they'll just invent their own. Sometimes the stories they make up become true. If the rumor goes that the Prince's lover is having an affair with an Anarch gang boss, that can lead to a jealous outburst or even a war between the sects, no matter whether it was true or not.

The Harpies have introduced the concept of fashionable and unfashionable romances. These change with the seasons, forcing those who want to stay in the good graces of the beautiful people to update their romantic preferences regularly. One night it's all the rage to have a mortal lover who knows nothing of the Kindred while the next you must succumb to the animalistic charms of the Gangrel. If your love story is unfashionable, or even worse, follows last year's trend, you will be mocked mercilessly.

The sanctions inflicted by the regime of social terror in the domain can be physically dangerous. If the Harpies suggest that a neonate is unfashionable, that's a signal that others can move against them with fewer repercussions than usual. After all, the Prince is known to follow the lead of the Harpies.

From the perspective of the players' characters, the regime of the gossips can come across as actively malicious, something that has to be resisted to be able to maintain any sort of honest relationships with others. Or alternatively being fashionable can be a fast track to power and influence. If the Harpies decide that a player's character's lover who's a mortal social worker shows admirable humanity and care, suddenly they can become a popular voice against the depredations and inhumanity of older Kindred. Of course, all this can change lightning fast when it becomes cool to date monsters instead.

Love Among the Filth

The city is sharply divided between the Camarilla and the Anarchs, the latter featuring an unusually large number of Nosferatu. This is because members of the clan have been declared unwelcome by the Camarilla Prince, forcing all of them to come together on the other side.

Because the Camarilla has intensely repressive policies regarding romance, the Nosferatu warrens spreading in the sewers have become a somewhat unlikely haven for those seeking to rekindle their fading memories of mortal love. Because the Camarilla is so powerful and engaged in periodical



sweeps to terminate the excess vampire population, even non-Nosferatu have sought refuge under the city streets.

What's more, ostensibly loyal Camarilla Kindred sometimes start dealing with the enemy just for the privilege of arranging their trysts in the relative safety of a maintenance room somewhere in the vicinity of a water purification plant. It's not ideal but at least you can bring a few candles for mood lighting.

This development has caused mixed reactions among the Nosferatu themselves. Some have found surprising success in their own romantic adventures, making use of their new status as the underground facilitators of passion and lust. Others

feel uncomfortable with the new arrangements, unable to see themselves as worthy of love even as everyone around them seems to be making it despite the grotesque surroundings.

Arranged Marriages

The city has no Prince, no Baron to hold its Kindred in check. Instead, the local Anarch gangs have developed a network of Blood Marriages among their members, growing increasingly intricate over the years. Its purpose is to keep the peace, making all gangs so thoroughly intertwined that it would be impossible for them to go to war against each other. At the same time, the connections make them resistant to outside influence. After all, how can you betray another gang to the Camarilla when you're Blood Married and thus Blood Bound to its second in command?

At first, the network of connections and Blood Bonds grew organically, from actual romantic relationships. Unfortunately, this has changed as politics took over, and now every Blood Wedding must serve the creation of a specific alliance. This means that the gangs frown on actual, spontaneous relationships between Kindred. They might upset the fragile balance keeping the gangs from killing each other, as Kindred tend to do.

Relationships with mortals are seen alternatively as a safe pressure valve or a waste of effort, depending on whom you ask.

Thus, two Kindred in love have two options: Either they must try to make it look like their Blood Wedding is the best play, politically speaking, or they must keep their relationship secret. Each approach has its own difficulties. ■



Signs of Affection from a Vampire Lover

Kindred, just like mortals, may show their affection in a variety of ways. Late-night walks, flowers, jewelry, and other such trappings of mortal romance are common—holdovers from a past life where emotions were felt... differently.

Many Kindred, however, choose to indulge in dates and gifts of a new sort, now that their outlook on life has changed. Here are a few ways a besotted (or obsessed) vampire might choose to display how they feel.

TABLE 2:
Gifts from Higher Humanity Vampires

| Roll 1d10 or Choose | Gift |
|---------------------|---|
| 1 | A tiny, jeweled vial of their own vitae, hung on a chain |
| 2 | An intricately carved werewolf fang, set into a silver ring |
| 3 | The only copy of a romantic play by William Shakespeare, unknown to the world |
| 4 | A bouquet of rare flowers that only bloom under moonlight when watered with blood |
| 5 | A lost portrait of two lovers by Da Vinci, partially burned and hidden away during the Second World War |
| 6 | A scandalously risqué letter from a Pope to his male lover |
| 7 | A Malkavian elder's journal, detailing their erotic dreams |
| 8 | A set of fine toothpicks and toothbrushes, made of exotic woods and furs |
| 9 | A bottle of vitae reputedly from Vatsayayan, author of the Kama Sutra, preserved via Tremere arts |
| 10 | A signed photo from a celebrity who's secretly their ghoul |

TABLE 3:
Dates with Higher Humanity Vampires

| Roll 1d10 or Choose | Date |
|---------------------|---|
| 1 | A clandestine trip to observe their last remaining relatives |
| 2 | A sitting for an old-fashioned portrait-painting session |
| 3 | A session with a Tzimisce tattoo artist, for matching tattoos |
| 4 | An underground rat-catching tournament organized by an eccentric Nosferatu |
| 5 | A jaunt to a secret, former drug refinery, now an underground art gallery |
| 6 | A stargazing session to view a rare celestial conjunction important to their clan's history |
| 7 | A "tea-party" to introduce you to their sire or other important Kindred |
| 8 | A Regency-England themed ball hosted by Kindred featuring real, antique outfits and decor |
| 9 | A night of superhuman parkour |
| 10 | As a couple, a night orgy at an exclusive spa and brothel, catered towards Kindred |

TABLE 4:
Gifts from Low-Humanity Vampires

| Roll 1d10 or Choose | Gift |
|---------------------|---|
| 1 | The skull of one of your ancestors, inscribed with a love-poem |
| 2 | The severed fingers of a mortal who once insulted you, strung into a beaded curtain |
| 3 | A pair of beautiful twin youths, to share together for a meal |
| 4 | A bound thin-blood who accidentally entered your territory, for you to brand with sunlight together |
| 5 | A vial of blood from every surviving member of your family |
| 6 | A notebook with pages made of human skin, each page from someone you once knew |
| 7 | A potion that lets you dream of people you have lost—but only as part of horrific nightmares |
| 8 | A stake that once stabbed into the heart of a particularly bloodthirsty elder |
| 9 | An elaborate chair-torture device, complete with sturdy straps to hold down your victims |
| 10 | The head of one of their favorite mortals, disembodied and pickled in a jar |

TABLE 5:
Dates with Low-Humanity Vampires

| Roll 1d10 or Choose | Date |
|---------------------|---|
| 1 | A burlesque show performed by Dominated mortals who are not normally dancers |
| 2 | An infiltration into a "Haunted House" attraction to terrify (and maybe feed on) mortals |
| 3 | A circus of performers who have been fleshcrafted into grotesque forms |
| 4 | A contest to see who can feed on the highest-ranking member of a corporate retreat without using force or threats |
| 5 | A live chess game with mortals dressed as chess pieces who fight to the death |
| 6 | A "Blood-Sampling" night featuring a captured group of mortals with very different backgrounds and lifestyles |
| 7 | A party where the dancefloor is a crowd of mortals lying prostrate |
| 8 | A "concert" whose instruments are mortals who scream as they are tortured |
| 9 | A trial where kidnapped mortals are set loose in an enclosure with a single wooden stake each, hunted by a band of hungry Kindred |
| 10 | A night of extreme mutual BDSM, involving the severing of fingers and limbs, the gouging out of eyes and the like, immediately followed by feeding on bound mortals |





Chapter Three:

LOVE INTERESTS

Romance tends to live and die on the strength of your supporting characters. They must be appealing to the players on some level, and their characters too. This chapter features a selection of Storyteller characters specifically created for romance. You may note that they fall into stereotypes you may recognize from movies or novels. This is because often, stereotypes become such because they work.

The main difference between roleplaying and real life when it comes to attraction is that in games, we can make dangerous, even stupid choices because it's not real. The consequences end when the game ends. This means that we can fall for dangerous bad boys, become bewitched by nonbinary individuals of malicious character and try to hit on girls who seem intent on eviscerating us.

Vampire: The Masquerade is a game with larger-than-life (or unlife) personalities, brooding Ventrue and murderous Brujah. It's fun to see what it would be like to date them. Or just enjoy the sweet taste of their Blood.

I like stories of love. There's something comforting about them. The particulars may change but the broad strokes are the same as they ever were.

Sometimes the ones that leave me with the best stories to tell afterward. It makes for a better love story and survive to tell the tale?

There's a danger you may be susceptible to when you grow older: You start to view the people around you as nothing but stereotypes.

It's understandable, of course. Sometimes it feels like there are but a few basic types of Kindred and kine alike and most get assigned one as they're born, grow up and get Embraced. You find that people don't change all that much as the centuries pass. These stereotypes let you treat people as interchangeable, saving you from having to think of them as individuals deserving of individual consideration.

This is a mistake.

Once you no longer see the people around you as anything but ever-repeating types, you've taken one step more down the ladder that eventually leaves you a wight. And we all know what tedious, violent bores they are!

You may be wondering what I'm getting at here. The answer is, of course, the Hecata.

The Clan of Death.

Really, the most boring of all the clans when it comes to romance. In this regard, the only ones to give them any real competition are the Gangrel.

I've had a few Hecata lovers over the years, of course. I remember my first, a somber gentleman of a deathly pallor, impeccable education and a penchant for brooding. Now, if you remember what I told you about the Gangrel, you may see where this is going.

I was taken with him at first! He was so intellectual, considerate, refined. He kept saying that he didn't want to rush, that he wanted to enjoy the slow torture of our romance without spoiling it with anything as crass as physical intimacy.

He had a way with words and I believed him. I was young and naive, but to be honest I still try to believe all lovers I'm with. Cynicism gets you nowhere.

Then finally after a long, long courtship, I joined him in the bed of his Haven, a magnificent if rotting mansion. It all came apart. It wasn't even that he was a cold fish, as the Hecata are reputed to be. He just didn't know what to do. He was clumsy and awkward. Even the painful Hecata bite failed to bring a masochistic thrill to the experience. It was just painful, nothing more.

The mystique was gone.

I left. What else was there to do?

— Victoria Ash

own.
Is this story true? Of course it is. That's one thing I know for sure. The ones that end in happy endings, where the virtuous get their just rewards and the beautiful and the good get their just all lies. The ones that are messy, ugly and weird... Those are the love stories that tell you what really happened.

— Victoria Ash

PERFECTION

You create a supporting character who's hot, intelligent, altruistic, genuine, honest, moral, brave and dignified. Surely the players' characters all instantly fall in love?

Well, they might. But experience has shown that often when you introduce a character who is simply too perfect, the players' characters react negatively. They instinctively say: "Who cares about this guy?"

There's something inherently off-putting about perfect people. Often Storyteller characters with flaws end up generating much more attraction. Perhaps they're more intriguing or relatable, or maybe it just feels like you can relax with someone who is not a moral paragon.

Attractive Qualities

There's one quality that's attractive beyond any other: That the character finds the player's character attractive. They think the player's character is hot. Perhaps they're intimidated by their beauty and grace, or maybe they find them poignant, compelling or intellectually alluring. Whatever it is, the main thing is that they can't stop thinking about the player's character.

Often, it doesn't have to be more complicated than this. Make a Storyteller character or two and have them confess their attraction. Maybe the player's character overhears them talking about how much they're in love but is afraid to make a move. Maybe they do make a move and it's awkward, or maybe they're suave and smooth. You can play it many different ways as long as it feels like the attraction is genuine.

Of course, you can also make the players' characters work for it. Maybe a Storyteller character is a known rake, a lady-killer who plays the game while it's fun and then skips town. But maybe your character is the one to really get through to his heart?

That's another attractive quality: Being the exception. We all want to feel special and it's flattering to think that the Tzimisce elder is feeling the strange flutterings of love and desire for the first time in centuries in his dead, cold heart just because of us.

And why not? It could happen.

For another variation of the theme, perhaps a sophisticated Toreador courtier seduces your character for political reasons but then becomes enamored for real.

Here are some other qualities that can be used to make a character attractive:

Fun: The character is fun to be around. They're witty, clever and always come up with great date ideas. In their presence, the world feels a little bit less dark. This type of a character is great at giving a good first impression. Once a player's character is entangled in the romance, you can reveal all the terribly complicated situations your supporting character is involved in.

Great At Sex: The character is a wonderful lay. They simply know what they're doing, are good at reading their partners and are able to provide extremely good sexual experiences for themselves and others. This is the kind of quality you can communicate through gossip and rumors: "I heard that they're just amazing in bed..." It's often fun to give this quality to a character who also has significant negatives: Maybe they're also an unreliable shiftless lay about. As Kindred gain age and lose Humanity, what matters starts to shift. At first, it was passion and emotional intelligence, but as time passed, it became more and more just about the taste of their Blood.

Hot: The character is physically attractive. The important thing here is to remember that what counts as physically attractive is highly subjective and what works for one player and character will fail with another. Hot and interesting tends to

work significantly better than hot and boring so conventional standards of attractiveness may not be as effective as you'd think.

Intense: The character feels very intensely about something specific, or maybe even everything. They always come across as if they were operating at 200%. In real life, such people can be exhausting but in a roleplaying game, they're striking and memorable. One way to communicate intensity is to have the character always give their total attention and focus to whomever they're talking with.

Profound: The character is a deep thinker, has a rigorous set of values or displays the ability to see the beauty of this world. They seem more profound than an ordinary person. One angle from which this is attractive is that such a person can also be able to see you in a way that others can't. They just understand your unique history, personality, dreams and fears!

Tragic: The character is the victim of a terrible tragedy. Their circumstances are awful and they desperately need something to make their existence bearable. Perhaps you can provide them with that spark of light? You could even save them! Of course, it remains to be seen what happens when a player's character has performed the role of the knight in shining armor. Can the romance last when the tragic victim becomes a confident, dynamic person in their own right?

This collection of traits is by no means exhaustive, or always reliable. You can make a character you think is great but which fails because no player's character is interested. Then they decide that your random bouncer character is for some reason supremely intriguing. If this happens, you should go with it. If a player's character displays romantic interest in someone, that's a signal to develop that Storyteller character further even if a possible romance is doomed to fail.

ASSIGNED A ROLE

Dee: Sometimes your accent slips.

Noel: What do you mean?

Dee: The way you speak French. I don't know if most people could tell and it doesn't show in your English, but it sounds like you're faking it.

Noel: Come on. You can't accuse people of things like that.

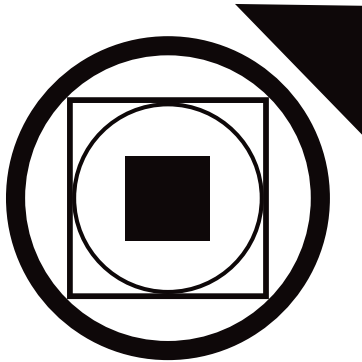
Dee: Sure I can.

Noel: Okay, yes. You're right. I'm not French, I'm Quebecois but Victoria didn't like it when I sounded Canadian.

Dee: And you changed your accent. She made you into the pretty little himbo she wanted.

Noel: Fuck you. I can be my own person.

Dee: Sure. But it helps if you can be the person people want to see.



Layla Rivera

“How are we supposed to act in Elysium? Or you know what, I’ll just copy you.”

“What do you think of the Tremere? Are they a nice clan?”

“I’m not going to date anyone before I get a grip on all this.”

“I never used to have a kink for blood... But you know... Do all vampires feel this?”

Affiliation: Tremere fledgling, no sect

Life comes at you hard. One day you’re a college student on a scholarship, working weekends as a bartender to make extra money. The next, you’re hiding from the sun because someone decided to make you into a vampire.

Layla was Embraced without the permission of Prince or Baron by a minor local Tremere. She’s not

sure whether it was by accident or on purpose but it’s clear he abandoned her immediately afterward. Everything she knows about being a vampire she had to figure out herself. That process is still ongoing.

Although Layla has figured out her sire’s position in the local Kindred community and thus knows she’s a Tremere, she hasn’t yet made herself known to her clan.

All the features of being a vampire, from drinking blood to hiding from sunlight, cause intense distress for Layla. She's kept away from her family because she can't bear the Hunger-filled thoughts she has around them. She's already drunk from one friend, an act she regrets because of how it made their relationship weird. Now the friend keeps texting her, suggesting they make something more of the "one night stand" they shared.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 5, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Academics 5, Finance 5, Politics 5, Disciplines 4

Disciplines: Auspex 2 (Heightened Senses, Premonition), Dominate 1 (Cloud Memory)

Appearance

Layla is a twenty-something Latina college student. She has trusting, open features, as if she was eager to believe the very best of everyone. Recently, she's tried to dress in street styles because she thinks it fits her new vampire persona. Vampires should be cool, right?

Personality

Being a vampire is sort of like a medical condition. No reason to change who you are!

Initially, Layla is in denial about how much the Embrace has changed her. She prefers not to think too much about when she has to hunt and focuses on strangers even if it's harder to devise ways to get their blood.

She wants to be the good person she was raised to be. She's energetic, cheerful, kind and prone to thinking the best of people even when there's clear evidence to the contrary. Still, she's not an idiot and will defend herself once things become threatening.

In her own way, Layla is ambitious, wanting to contribute concretely to the world around her. She used to think of careers in academia or perhaps

in government but now that she's a vampire she's starting to realize there are hidden structures of power that can be leveraged to great effect. Especially if you're young enough as a vampire to understand how the world works.

Despite her squeaky clean exterior, Layla is starting to realize that being a vampire opens up opportunities for all sorts of darker pleasures. As her sense of self changes to accommodate being a bloodsucker she will accept that it's okay to give into temptation.

The idea that as a vampire herself, she can have a genuine super hot vampire lover is mind-blowing to her. Now the only thing she needs is to find the right vampire to fit her fantasy!

Haven

Layla shares an apartment with three other young women. After becoming a vampire, she has installed heavy drapes and currently sleeps under her bed to safeguard against accidents. She thinks she needs something better as a haven urgently but hasn't managed to arrange it yet.

She has told her roommates that she has a new job with very late hours and she needs to keep her room dark because otherwise, she can't sleep.

Layla is embarrassed with her accommodations because she believes every other vampire has a dark mansion or a glamorous penthouse. If she sees other vampires with modest havens she relaxes but doesn't give up her goal.

If she's deeply in love or lust with someone, she'll get over her embarrassment. If her haven is the only place available for a midnight tryst, her roommates have to bear with it.

Romance

Layla is both scared and intrigued by the world she suddenly finds herself in. She has a tendency to entertain romantic fantasies about the Kindred she meets, especially the first ones before she's introduced into the Elysium or the Anarchs. She

imagines they're cool and sophisticated creatures of the night, in possession of all the answers she currently lacks.

Her style of flirting is clumsy because she's not particularly good at hiding her interest in someone. When she has a crush, it's painfully obvious as she tries to get closer to the object of her interest, complimenting them awkwardly.

Initially, the biggest obstacle to romance with Layla is that she believes she must make sense of her situation and find a stable status quo before she can date anyone. She doesn't want to be a liability to more experienced Kindred, or someone's project. She wants to love as equals and that means she has to improve her situation.

Yet at the same time, the heart wants what it wants, even if it no longer beats.

If a player's character decides to try to flirt with Layla, she's receptive up to a point. She likes the feeling of security brought by her new vampiric abilities, the sense that she can take risks with people and fight her way out if they turn out to be assholes. If the flirting becomes more serious, she initially pulls back. It was just for fun!

Layla is exploring her newfound feelings regarding the confluence of blood, desire and sex. It might be easier to do this with a no-strings-attached random lay than with someone who's serious about their feelings. This presents a possibility for a casually slutty character.

Scenes

Date With Blood Magic: Layla wants to check out her clan. When the local Tremere hold a reception for the city's Kindred, she asks a player's character as her date for moral support. When she spots her sire among the local Tremere, she impulsively asks the player's character that they pretend to be a couple to stave off her sire's attentions.

Meeting Her Friends: In an attempt to hold onto her human life, Layla decides that her lover

should meet her friends. That's what people do after they've dated for a while, right? The friends have noticed that something weird is going on in Layla's life. They're suspicious of her new lover, suspecting that as the cause of all the changes in her. For extra complications, the player's character can choose to bring a few friends (the other characters in the coterie) along. To make things more difficult, one of her friends becomes enamored of a player's character, making it easy to drink from her. If the player's character does so, Layla is both worried for her friend and jealous.

Hunting Together: Layla asks if vampires hunt together and whether it would be romantic to do so. She's not an experienced hunter but she wants to try out the experiences available to the Kindred. If it goes well, it can be a good, romantic experience where two Kindred play with victims together. But it could be a terrible idea, the Hunger and the travails of the hunt turning a playful experience into horror. Or perhaps that's the thing that makes Layla truly grasp her vampiric nature, for better and for worse.

Relationship Complications

The Sire: Layla's sire Embraced her because of an embarrassing one-sided crush. As she became a vampire, he realized he'd possibly doomed himself because he broke against the laws of the domain. This is why he initially kept his distance from her. Now that Layla has made her own way into Kindred society, he tried to reconnect with her, wooing her and trying to put down any romantic relationships Layla might have developed.

Opposing Ambitions: When the characters first meet Layla, she's not affiliated with a sect. After romance blossoms, she becomes interested in the opposite sect from that of the players' characters. If they're Anarchs, Layla wants to be in the Camarilla, and vice versa.

Lovestruck Roommate: One of Layla's roommates develops a crush on a visiting player's

character, trying to get a moment with them to make a move. Alternatively, she may have figured out that the visitor is a vampire and want in on the action. She doesn't realize that her friend is a vampire too.

Hungry for Experience: Layla wants to see and feel more of Kindred society than any single lover can provide. Surely the Kindred are not hung up on monogamy? Does a player's character try to keep her for themselves or try to facilitate her experimentation?

Development

Layla finally connects with her clan. In a surprising turn of events, they accept her, recognizing her talent for both thaumaturgy and the kind of bureaucratic organization helpful among the Tremere. She quickly becomes indispensable in the nightly running of operations led by more experienced Tremere.

Because of this, Layla's position in the city goes from an outsider to a trusted insider. She goes from someone the characters can help to someone who helps them. It might be interesting to see what kind of emotions a player's character romantically tangled with Layla would have to navigate if the former naive outsider suddenly outstrips them in accomplishment.

Layla may end a relationship because she feels it was part of her introduction into Kindred existence. Now she has established herself, she needs something else, becoming the ex-girlfriend who started succeeding after the end of the relationship. If she falls further in terms of her Humanity, she may start participating in the cruel games of the Kindred, or feel compelled to do so to impress her new compatriots.

Layla may even feel conflicted by such demands, making a character's unlife miserable and then feeling remorse over it.

Tragedy

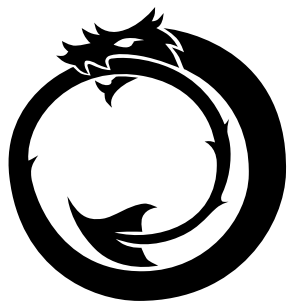
The tragedy involved in dating Layla is probably the most common of all among the Kindred: Being close to her as she becomes used to vampiric existence, compromising her humanity to satiate the Hunger inside her. She may even come to view her relationship with a player's character in transactional or cynical terms.

Layla's utility as a supporting character depends on where the players' characters are on their journey. If the chronicle has just started and the players' characters are fledglings new to the night, Layla is initially much like them, if not perhaps a bit more humane. But as events progress, she joins the establishment and loses her grasp of who she once was. In this sense, the characters can both resent her for her success and take her as a warning for what will happen to them too if they're not careful with their Humanity.

If the chronicle has already been running for a while and the players' characters have had time to accumulate a few Stains, Layla can be a reminder of who they once were: Fledglings still clinging to the memories of their mortal lives. In this case, the tragedy arises from the contrast between her and the characters' current, sordid circumstances.

What's more, such a mirage of innocence can't last. Layla becomes one more morally corrupt vampire. She can justify acts that would have horrified her when she was a human, supporting the culling of illegally Embraced Kindred or playing power politics inside her clan resulting in the destruction of her rivals. She can even engage in romance just to spite an enemy, instead of even the aspiration of genuine intimacy.

Art Notes: A twentysomething Latina, Layla is the girl in your class, your workplace or in the cafe across the street that you fall in love with. She's young, kind and caring, just on the verge of discovering the dark possibilities of undead existence.



Condor

“Hey there? That someone who looks like you is alone right now is a crime. Let me help fix that...”

“I’ve been searching my entire undeath for a way to rid myself of the worst aspects of being one of the Kindred.”

“Art, ideas, thoughts... these have as much power as blood and fangs.”

“Hurt me. Please.”

Affiliation: Ventrue neonate, Camarilla

“Urban Inkstuff”: a punky, guerilla art collective that creates spectacular spray-painted murals, sidewalk chalk-paintings, and even projection-mapped animations throughout the city. While their work might seem to just be a cry for attention, look closely: you’ll find subtle political messages encoded in each of their “interventions”.



At the heart of the collective sits the enigmatic, magnetic, and beautiful Condor. While Urban Inkstuff champions anarchist values, no one doubts that Condor is the true leader (or "visionary" as he's sometimes called). Condor decides where interventions will take place, who takes part, and how they do. While the collective has a fairly loose definition of "membership", Condor decides who can enter the inner circle. And though Condor has had occasion to make use of the powers granted to him through Presence, the collective's fierce loyalty does seem to genuinely stem from his forceful charisma.

Not much is known about Condor's past. He grew up amid the haze and music of the sixties. He was raised "she", but quickly rejected that designation. He traveled around the country (the world?) for much of his youth. He collected lovers like pearls on a necklace. What's more important to folks is what he's going to do. Where will Urban Inkstuff's next intervention be? What is Condor's true design?

Among the Kindred, Condor is a bit of a loner. Condor is Ventrue only in lineage, and seeks little control over his fellow vampires. He prefers the company of his mortal collective, though a few Toreador and other artistically-minded Kindred number among his friends. However, he does sometimes make an appearance at important occasions, and while he is not counted among those with true authority, his reputation among the mortals—combined with uncertainty about his real power and allegiances—has earned him a degree of respect.

Unfortunately, it might have earned him enemies as well.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 4, Social 6, Mental 4

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools: Leadership 8, Persuasion 8, Performance 7, Athletics 6, Disciplines 3

Disciplines: Presence 2 (Daunt, Lingering Kiss), Dominate 1 (Compel)

Appearance

Condor is a white trans man who appears to be in his late twenties or early thirties, though his features are often described as youthful. Gay men would call him a twink: Condor is skinny, blond, and—according to those with the privilege of knowing him better—shaved hairless below his scalp.

He sports numerous piercings (including a few more intimate, genital piercings), and has heterochromatic eyes: one hazel and one blue. He tends to wear, loose, brightly patterned clothing, similar to the "hippie" styles of the '60's. Some people find it strange that Condor eschews tattoos of any kind. "When you see my body, I want you to see my body, freckles, scars, blemishes and all". Indeed, Condor is vocally proud of the scars from his gender-affirming chest-tissue removal surgery, scars that will probably never fade unaided, now that he is Kindred.

Personality

Even if a Tzimisce curse were to strip Condor of all his beauty, he would likely still be one of the most charismatic people you know. When you speak, he will hang on to your words as though you're the most important person in the room. When he speaks—you can't help but focus on him.

Condor speaks passionately—complete with energetic hand gestures—about a great many topics: Queer rights, environmental justice, corporate greed...But while he may wax eloquent on all these topics, Condor's passion only truly burns for one

goal: achieving Golconda. Condor has spent the last decade fervently seeking the fabled Saulot's writings. He is convinced that if he reaches this "higher state", he can achieve enlightenment. Unfortunately, his quest is somewhat hindered by his feeding preference: Condor loves to find sexual partners (usually men associated with Urban Inkstuff) who will willingly submit to small "sips" of blood during sex. Condor often uses the Cloud Memory ability granted by his Dominate Discipline to mask the depth of these sips, though he's usually remarkably self-controlled, and has never caused lasting injuries. On dark days, Condor wrestles with the ethics of this behavior.

A few of the more cynical Kindred have likened Condor to an explosion: undeniable sound and fury, a force to be reckoned with—but one that will inevitably burn itself out.

Haven

The closest Urban Inkstuff has to a central hub (or "hideout", if you will) is a dingy, little, two-story shop named "Vintage Visions" selling retro movie and theatre posters, located in the seedy part of town. The building appears rundown and covered in graffiti, with exotic species of mold and ivy crawling out of the cracks. A sign on the front window has advertised a Christmas sale since 1997.

The shop itself is located on the first story of the building, while the second floor consists of a few rooms where Urban Inkstuff stores equipment and holds meetings. A door hidden in the back of a closet leads to a secret room known as "The Ink Room", whose walls, floors and ceilings are covered in tiny, detailed, blue and white drawings of a "prophecy," a deceased member of the collective claimed to have seen in a dream. Members come here to meditate, brainstorm and think about art. In some ways, it might be called a sacred space.

The unusually spacious basement, about the size of a comfortable, one-bedroom apartment is Condor's actual dwelling. While not exactly lavish,



the space is clearly much better maintained than the rest of the building. Of particular note is the well-stocked shelf of philosophy books (behind which is hidden a small safe containing texts pertaining to Saulot and Golconda, and a Tremere Blood Sorcery treatise), a somewhat abstract painting in vibrant oranges and purples of a mother and a little girl painted by Condor's own mother, and an enormous, red-velvet couch which has seen many a one-night stand. Condor rarely washes the sofa covers. He finds the idea of the "essence" of his many lovers building up on the couch to be romantic.

Condor prefers to meet with most people on the second floor. Only those he trusts get to see visit his bedroom (and the admirable collection of sex toys displayed on the wall).

Romance

Condor is... a fuckboy.

Were it not for his feeding preferences, Condor loves sex. He is a suave, uncontrollable flirt, and spends many nights a week pursuing sexual conquests. It helps that he has managed to cultivate his Humanity successfully enough that he can enjoy mortal sex.

Condor goes for men of all types: young inexperienced twink fresh out of college. Older

leather-daddies with decades of experience. Gym-bunnies who look good but don't really know what to do with their dicks. Nerdy gays with cosplay fetishes. "Not my type" doesn't really exist in his vocabulary. If you're a man who has reasonable game, chances are Condor will take you home for a tumble on his couch.

On the other hand, Condor rarely pursues women and has a single very strict type. Condor only goes for strong, dominant women with sadistic BDSM tendencies. When he's with a woman, Condor wants to be spanked raw, tied down, pegged, spat on, and basically undergo any sort of pain and humiliation his partner can invent. He tends to feed on this sort of partner during post-sex aftercare.

While Condor is extremely sexually active, romance is another matter. Condor has had very few stable relationships, both before and after his Embrace. He will rarely be romantically attracted to anyone who isn't thoughtful, artsy, or spiritual. Deep down, Condor believes that he doesn't deserve true romance until he's achieved Golconda.

Scenes

Art Attack! Condor is hoping to break into a corporate office in the middle of the night with a small group of Urban Inkstuff members to create an extremely elaborate, mandala-like mural on the floor. He asks the players' characters to help access the office, or keep watch. Unfortunately, the company is secretly the domain of a Tremere of middling power, one who is wary of Condor's growing influence.

Is It love? For the first time in decades, Condor has felt the spark of romantic attraction for another man. However, the man is as enigmatic as he is attractive. Condor asks the players' characters to help him "scope out" this potential lover. Does he have any secrets Condor needs to be wary of?

A Side of Pain: A player's character catches Condor's attention at a club, gallery show, or concert. He invites them over promising "a

marvelous time" and asks for increasingly intense and painful BDSM acts, culminating in him breaking down in anguished tears about the futility of Kindred life.



Relationship Complications

The Stalkers: A small group of thin-bloods has grown obsessed with Condor and the work he does with Urban Inkstuff. They've been following him around, endangering not only the secrecy of his collective, but at times, the Masquerade itself. What's more, rumors abound that they plan on kidnapping him, and "convincing" him to be with them.

The Hopeless Romantic: A member of Urban Inkstuff falls hopelessly in love with one of the players' characters, and starts making grand gestures to win their heart: a shower of roses, a flashmob, a spray-painted mural dedicated to them, a takeover of a billboard professing their love...Unfortunately, Condor believes that the player's character is trying to infiltrate his collective and undermine his power.

The Lover: An elderly mortal with whom Condor shared a passionate, deep love years ago arrives in town, chasing down clues to Condor's whereabouts. He seeks closure and answers to why his "true love" left him. Not only is Condor guilty about hurting the man's close friend (the reason he

left him), but also he's also worried that allowing his former lover to see him would be a Masquerade breach. However, he wants to neither hurt nor mesmerize someone who was once so important to him, and he asks the players' characters for help.

Obsession? If one or more players' characters start a relationship with Condor, he soon begins to doubt himself, and convinces himself that dating another vampire would have been anathema to Saulot, and an impediment to achieving Golconda. However, he's also certain his romantic feelings are real; he can't just forget them. How does one deal with a vampire in such a dilemma?

Development

As the local Camarilla members begin to include Condor in their events, he discovers that a Tremere coterie may own a text important to his pursuit of Golconda. Condor begins to bend all his resources toward obtaining the text, including the mortals under his influence. His actions soon begin to endanger the members of Urban Inkstuff, and verge on Masquerade breaches.

Can Condor be protected against suspicious Camarilla members, as well as his own ambitions? He may end up making deals he shouldn't have, arousing the interest of Kindred better left alone. Sometimes those most intent on the path to Golconda start making mistakes, spurred on by their obsession. A degenerate older vampire offended by Condor's focus may even help this process along, intending to seduce Condor into losing his Humanity just when he imagined he was getting so close to it.

Will any romance have a chance to blossom amidst this powerful storm of secrets, obsession, and Blood Magic? What happens when Condor chooses his own salvation at the expense of his lover or is forced to make deals with the Tremere that impact those closest to him?

Tragedy

Both Condor's obsession with Golconda and his deep-seated self-loathing might lead to tragedy for anyone in a committed relationship with Condor. There's also the matter of his insatiable sexual appetite (which could turn off anyone seeking monogamy), and possible retaliation from the Tremere, for delving too deeply into their secrets of Blood Magic in pursuit of his quest.

A possible core tragedy for those enmeshed with Condor is that the attempt to become better may cause him to act in ways that hurt those around him. Many Kindred find wisdom in the old vampire refrain: "A beast I am lest a beast I become." One has to do monstrous deeds to avoid becoming even more monstrous. This concept is impossible for Condor to accept even as he acts in accordance with it, making him erupt in self-loathing at those around him.

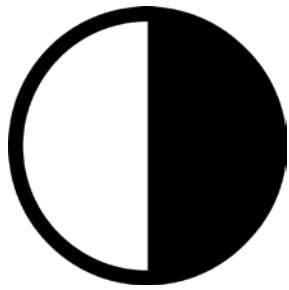
It's up to the Storyteller to decide how hopeless the quest for Golconda really is. It's possible that for Condor, it's actually just a road to self-destruction.

However, tragedy may loom even in the unlikely possibility that Condor genuinely succeeds. This means the romance he's involved in ends as he can't bear to associate with those tainted with the curse of Caine. The player's character is left behind as his former paramour walks off into perfection.

Art Notes: Skinny, late-twenties man, with delicate features, and many facial and ear piercings. Short blond hair. Wearing a leather jacket or vest without a shirt underneath. Scars from top surgery are prominent. Nipple piercings. Dark, skinny jeans (without a prominent bulge) artfully ripped at the knees. No facial, body, or armpit hair. No tattoos.







Ethan & Hamza

“Me and Hamza? Yeah, we’re best friends. We’re never out of each others’ sight. Got a problem with that?”

“Ethan is jock-bro with pasta for brains and I love him more than any other dude on the planet.”

“We’re not monsters. Okay fine, we’re really trying not to be monsters.”

“I mean, there’s room for more on the bed...”

Affiliation: Thin-blood fledglings, no sect

Ethan & Hamza seem to be a duo straight out of a young adult-comedy show: varsity-swimmer Ethan and geeky digital artist Hamza, thrown together as roommates during their freshman year of college, whose friendship then blossoms and transforms into an unshakeable bond over their academic life.

Except that their story took a darker turn. At the end of their junior year, the openly bisexual Hamza and the sexually-curious Ethan, already enmeshed in romantic tension, brought a strange, alluring woman back to their dorm. The sex was

novel, kinky—and utterly transformative. The next night, the pair found themselves overcome with an overwhelming Hunger for blood. The woman was nowhere to be seen.

In their newfound, initial blood-frenzy, the pair drank deeply from the visiting girlfriend of one of their floormates—and in a panic, left her for dead in a hidden corner on the campus grounds. When the guilt-ridden duo returned later that night, the body had vanished.

The pair bumbled their way through their first months as Kindred. As thin-bloods, they’ve managed to maintain some of their mortal, collegiate, life. In vampire society, however, they’ve made few connections, let alone allies. Unfortunately, they’ve also somehow annoyed a handful of local figures in Kindred society.

It’s now Ethan and Hamza’s final year at college. With vampirism, possible enemies, and only a hazy conception of what the future holds, the pair have become even more inseparable. Are they best friends? Dating? Fuckbuddies? Even they don’t know. What they do know is that they have to rely on each other to make it through the upcoming nights.

General Difficulty: 3/2

Standard Dice Pools:

Ethan: Physical 5, Social 4, Mental 3.

Hamza: Physical 3, Social 4, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 5

Exceptional Dice Pools:

Ethan: Athletics 5, Insight 4, Brawl 4.

Hamza: Subterfuge 5, Craft (Drawing) 4, Technology 4

Disciplines: none

Appearance

At his university, Ethan fits the archetypal “jock” look: Ethan is a muscular, white man with red hair in his early twenties, and often wears either athletic gear or university-branded apparel. He has a light dusting of freckles on his face and startlingly green

eyes. He has a tiny, brass lock tattooed on his ankle, the result of a drunk night out with Hamza.

Hamza is a South Asian man of average build, with dark, shoulder-length hair he keeps tied in a topknot. He wears glasses and tends to dress in either jeans and graphic tees featuring his favorite geek pursuits, or full-on cosplay. He has a small, brass key tattooed on his ankle. Neither of the pair remembers whose idea the tattoos really were.

Both Ethan and Hamza possess the Lifelike thin-blood advantage: They appear fairly human, can eat a little, and can partake in (and enjoy) sex without expending effort. This has helped them both blend in at school, and escape notice from other Kindred.

Personality

Ethan is outgoing, gregarious, and charismatic. Hamza is a little more introverted and has a sharp sense of sarcastic humor for those who irritate him. Since their Embrace, their confidence has been shaken; nevertheless, they attempt to keep on with their lives as much as they can. Ethan continues to pursue athletic hobbies, though he has had to limit himself to indoor pursuits. Hamza has been delving into the vampire-themed side of geekdom.

The pair is worried about giving into their monstrous nature. They're terrified that they might have killed a woman on their first night as vampires, a fear sharpened by the mysterious disappearance of the body. To try keeping their violent urges in check, the pair tend to feed as Cleavers, taking surreptitious sips from Ethan's swimming teammates, their classmates, and their circle of friends. From time to time, when their guilt becomes too overwhelming, they might steal bag of blood from the university's medical school, where Hamza has friends. This latter method of feeding rarely satisfies their Hunger for long.

Ethan and Hamza have been inseparable friends for the last three years. They do all their social activities together, hunt together, and before their transformation, visited each other's families over

major holidays. Hamza attends Ethan's swim meets and cheers loudly from the stands. Ethan helps Hamza build cosplays, even standing in as a model or living mannequin from time to time. Since their Embrace, the pair have grown even closer. Some Kindred ask themselves if such a strong relationship between vampires is possible; could the two be Blood Bound in some, new, heretofore unknown manner?

Haven

As seniors, Hamza and Ethan have permission to live off campus. They've secured a small apartment in a squat building within walking distance of the center of campus. The building is typical of the residences that spawn in collegiate neighborhoods: not quite bad enough to be considered "slums", but catering to a slim student budget nevertheless.

As one might expect of college students, the apartment is fairly messy, with haphazard clothing, old takeout containers, and textbooks competing for space with the shabby, second-hand furniture. A surprisingly large and diverse array of plants call the space home: the pair recently decided, based on advice from a junk-science daytime "medical advice" TV show, that tending to plants will help calm their Hunger and base urges.

Hamza's room is papered with drawings, visual studies, and artistic inspiration. Ethan's room houses medals, trophies, certificates, and other signs of athletic brilliance. The two spend a lot of time in each other's room. Ethan's bed has a conspicuous dent and claw marks—remnants of an unusually vociferous, lust-blinded evening of carnal exploration shared between the pair.

At the back of their fridge is stashed a small vial of a Thin-Blood Alchemy concoction simply labeled "For Emergencies". Neither of the two knows exactly what the contents will do when drunk; it was a pity gift from another group of thin-bloods the pair encountered early in their vampirism.

Unknown to either Ethan or Hamza, their

landlord Joe Weaver, an elderly gentleman with a cantankerous personality, is an agent of a reclusive local Nosferatu, reporting on their whereabouts and activities for some unknown purpose.

Romance

Hamza considers himself bisexual. Ethan used to consider himself a straight “bro”...but three years of friendship with Hamza have slowly eroded that certainty.

The night of their Embrace was the first time they acted on any sexual feelings toward each other. Since then, the pair routinely have sex, though they dislike talking about it (even to each other) and don't consider themselves a “couple”.

However, the pair will only entertain romantic and sexual overtures if it's clear that they come as a package deal: they will only date or even sleep with people (of any gender) if both of them are involved. Getting the pair to unpack the emotional underpinnings of this requirement might be a tricky endeavor however since they refuse to define or even mention their relationship with each other.

If a player ends up in a relationship (or even a one-night stand) with the pair, it becomes very clear that Ethan and Hamza share very tender feelings towards each other, and if their trust is gained, they will extend that to a new partner. They ask about their partners' needs and current state, love making small romantic gestures, and go out of their way to support each other.

Finally, Ethan is a loud, insatiable bottom, and loves to see how hard he can take it from Hamza (and any potential new partner). When in the mood, both Ethan and Hamza can be very sexually adventurous.

Scenes

Mark of the Mercurian: Ethan is kidnapped by an ambitious Tremere neonate, who hopes to gain favor with his Elders by inscribing the Mark of the Crescent Moon onto the thin blood during a

Tremere gathering. A distraught Hamza approaches the players' characters for help.

Sire Clues: Hamza stumbles into a Malkavian in the throes of his derangement, who solemnly pronounces a prophecy detailing how Hamza can locate their sire—the mysterious, beautiful woman the pair brought home that fateful night a few months back. He excitedly asks the players' characters for help in following the trail. Ethan, however, is less enthused. Memories of their monstrous first hunt leave Ethan with no desire to find their sire.

Busybody: A member of the women's swim team grows concerned about Ethan's strange new behaviors and begins asking questions, following the boys home and basically nosing around. Ethan and Hamza have little experience dealing with dedicated investigators and have no desire to harm her. They approach the players' characters for help.

Relationship Complications

The Other Woman: Hamza is suddenly very interested in a girl he met downtown, and begins spending steadily increasing amounts of time with her alone. Ethan and Hamza don't have a formal agreement about their relationship—they barely even acknowledge the romantic and sexual sides of it. As a result, jealousy rears its fanged head: a suspicious Ethan asks the players' characters to investigate who this rival for Hamza's time might be. She is, in fact, a faerie (*Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 377) with designs to whisk Hamza away. Her exact motives are inscrutable.

Meeting the Boyfriend (?) Hamza begins to develop feelings for a player's character and after spending time with them, decides to introduce them to Ethan. Ethan, however, is suspicious and uncomfortable about someone entering their (ill-defined) relationship, especially another vampire! Can the players' characters convince Ethan about their intentions and win his heart?

To DTR or Not DTR? DTR stands for define the relationship. After years of sexual tension and a few months of scorching sex which they never talk about, Hamza feels he's finally ready to officially ask Ethan to be his boyfriend. Polyamorously, of course. Unfortunately, when he broaches the subject, Ethan grows flustered and literally runs away. Now he's avoiding Ethan (a difficult feat since they live together). A morose Hamza beseeches the players' characters to intercede.

Bedroom Anxiety: If a player's character begins a relationship with the pair, things go well until their first group sexual encounter. Ethan starts remembering their first threesome (with their sire), has a panic attack, and flees. He'll need to be consoled, and will need to be slowly eased into having another group sex scene anytime soon.

Development

Fascinated by their relationship, a Toreador ancilla respected by the Camarilla invites Hamza and Ethan to "a little gathering of friends and business colleagues". He hints that an offer to formally enter Camarilla society might be on the table, a rare event for thin-bloods.

At the same time, members of a gang of Anarchs led by a zealously revolutionary neonate "encounters" the boys in an alleyway one night, and introduces themselves as "the future of vampirism". They're eager to topple the Camarilla leadership in the city and are seeking new "like-minded individuals".

Are these genuine offers of peace and alliance, or subtle traps? How far can either group be trusted? And can Ethan and Hamza continue their independent life, or will they be forced to choose a side in the coming nights?

As with some of the other possible love interests in this chapter, the corroding influence of vampiric society is a significant threat to any romantic liaisons they might engage in with the players' characters. The way they have organized their unives is close to

humanity, a fragile setup easily damaged if exposed to the machinations of more established undead.

What kind of motivations do the players' characters have when confronted by this process? Do they wish to try to slow it down to preserve something precious or speed it along for the pair's own good? After all, they have to wise up to the games played by the Camarilla Court or the city's Anarchs before they're destroyed like so many thin-bloods before them.

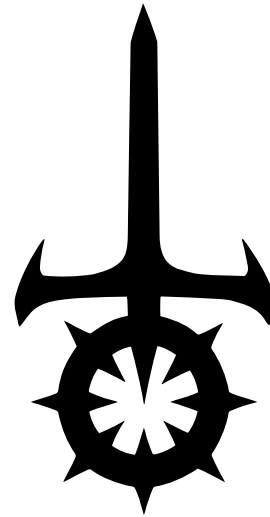
Tragedy

The trauma of their first hunt—the fact that it might have been murder—weighs heavily on the two boys. Add to that burgeoning emotions, codependency, and newfound queerness on Ethan's part, and you have a potentially explosive cocktail

Soon after the pair enters a relationship with one or more player's characters, Ethan begins to have intrusive memories about the fateful threesome, and about the trauma of their first hunt. He begins to wonder whether he deserves love as a vampire, whether he should be cursed to be alone. He might go into a depressive state, which would make Hamza increasingly distraught. If left unchecked he might even run, an event which could provoke thoughts of self-harm in an extremely upset Hamza.

Ethan and Hamza are still fairly close to who they were when still mortal. However, Kindred need to feed and the Hunger never goes away. Some vampires crumble when exposed to the realities and demands of their new existences, and particularly Ethan may well be among them. Is it possible to ease him into what he needs to do nightly to survive?

It's possible to use the pair to showcase one of the core features of **Vampire: The Masquerade** by focusing on Ethan's despair over what has happened to both of them. If the players' characters are close to them at this this point, the tragedy of the condition they too share resonates more deeply.



Dmitra Thorn

“Let me take care of you.”

“You shouldn’t trust anyone. Not even me. But I’m ever so charmed that you do.”

“Tell me, what’s the worst thing you’ve ever done?”

“There are no excuses that validate giving in to the Beast. The more we struggle to control our drives, the greater our responsibility to do so.”

Affiliation: Brujah ancilla, former Anarch, now increasingly fascinated with the Sabbat

Dmitra burns with a hidden fire, fueled by an anger that will never completely dissipate. To those who don’t know her well, she appears only ever calmly dignified, but that’s how she wants to be seen.

Dmitra used to look forward to having kids and growing old. Her childhood and youth had been hard, marred by poverty and all the struggles that follow, but she'd gotten through it and was just reaching a stage in her life where she could start to live for real. So, the Embrace was nothing she wanted. Her transformation came as a surprise, brought upon her by a guy she only knew superficially from her involvement in a local grassroots movement. It hurt to lose her future. But when he said she'd be able to make real change as one of the Kindred and introduced her to the Anarch Movement, Dmitra decided to bury her rage and disappointment for the sake of becoming part of something bigger.

The instinct to destroy was something that began to grow in Dmitra the moment she rose from the dead, but it didn't fully bloom until she learned that her sire was greedily feeding every night on the very same people he was claiming to help. She struck him down the moment she found out. Draining him dry, pushed by her disdain at all his selfishness, his audacity, the way he had drained women and children. She drank him up and increased the potency of her Blood, finally dealing out justice and moving that much further away from her human self.

Having committed diablerie, Dmitra knew she would be shunned at best by the Anarch community she belonged to, so she left before they could decide what to do about her.

She's kept mostly to herself ever since, having lost faith that vampires can be anything other than evil. She prefers the company of mortals in most cases and tries in many small ways to improve the lives of those around her, but she doesn't let anyone get too close. When she needs allies, she calls on the few contacts she has who claim to be in the Sabbat. If you need to make a deal with the devil, why settle for anything less?

General Difficulty: 4/3

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

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Insight 8, Subterfuge 8, Disciplines 5

Disciplines: Potence 3 (Lethal Body, Prowess, Brutal Feed), Presence 2 (Awe, Lingering Kiss)

Appearance

Dmitra is a statuesque golden-skinned woman of indeterminate ethnicity with an hourglass silhouette. She looks to be somewhere in her 30s and has a strong, confident presence. She has a timeless style and likes to invest in well-made designer pieces that will last through the decades. She often adds a touch of whimsy to her outfits, such as a unique gold brooch or a long pair of kid-skin gloves.

Personality

Dmitra has withdrawn as much as possible from the machinations of her fellow Kindred and has instead created an existence for herself filled with art and culture and the enjoyment of beauty and pleasure in all its forms. These things let her forget what she's lost for a time.

She prefers the company of mortals in most cases when it won't be too great a risk for them to be around her, but enjoys dalliances with Kindred who travel through her area. She is dominant in most situations, but always polite. When something angers her, she does her best to hide it, although you might sense the suppressed rage if you're observant enough.

Dmitra believes herself to be fundamentally evil, but she still follows the personal credo that she must do more good than bad, and she makes a nightly effort to equal out the bad she's done with good deeds. But of course, she has a vampire's morality, and what seems good to her is not always what the majority would agree to be the right thing. Dmitra might kill someone out of mercy for being morally

flawed or prioritize the safety and comfort of an individual above the needs of the many. It's a great sorrow to her that she never got to be a mother, and she channels her desire to take care of others into her fleeting relationships.

Haven

Dmitra's home is a mid-century villa outside of town with a modest but beautiful garden surrounded by an iron fence. She's had a subterranean basement installed below the wine cellar, where she slumbers during the day. A few human workers visit weekly to clean, stock up her fridge, and tend to the garden. Sometimes, when she feels sufficiently in control of herself, she'll rent out her guest room cheaply to someone in need.

Dmitra's lucky enough to have made a fair bit of money over the years, and she's comfortable enough to be able to live somewhat eccentrically. Most locals think she's a rich widow or someone's kept woman.

Romance

Dmitra is a romantic dominant top who prefers femme and non-binary partners. She likes to take care of her partner and will let herself get quite romantic while she courts them, becoming protective and territorial when it comes to them. Her relationships have never lasted long, however, as she always ends up either resenting her partner or convincing herself she's a risk to them.

Dmitra is an elegant flirt who is almost always completely in control of the way she appears to others. She respects when others stand by their weaknesses and flaws, and the higher Humanity in her partner, the more she cares for them.

When a player's character decides to flirt with Dmitra, she will act interested initially no matter what, just to get a chance to check out who they are and whether they'll be a threat to the humans in her domain. If she likes them, she'll want to get close to them for real, and she'll show her interest by sending

clever gifts, taking them out, and offering them different types of pleasure. Her interest will last for as long as she can see something good in the player's character. If their Humanity gets too low (say, below 5), she will turn against them; if she continues to see them and this doesn't happen, she'll eventually decide they are too good for her and start to distance herself.

She's unwilling to admit it, but Dmitra longs for a long-term partner and something more resembling the life she never got to live. Someone who could get through to her and help her see that her existence doesn't have to be so black and white and that she doesn't have to think of herself as basically evil could win her unending devotion. But so far, something like that has only been a distant dream.

Scenes

A Night In the Pretty Lights: Dmitra takes a player's character out for a night on the town, showing them all manner of considerations and treating them as though they are the only one she has any eyes for.

Catholic Guilt: Dmitra breaks down and admits to a player's character what she's done, getting dangerously close to turning violent again if they don't fully grasp why she did it and why she'd do it again.

Testing Your Worth: Dmitra has decided it's time to figure out if the player's character or any of their friends are good enough vampires for her taste. She'll plant temptation in their path and see if they fall, ready to turn on them at a moment's notice.



Relationship Complications

A Visit From the Past: Dmitra thinks she's long since escaped anyone who'd want to get back at her for her sire's death. She's wrong. A group of her old Anarch contacts shows up, having looked for her for years, and thirsty for revenge. Anyone found with her will be accepted as collateral unless they quickly ally with the visitors against her.

A Jealous Pet: One of Dmitra's human connections has been holding out for her to give them a chance and is consumed with jealousy when they realize that she's started something with someone else yet again.

An Adoption: Ever so often Dmitra feels so deeply for a lesser creature, that she takes it upon herself to save them from their circumstances and give them the life they deserve. Now it happens again, and the player's character she's gotten involved with suddenly finds themselves partially responsible for a human street kid, a young pregnant woman, or a puppy — and the target of Dmitra's growing suspicions that they'll hurt them.

Development

A nearby high-ranking Kindred or Cainite ruler decides that they'll no longer allow Dmitra to keep to herself and send a delegation to demand she must swear proper allegiance to them. Dmitra will have to choose to fight or obey, keenly aware that she's never stopped regretting that first time she gave in and believed the good intentions of her sire and his sect.

If it gets out that Dmitra has committed diablerie, any other vampires in her region will want to use it against her, and she may be blackmailed, hunted, and driven away from her home. Characters who help her in these situations will gain a lot of respect and affection from her in return.

Dmitra is a formidable figure but her autarkis tendencies means that she's exposed to the sects and other groups who may wish her ill. This may end up either in her final destruction or drive her

into becoming one of the Sabbat, a fully inhuman monstrosity. This could be a particularly horrifying development if a player's character had been intimate with her. When they first meet, Dmitra is still recognizably a person. After going over to the Sabbat, she can still mimic some of her earlier persona but the woman she once was is not there anymore.

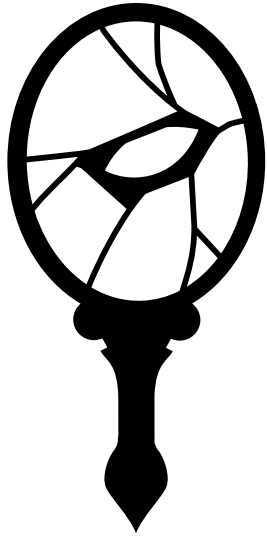
Tragedy

The tragedy of dating Dmitra is that she fundamentally believes herself unlovable and thinks, when she is in her darkest moods, that all Kindred are doomed to do evil. She is brilliant at making you feel special and she probably does fall a little in love with all of her partners, but sooner or later she's likely to turn against whomever she's with. All she wants is to be mortal again and that's not something she'll be able to achieve, no matter how special the connection.

Dmitra has also had a series of mortal partners, but the risk that she'll hurt them is too high for her, so she tries to avoid those kinds of relationships now.

If a player's character becomes intimate with Dmitra, this core conflict inside her almost ensures that the relationship ends in tragedy. She's not who she wants to be and that makes her unpredictable and difficult to be with.

In an ideal world, her desires might turn her on the path towards Golconda but she's too cynical to really go for it. That's why it's more likely that she will suffer a moral fall, becoming the opposite of what she yearned to be.



Angelique Dutertre

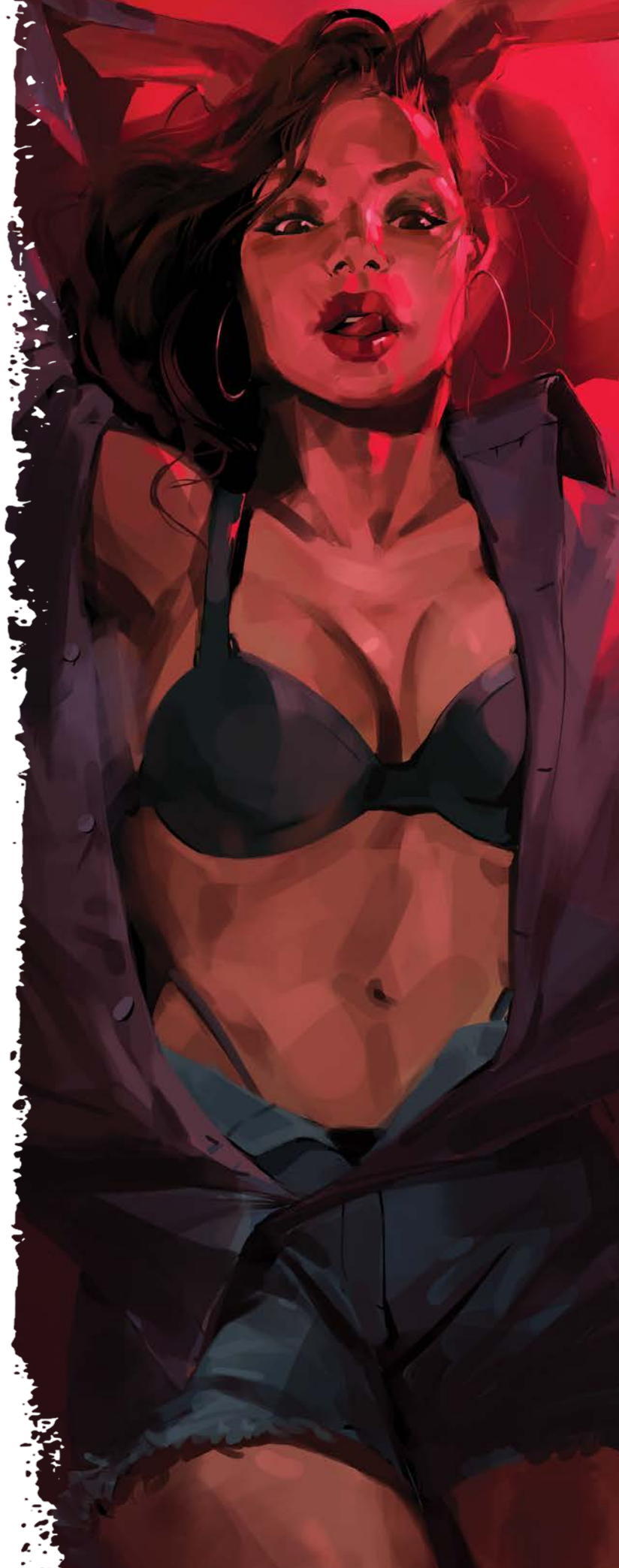
“They hurt me; you know... So very, very badly... I remember it all. The cold water, and the shocks, but the questioning was the worst... Why are you like this? Why are you like this? And when I tried to die, they would force the food in my mouth until I could not keep it in. Sometimes I still feel the taste of bile and acid in my mouth, too...”

“They told me that love was bad, that I was a sinner, that I was a very, very bad girl... But love...”

“Please, can you sing me a song? I just love music, so very much...”

Affiliation: Malkavian neonate , Anarch

Life as a young woman from a good family living in the period between the world wars was supposed to be written out for you. Be proper, get educated but not too much, make a good marriage, do not make any noise. Being weird, different, too intense, or even worse, promiscuous, would be severely punished.



Angelique was Embraced after her sire gave her the opportunity to escape the mental institution her family locked her in. She does not remember exactly why they locked her up. She believes she simply “loved too much”.

There was a woman named Marianne, the love of her life. Tonight Angelique only has a faceless statue to remember Marianne by. Angelique survives in her undead existence as an artist whose disturbing paintings and sculptures enthrall a mesmerized audience of rich patrons.

Angelique likes to surround herself with fellow artists and is always looking for someone to love and look after her, but always ends up disappointed as no one has yet managed to compare to the lost love of her life.

General Difficulty: 4/2

Standard Dice Pools: Physical 3, Social 5, Mental 5

Secondary Attributes: Health 5, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Awareness 7, Persuasion 6, Intimidation 6

Disciplines: Auspex 4 (Sense the Unseen, Premonition, Share the Senses, Spirit’s Touch), Dominate 2 (Compel, Dementation)

Appearance

Angelique is a mid to late twenties white woman, thin and pale, with a waif-like quality in movements and demeanors. She has long wavy hair and strikingly bright eyes. She favors comfortable clothing that one would wear at an art studio, often stained with paint and dust.

Personality

Angelique is a contrast between a fragile, vulnerable appearance and hidden steel underneath. As a young

girl she was punished for “loose morals”, and her passage in a mental institution broke her mind. Her sire came to feed on the prisoners and gave her an opportunity to escape, keeping her as a protégée and then child for her resilience.

Angelique is soft spoken, caring, with a dreamy look and lively passion for art. She is also extremely volatile and can flip and turn aggressive if she does not get her way. Her Predator Type is Scene Queen, moving among artists, mostly mortal lovers that she disposes of when they do not suit her fantasy anymore.

Angelique does not care about politics or advocate being an Anarch, but she knows her feeding ground is free territory and is attached to the idea. Any threat to that freedom is met with violence.

Angelique loves to love, and the idea of love. The memory of the love of her life Marianne rests heavy in her mind and has led her recently to start looking into Oblivion with the hope of becoming a new Pygmalion and creating a lifelike reproduction of her. She might yet find new love but may just as well be condemned to the tragedy of having part of her heart always lost in the past.

Haven

Angelique spends most of her time in an ancient off-the-grid building turned artist collective, haunted by many Kindred, and visited by unsuspecting mortals serving as a herd. This artistic hub, called “The New Montmartre”, or Neo-Montmartre for short (see p. 132) is the center of an independent Anarch domain which gives her a sense of home and safety.

Her own haven lies at the basement of the building, among a series of safe rooms designed for fellow Kindred. She slumbers on the floor of a bare padded cell with grey cushioned walls, empty but for the unfinished statue that symbolizes her lost love, Marianne. The basement also holds her treasure room, where she hides trophies from former inmates and victims.

Romance

Angelique longs for romance but love, desire, and sexuality remain mired in feelings of guilt. Her guilt from love and sensuality in general can be seen in her general shyness, especially with newly formed acquaintances. When more serious bonds are formed, it is her guilt over the now deceased love of her life that takes precedence. She is always in a push-pull movement, looking for romance and then turning it down.

She similarly alternates between being openly flirty and sensual, then shy and demure. If pressed and granted enough trust, she will confess struggling with her feelings and guilt. The main obstacle to romancing Angelique is herself. She does not believe she is worthy of love. After the elation of shared affection, she will sink again into guilt and bitterness and turn on her lover as quickly as she loved them. Trust, time to heal and sharing her feelings will help though.

Seducing Angelique is not a complicated process. She will be a little shy but will quickly respond to interest, especially with female characters or fellow artists. The excitement of a new relationship will make her giddy and playful. When feelings encroach and the relationship deepens, however, her instability will put the whole romance in jeopardy.

Scenes

A Bohemian Party: The artistic hub often throws wild parties, but Angelique prepared this one in honor of her new love. There will be music, dancing, small, secluded rooms for sensuous encounters, and willing mortals to feed on. Angelique will show herself at her best: playful, witty, sensual. She will introduce the character to her friends and other local Kindred, and the party will be a great opportunity for networking and new acquaintances.

Hidden Montmartre: In the hope to secure the character's presence at her side some more, Angelique will take them to explore the hidden

depths of the area. The district is made of mostly squats, bordered by a crescent of newly gentrified areas. It is a nice place to go hunting, and a good place to hide in.

Angelique's Rooms: When enough trust has been established, Angelique will invite the characters to stay with her for the day's slumber. She will show her room, her unfinished statue, and start talking about her history with Marianne. Most importantly, she will show the character her treasure room, filled up with relics from deceased former inmates of the mental institutions that she dug from their graves, and trophies of deceased victims. Jewelry, small pieces of arts, books, engravings and even a couple of occult tomes are clustered together. The character may find some valuable pieces and obtain one as a love gift with a little persuasion.

Relationship Complications

The Rival: When Angelique starts being involved with the character, former favorites come out of the woodwork. Some may have good intentions and want to warn the character about the violence lurking under her lovely surface, others straight up try to push the character away hoping to ingratiate themselves with Angelique again.

Angelique's Jealousy: As Angelique gets closer to the character, she also manifests fits of jealousy to anyone close to her romantic interest, whatever their relationship status is. If anyone makes her feel unimportant to the character, she lashes out. If her rival — real or imaginary — is a mortal or significantly weaker Kindred, she might resort to abduction to try to take them away.

The Investigator: Sometime into the relationship a prospective rival appears in the artistic hub. Angelique appears moderately interested but appreciates the extra attention. Some digging reveals the suitor is an investigator looking into the many deaths surrounding Neo-Montmartre, in a bid to weaken the Anarch stranglehold on the area. Investigation reveals that Angelique has been

hunting young women who look like her dead lover, to the point that she is threatening the whole district.

Oblivion: Angelique has been dabbling with Oblivion to revive her past lover Marianne's spirit in the statue representing her. Untrained and unsupervised, her experimentations have made her more volatile than ever. Maybe she asks the character for help, or maybe she just flips on them, but her illegal experimentations drive a wedge between them.



Development

Positive developments are not impossible. Angelique may finally manage to properly mourn her past love and get past her crushing guilt. She gives up practicing her Oblivion and fully focuses on building up Neo-Montmartre. The area becomes richer and flourishes artistically.

However, the tragic nature of the Kindred makes it more likely that her depredations cause Neo-Montmartre to become even more desperate, creative individuals losing their spark in a cesspool of drugs, death and hopelessness. She may delude herself into thinking she's a positive influence when she's the opposite.

Still, the players' characters can have a strong influence on her. If they help her move on, she may become an ally of sorts, although her unpredictability remains. She may even forsake the Anarchs and join the Camarilla as part of her journey of letting go of the past. She would not be the first Anarch to do so.

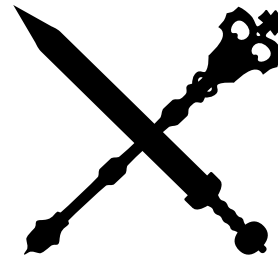
Her Oblivion may start bearing fruit, but in a horrific manner. She manages to summon something she believes is her lover's spirit into the statue, but perhaps it's just a hungry, malevolent ghost. It might even be Marianne, but the ghost doesn't match with Angelique's romanticized memories of her lover.

Tragedy

In the worst possible outcome, guilt, mourning, and pain become overbearing for Angelique who truly embraces the Beast and goes on a rampage for revenge to ease her own pain. She has to be neutralized or might even court final death on her own in a rare moment of lucidity.

Such a development might be presaged with one last date with the players' character closest to her. She does her best to make the character feel loved and appreciated, but there's an element of sadness to everything she does. She refuses to talk about what's ailing her, instead putting all of her focus on the player's character. She wants to create one last impression of herself as she used to be.

Then, the next time she's seen, she's become lost to the Hunger, unmoored from community and love.



Viscount Claude d'Aspremont

“What is happiness, love, pleasure? So many philosophical questions and even after centuries we have yet to come up with a satisfying answer.

We want to believe that love will bring us pleasure, but it is merely a pretext to chase after it.”

“When you reach my age, you just waltz from one stale cold easy arrangement to the other, trying to find happiness in what is barely a shiver of pleasure. I believe my heart to be shriveled and my mind prematurely old. And yet I do hope for renewal, and to plunge again into the charming illusions of youthful fancy...”

Affiliation: Ventrue ancilla, Camarilla

When the endless night offers you everything, where do you find excitement, motivation, and cause to engage in your society of peers? Such are the questions that the Viscount Claude struggles with every other night. The Viscount was Embraced in the middle of the XIXth century, at the height of

the French Second Empire. Although he has learned all the trappings of aristocratic society, he was born to a common soldier who climbed the ranks and was elevated by Emperor Napoleon himself. His connections and capacity to navigate any class and society made him valuable to his sect.

The Viscount spent the next decade securing fortune, connections, and allies, both domestically and internationally. But as he consolidated his status, he began to experience ennui. In recent nights all his energy goes towards chasing excitement through seduction, temptation challenges and the thrill of the chase.

The Viscount is a committed rake and lives for romance, whether for himself or to challenge others. He is indiscriminate in his tastes and pleasures and is mostly drawn by provocation or the unexpected. Despite his blasé attitude, he longs for the night where he will get overwhelmed and feels that he loves again... although he will never admit it openly. Should he believe he is in love, he will shower the object of his affection with praise and riches and just as quickly turn against them for submitting him to the throes of romantic weakness.

General Difficulty: 4/3

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

Secondary Attributes: Health 6, Willpower 6

Exceptional Dice Pools: Persuasion 8, Finance 7, Insight 8

Disciplines: Auspex 1 (Heightened Senses), Celerity 1 (Cat's Grace), Presence 4 (Awe, Lingering Kiss, Entrancement, Irresistible Voice), Dominate 3 (Compel, Mesmerize, The Forgetful Mind)

Appearance

The Viscount is an early to mid-thirties French male with androgynous traits. He has an easy smile that always ends up in an ironic smirk. His demeanor is pleasant but his sense of superiority is evident. He will dress elegantly, with perfectly tailored and fashionable suits, navigating easily between business casual and shinier, more lavish party attires.

Personality

The Viscount has embraced being a Kindred from his first nights as one of the undead. Harping on the philosophy of the Damned is not for him. Action and engagement is. The Viscount revels in his position, power and all the advantages it brings. He knows he has the physique, fortune, and connections to fulfill any and all of his whims. However, his greatest enemy is boredom... and himself. He longs for novelty and will court whatever could bring a breath of fresh air into his unlife.

He is loyal to his peers and has always worked towards advancing the interests of his lineage. As he has grown more comfortable in his position, he sometimes leverages favors towards his own bloodline, but still rewards loyalty from those of other lineages as well.

As a hardened seducer, the Viscount holds a profound streak of cruelty under his charming demeanor. Seducing a fragile mind and breaking them remains a perpetual source of amusement. Taking pleasure in inflicting pain (consensually or not) is just another hobby. Challenging people coming to him for a favor to cruel games of seduction and violence is entertaining. Kindred visiting the Viscount's salon do it at their own risk.

Anyone who would succeed in arousing the Viscount to true passion would have to be truly exceptional indeed...

Haven

The Viscount can be found haunting bustling cities, but his preferred Haven is in a countryside manor estate where he can host celebrations at night and rest in a bunker by day. He often acts as host and master of ceremony for the fabled Court of Love (see p. 125).

His mansion is a contrast between a carefully preserved historical façade and a well-maintained, state-of-the-art contemporary interior. The Viscount has fully evolved with the times and

adopted modern, sleek, quasi-colorless, sober trends in design and architecture. His interiors favor minimalistic furniture and decoration, with mostly black, white, and grey surfaces with red and purple ornamentation and lighting that presents striking contrast at night. Security is of course at the maximum, with public reception spaces clearly separated from the Viscount's private apartment. His safe resting place is even more secluded.

The Viscount's Predator Type is the Siren and he drinks from a small host of people courting him for money or favors, or brief flings he entertains for a while and then discards. He uses the public fronts of producer, club investor, publisher, or lobbyist to evolve in society and justify his fortune and status.

Only a trusted few get to see the Viscount's inner sanctuary. Any lovers he takes there should see it as a huge sign of trust.

Romance

Although he would never admit it, the Viscount longs to feel the passion of actual love again, not just the superficial excitement of a novel relationship. His interest is easily piqued but will fade just as quickly.

The Viscount flirts constantly and likes witty quips and remarks, while clearly showing that he thinks nothing of it. His real interest shows when his light tone turns serious.

The Viscount is easy to date casually since he is always open to try new relationships. However, the biggest obstacle to building a more serious romance with him is his own superficiality. He will however get involved with a fellow Kindred who poses an interesting challenge: Matching wits in a game of intrigue, countering his attempts at charm, forcing him to be sincere or simply by displaying power.

A character engaging in seduction with the Viscount will do it first on his terms, usually because people approach him or enter the so-called Court of Love for information, influence, or power. However, a relationship started under auspices of domination

and manipulation may blossom into something else. The more interest the Viscount has in the relationship, the more intense he will be as a lover.

Scenes

First Challenge: During any first encounter with a fellow Kindred, the Viscount will test them to take their measure, first verbally, then through challenge (the most common one will involve seducing a third party and letting him observe). If the Kindred rises to the challenge in an interesting and unusual way, his interest grows.

Tete a tete: The Viscount having taken special interest in the Kindred will invite them for a special night out that will be tailored to their interest. It may be a night hunting out, a special visit in rare and unusual locations, unlimited access to the Viscount's flock for the night or a special gift. This will escalate the relationship and show there might be something else.

Confession: If the Viscount really develops affection for the Kindred, he will start by denying it, due to wanting romance and treating it as a weakness. If during some conflict or altercation he finally confesses his feelings it will be a frantic, very vulnerable confession.

Relationship Complications

The Rival: The Viscount's current affair partner (or long-lasting Kindred companion) sees his budding romance with the character as a threat to their own position. They start confronting them, try to provoke them into making mistakes that would devalue them to the eyes of the Viscount, and might turn to violence (directly or via henchpersons).

The Cruelty Tests: As the Viscount's interest grows, he submits the character to various tests in exchange for what they might need (for example, information, money or contacts). The trials will be designed to turn off the character, by making them act against their own morals, whether in

acting cruelly, having to endure pain or sacrificing something precious.

The Secret Agenda: The Viscount had a secret motive to being interested in the character in the first place. Maybe he wanted something from them, wanted to use them beyond the seduction game or had a rivalry with their sire. A fellow vampire with bad intentions (see *The Rival*, above) reveals the truth to the character, letting them sort out whether they feel betrayed by this secret or not.

The Reluctant Breakup: After confessing actual feelings, the Viscount will try to break up the relationship for fear of losing control over his feelings. He will confront the characters brutally but his reluctance to break up the relationship will be obvious.

Development

If a relationship with a player's character goes exceptionally well, it's possible that the Viscount finally mellows and rejoices in connecting again with the heart and vibrant passion of youth. His court will be influenced for the better by his newfound love and he will contribute to initiating a new wave of art and creativity.

However, even if this happens, it antagonizes some of his former allies in cruelty, a loss which may resonate with unforeseen complications for years to come. Depending on his new lover's lineage and affiliation, he will be able to influence politics in their favor, if the interests of his own bloodline are maintained. If this benefits the status quo he will be satisfied in consolidating power. If it shakes politics, he will revel in the gains to be made from a new political balance.

If the Viscount manages to catch onto the fragility of youth and perhaps regain some of his lost Humanity, it isolates him from those like him. Enemies consider him weak and allies start to suspect he has lost his touch. Thus, he may end up sacrificing more for love than he ever intended. It's an open question: Can he adapt to a lower status in

Kindred society or will such setbacks drive him back to his old ways?

Tragedy

Perhaps more likely than a happy end, the Viscount fails to accept new love and decides to reject all love as weakness. He breaks up with the character and falls into a pit of self-destruction and brutality. His efforts to distance himself from the player's character results in political turmoil compromising his own standing. He retires from politics, and only holds Court with the most brutal, deviant and unforgiving Kindred.

The tragedy of such a loss may not seem so dramatic at first. The Viscount fades away from the nightly existence of the players' characters, becoming a memory of a whirlwind romance that was doomed to end in disappointment. Then, as time passes, his influence is felt again, prodding at the lives of those once close to him like a questing snake. The idea that someone might have kept hold of the love he renounced is unacceptable to him.

Thus, the Viscount may emerge as a villain in the chronicle long after he has initially left. Only now he has new allies, a new, even crueler approach to unlife and perhaps even a new lover, some naive fool who hasn't yet seen through his facade of wit and fancy. This new lover could even be someone close to the players' characters, chosen on purpose to provoke them. ■



Quick Character Ideas

Here you have some quick ideas for romanceable supporting characters who can also easily be turned into enemies.

THE LONELY RESEARCHER

This Kindred has spent decades in near-isolation focused on studying their chosen field. Perhaps they are an astrophysicist, a historian, or a passionate collector. Either way, their personal library is impressive. They won't necessarily be up to date on current world affairs, but they're sure to have extensive knowledge about some subject that will sooner or later lead the coterie to their door.

The Lonely Researcher may be difficult to get close to initially, but deep down they thirst for someone of their own kind to share their passion with.

THE GOOD DOCTOR

This ER doctor works the night shift at the local hospital and gets to know the player's character as a night nurse, a death vigil volunteer, or some other human mask of kindness and selflessness. They are passionate, have a good heart, and get in the habit of asking a player's character to wind down together at the end of long shifts. Will they turn against the player's character when they find out what they are, or find a way to justify it and help them feed?

THE EAGER FIRST-TIMER

This fledgling is hungry to experience everything their new condition has to offer, and so they are on the market for a guide who can take them by the hand and lead them through it all — from looking at the grass to draining tourists to experiencing sexual pleasure with vampiric senses (some of which may not go quite as they hope).

As the First-Timer realizes that their exciting new condition is also a curse, the player's character can step up to be the support they need to get through it or find themselves at the receiving end of their frustration.

THE VAMPIRE LIFESTYLE COMMUNITY MEMBER

This beautiful black-clad goth spends their weekends drinking blood out of high-stemmed crystal glasses and sports a pair of uniquely well-made fangs as a member of the vampire lifestyle subculture. When they run into the player's character and their friends, they assume they are the same and take great pleasure in being impressed by their finesse — or critiquing all the ways in which they fail to act convincingly as proper vampires.

The human lifestyle vampire is charmed by style, manners, real silk velvet, and specialized knowledge. If you wish, the players' characters may take as long to realize that this supporting character is actually mortal

as it takes the character to understand that the coterie members are not.

THE DIGITAL SHADOW

This talented hacker knows their way around the dark web and spends their time messing with big corporations, breaking into government-owned databases, and copying collectible NFTs to diminish their supposed value. They believe in the individual's right to be anonymous, and, for the low price of friendship, flirtation, or a steady supply of weed, they'll work to help their crush stay hidden by crafting false alibis and covering up any digital footsteps left by accident.

The Digital Shadow can function as a three-dot Contact.

THE CATFISH

It's a sad existence when you think yourself unlovable. The Catfish longs for connection but is afraid to take a chance on it for real, so they hide behind various constructed personas for a taste of play pretend love. Likely, they are a Nosferatu with mental and physical scars, but they could be any Kindred who has been using online chat sites to look for victims and find themselves getting a little too attached.

Once the Catfish and the player's character have found each other, the Catfish will start looking for ways to maximize the apparent emotional intimacy between them without having to meet for real. Perhaps they'll communicate through letters, use a burner phone with a voice filter, or send ghouls to act in their stead. The love the Catfish feels may be as real as it gets for them, but it could also all be a ruse.

THE DETERMINED HUNTER

Ever since they lost someone close to them to creatures of the night, this hunter has been looking for monsters to kill, and they may especially be looking for vampires. Devoted to a task most people would consider plain insanity, the Hunter has gotten used to living on the outskirts of society. However, when another outcast has allied themselves with the Hunter, they'll find them to be passionate and eager to trust for the sake of a chance at being "us against the world."

The Hunter may know that the player's character is a monster, but argue that they are the only good monster, while they try to figure out how to get to the rest of the coterie. Or, they may have very little real experience with the undead, and will not recognize the one in front of them until it is much, much too late.



Chapter Four:

STORIES OF
LOVE AND
ROMANCE

Was my wedding with Tegyrus romantic?

Oh, dear childe. You have to learn to separate politics from love. When you meet your forbidden lover for a secret tryst and taste the blood of their passion, that's love. A Blood Wedding... that's politics.

But I don't want you to become cynical either. Many of our kind become cynical when they age, and it's so unattractive. They think they know everything when they can't feel anything. Who would want to be with someone like that?

No.

If you're blessed with a Blood Wedding, you must find your own romance within it. Underneath all the politics, the jostling for position, the games of greed and power. Somewhere there you can find a precious moment that belongs only to you and someone who loves you.

I appreciate Tegyrus of course. We share a mutual Blood Bond. He has his charms and he's very loyal.

Still, the moments of romance I remember from our wedding were not with him. See, old Tegyrus has one really rather charming quality: He likes to Embrace handsome, brooding lads. They're always so serious!

One of them caught me flirting with one of the Nosferatu guests and scolded me. It was really quite amusing! He said it wasn't becoming for someone getting married to his sire!

I amused myself by seducing the boy and we had a nice romp in a bathtub before the fitting of my wedding dress. Afterwards, he was overcome with guilt. Crying, telling me things he really shouldn't have.

I'll always be grateful for him because he gave my wedding a touch of transgression, even if only in his young eyes.

I leaked the details of his trivial betrayals, of course. He was given a choice: Submit to an execution or kill his closest mortal descendant. He chose to kill, of course. Still, I hope one night he finds out I was responsible and comes to seek revenge. That would be rather thrilling!

— Victoria Ash

— Victoria Ash

Romance often works best as one element in a chronicle where other things happen as well. Even if you mostly care about your character's love story, the rich and varied world around them will provide context that will make it more interesting.

For example, due to the indiscretions of the players' characters, they've been subjected to a Blood Hunt by the Prince. What does that mean for the character who is dating the Prince's child?

This chapter consists of romantic stories you can insert into your own chronicles. You can play them as they are or modify them so they work better for your specific needs. Their purpose is to showcase the many ways stories of romance can be interesting to play in a game of **Vampire**.

The stories included in this chapter are not all complete scenarios that will fill a session of play. Rather, they can also be romantic subplots and side stories that can be run alongside other events in your chronicle. Some take more focus, others less.

Bulletproof

Romantic stories are even more vulnerable to surprising player actions than other types of events because they depend so much on what works for each player. If a player doesn't respond to your carefully crafted romantic bait, the whole story is in danger of evaporating.

This is why it's often good to craft preplanned romantic stories so that it's not necessary for a player's character to fall in love. They can but the story will proceed even if they don't.

For example, if a story involves a confused elder recently risen from torpor, it can go two ways:

A player responds to the elder, finding them romantically interesting. It becomes a love story between them, a modern Kindred and someone out of time.

Alternatively, if a player doesn't feel like their character would find the elder romantically



compelling, you can make the elder cling to the character in an embarrassing way. Then the story becomes about how to say no to a confused but powerful vampire.

If you make space for this kind of backup plan, it becomes easier to respond to the players during the events of a session.

Giving Up

Sometimes when you run a romantic subplot, you realize it's simply not working. That may happen with any of the scenarios here. The players ignore it or seem uncomfortable with it. In a situation like that, it's okay to simply give up and focus on things the players do seem to find interesting.

It's quite possible that just as you realize your plan of involving a character in an affair with the Toreador Primogen, their player spontaneously decides that a Gangrel neonate newly arrived in town is romantically intriguing. When that happens, you may even be able to recycle from the structures of the romantic scenario you were planning to run, just with different specifics.

The Toreador was supposed to have a jealous ex-lover and you smoothly transfer that whole sequence of events to concern the Gangrel instead.

INCAPABLE OF LOVE

Dee: You're drunk. Should be careful which mortals you drink from.

Noel: Fuck you, Dee. I'll drink from whomever I want.

Dee: You defected to the Anarchs and now you're sitting alone wallowing in self-pity. It's not a good look even for a good-looking man like yourself.

Noel: Why does everybody keep using me? Victoria, even Rudi... I thought he liked me but he doesn't give a fuck.

Dee: Rudi? But he's always so proper! Didn't think he had it in him.

Noel: I don't think vampires are capable of love. We're just animals in human form.

Dee: I'm capable of love!

Noel: Yeah?

Dee: Sure. I love blood.





Vermilion Fashion

“It’s so romantic! Just imagine how beautiful it must have been, the Vermilion Wedding. I’m so envious. I wish I could have something like that. I remember when I was a mortal, all those feelings. Love. Affection. Care. I want to have those feelings again!”

The recently celebrated Vermilion Wedding was a union between two of the great Kindred sects, the Camarilla and the Ashirra. It was symbolized by the Blood Wedding of the elders Victoria Ash and Tegyrus. A fundamentally political event, at its core the Vermilion Wedding has nothing to do with romance.

Yet the Kindred are masters of making things seem something other than they really are. There’s a lot of talk about love between the vampires involved even though it seems somewhat unlikely given that Victoria Ash is a consummate socialite always up to date with the latest mortal fashions while Tegyrus is a stolid arbiter rarely given to flights of fancy.

News of the Vermilion Wedding sparks a fashion for romance among the ancillae and the few remaining elders in the domain. Struggling to hold onto their connection to mortal life, culture and emotion, they decide that they need to experience

love! That will keep the Beast at bay and make them feel as if they were newly Embraced neonates again.

It’s thought to be particularly desirable to find a neonate lover because it connects them to all those mortal emotions they feel nostalgia for. Or so they believe.

From the perspective of the characters, what happens can feel like a sudden stroke of luck, completely out of the blue. An older, powerful and attractive vampire falls in love with them. Unfortunately, it becomes apparent that this is a fashion trend, not an organically developing crush. Once the trend passes, so too does the love.

The ancillae and the elders want their love stories. Can the characters oblige? If they do, what happens when the fashion passes? What if a character makes the greatest mistake of all: Genuinely falling for the elder hitting on them?

Running the Story

This story lives and dies on the personality of the older vampires who start romancing the characters. The way they come across guides how the characters react and what kind of scenes follow. If an elder seems like a violent buffoon, the reaction is different than if they're a hot, alluring monster.

You can decide whether one of the older vampires decides to fall for a character, two or three, or if every single character attracts a lover. Perhaps the coterie has caught the attention of a group of ancillae and elders and they decide to make a sport of seducing all of them.

Once you've decided which characters will be approached by an older vampire with amorous intentions, consider what qualities they might be attracted to. This makes it easier to make the love story feel more believable, especially in the beginning. The ancilla and elders want to make it look and feel right, after all.

A Toreador ingenue attracts an older vampire because of their elegance and artistic sensibility. A Nosferatu feels rugged and exciting after all the pretty boys the elder has dated previously. A Brujah who hates the Camarilla is perversely attractive to a Camarilla Ventrue.

It doesn't have to be complicated but it helps to think about it in advance. Part of the fun of playing romance is feeling your character is attractive to someone so it's a good idea to make it feel so that the attraction the elder acts on is real even if the romance is motivated by fashion.

This story also works well as a sideshow to other events occurring in the chronicle.

Supporting Characters

The story requires a set of deeply entitled, conceited ancilla and elders who are good at lying both to themselves and others.

Francesco Baresi

Ventrue ancilla

A wealthy, Italian Ventrue with holdings both in the U.S. and in Europe, Francesco is handsome, suave and caring. He knows that his attention is a gift to anyone he chooses to bestow it upon. He prefers short romances: Sweep someone off their feet, show them the wonders of the night, and end it before reality sets in.

Francesco is attracted to Kindred who seems tough and offensive, although he tries to deny this side of himself. The only way to get through his practiced charm and self-assurance is to refuse the fairytale he tries to build around himself.

Della Carpenter

Toreador ancilla

Originally a servant in a wealthy Chicago household, Embraced as an act of spite in the Kindred politics of that time, Della has become a powerful Kindred socialite by always stressing that she's an outsider. Born to poverty, without much in the way of resources, her performance of opposition has brought her close with the cream of the local Camarilla. She's a safe opponent for the powers that be because she knows the limits of rebellion.

Della wants to be the first when it comes to new Kindred fashions. She's good at falling for a wide range of prospective individuals, as fits the times. Her method is to cultivate an atmosphere of us against the world, rebels together fighting the establishment!

This rebellion never consists of actually dangerous, concrete acts. She favors symbolic gestures visible to her friends at Elysium.

Safiya the Seer

Malkavian elder

An elegantly dressed Black woman seemingly in her thirties, Safiya fits in well in any Camarilla Elysium due to her effortless ability to sneer at the less stylish. She's wealthy and has attendants aplenty but her

origins are somewhat opaque due to her habit of living in the future through making predictions that she then immediately seeks to make true. If she predicts the fall of a Prince, she'll do her very best to ensure the Prince will fall.

More relevant for this story, she has a habit of using her oracular rhetoric when seducing a lover. A line such as: "We are destined to be lovers" is a fact in her mind and if some poor neonate tries to resist, she only becomes more determined to woo them.

Conveniently for Safiya, her prophecies tend to follow her desires. Whatever she wants, she foresees herself getting.

Sparrow

Brujah ancilla

It's hard to believe Sparrow is over a century old. They look youthful, somehow delinquent despite any and all efforts to clean up. They see themselves a traditional Brujah revolutionary in the classic mold, the archetype others copy. Yet the reality is that they mostly associate with Princes and primogen, part of the establishment even if they persistently deny it.

Still, the criticism stings. Who are all these young Anarchs to say they're not a real rabble rouser? Sparrow feels they must prove themselves by engaging in a radical act of revolutionary love! What's better than starting a relationship of equals with some miserable downtrodden loser of a vampire?

Ju-won Mae

Nosferatu ancilla

In life, a politician and a diplomat used to traveling across the international arena, Ju-won has been frustrated with his unlife. For decades he used to dabble in mortal politics, leveraging the expertise and connections he had left over from his mortal days, but now those have all expired. The scope of his existence has shrunk into this city, the Kindred within.

He tries to cope by engaging in all Camarilla social games with intense dedication. Perhaps they will grant a modicum of satisfaction and a sense of

meaning? For someone being romanced by him, this intensity can easily feel like love.

Flow of Events

The flow of events in this story depends on the actions of the characters. If they spurn the would-be lover, nothing much will happen. Still, here's an example of how it can go:

Seduction: The older vampire does their best to maneuver a character into emotionally compelling situations.

Love Story: The character and the older vampire believe they are in love. Perhaps they even are! They go on dates, hunt together, and meet each others' friends.

Problems Arise: The insincerity of the older vampire becomes increasingly apparent in their actions, the way they talk with their peers and perhaps even at intimate moments.

Opportunities and Information. The character gets other perspectives on their situation, discovers blackmail material, meets with the exes of the older vampire, or otherwise gets a better grasp of what's happening and what they can do.

The End: Either because a character proactively makes a play or because the older vampire pulls out, the relationship ends.

Scenes

Different versions of these scenes can be used with different supporting characters. For a maximalist version, every player's character gets subjected to romantic overkill.

Romantic Overkill: Once an older vampire has settled on a target for their affection, they go for absolute overkill. An ocean of roses, gifts, intense attention. It depends on the character how they want to deal with this. For some, the explosion of attention is welcome. For others it might be stifling, or even appear as an insult.

Topping From the Bottom: An older vampire doesn't want to seduce one of the characters. They

want to be seduced. To make this happen, they engineer various “coincidences” where the character has an opportunity to go for it. If the character doesn’t take the bait, a ghoul or confidante of the ancilla will discreetly tip them off about what’s happening.

Showing Off: The older Kindred want to parade their conquests at Elysium. The characters get to meet Primogen and Prince, ancilla and elders seemingly on an equal basis, chatting casually about their various concerns. Perhaps one of them makes a play for a character’s affections, just to spite their rivals or to relieve their boredom. Once the romance is over, the illusory status enjoyed by the character evaporates.

The City Is Our Playground: The older vampire flexes their influence and takes the character on increasingly outlandish dates in places where it would normally be impossible to go. Contacts in politics, the police force, and business make rooftops, the offices of political representatives and holding cells available.

Actions

What kind of things the players’ characters might take to get ahead in this story? The players can come up with these or other ideas themselves, or they can be suggested by their friends, ghouls or other acquaintances.

Play the Player: Many older Kindred see themselves as veterans of emotional manipulation, immune to the lesser efforts perpetrated by the young. This is not always true. A character can try to manipulate the manipulator, seduce the seducer and see where that leads.

Bragging Rights: A character can leverage the situation for increased status in their own community. An Anarch shows off their new Ventrue boyfriend to demonstrate their ability to move in Camarilla circles. This can get dangerous depending on how their friends see the romance.

Maximum Drama: Even if a player realizes the older vampires are not very sincere in their romantic

efforts, a player can choose to go for maximum drama by having their character take everything at face value. That way, when the truth is revealed, the resulting scenes are as fraught as possible.

Developments

Once the romance is in full swing, it’s time to introduce complications.

Dueling Suitors: Two of the older vampires start fighting over the affections of a single character. Both are motivated mostly by a desire to deny the other something they both want. If that requires faking deep, sincere love, then so be it.

Making an Impression: The older vampire wants to look good in the eyes of the person they’re dating so they orchestrate a complicated scheme to spread malicious rumors about them, which they can then heroically and publicly counteract at Elysium. Trouble comes when the character finds an opportunity to figure out what’s really going on.

An Ex Appears: An ex lover of the older vampire makes an appearance, complicating the situation. There are many ways this can play out. The ex can be a pitiable wreck, an example of where loving an unloving monster leads you. Or they can be another ancilla, a vengeful and jealous creature who detests the idea that their lover has found someone new. They can even be perfectly charming and make a play for the character themselves.

A Switch: **The older vampire decides to switch** over to a friend of the character, preferably played by another player. This move is so callous, it works best if the players have some emotional distance to the situation their character is in.

The End

Ending the story requires a deft touch from the Storyteller. You have to watch your players and see how they interact with the events. Here are a couple of possibilities:

Tragedy: The players involved are emotionally invested in their love stories. This means that you



can't cut them off casually. Even if the fickle nature of the elders and the ancillae means the love story is doomed to end in heartbreak, you have to play it out properly so the players will feel their emotional journey is respected. The lessons of this ending are that older vampires are inhuman and loveless, prompting the question whether the characters will become that as well when they get older.

Real Romance: A happy end is not in the nature of this story. Yet sometimes an in-game love story sparks with such chemistry at the gaming table that you have to reassess. In this story, an older vampire who originally started to romance a character due to suspect motivations finds themselves falling in something like love. What began as a cynical ploy becomes a real romance.

Comedy: If the players suss out the suspect motivations animating the older Kindred, it's possible they don't become particularly invested in their characters' emotional circumstances. This can lead to a more detached playstyle, lending itself to more comedic situations. This can characterize the ending as well, with the inhuman cluelessness of the older vampires underlined as they parade around Elysium, moving onto the next fashion. Mortal lovers, perhaps?

Political Maneuvering: What if the characters try to exploit the situation to make a political play? They've met many of the important movers and shakers of the city during their time as paramours to the aged and the ancient. This ending depends on what the characters are trying to accomplish but the key question is whether their status survives the end of the relationships with the older vampires. If they look like clueless chumps, it won't. If they deal with it with irony and grace, they'll come off okay.

Under the Radar: The games Kindred play are dangerous. Dating older vampires has given the characters a glimpse into how they manage their affairs and it's not a pretty picture. The characters want out. When the romance ends, it comes as a relief. No longer do they have to be pawns in games played at a much higher level than they are able to perceive. If the goal is to go back to safe anonymity, a bit of embarrassment is fine. It only shows that the characters are no threat to older Kindred.



The Comeuppance Club and Agency

“I always found it peculiar that we use the expression ‘to fall in’ love. So many tragedies are associated with the idea of the Fall. Such biblical symbolism. And as the saying goes, it is not the fall, but how hard the landing... And this is where we come in. We exist because however fine your romance is, the question is, will it end well? And if it does not, how do you get payback?”

—SHAYNA ANTALYA, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

The end of a romance can take many forms. It may be friendly, where each partner leaves grateful for their memories and personal growth, remaining friendly after a period of mourning. But among the Kindred, such cases are rare. It’s much more common for it to turn bitter, lovers becoming hostile and having to avoid each other completely. A partner feels wronged. Cheating in an exclusive relationship, walking away from unrequited affections, financial abuse and betrayal: When the time comes to do a post-mortem on the relationship, the faults you can find are many.

The Comeuppance Club and Agency (often called just the CCA) was built on the ashes of a bitter relationship. Born as a salon for those burned by failed Blood Weddings and other Kindred relationships, it acquired a mortal front as a private detective agency specializing in extra-marital affairs. Although the mortal side of the operation brings

in funds and makes nightly operations possible, the CCA also hosts a clandestine Kindred service for romantically thwarted vampires in search of retribution.

The CCA’s operation is volatile by nature as retribution sometimes invites a response in turn, easily creating a spiral of vengeance.

On the surface, little differentiates the CCA from a regular, run of the mill detective and bodyguard agency. However, they do run more illegal activities targeted at former lovers even for mortal clients. Such services include sabotage, electronic spying and even break-ins and physical intimidation. The CCA’s foundational mentality fosters revenge and seething rancor rather than growth and healing, creating a flammable work environment. Potential employees and ghouls are recruited from among former clients, creating a cult-like mentality of misanthropic cruelty.

Whether the CCA is able to transcend its origins and become a faction among factions in the local Kindred domain or if it burns to the ground in a conflagration of resentment and revenge remains to be seen.

Running the Story

The players' characters can become involved in this story from a number of different entry points. They can be prospective clients, introduced to the CCA in the wake of a failed relationship. Their exes can employ the CCA to get revenge on their behalf. The CCA can even be their employers, sheltering them from the vagaries of the night and sending them on errands of retribution in return.

The easiest way to use the CCA is to start the character as part of the operation. If the players' characters regularly accept odd jobs to get by, especially at the margins of legality, they can be contracted by director Shayna Antalya to fulfill a task set by a client. The compensation will always be worthwhile, and personal favors may be on the table for the most prestigious clients or dangerous operations.

As prospective clients, players' characters who went through a tragic romance or betrayal of a loved one can be approached by one of the client recruiters such as Romana or Rina. If the characters resist the idea of pursuing vengeance, but have been seriously hurt in their past relationship, a Composure + Resolve test might even be necessary to reject the offer. Alternatively, they might be threatened by their former lover and look to the Agency for a means to protect themselves.

As targets, interactions with the Agency build directly towards a confrontation. When the players' characters start experiencing setbacks, sabotage or even physical aggression, and start to investigate where it's all are coming from, they learn about the CCA. The question is, what to do about it?

The following story ideas should be adapted and developed depending on which angle the characters are approaching the CCA from.

Supporting Characters

The main supporting characters are the active stakeholders of the CCA.

Shayna Antalya

Brujah ancilla

A retired athlete and successful coach, Shayna turned to criminal activities after a messy divorce and being dumped for a younger model left her almost penniless. Embraced by a fellow criminal, she has distanced herself from her sire due to his domineering tendencies, too reminiscent of her former marriage.

She started the Comeuppance Club helping her associate Rina through one of her messy relationships and quickly found there was a market for unhappy people in love, Kindred and mortals alike. The Agency quickly grew and has become a dysfunctional found family, but Shayna, in spite of escaping several toxic relationships, is oblivious about how toxic she herself might have become.

Rina Gauri

Toreador ancilla

A woman in her early thirties with olive skin and clear eyes, Rina was Embraced for her beauty into a celebrated and influential Toreador dynasty. From her position of privilege and self-centered education, she has inherited a very entitled mindset that she hides under a pleasant smile. She will be the best of friends at first but then turns into a terrible enemy when she gets tired of you. Shayna is the only long-lasting acquaintance she has not disowned due to imaginary grievances.

Rina does not officially work for the CCA but is always around and has a wide enough circle of contacts to regularly bring in new customers. Furthermore, with her pattern of passion and dissatisfaction, she is also the Agency's most regular and faithful client.

Orestes Anastasios

Tremere ancilla

A Greek immigrant by origin, Orestes worked as a police officer and then a private investigator before being Embraced by a rogue Tremere that left him to fend for himself. Orestes was already living mostly as a loner and adapted to his new situation, continuing his work as an investigator with the added Blood Sorcery tracking skills. He is now the main investigator for the CCA.

He started working for Shayna and they started an unlikely partnership. Orestes is not known to indulge in romantic relationships, which is usually explained by the fact that his formative years happened when his own romantic preferences were outlawed by society.

Allyn Amable

Brujah ghoul

Allyn was recently made into a ghoul by Shayna Antalya, with the goal of an Embrace once the local Prince finally grants permission. Antalya is planning to create a childe who'll be her personal accountant and keeper of secrets and so far the young ghoul has performed admirably, perhaps motivated by the promise of immortality.

Allyn grew up lonely in a home that cared little for them, with few friends around. They do not hide having little interest in romance and sex, which Shayna liked, putting her childe above the fray of tumultuous passions. However, Allyn has plenty of passion for other kinds of relationships, and eager to experience the meaningful connections they've lacked in life so far.

Romana Chandra

Toreador neonate

Romana is Rina's childe and a recent recruit, working as a junior investigator and executor. A prepossessing woman in her early thirties, she was the mistress of a married man and almost driven mad after being cast out in favor of the legitimate

wife. Rina discovered her as she was stalking her former lover with an eye to committing arson on his home. Rina followed with interest as Romana barred the doors from the outside, the conflagration resulting in severe, permanent burns to the married couple, leaving one dead and the other to mourn with scars that would never heal properly. Rina Embraced Romana in a fit of imagined kinship, and Romana in turn embraced her sire's mission of avenging thwarted lovers.

Flow of Events

The following events may be distributed among a group of characters or intertwined with other story scenes as side experiences.

Entering the Club: The characters discover the CCA's existence and purpose. They are invited to join their activities or, if they were targeted by the club, need to negotiate with their former lover to end the threat.

Agent Provocateur: A character gets involved in a seduction and stakeout mission to root out an unfaithful spouse. They might be directly involved as a seducer, through their personal acquaintance of the target, or take care of pictures.

Love in a Hopeless Place: A character strikes a romance with one of the Agency's regulars. All of them are, in various degrees, jaded by betrayal and do not believe in sincere affection anymore. Can a romance truly blossom with people as cynical as these?

Cooked Intelligence: A character tries to get information on the CCA but gets noticed by first investigator Orestes. Orestes feeds them a mix of real and fabricated information to entrap them. The character gets in trouble trying to use said information.

Pain or Gain: A rival faction decides to take down the Agency. The characters can decide to assist in taking them down for their various acts of aggression against local Kindred, or defend their right to exist, albeit for questionable reasons.

Scenes

For this story, good themes for scenes are love, how real it is, disappointment, forgiveness, redemption, and what it means to move on after a breakup.

Stakeout: The character is invited in a stakeout to prove adultery. They can strike a candid discussion with their co-tail. The stakeout can work as intended, or happen upon an unexpected complication (for example, the target gets assaulted or tries to evade the tail which puts the surveilling characters in danger.)

Honey Trap: The character is hired to seduce a suspected adulterer, or to create compromising blackmail material. Characters may succeed just using their social skills if the target is indeed a libertine but can be pushed to use Disciplines in an entrapment scenario.

Unlawful: The character is hired for one of the most violent operations of the CCA (probably conducted by Romana, as the most violent of the bunch). Such operations can, but are not limited to, kidnapping, sabotage, assault and murder.

Informal Date: A character is invited to the informal Club gathering that takes place every first Friday of the month by one of the CCA's patrons. Unbeknownst to them, they have triggered romantic interest and may discover that the friendly gathering is actually a date in disguise.

Actions

The progress of the story is very much contingent on where the characters decide to position themselves in regards to the Club and Agency's twisted ideology. Will they go along with the Club's purpose, play along to protect the victims, or start an open conflict?

Marvelous Minion: Whether because of conviction or for personal gain, the character fully supports the Agency and its mission. They undertake specific missions under supervision by Orestes or Romana. If opposition to the CCA arises they might be caught in the crossfire. Being a faithful



soldier carries the advantage that the character can use the Agency's resources in their own romantic endeavors, although this probably carries a cost measured in Stains.

Double Agent: The character tries to shake things from the inside. They might try to steal information from the CCA or warn prospective victims. Characters with diplomatic and social skills might try to shake the Club's foundation by sowing doubt within.

Evident Enemy: The character gets involved with the open opposition to the CCA's activities. This can come from many directions. The local Anarchs may decry the CCA as another facet of Camarilla perfidy, or the local Camarilla Prince may find that it destabilizes the domain. Or perhaps the CCA has dirt on the Prince and they want the Agency gone to avoid being blackmailed.

Developments

Developments and complications will be contingent on the characters' choices and positioning with the CCA's operations.

Sweet Revenge: The character gets the CCA to help them exact their revenge, whether on a former lover or someone they presented as such. This retribution brings the character a fleeting sense of satisfaction but compromises their Humanity.

Unrequited Love: A character becomes the target of one of the CCA's residents' romantic interest, and the feeling is unrequited or the romance turns sour. The character knows that it is only a matter of time before they are targeted.

Payback: A former victim of the CCA (it can be a player's character if they enter the scenario as a target) decides to enact retribution in return. Opposition starts covertly, trying to chip at the mortal servants and financial assets of the Agency. The characters might even be enjoined to infiltrate the Agency, pretending to be clients or prospective employees

Assault on the Agency: After weakening the Agency's assets, the opposition brings Kindred

sectarian wars to the CCA. They foster a full assault and takeover of the CCA's assets and domain. The characters may take a side or try to benefit from the fray, acting while everybody else is occupied.

The End

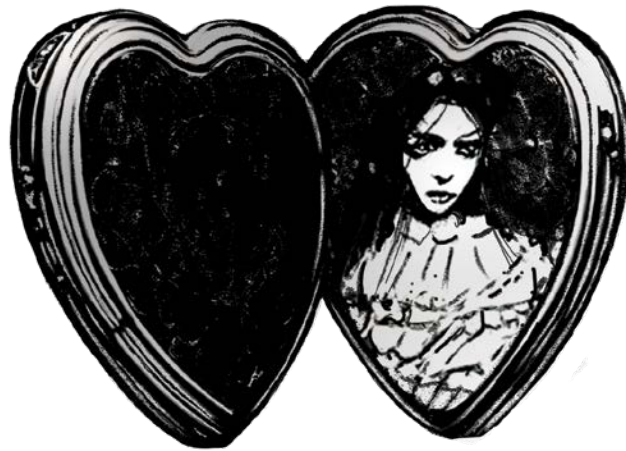
The Agency's status quo is unsustainable. They have made too many enemies over the years, and they need to evolve or disappear. The endings depend greatly on what kind of a relationship the characters have with the CCA.

Contract Completed: The interactions between the players' characters and the CCA remain minimal, as they complete a couple of missions and then go their way. They may hear of the CCA's downfall later down the road.

A Radicalized Club: In an unlikely turn of events, the CCA becomes so radicalized in their hatred of the Camarilla and the Anarchs that they join the Sabbat. They fully embrace the inhumanity and cultlike mentality of the sect, forsaking their Humanity for good. They may still maintain their former facade, but now it's just for the purpose of fomenting discord and death.

A Club in Ashes: The CCA's many enemies unleash a full-fledged war against them. Any sect or faction can be involved in this scheme. The takeover ends in a frontal assault on the Agency's main base of operations. The CCA's patrons lose everything and probably get destroyed.

The New Redemption Club: If the players' characters manage to push a diplomatic solution or gain enough influence with the patrons, they may convince them of the futility and danger of continuously pursuing revenge. They can use their personal connections or powers of persuasion to do so. If so, the Club might evolve into something more constructive. However, even if this happens, the chances of a happy end are low. Kindred sometimes take personal growth for weakness and a more reasonable Club may attract even more hostility from people and factions they've slighted in the past.



Chosen for the Bond

“There’s nothing you can do, young ones. You’re in my domain now, and you’ll follow my rules.”

No two domains are ruled in exactly the same way, and whenever a coterie enters a new territory, they may find a new set of norms and expectations waiting for them. Following many years of the Beckoning, many domains have gotten new lords — some more modern-minded than their elder predecessors, others with ideas quite archaic.

In this story the coterie arrives in a city where the Prince controls the Kindred population through a network of Blood Bonds, and where tradition demands that all who hope to stay for more than a few nights must enter into Blood Marriages with members of the court.

The story is written as a trap which is sprung with the coterie’s arrival. They do not know about

the rules initially, but hear tempting and wonderful things about the well-connected Ventrue Prince and her court of marvels. Visiting her in person, they find themselves surrounded by lusciousness, delights, refinement, and beauty. And when they finally understand that the Prince has made them prisoners and means to force them into Blood Marriages to her loyal courtiers, it’s already much too late to make an easy escape.

Will some of the characters give in or will they resist the call of desire and influence?

Running the Story

This story is about power and seduction. It can be put into motion when your troupe's coterie enters a new city, either for their own reasons or because they've been lured there by rumors engineered to tempt them. If they're headed to a bigger city that already has a Prince in your chronicle, perhaps this domain is a stop on the way.

The story provides the setting and characters for an enemies-to-lovers romance as well as the reverse, and the supporting characters have all been drafted to be impressive antagonists who can easily double as would-be-valentines. More can easily be added.

Each of the players' characters will get a chance to become part of a romance. If there are obvious reasons they can't enter into a Blood Marriage, maybe they won't be directly involved with the Prince's match-making machinations but they can still connect romantically with one or several of the supporting characters, perhaps even causing interesting havoc by splitting up matches the Prince would rather see happen.

If some of your players want to opt out of the romance play, the story can easily progress with only some of the characters accepting the Prince's demand. As the story develops, there will be several chances to enter or end romantic play.

The story works well as the temporary focus of a continued chronicle.

Supporting Characters

The story is driven by two manipulative ancillae leading a court of potential enemies and lovers. Each of the characters can be either, depending on what best suits your story.

Prince Alexandrine

Ventrué ancilla

Supported by her loyal followers, Alexandrine was quick to grasp the seat of power for herself when her sire left for the Beckoning. Since then, the domain

has been totally transformed. Alexandrine has set up an elegant court characterized by artful pursuits and well-rehearsed manners — all of which rests on a network of unbreakable Blood Bonds leading back to Alexandrine herself and her shadow partner, Emeric.

The tall Ventrué Prince makes a striking figure. Self-assured and stunningly beautiful, she commands the attention of all whenever she steps into a room. Although all Kindred have the capacity for needless cruelty, she's good at hiding her mean streak until the time comes to deploy it. At such times, an element of threat and danger creeps into her words. She demands obedience in all things, yet offers a subtle tempting reward with her knowing smile.

"I won't let you get hurt here ... unless you disobey me."

The court is housed in one of Alexandrine's havens — a great 19th century mansion built on top of a cavernous basement.

Emeric, "the Shade"

Tzimisce ancilla

Emeric's exact function at court is hard to guess. Is he Alexandrine's advisor, her lover, or somehow the power behind the throne? Mostly keeping to his own, the enigmatic Tzimisce is seen only when the occasion — or the person — is exceptional enough to tempt him.

Emeric is sharply intelligent with a sly charm that just as easily turns to ichor against those he chooses to despise. Both when dancing and dueling, he expertly takes the lead, barely letting his partner notice what's happening until they feel themselves moved by his will.

Jemar "the Dog"

Gangrel neonate

This pale-skinned giant of a man serves as the court's personal guard and enforcer. Already towering over most others, Jemar is built strong and hard like a

woodsman. His scarred face and rough, somewhat animalistic, features make his presence undeniably intimidating.

Jemar rarely speaks except for brusque commands, but those who take the time to look may learn that his pained and angry eyes soften when he looks at someone he cares for and that his voice can be warm and quiet when he feels like he can be himself.

The court tends to treat Jemar as a broken beast, an outcast who is only as good as he's useful. But below the surface, there's more to be found.

Vincenzo Gallo

Toreador neonate

The Prince's favorite courtier is as smooth-tongued as he is talented. The boastful Toreador spends his days entertaining the court and gathering inspiration for his next masterpiece. Vincenzo has long since given up on the classic artistic pursuits which first got him Embraced, instead dedicating his existence entirely to orchestrating uniquely aesthetic and sensual social occasions, making invitations to the court's Elysia much sought after.

Vincenzo is desired by many, not just for his good looks and ever-flirtatious manner, but because he takes genuine pleasure in figuring out how best to satisfy and because he is the kind of person to whom it seems the whole world disappears when he looks into your eyes.

Blanche Gagnon

Nosferatu neonate

Despite being a Nosferatu, Blanche is strangely known as a beauty. When you see her, you understand why, as her smooth movements make her appear almost ethereal, and the many layers of thin muslins she draped herself in clings tightly to her body, revealing a figure that is almost perfect in its proportions. Blanche is never seen without her veil and mask, for below she is covered in ill-smelling sores that never seem to heal.

Blanche serves as the court's information keeper.

She is friendly and helpful when approached, but is always making mental notes for later use, and no matter how trustworthy she seems, no secrets are truly safe with her.

Blanche may use birds and other small animals to keep an eye on the coterie. If they are kind to her spies, she's likely to take a liking to them.

Rowan Byrne

Ventruue neonate

The court scourge has a strict and serious demeanor, serving as an uncompromising judge and executioner against any who dare break Alexandrine's rules. But what no one sees is that Rowan fights an inner battle — weighing their loyalty and bond to the current Prince against the Camarilla codex revered by the previous ruler. Rowan is not convinced the Blood Weddings are either good or necessary.

In life Rowan was a member of the clergy, faithful to the laws of their religion and filled with the light of their god. After the Embrace, ashamed and afraid, they stopped praying and looked elsewhere for guiding principles to follow.

Gail

Banu Haqim neonate

Alexandrine's "little witch" has a will of their own, which would get them into trouble much more often than it does, were it not for the rest of the court keeping an ever-watchful eye on them. The playful young vampire seems harmless at first, but their quick reactions and artful tricks makes them a real challenge as an enemy.

"Sure, we can spend some time together to please the Prince. But rest assured, you wouldn't be able to handle me if this was for real. I bite."

On the surface Gail seems to take few things seriously, always acting the part of a trickster, but underneath it all, an unusually humane heart remembers how it used to beat, and Gail has real things they believe in.



Tip: You can change the gender of any of these characters to better suit your chronicle and the preferences of the players' characters they're trying to romance.

Flow of Events

Here's an example of how the story may progress:

An Invitation: The coterie is made aware of the existence of Alexandrine's court and the prospect of getting closer to it is made irresistible.

A Temptation: The coterie becomes Alexandrine's special guests and are taken care of in every way.

A Demand: Alexandrine's demand that vampires in her domain be bound to her loyal court is put forth and the coterie realizes they've been imprisoned.

Pairing Up: The coterie gets a chance to get to know the courtiers better and matches are suggested.

Considering Your Options: The downsides of eternal blood bonds are made obvious and the dangers surrounding the coterie grow.

Till Final Death Do Us Part: One or several of the members of the coterie enter into Blood Marriages, Alexandrine is removed from power, or the coterie all leave the domain.

Scenes

These are some of the scenes the coterie might experience.

The Most Beautiful Evening: The coterie attend an event at Prince Alexandrine's haven. It's been designed to impress, and their every need seems to have been anticipated. The courtiers pay

rich attention to the coterie members, some flirting openly and others trying to warn them to be on their guard.

You've never seen a banquet quite like this; the overflowing abundance of beautiful dishes almost makes your mouths water bloodily despite the animosity of the ingredients. You understand why when you notice the servants lining the walls, carrying platters of draped grapes and thinly sliced meats. They've been anointed with sweet-smelling herbs and their lithe limbs are naked and ripe for the tasting.

At the end of the night, when the coterie are drunk on blood and pleasurable impressions, Alexandrine lets them all know that vampires in her domain are expected to enter Blood Marriages with members of her court to prove their loyalty to her.

The Exits Disappear: The coterie is made to realize that they've been trapped within Alexandrine's court — kept there by supernatural means, a hyper-complicated surveillance and alarm system, or simple blackmail. They're still treated well but everything starts to be tinged with danger, and the coterie start to find signs of other visitors who did not comply and were punished for it.

The Love-Matching Games: The Prince arranges for several date-like meetings between the coterie members and her courtiers. A player's character walks into a room while searching for an escape and finds it filled with roses, a courtier lying in a pile of silk, their wrists and neck bared. Another is offered a tour around the grounds and finds themselves sharing a meal with their guide.

Intimate Moments: A player's character gets to know one of Alexandrine's courtiers a lot better when they help them out of a dangerous situation. The courtier lets the player's character see a side of them no one else knows.

Tearful Goodbyes: If the coterie decides to leave before you want them to, overcoming all the traps and temptations laid out for them, members

of the court will try to get them to stay until the very end. They may appeal to the coterie's humanity, swearing they themselves are trapped and need their help, or perhaps they declare their genuine love, insisting that they cannot go on if not for a few more moments shared. Whether the courtiers are genuine or not is up to you.

Actions

These are some actions the players' characters can take in response to the story. They may think of them themselves, or they can be suggested by characters around them.

Receive and Enjoy: Despite the burgeoning danger, the characters may just want to take some time to let the courtiers show them all the ways they would benefit from staying with the court — and how special they could be to them.

Talk Some Sense Into the Others: While some of the characters may fall head over heels in fascination with their new suitors, others may see the obvious dangers in falling into Alexandrine's trap and do everything they can to try to shake some sense into their smitten coterie mates.

Run Away Together: Perhaps a player's character likes one of the courtiers well enough to want to be with them but not enough to enter a Blood Wedding and enslave themselves to a Ventrue Prince for the rest of eternity. Perhaps they can convince the courtier to try to escape with the coterie.

Attempt to Overthrow Alexandrine: If the coterie doesn't like the way the Prince does things, they can always try to overthrow her. Alexandrine has not been the ruler for long, and it might not be impossible to convince one or several of her subjects to turn against her.

Developments

Complications you can introduce after the characters have become familiar with the domain.

Changing Targets: One of the vampires decides

that they're much more interested in someone other than who Alexandrine thinks they should be with. The Prince is trying to use romance, the Blood and the ceremony of the Blood Wedding to dictate the emotions of her subjects. It may turn out that one of her seemingly loyal retainers has something surprising on their heart.

Threats From Within: Parts of the court want the coterie gone and are coming after them from the shadows, making their every move fraught with danger. It turns out that jealousy is one of the emotions engendered by the enforced affections caused by the Blood Bond. Although the Prince promises that all who join in her system of loyalty and Blood are welcome, in practice those closest to her are jealous of their positions in court.

Threats From Without: This is just one domain among many. Perhaps the childe of an important elder in a nearby, much larger domain comes to the court and promptly gets wedded by Alexandrine. Now their sire comes looking for them, and a vampire with the experience of the centuries behind them is much less likely to accept this new regime. Or in a surprise twist, perhaps they go along with it just because it feels so novel.

Upping the Ante: The Prince grows impatient and finds some new incentives to push the coterie to agree with her demands. Perhaps she isolates them from one another, tries to trick them to drink the blood she intends for them, or attempts to blackmail them. She may get too clever for her own good, alienating even those who initially went along with her plans because of her high-handed approach.

An Unexpected Friend: One of the courtiers genuinely wants out of their luxurious entrapment and tries to help the coterie. This can be anyone, even the Prince herself. She may have realized she created a monster by enforcing all these Blood Bonds. Who can deal with the emotions of so many Kindred all forcibly Bound? The Bond doesn't make one passive and the artificial emotion it enforces can lead to dramatic, even violent outbursts.

The End

A few possibilities for how to end the story.

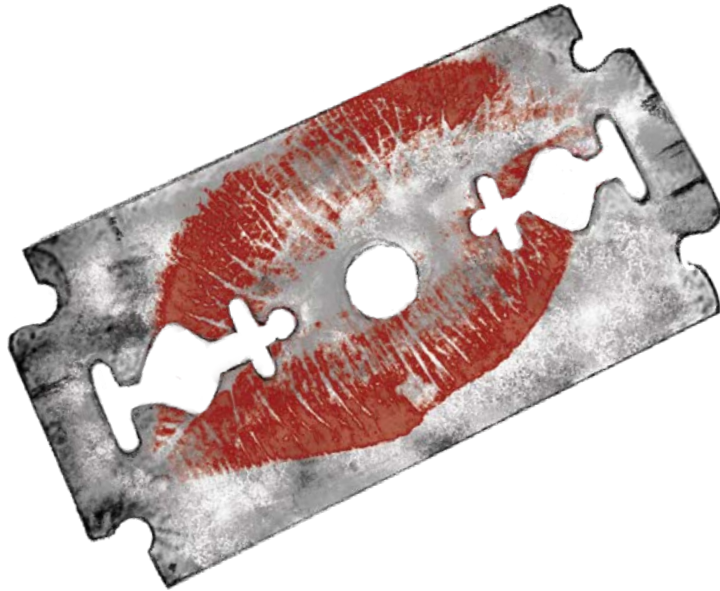
Tragedy: If your players have a taste for tragedy and their characters have entered into relationships with the supporting characters, you may twist romances by mixing love with betrayal. A lover who has helped the coterie throughout the story betrays them in the end—or the only way they can escape is by sacrificing them. You can also let the coterie misunderstand the actions of someone they care for, thereby turning against them, only to find out in the end, that their lover never betrayed them to begin with.

New Beginnings: You can allow the coterie to escape with one or more courtiers, continuing the relationship after the story has ended.

Blissful Compliance: If the coterie decides to comply with Alexandrine's demand and one or several of the members enter a Blood Marriage with members of her court, they can stay in her territory for as long as they like. You can let Alexandrine be content at this point or let her grow more demanding as part of future stories you run in your chronicle.

All Cords Cut: If the coterie chooses violence and overthrows Alexandrine, the story ends with one of the courtiers taking her seat. Members of the court who remain loyal to her past banishment or final death may try to come after the coterie.

Lords of Love: Alexandrine is not impossible to overthrow. A determined coterie playing her retinue against her could depose her and take over the domain. At first, they might think that it would be best to abolish the custom of mandatory Blood Weddings. However, after a while they may discover that they've become part of the domain's culture, an expected tradition and a symbol of the power of the Prince. A leader who doesn't like them may appear weak.



Lingering Kisses

"It's flattering and convenient when a mortal gets addicted to the Kiss. You don't need to hunt them when they offer themselves freely! But there are dangers involved..."

Among the wise, it's thought best not to drink twice from the same victim. Yet, whether from specific tastes or the temptation of convenience, it's not uncommon to return to a blood source one has tasted before. A few even dare to make regulars of their donors.

But what happens when you keep visiting the same fount? Certain Kindred may use their powers to hide their presence and suck what they need fully unnoticed. Others will spend time with the mortal, allowing them to remember most of the encounter except for the feeding. The vampire may think this makes them safe. But no feeding is

ever risk free. And while there are some obvious potential consequences — such as getting in trouble with other Kindred for being too careless with the Masquerade or attracting the attention of local hunter teams on the lookout for suspicious activity — there are also other risks involved.

Being fed on is, in most cases, pleasurable. Unless the vampire in question is one of the Hecata, it remains an experience which few mortal activities can compete with. For the sake of the rush of getting high, people lose their fortunes and their futures. No wonder then that the once-bitten may become dependent on being bitten again, regardless of their understanding of what exactly it is they crave.



In this story, one or several of the Kindred characters have made the mistake of getting too close to one of their victims and have, as a result, awakened an obsessive desire in them.

The affected mortal may not know that the vampire has been feeding on them, but what they do know is that they are starved for their touch — and, unable to explain it in any other way, they understand it to be love. They now spend their every waking moment longing to be closer to the character; and every night they toss and turn, feeding into fever dreams of orgiastic reunion.

Running the Story

There are several ways you can introduce this story to your chronicle. The most obvious is when one of the players' characters has fed several times on the same victim, but the repeated feeding is not a requirement for the story to begin. Dependence may strike after even one feeding, although the risk is theoretically heightened each time the character and their victim share any kind of intimate moment — examples include eye contact, brushing up against one another in the stairwell late at night, discovering a shared interest, helping or receiving help from the other. What is important is that the mortal Storyteller character has felt the Kiss and it has started something in them.

If the supporting character has met the player's character (and been allowed to remember it), they will feel a direct attraction to that vampire. The story will therefore work the best with Predator Types who make a habit of engaging directly with their victims.

The Cleaver and the Siren may find themselves halfway into a relationship that's suddenly getting much more intense than they planned for.

The Osiris and the Scene Queen easily attract romantic attention, and it could be a mystery to them which of their fans is behind the strange gifts they begin to receive.

The Alleycat may be relying on violence to get what they want and has not foreseen that one of the

victims they carelessly took would themselves turn stalker — and the victim may be driven as much by a desire for revenge as desire for their attacker’s touch.

Finally, the Consensualist might gain a stalker who knows exactly what they are, and who is therefore so much more dangerous to deal with.

If the supporting character does not remember the vampire or has not seen their face, the obsession can still take root, starting out as a hazy desire for something they can’t quite put their finger on but which they’ll recognize on some instinctual level, when they find it. The Sandman, for instance, may have left an unconscious impression on their victim who gets attached to the character “appearing to them in dreams” and starts looking for them.

The story will not work with the Bagger Predator type or the Farmer, unless they break their own rules and feed on a living human.

You may modify the story to work for a Blood Leech, allowing their stalker to be vampiric. This will heighten the stakes of the story much sooner than otherwise.

The story, as written here, is focused on a single vampire as the object of a mortal’s obsessions, but you may modify it to fit your chronicle. If two characters feed on the same victim, perhaps that victim will become obsessed with them both.

Once you’ve decided which character will be stalked, you should consider which type of circumstances and locations they will be most vulnerable in and which of their contacts you could involve. **Vampire: The Masquerade** is a horror setting, and this story offers rich opportunity to dial up the creepiness, allowing the player’s characters to become hunted with the same predator-like intensity as they themselves prey on others.

Depending on the experience you wish to create for your players, consider whether you want the stalker to reveal their intentions early on, or if you want to slowly escalate the horror by not letting your players discover what and who is after their characters until late in the story.

This story works well as a side story to other events occurring in the chronicle.

Supporting Characters

This story requires one central Storyteller character and a set of supporting ones who are eager to help them get closer to the player’s character.

Stalker

mortal

The stalker will have to be someone the player’s character has fed on. You can use any old or recent victim from the chronicle and make them into your stalker character.

The stalker thinks of their obsession with the player’s character as love. Initially, their desire to get close to them seems like normal infatuation or curiosity, but as the story progresses it becomes more intense, curiosity turns to ardent desire, which becomes jealousy, paranoid delusions, possessiveness, and finally violent impulses.

For added effect, choose a stalker who isn’t obvious but has good reasons to get close to the coterie — maybe they know one or several members from when they were alive, have information they need, or turn out to be related to a Touchstone or mortal ally.

Bert Reyes

mortal

Bert is one of those people who doesn’t really draw attention to himself; he’s just always around. But while you may not notice him, he’s sure to notice you. He doesn’t have much going on since his sweet wife died, so he makes time go by faster by keeping an eye on things. Bert’s generally suspicious of most goings-on in the neighborhood and he makes sure to report whatever he sees to anyone in his local community who’ll listen.

Bert is a neighbor, a regular in the local pub, or he collects bottles. He notices more than he lets on, and he’s happy to tell the stalker whatever he sees. Bert is suspicious of strangers, foreigners, tax evaders, youth, and atheists, but he does believe in love.

Gillian H. Hansen

mortal

The owner of the local bodega fantasizes daily about starting over somewhere exotic or getting swept off her feet by a tall handsome stranger with a strong jawline and a deep voice. She's single, bored, and looking for an excuse to get involved with something adventurous. She'll help the stalker however she can, including setting up the player's character for "romantic" surprises.

John Marshall & Peter Davidson

mortals

John and Peter work the night shift in the precinct. John is former military and he's heard gossip that juiced-up goons have started taking over the streets. He doesn't have the connections to be informed about vampires but he's paranoid and nervous both on and off duty, and he's got a clear feeling something's not right. John's only been on the job for a few months, and he's still jumpy.

Peter's been a cop for years and it takes a lot to shake him now. He doesn't get involved unless he has to, but he'll have his partner's back if John gets in over his head.

Tip: John would be a good choice for a scorned ex but could also easily be used as the stalker if you want to use a pre-written character.

Clement Mercier

Malkavian ancilla

Clement considers himself a passionate rebel. Embraced in the 1910s while in his early 40s, he's had some time to discover how best to enjoy everything unlife has to offer. Clement enjoys the presence of mortals and has become a bit of a gourmand when it comes to feeding, preferring those with big emotions.

Clement may be planning to eventually feed on the stalker himself, but until then, he's seeking merely to help them, delighted by the growing

intensity of their emotions. Clement is likely to Embrace the stalker once he thinks they've become sufficiently deranged.

Florence Ross

Malkavian neonate

Florence works at a 24-hour open psychiatric crisis clinic. She occasionally helps her walk-ins off the suicidal ledge, but most of the time she nimbly makes whatever issues they have worse, priding herself in her ability to help them get closer to understanding true reality. Florence is a romantic, and when the stalker tells her that they're meant to be with the player's character, she can only passionately agree.

Florence will seek out the coterie to aid the stalker, and she may also help them by delivering messages for them herself or through her ghouls. Florence is likely to Embrace the stalker.

Flow of Events

Here's an example of how the story may progress:

Infatuation: The stalker becomes love sick (this happens outside of the events known to the troupe).

Courting: The main player's character starts to receive letters and gifts.

Obsession: The gifts become more frequent and unsettling and the whole coterie start to feel watched.

Harassment: The stalker's actions become threatening to the safety of the player's character and the rest of the coterie. Any humans who could elicit jealousy may be in danger. At this point, the stalker will be attempting to get Embraced so that they can "be together forever."

Resolution: The coterie discovers the identity of the stalker and puts an end to their behavior, or the coterie go where the stalker can't reach them, temporarily escaping their attentions until such a time when you should wish to bring them back.

Scenes

These are some scenes the coterie might experience.

“Just getting your attention.” The player’s character receives letters and gifts. In the beginning they are sweet if somewhat unsettling. They may be things like perfume, chocolate, a collection of modernist poetry, a delivery of take-out, a watercolor portrait or antique books, blush, and lightly blood-stained underwear.

“Why are you teasing me?” The gifts become more threatening and the rest of the coterie start to feel watched. They rise, finding the doors and windows to their havens open and seeing signs that someone has been inside. They notice strangers following them around when they move about at night. They may be getting attention from law enforcement who report that someone feared they were “in danger”, since they weren’t “coming out.”

“Who is that?” The stalker gets jealous of the attention given by the player’s character to other characters and tries to get between them. A Touchstone or ally may go missing and the coterie may find that their usual sources of blood or typical victims are interfered with.

“Just here to help.” Clement or Florence meet the coterie under supposedly completely unrelated circumstances and appear to be interested in helping them with whatever they’re currently working on. With their presence, the harassment increases, and it becomes clear that they think the player’s character has an important role to play in some grand game of destiny.

“Enough is enough.” The stalker has been embraced and starts to appear in the coterie’s path, turning other Kindred against them with lies, endangering them and those they care about. The characters may wish to escalate the situation into violence but now the situation has changed: The stalker is protected by the laws of the domain. Can the characters convince the local Prince or Anarch gang boss that this is an individual the domain could do without?

Actions

These are some actions the players’ characters can take in response to the story. They may think of them themselves, or they can be suggested by characters around them.

Giving In To Love: Perhaps one or several of the coterie think the idea of a stalker is intriguing or even romantic. They may push to see what will happen if the romance is allowed to flourish. After all, when you’re a vampire you can entertain romantic fancies that could be massive red flags to ordinary mortals.

Taking Advantage: The coterie may want to leverage the stalker’s obsession for strategic advantages, using them to solve other needs or issues they may have.

Putting an End To the Madness: No matter what the coterie does, as long as the stalker is alive, their obsession will sooner or later turn dangerous and the players’ characters will need to decide how to end it. Killing the stalker will end the issue but it may be too late to avoid the consequences their obsession has had on the local community and the new attention now directed at the coterie.

Escaping: If the coterie decides to leave the city, they may escape the stalker for a time. It will be up to your discretion to decide whether you allow the stalker to catch up with them at a later time. This is the kind of a choice which may make sense if the stalker manages to get connected to dangerous instances such as a Second Inquisition agency.



Developments

These are some of the elements you can introduce once the story is in full motion.

Worried Neighborhood Watch: The local community has noticed the coterie and are trying to gather more information about who they are and what they're doing in the neighborhood. The coterie is being watched from the moment they leave their haven till the moment they return. It's a matter of time before someone comes knocking in the middle of the day.

Malkavian Malpractice: Clement and Florence have taken it upon themselves to bring the destined love story of the stalker and the player's character to fruition and they are now involving themselves in the coterie's affairs, discreetly attempting to bring them and their stalker closer.

A Jealous Lover Appears: It turns out the stalker is already in a relationship or has recently left one. A jealous partner has found evidence of what they consider an affair and show up to "have words" with the player's character.

The Stalker is Embraced: The stalker is given the Embrace and wakes up a fledgling vampire, still full of strange cravings. Depending on circumstances, they may still be hyper-focused on the player's character and may want to drain them, to unite with them fully, finally.

The End

These are some of the ways you can end the story.

Cathartic Release: If the players have responded strongly to the developments of the story, they may need closure, making the best ending one where the stalker is stopped or cured of their obsession. Depending on perspective, some may also find it a relief for the stalker to actually confront the vampire who fed on them and make them understand what it did to them.

Like the Finest Wine: If the coterie drain the stalker, they will of course get to take advantage of the intense essence in the blood, which matures into an increasingly potent draught the longer the stalker is allowed to escalate their obsession.

Transformation: If the stalker isn't Embraced by one of the Storyteller character vampires, a player's character may choose to turn them, thereby transforming their obsessive desire to experience the Kiss into a desire to feed.

Continued Threat: By allowing the stalker to survive the story, perhaps as one of the Kindred driven half-mad by desire for their blood or as a scorned lover turned Hunter, you ensure that there will be a shadow of something unsolved hanging over the coterie. Such a lingering enemy is ready to be drawn into action again when it suits the coterie the least.



The Court of Love

“My ancestors, the dukes and duchesses of Aquitaine, invented the art of courtly love; la fine amor, the beautiful love, the exquisite love. Courtly love means submitting to the object of your passion, obeying their commands and desires. In the Court of Love, desire is power, and there are only two possible outcomes: triumph or perish.”

Because vampires are so closely associated with lust and desire in the popular imagination, many engage in games of seduction and manipulation as a pastime. Sometimes this results in a formalized Court of Love that can take different forms. The specific Court described here is an ancient one, even claiming to originate the tradition. In reality, it wasn't the first and is only one of many.

Its origins can be found in the tradition of courtly

love that originated in the South of France in the Middle Ages. Initiated by powerful ladies of noble birth, the Court of Love established a norm where the lady is the object of adoration and dictates the terms of endearment to her lover. This was extremely subversive as it allowed women to take power in the relationship and impose their will, all while maintaining distance and keeping interactions non-sexual.

Applied to Kindred and the modern world, the Court of Love has become a hub for networking, elite socialization, meeting those you have affairs with, and gaining favors. The latter point can translate into information, access, or influence. Games and challenges of seduction are the price to pay for any Kindred who wants to participate in the Court. Only Kindred of the highest status can fix the rules and challenges. Tasks so assigned can be daunting, but the rewards are worthwhile. True affection is rare and frowned upon but may yet arise in a setting where pleasing is the norm in all communications.

The Kindred have a tendency to debase everything they touch and this can be seen in the Court as well. Where the original, mortal Court of Love gave social capital to women, the Kindred version has a tendency to do so for powerful, socially influential ancillae.

VARIETIES OF THE COURT

The Court described here is also the ruling court of a Camarilla domain. Thus, this Court of Love has its own territory which is guarded against interlopers. However, in other domains the Court of Love may take different forms. It might be a faction in a larger Camarilla domain or even just a set of traditions and rituals sometimes affected by local Kindred.

Running the Story

This story starts with the characters entering the territory of a Court of Love. There can be many motivations for that: maybe a mentor wants to test their skills, maybe they want to get in touch with a regular of the Court, or maybe they need something (information, money, an artifact in the possession of the Court elite). Motivation should flow from who the characters are, with a hint of the promise of an exciting experience. Interactions must also be tailored based on the characters' personality and perception of romance.

Having a supporting character ask each player's character their opinion and expectations from the Court can be a good way to build the foundation to your own Court of Love.

Maybe a character becomes obsessed with one of the older Kindred elites that roam in the Court of Love and try to answer their challenges to get their favor. Another character may fall for the target of a seduction challenge assigned to them. How can they prove their feelings are sincere when they started on a bet?

The leaders of the Court are ruthless seducers. Maybe a character becomes the Queen's favorite and gets threatened by jealous competitors. Maybe they manage to elicit sincere passion in an old, jaded libertine and get enmeshed in complicated emotions and intrigues.

During the seduction challenges, characters might be forced to do something they are really averse to. This story can be used if the Court of Love's trials are an obstacle in the way of getting something that is of vital importance to them. They might be forced to seduce someone physically or morally repugnant to them. They might be coerced into brutalizing others mentally or physically. The Court forbids open aggression and violence, but possesses a dedicated subterranean space, the Night Court, where all bets are off, and duels, binding, and blood play are routinely organized.

Supporting Characters

The story uses two types of supporting characters: the Court's hosts and elites, and the courtiers of lower ranks vying for their favor. The characters will start at the lower ranks, and the other courtiers can act as allies, targets, rivals, or cautionary tales.

Marquise Madeleine de Bellecourt

Toreador ancilla

Madeleine de Bellecourt is the Queen of the Court of Love, who grants favors or dispenses disgrace. The



Marquise dubiously claims to be descended from the dukes and duchesses of Aquitaine, although none would be so daring as to question it. She has significant wealth established over decades of investments and enjoying rich protectors, now boasting independence and clout.

The Marquise engages in intense, but short lived, romances. She will flaunt her favorite of the moment, lavish them with gifts and praise before moving on to the next pet. Some manage to move on after benefitting from the relationship. Others remain in the court, forever heartbroken.

Viscount Claude d'Aspremont

Ventruie ancilla

Viscount Claude is Madeleine's long-time friend and former lover. He acts as the Master of Ceremonies in the court, distributing challenges and hearing petitioners and courtiers. He is an archetypal seducer and libertine, entertaining only very short-lived flings.

Deep down the Viscount longs to feel truly in love again and, in love, find the vitality of youth and humanity. (See p. 93.)

Caleb Decubal

Nosferatu ancilla

Caleb is the leader of a Nosferatu trio that haunts the Court of Love. They are used cruelly in games where they must be seduced by vain and beauty obsessed Kindred. Yet they endure being the objects of pity and revulsion because of the resources and information they drain from the Court. Caleb calls himself the Jester of the Court but can provide sound advice and help newcomers navigate the Court's politics.

Caleb is detached from entanglements of love and romance but is deeply caring to his brethren and the few Kindred he has mentored over the years. He treats those who show respect for his wisdom and experience well.

Amore Odalisque

Toreador neonate

Charismatic, elegant, artistic, and sensitive, Amore is a childe of the Marquise, and a prominent courtier. They are often a designated target to be seduced in the games of love. Like their sire, Amore has intense but brief relations, making them a perfect foil to whichever challenge the Marquise wants to set up. They also often perform at the Court, being an extremely gifted singer and violinist.

Amore is not beyond having sincere feelings, but their true loyalty will always go to their sire the Marquise. Any romance with them can only end in heartbreak and tragedy.

Ainsley Shale

Brujah neonate)Ainsley is a neonate hanging at the Court of Love at the bidding of their own sire to test their skills. They scoff at the vanity of the Court, which earned them the nickname "The Brat". As such, they are often set up as a hard-to-get target in games of love.

They are not beyond having sincere feelings but will always resist them. The best way to gain their friendship and affection is to share their distaste of the Court's hypocrisy and vanity.

Flow of Events

The flow of events in this story depends on the actions of the characters. They may decide not to abide by the Court's rule and find other ways to get to their end. Branching into an infiltration scenario remains possible and giving your characters several paths to resolution is always recommended. However, if they get to the thick of the Court of Love, here is how things might go:

Introduction: The characters get access to the Court of Love, introduce themselves to the Queen and courtiers, present their requests, and receive their first challenges. How do they react to being tested as seducers and lovers?

Entanglement: While performing their challenge, one or more of the characters get enmeshed in a deeper romance. Their target or another of the Court elite develops feelings for them. Do they return the affection or try to use it for their own ends?

Rivalries: As the characters start gaining traction in the Court, they become the target of jealous rivals. Attacks can be verbal, made using influence, or even physical outside the Court. How do they handle their rivals? Fight back or negotiate?

Gains and Wisdom: The characters get what they came for at the Court, and maybe even something better. They become wiser to the opportunities of such a place, or bitter at its callousness and cruelty. What lessons do they take from their experience there?

Denouement: The characters can reflect on their experience and some consequences follow them. Maybe they make reliable allies. Maybe they suffer heartbreak of their own. Maybe they become more somber and twisted. How will their actions impact their future?

Scenes

Most scenes at the Court of Love will revolve around challenges (for example, seduce a specific person, make a romantic performance or take someone in a submissive-dominant roleplay). The following scenes represent possible complications and entanglements.

The Queen's Pet: A character catches the attention of the Queen herself. She tests their interest by challenging them to a game of wit (for example, a poetry contest), a test of seduction (pit them against another courtier to seduce a third party), and a queenly challenge where they must take the Marquise herself on a night out. She takes the character as the preferred lover for a while. This status comes with riches and resources, but also a lot of enemies. The character will then be discarded for a newer model.

Amorous Heartbreaker: This scene involves a seasoned member of the Court of Love. It may be the Viscount himself, but can also be another cynical character who thinks they cannot love again. Yet they find (or believe?) themselves falling for a player's character. On the one hand, they might lavish their flame with gifts, compliments, and affection. On the other, they could try to break the object of their desire to be rid of feelings they find repulsive. Depending on the story, it can be one or the other, or a combination of both.

The Talent Show: The Queen offers a private tête-à-tête with the winner of the night's talent show. Time for artistically minded characters to shine! For more provocative characters, making a deliberately poor performance that gets her to laugh can also give them an unexpected win, and a lot of jealous rivals.

The Night Court: The Court of Love has its own dungeon where submission and exchange of pain and pleasure rule. To the Marquise, the so-called Night Court is the ultimate expression of courtly love, through absolute submission to the one you claim to love. The Marquise's understanding of BDSM is of course extremely sketchy, and sometimes a pretext for blatant torture.

Actions

Although the Court of Love is a domineering setting, it is important that the players' characters have agency for what they want to achieve. Caleb, as the Jester and mentor, can provide guidance.

Play the Game: How can players engage in the seduction game? On a pure roleplaying basis, extravagant compliments and declarations of love and poetry (think Shakespearian sonnets for tone) are always welcome. Social skill tests can generate a bit of tension and help unlock further interactions. Excess of noise and physical aggression is proscribed in the Court of Love and will result in expulsion, but subtle use of Disciplines (typically, Presence or Dominate) is tolerated and can also be put to

good use. Buying out the cooperation of a target in exchange for money or favors is also a solution, as well as any other tactic a creative character may come up with.

Leverage: The Court of Love trades in seduction, favors, and secrets. Characters who do not want to play the Marquise's petty games can go for the second most powerful weapon: blackmail. The Marquise and her various lovers have built her fortunes over misdeeds and fraud; depredation and murder are no strangers to her. The Marquise also serves the interests of several influential Kindred that she sometimes pits against one another. Risking her status and careful balance will get her to comply with any request but also make her a powerful enemy.

Public Declaration: In the game of seduction declarations of love, rejection, and breakup are key milestones. They're even better if you make a huge spectacle of it. Characters may be tempted to do so to advance in the Court or be compelled to do so by the Marquise and other Court elites. Whether the characters jump to the occasion or feel mortified by the process is up to them.

Developments

These are examples of challenges and complications you can introduce to make your character's exploration more interesting.

Caught in the Act! As a lead-up to a rivalry complication, the character and their mark are walked upon by a jilted lover, who chooses to make a big scandal out of it. Depending on the character, this might be a trigger for a confrontational scene. The potential for escalation is endless as public revelations may draw even more supporting characters into the fray.

Sabotage: A character endeavoring to make

a grand gesture (for example, participating at the talent show or organizing a magnificent night out) is sabotaged by a rival. The action will be non-lethal but highly disruptive. Sometimes the emotions engendered by the machinations of the Court are so extreme they prompt genuinely destructive behavior such as ratting on rivals to a Second Inquisition agency, destroying their haven or making their mortal contacts targets for organized crime. Such actions may cause one to lose face in the Court but that's a small consolation for the target of the sabotage.

Busted! If the characters explore where they are not allowed to (whether to get information or blackmail material), they must evade the guards and may get caught. The Court can turn quite cruel when its most powerful members feel jilted or threatened. A character caught in the act may be excused at first, but then find their lovers seduced, their mortal contacts Embraced or killed and their reputation maligned at every opportunity.

The End

The Court of Love is first and foremost a setting and can be left with an open ending. However there can be several scenes that can be used to give the characters a better sense of closure.

Adieu: The Marquise has given the characters what they want, gets tired of them or was displeased by them. She parts with them graciously, but there is steel under her flowery words and the characters are made to understand that they may never set foot at her salons again, unless at their own peril.

The characters may discover that the Court's rules are fair and even as long as nobody threatens the Marquise or others with real power. If that happens, suddenly the whole game is twisted against the threatening newcomers, or they're unceremoniously shut out. If this happens, the characters may find themselves contacted by other rejects from the Court of Love, possibly contemplating revenge.

This could be accomplished through violence but it might be more fun to beat the Court in a cruel game of seduction and romance.

Impossible Love: A character elicits infatuation in one of the Court's elites (the Viscount or someone else). This Kindred can't get past their inhumanity to accept that they might be experiencing something genuine and instead break off the relationship in the most public and loathsome possible way. The characters are made to leave, and the lover will remain forever as a shadow of their former selves.

Such a progression of events may leave the characters confused as to what really happened, but here too they may find that they were not the first.

Grand Courtiers: Characters successful in the court's challenges and who gain the Marquise's favor can be granted the status of Grand Courtier (meaning a permanent invite to the Court). This will make the Court a permanent asset to the coterie, which will grant them regular resources of information and blood.

If some among the coterie manage to attain such a status, they're expected to keep the interests of the Court in mind in all of their dealings. Other Kindred in the domain associate them strongly with the Court which may come into play in case another faction moves against them.

If the characters are successful and victorious inside the Court, finding that in the end it's just another Kindred faction may be the saddest ending of all. The Court's elites are good at painting themselves larger than unlife, their machinations somehow more noble than the sordid games Kindred courtiers usually play. That mask may come off if the characters have to witness the Court in a banal war of territory.





The Shades of Neo-Montmartre

"Somewhere during those fleeting moments, sharing the meager companionship of the night, it almost felt like we were happy. But for the Kindred, such feelings never last."

This story can take place in any modern city, where people at the margins, artists and vagabonds, gather to revel in love and their common humanity. In their midst roam the Kindred, who enjoy and prey on this kind of company. They find amusement in these mortals, pleasure in using them in their games, and safety in numbers. Together they cohabit, create, and celebrate, trying to find beauty and meaningful connections. Unfortunately, the corroding effect of the vampire is impossible to escape.

The hub of this community is a loose collective in an abandoned building pompously dubbed “the new Montmartre”. Over time and possibly due to the influence of Kindred nostalgic for past glories, the whole area around the collective became known as Neo-Montmartre. The whole place is easily welcoming, and while some of the residents are cynics or downright exploitative, among the mortals the affection and camaraderie is mostly genuine and honest.

For mortals living in this milieu, this could be a story about characters finding love, romance, friendship and found family. For the Kindred, it’s about the yearning for all these things, despite the

looming corruption engendered by the Hunger. A vampire may delude themselves into thinking that they’re fighting to save the community they prey on, and in that process they may even feel they’re a part of the romance of their environment. But eventually the Blood and its demands always reasserts itself.

There might be many reasons for the characters to get involved in Neo-Montmartre. They are contracted to investigate the place, for example to recover an artwork said to be possessed by someone in the district. They might be asked to handle the issues of some of the residents before they escalate, especially the beautiful, but explosively dangerous Angelique. (See p. 89.) A younger neonate might have been a member of the collective and still wants to hang out. Or the characters get involved in the turf war between the locals Anarchs and other sects looking to encroach in the area.

Neo-Montmartre is riven by many cracks and intrigues, but it lives and dies by its attachment to beauty, art, and above all, love. The tragedy of the Kindred is that even if they believe in all of those things, the influence of a hungering predator is rarely for the better.

Running the Story

Characters who become enmeshed with the district and its colorful characters will not lack opportunities for romance. The attitude of regulars is welcoming, unassuming, and encouraging of the free expression of emotions and emotional bonding, whether long or short term.

If the characters find themselves in Neo-Montmartre, you should decide in advance if they arrive with a deliberate purpose, or if they just take in the atmosphere before intrigue finds them. In the latter option, the characters may have found a refuge there, be artists themselves, or have acquaintances in the collective. You may wish to play up the pleasant vibe of the milieu to create contrast with the tragedies that may well follow if the community attracts too much Kindred attention.

This is an opportunity for the players to develop their characters' psychology and engage in conversation separated from plot considerations. If they come with a specific reason, they can be hooked in by one of the many issues in the community: the excess of mortal disappearances, the erosive practice of Oblivion, a quest for some of Neo-Montmartre's treasures, or the conflict over territory between various sects.

Opportunities for romance will depend on the characters and what they are looking for. Some denizens of Neo-Montmartre gravitate towards melodramatic romance that burns short and bright. Others maintain decades-long organic polycules with absolute trust in each other. An artistic character may find a muse that gives them inspiration and joy. Another may be drawn by the most vulnerable and troubled characters. Neo-Montmartre presents an opportunity to engage in short, inconsequential flings and a chance to be drawn into intense, dramatic, complicated relationships.

Supporting Characters

Supporting characters in Neo-Montmartre should provide both casual engagements and potential for intrigue. Following are some of the most prominent residents of the collective. You can adjust their gender presentations to fit with the romantic needs of your troupe.

River Albina

Brujah ancilla

The unofficial leader among the Kindred of the collective, River is imposing and always moves with a scowl and threatening air. Born working class and having been in many strikes and union fights, River has found a haven in Neo-Montmartre and considers themselves the older sibling of the collective. They always seem a bit distrustful at first but warm up to no-nonsense, streetwise characters. River is interested in romance but dislikes brief trysts. Their interest will only grow from sincerity and respect as equals.

Angelique Dutertre

Malkavian ancilla

Angelique is the most flamboyant and explosive personality of the group. She navigates between meek gentleness and hair-trigger jealousy. Her guilt and obsession over her long-lost lover Marianne have brought her to the brink of irredeemable insanity. She can be truly passionate if she manages to get over her guilt. See p. 89.

Sasha Cande

Hecata ancilla

A fringe occultist hailing from a working-class background, Sasha had to learn to survive on their own early in their Kindred unlife. After long years being both a mercenary and a paranormal investigator, they have found a refuge in Neo-Montmartre, where they hunt for old occult artifacts and investigate the way some artist Kindred seem to

bend entropy around themselves. They keep mostly to themselves but may show interest in connecting with fellow Hecata or people knowledgeable in occultism.

Soline Vertue

Toreador neonate

An unsuccessful artist surviving on odd jobs and modeling, Reyes was Embraced mostly for their shattering good looks and is rather proud of them. They tend to take the role of tour guide for newcomers with excess pomp and grandeur. They will flirt easily, but are also dedicated to the Neo-Montmartre family as their sire is away dabbling in politics and stolen art. Due to Angelique's madness, they have also taken the role of museum and treasury guardian, which puts them first in the line of fire when illegal relics start attracting unwanted attention.

The Eternal Muse

Malkavian elder

Angelique's sire hangs in the background, always discreet, ever present. Plagued by visions, they call themselves "the Eternal Muse", since they use their extensive mastery of Obfuscate and Auspex to create the illusion of the most perfect model or Muse to any willing to pay (dearly, mostly in favors although they do not refuse money). They have started getting worried at the childe Angelique's erratic behavior of late, and try to get involved in her unlife to encourage her to move on. The Muse likes playing the role of the most perfect creature to other people but seems uninterested in romance for themselves, maybe because they have played multiple roles so long that they feel no one is interested in seeing their real face under the mask of divine perfection.

Flow of Events

The flow of events in this story depends on the involvement of the characters in the local intrigues.

The following is an example of a general trajectory.

A Flirting Glance: The characters first interact with the collective, meeting or reconnecting with its inhabitants. They approach a possible romantic interest, or are approached in turn.

The Cracks in the Painting: The character and their romantic interest get closer as they spend more time together. However, the character can feel there are secrets and unspoken tensions. As they experience something meaningful together with their lover, they start to learn about the many threats looming over the district.

The Rip in the Curtains: Threats become more tangible when the inhabitants' actions lead to grievous consequences, from local turf war to unexplained occult apparitions. The character needs to decide if they want to investigate and save their lover or cut their losses.

At Full Blast: The district is in full upheaval and the characters are caught in the crossfire, whether they want it or not. Are they capable of holding to the ideals of love and solidarity or will the pressure of Kindred affairs force them to focus on their own interests?

Denouement: Worst comes to worst, the relationship ends in literal flames and the characters barely escape with their unives. If they manage to stave off catastrophe, they can go on to witness the corruption that their little corner of Kindred paradise inflicts on the mortals of the neighborhood.

Scenes

The first scenes establish the atmosphere in Neo-Montmartre before trouble settles in. In terms of atmosphere, they should be pleasant, low key, with friendly banter but a general sense of approachability, even though signs of early tensions can appear.

The Naked Truth: One of the artists of Neo-Montmartre really wants a new model and will try to get one of the characters to pose for them. How naked they are willing to be is up to them, but in

that context, the more the better. The artist engages in light-hearted flirtation which can be continued after the posing session if the model wants it.

The Museum: One of the Neo-Montmartre artists gives the characters a tour of the current exhibition they have curated, a blend of Kindred-made expressionist paintings and a few choice pieces by talented mortals. They flirt by trying to get the visitors to express their emotions. If they cooperate, the tour guide alludes to the fact that there are even more precious pieces in the basement treasury built by Angelique. Occultists in the group can feel that some of the museum art has been altered by repeated use of Oblivion to protect the building, as well as amplify Ceremonies created there.

Patrol Run: Characters with strong physical skills get invited to help patrol the district at night. They get shown the best feeding grounds and hiding places. They may get the respect and romantic interest of protective leader, River, or one of their compatriots.

Meet the Elder: A character starting to get more serious in a relationship is invited for a private meeting with their romantic interest and the elder Muse. She appears to them as the most desirable human they can fathom, to test their nerve and behavior with their lover. The Muse also questions them on their intentions and emotional maturity towards their partner. The discussion may be stretched over several meetings. The scrutiny is tighter if the character is trying to romance Angelique. If the Muse decides to trust them, she reveals herself as an elder haunting the community.

Actions

If the characters wish to fit into the community or discover its secrets, they have to win the residents' trust by helping them.

Gallant Knight: A character can join in the fight against the various gangs fighting over the district and disturbing the collective. Some will turn out to be just regular criminal gangs, but deeper

investigation will reveal sect infighting over control of the area and its treasures. Technically the area is an Anarch domain but the local Anarchs don't like the way its Kindred try to keep themselves away from the conflict with the Camarilla.

Generous Patron: A character will advance their standing with the community and their love interest by contributing to their artistic endeavors. They may give some of their own art, join in a difficult negotiation with an art dealer, or submit gracefully to posing sessions. Artists have a lot of social capital in this milieu.

Master Maker: Angelique's unfinished statue of her former lover Marianne is one of the key points of instability in the collective. Frustration with the statue's unfinished state is accelerating Angelique's mental deterioration. Furthermore, the statue exudes its own nefarious occult aura born of Angelique's uncontrolled experimentation. Understanding the issue and finishing the statue would be an enormous boost to any character's relationship.

Finishing the statue may take different forms. Occultists may try cleaning the statue of ritual taint and magic it into completion. Artists of course can work directly on it, and performers or poets observe that, due to the extreme magic nature of the work of art, poems depicting the beauty of the dead woman work just as well as a sculptor's hand to mold it.

Developments

Trouble boils under the happy carefree surface of Neo-Montmartre. While a character engages in romance in the district, their romantic interest will be in danger. They call them for help if the character does not volunteer to help on their own.

Turf War: Both Kindred sects and rival Anarch groups vie for control of the territory. As the situation becomes more and more tense, some Kindred of the collective get ambushed, wounded, or kidnapped. It may even be that some, like Camarilla Toreador or Tremere, find the community

offensive on its own merits and wish to see it destroyed. The Toreador out of jealousy over the perceived authenticity of its artistic practice and the Tremere because of badly controlled occult activity.

Trafficked Relics: The Neo-Montmartre's private museum and treasury holds relics appropriated, stolen, or lifted from graves, some of which are highly compromising and dangerous. Until recently the collective has always refused to open their vaults to outside observation, and tension escalates when Soline is attacked and brutally questioned. Negotiating a proper restitution or compensation becomes critical. The treasury is a good place for any sort of plot item the Storyteller desires, connecting the community to other events in the chronicle.

Angelique's Madness: Angelique deteriorating mental states becomes a clear issue. She hunts women reminding her of her past lover because she cannot forget her, and has an unfinished statue representing her. Characters need to fix the statue, help her mourn properly, as well as getting her to drop Oblivion if the district is ever to have peace.

The Occultist's Betrayal: Sasha's disregard for prudence and authority gets Neo-Montmartre into trouble. Characters with occult connections will be approached regarding the issue. Sasha has let Angelique experiment dangerously, trafficked and hidden precious and dangerous occult artifacts, and openly defied the local Tremere or another faction concerning themselves with Blood Sorcery and Oblivion. The conflict may end up in Sasha's sequestration or final death. Returning stolen items, accepting some form of control and authority, and getting their act straight can resolve the issue.

The End

Various story exits are possible for Neo-Montmartre. The arcs of individual romances involving the players' characters depend on the players' actions and desires but the whole community has a story of its own. Like many artists' communes, its time on earth is temporary.

Fade Away: The characters do everything right, saving the community from themselves and limiting Kindred exposure to the mortal artistic practitioners to keep them from being sucked into games of blood and moral corruption. Nevertheless, the forces of capital and gentrification leave their mark. The most successful mortal artists are drawn away by the prospect of more money for their work and greater public recognition. Real estate companies force bars and nightclubs to close as they build hotels in a chic neighborhood. Survivors of the scene reminisce how great it was and one of the Kindred may be glimpsed in the background of archival footage used in a documentary about the area produced ten years after its demise.

Upheaval: Due to internal instability, the district of Neo-Montmartre sinks into turmoil. Control is assumed by another faction that tears down the collective, leading to the exile or disappearance of most of its residents. The district is now exploited as a beachhead for more territorial strife to come. The players' characters and their romantic interests are separated or must break up in the face of the tragedy. Such outside threats may include the Anarchs who decide that the domain must be part of their effort to oust the local Camarilla or a Camarilla project to destroy the mortal communities Anarchs infest. For a truly horrific end, the Sabbath may roll into town. The community of Neo-Montmartre would be no match against them.

Tragedy: In a more internal version of the above, the more fragile characters in the community break and end up on a violent rampage that can only end in their own destruction. The characters have to see their romantic interest break down and abandon them. This version of the ending has the most potential for romantic tragedy assuming the characters are personally involved with the community's principals. Naturally, such a breakdown may end up on social media, bringing down the wrath of a Second Inquisition agency and eradicating the conditions that made Neo-Montmartre possible in the first place. ■

Quick Story Ideas

Here's a couple of story ideas you can use to introduce romance to your chronicle, either as the central theme or just as a bit of spice.

A HUNDRED YEARS I HAVE DREAMT OF YOU

Purposefully or accidentally, the coterie manages to locate the resting place of an ancilla in torpor. When the ancilla wakes up, they insist they've spent a hundred years dreaming of their beloved, and (as soon as they've fed) the only thing they want is to find them again. The old Kindred insists on involving the coterie in their search, and it's all the players' characters can do to manage them, unknowledgeable as they are about the modern world and impossible to reason with. The problem is, all signs point to the ancilla's beloved as either long dead or a figment of their imagination.

What happens once the ancilla manages to locate a close enough look alike?

And what if it turns out that the original partner exists after all? Perhaps their memories of the affair are starkly different from the ancilla's, and they won't feel kindly towards anyone they perceive to have woken up their ex, not to mention helped said ex track them down.

NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS

A mortal Ally or Contact falls in love with one of the players' characters, not necessarily their primary contact. Because of the pre-existing relationship, the player's character tolerates the infatuation, maybe even to the point of returning it.

At first, the mortal's dedication seems unproblematic, even giving the coterie some extra advantages, such as a temporary backup Haven, added Influence, or just a way of feeling closer to their Humanity. But as the mortal starts to act as though they are expecting a real romantic relationship with intimacy and commitment, it starts to get more complicated. Should the player's character Embrace them for what they think is

love, figure out a way to break up with them, or attempt to engage in a relationship despite being cold and dead and constantly tempted to feed on their partner?

For a surprise twist, it turns out that the mortal lover isn't actually in love with the player's character at all, but has been possessed by a high-level Auspex-using vampire for as long as the affair has lasted (see *Possession*, *Vampire: The Masquerade*, p. 251). Perhaps because they are in love with the player's character, perhaps as a way to get information on the coterie.

THE KINDRED COMMUNE

When the players' character first meet the recruiter, they are likely blown away by how truly at peace with themselves they are. Here is finally someone who seems to have all the answers. Maybe the recruiter appears mere months away from achieving Golconda, or they have a unique, enlightened perspective on the vampiric condition, which makes the player's character feel that they too, can find true happiness as Kindred. The point is, the recruiter makes the player's character feel seen and hopeful in a way they haven't in a long time.

The recruiter romances their chosen target almost sneakily. First comes the love bombing, then the isolation from the rest of the coterie, but always they remain bright and charming and full of promises. Not so many to be unbelievable; just enough.

The recruiter, of course, turns out to be the sent-out representative of a Kindred commune, and if they ever get as far as to bring their newfound recruit back to base, the player's character will find that they have joined a cult, not a relationship and that they are now just one of several of the recruiters very special chosen partners.



Chapter Five:

OTHER WAYS
TO PLAY WITH
ROMANCE

Have you ever wanted to be a virgin sacrifice?

I mean, not literally virgin. Few among us could make a claim to that! But you understand what I'm going for: You walk through the congregation clad in a diaphanous, simple white gown. Some around you wonder if you know the fate that awaits you. Destruction for the glory of an obscure blood god.

The altar with the beautiful gold finishes, the stains from old sacrifices, the shackles to keep the sacrifice in place, and a high priestess with a knife raised high above her head.

It has a certain romance to it, don't you think?

And of course, what other role is there for me to play except the starring one, as a deathly pale beauty entranced by the chant of the crowd gathering all around me.

The Ministry is an interesting clan if you're looking for lovers who can take you on a strange adventure. The downside is that so many among them exemplify some of the worst traits of our Kindred. I'd like to think we're not all liars and charlatans (although I admit that I have been both, many times) but they make me lose my faith in any dignity or forthrightness the progeny of Caine might have once possessed.

The thing that makes it so difficult is that you don't know when they're being serious and when they're just putting on a show. It would be easy if every cult and clandestine religious gathering hiding members of the Ministry among their ranks was a sham. But this is not the case. The Church of Set is really quite sincere, after their fashion.

That's what bothered me when my Ministry lover told me that I was the only suitable sacrifice to bring forth a new age of darkness upon the Earth. It's flattering of course and she was a magnificent lover, so subtle and perceptive, but I wasn't ever sure if she meant what she said.

I don't like that. I want my lovers to fall madly, passionately in love with me. Make mistakes, lose their fortunes as they seek to make me happy. That's appropriate.

Still, I really recommend being a sacrificial victim in one of these cult rituals if you have the chance, at least if you can do it without getting killed. It's thrilling, all those eyes watching you in rapt attention as you're shackled onto the altar, the knife glinting overhead, the chant reaching a crescendo!

The purpose of the knife is to carve out your heart.

How did I escape?

That's my secret. But remember, never die your final death for love. Even if it seems romantic in the moment. Pretend if you have to, and then sneak away to love another night.

— Victoria Ash

The traditional format for tabletop roleplaying is that a group of friends gather in someone's living room for some hours to play a session. It's not the only way to play roleplaying games, **Vampire: The Masquerade** or games of romance. The COVID-19 pandemic taught many how to play on online platforms, making playing remotely even more mainstream than it was before.

When you play roleplaying games, you're in charge of how to make your game happen. You can play according to the customs of your play culture or make new, strange experiments. You can follow the advice of books like this one or disregard it entirely. This is one of the great strengths of roleplaying.

This chapter is all about alternate modes of roleplay, romantic or otherwise. There's also some game mechanic material to ground romantic explorations in the brute reality of being a vampire. Many among the Kindred have been accused of professing love with ulterior motives but when it comes to Resonances, those motives may be crass indeed. Sometimes a vampire just enjoys the taste of a specific partner's blood and wants to keep sipping. Sometimes they need it to develop powers of the Blood.

Intimacy

The methods explored here share one common feature when it comes to playing romance. As players, we have wildly varying comfort levels when it comes to playing emotionally intimate scenes with the Storyteller or fellow players. Some of us are happy to look a co-player deep in the eyes and say: "I love you." Some of us find it too much.

When you play on Tiktok, explore your character's romantic side in an in-game journal or write letters, you can distance yourself to some degree from the emotional immediacy of playing face to face. For some, this can make playing on romance easier as the play occurs in a more mediated environment.

Letters and diaries are interesting for the purposes of romance because you can play with the conventions of romantic language. What does a love letter penned by an ancient vampire sound like? What if they try to follow modern idioms?

FITTING IN

Victoria: Noel! I haven't seen you in a while. I heard you joined the Anarchs. A good choice. It immediately made you more interesting.

Noel: I don't care whether I'm interesting to you or not.

Victoria: Oh, Noel. Don't hold grudges. It's unbecoming! What are you doing at this party anyway?

Noel: I got bored with the Anarchs so figured I could have a little dalliance with some Camarilla neonate.

Victoria: Bravo! Just like I taught you.

Noel: You taught me to seduce Camarilla neonates to benefit my sect?

Victoria: Oh yes. You're fitting in, finally!

Playing on Tiktok

Tiktok is a social media service allowing users to post short videos and react to each other's posts. It has tools for video and sound editing and a library of effects you can use. It also has an active **Vampire** scene, with people adapting their play to the unique environment of the service. Other platforms, such as Discord, also feature active communities of play.

On Tiktok, many **Vampire** players dress up as their tabletop and LARP characters, doing lip synching with funny audios, and dueting the videos of other **Vampire** Tiktokers.





How It's Done

The tools and methods for playing on Tiktok have developed as part of the living culture of play on the platform. The method players experimenting with Tiktok came up with was to create dedicated Discord servers for the purpose of planning and discussing scenes that they wanted to play. The idea was that the meta-level conversations around the game would be handled on Discord and in-game videos posted on Tiktok.

(Tiktok play is also discussed in the *Players Guide*, p. 204.)

Going by the mechanics of the tabletop rules or using Mind's Eye Theatre is doable on Discord, but many players found that a Nordic Larp-style negotiation-based approach was more practical for the medium. In Nordic Larp, it's common for players to discuss what would happen in a contested situation, such as a scene of violence, and proceed based on what would be most interesting for the event, instead of using mechanics to resolve such situations as is common in many other LARP styles. This negotiation occurs without the input or presence of an impartial Storyteller. On Tiktok, this means that the players will plan out a scene on a Discord channel, either by writing up a script together, or just drafting a basic outline of the scene and conversation.

The players will then agree who will start the scene.

The starting player dons their costume, gets their background set up (typically either a plain black background, or using the green screen feature on the Tiktok app), and films their part of the conversation.

Depending on the scene, they may choose other apps, such as Capcut, for editing to improve the quality of the video. The player may choose to add background music so it feels like a scene in a movie.

The other players in the scene will then duet that video. Duetting is a function on Tiktok where the app puts the image from your camera side by side with the video you originally watched. This way,

you're able to do a running commentary or reactions to the video you're dueting, as your new video and the original video will appear side by side.

You can react silently using facial expressions or body language, respond using the adding text feature on the app, or use headphones or earbuds to hear the audio without causing noise pollution so that you can respond verbally.

When you make a Tiktok video, you can include pauses so that people have space to react in their duets.

Another Tiktok feature is called the stitch. You can stitch a Tiktok the same way you duet, by going to a video's share options and clicking the option you want. The feature lets you choose a few seconds from the video you're stitching and then continue with your own video. It's a tool for making it clear what you're commenting on.

At times stitch is more practical for making a reply during a scene than duet, especially if the original video doesn't give you a lot of time to make responses. This is especially true if you're itching to perform a dramatic monologue.

Tiktok has a lot of other features as well which provide plenty of opportunities for creative use in playing a scene.

If you want to have a tearful goodbye in the rain, there's a filter for rain. If you want to do a flashback, you can use a black and white or sepia filter. If you want to change your appearance, for example your eye color, make yourself paler, change your hair color, or use a green screen to change your background, Tik Tok's various filters and features make it relatively easy.

Indicating that specific videos are part of a certain event and scene is done through hashtags. They help you find your audience. Popular hashtags include #vampirethemasqrade, #VTMtok, #Vampireoc and of course all the different clans and sects.

If you run a game of your own on Tiktok, you need to create your own distinctive hashtag so people will be able to follow along, players and spectators alike.

Tiktok is being used to play Camarilla courts, Sabbat Vaulderie, Brujah fighting Gangrel and Salubri becoming a victim of diablerie. Almost anything you can do in a tabletop game or in a LARP you can also do on Tiktok.

The only thing to remember is that your video should be 1–3 minutes long.

Romance

The popularity of an individual Tiktok LARP can vary. Tiktok runs on an algorithm, and can be described as a "Democracy of Eyeballs". Some of the hashtags for various Tiktok-based **Vampire** LARPs can have as many as 100,000 to over 3 million views within a year, depending on how often the players upload and how well they spread the word about their hashtag game.

If you are looking to pull as many viewers to your story as possible, intense emotions seem to be a real draw, and the platform allows for it. Two mortal enemies staring down each other, trying to hold back their Beasts. Star crossed lovers with tears of blood streaming down their cheeks as they say goodbye, not knowing when they will meet again.

Playing up the gothic romance in the World of Darkness leaves players and viewers wanting more. However, romance while roleplaying, and especially LARPing, can be awkward and uncomfortable for some players when they are not playing with someone they are currently in a romantic relationship with. A medium like Tiktok has an advantage because you are able to act out the love your character feels for the other without being in the same room, without the need for physical intimacy, such as touching, kissing, and the like.

Two players who are interested in a romantic plotline for their characters will negotiate on Discord or in a group chat. They can discuss what sort of romantic situations they are comfortable acting out and filming, and let their scene partner react to it.

Because Tiktok has strict content guidelines keeping things at PG-13 at best, things such as

lovmaking, can be implied, but never shown.

As with normal LARPing, body language and facial expressions really help sell the feelings you are playing on.

If there are two young fledglings with a blossoming relationship while their humanity is still largely intact, having warm smiles, bright eyes, and leaning close into the camera helps bring into focus the sweet attraction between two characters.

If lust needs to be implied, a flirtatious fluttering of the eyes, a gentle bite of the bottom lip, and letting a jacket slip off the shoulder can easily display a Kindred's true desire.

If your Kindred's heart is breaking, some fake blood applied around the eyes to be used as tears as you pretend to cry. (Please do not put the blood in or on your eyes, and try to find stage blood safe to be used on skin.)

Finding the right lighting, filters, and background music can really help relay the tone you are looking for. With the various features and sound library that Tiktok and many free editing apps have it's possible for you to create a scene straight out of a Gothic romance or a horror film. On Tiktok you have plenty of tools available to physically show what is happening in a scene.

What if your characters want to share a warm embrace, or a passionate kiss? Some Tiktok creators have found ways of interacting with their cameras to convey physical intimacy. Many found that if they wish to share a kiss, they will lean their faces to the side to where their lips are out of the camera's view. The person who then duets will do the same, usually from the opposite side, so it looks like they just reached from their box and brought each other's lips together.

If you want to hold your lover in your arms, or caress their cheeks, you can lean your body close to your camera, have your arms reach out off screen, or hover your hands around your phone to where your thumb or a finger pops into view in a slow, gentle caress.

The Sound of Play

One of the things Tiktok is famous for is the wide variety of sounds available. Sounds can be used a couple of different ways. You can use sounds to lip sync to make a comedic sketch or a music video. You can also use sounds to have background music.

Comedic videos are a form of interaction native to Tiktok roleplay. The idea is that you make a video commenting or parodying your character or the play you're engaged in, in a similar way as manga sometimes does with chibi versions of the regular characters. It's understood that these comedic Tiktoks are not in-game but still enrich the participants' experience of the game.

After you find the right background music for your scene, you will have the option of adjusting the volume on both the original sound and the added sound. It is recommended to increase the volume of the original sound of your video and then lower the volume of the added song so it can be soft music in the background to solidify the mood you are trying to portray on screen.

Although face-to-face play and LARP events have resumed, Tiktok play continues. Many **Vampire** players still love to tell their stories and make their content on online platforms, as they provide creative freedom and allow players not to worry about fitting in each other's schedules.



Letters of Affection

Expressing romantic or sexual interest for the first time is always a nerve-wracking affair, be it in real life or within a roleplaying game. Even the most experienced and conscientious player can find it a challenge to fictionally flirt with another player.

One strategy to help overcome awkwardness or trepidation is to write letters to each other. Sometimes, taking time to write down a character's potential feelings is easier than figuring them out in the moment.

Letters like this can be abstract—aids to help express what your character feels—or wholly within the fiction—actual in-game letters (or emails, wall-graffiti, songs, any sort of text, really) that the characters write and deliver. After all, vampires often cling to old, romantic trappings in order to rekindle within themselves the emotions they once felt before the Embrace. An ancilla or an elder might have grown up writing and receiving love-letters from paramours, while a younger vampire might simply find the practice charming.

When writing in-character love letters, it might help to keep the following tips in mind:

- **Approach the letter just like any other character moment:** When you play out a conversation, you most likely put yourself in your character's shoes. Writing a letter is no different. Use the roleplaying skills you've practiced at the table: think about what words and idioms your character would use, what references they might make, what tone they'd employ.
- **There's no pressure:** You're roleplaying, after all. You, the player, can't melt into the shadows, take over minds, or transform into animals, but you pretend frequently that your character can. Similarly, you can pretend that you're a poetic, romantic, letter-writer. You don't actually have to be any good.
- **Other players are there to support you:** Your vampire character is probably much more



smooth, or sexy, or intimidating, or observant (or so many other things) than you are in real life: that fiction is supported by other players, who behave as if your character is all those things. In fact, the gaming group really only has one job: to maintain the fiction you're creating together. So if you want your letter to come across as epically romantic, or ghoulishly obsessive, or sophomorically tentative, just tell the other players that! Announce what tone your character is conveying in your letter, and other players can easily roleplay their responses.

- **Lean into tropes:** You're playing **Vampire: The Masquerade**, after all. Roleplaying can get a lot of mileage from slipping into the familiar, the tropey, and the cliché; well-worn tropes help guide the stories and experiences we want to play. So go ahead and use all the romantic clichés you can think of, no matter how cringey. Compare the object of your affection to a summer's day, wax lyrical about the moonlight on their skin, or how *no vitae* tastes sweeter than their kiss. Remember, you can always just tell the players the tone your character is trying to achieve (and have a good laugh about romance tropes!)
- **You don't need to write a novel:** Even if your character is illuminating reams of parchment with ardent professions of love, a short note on your part can convey the general idea and tone. You can even leave your note unfinished: a "..." can do so much heavy lifting!

Tools

The simplest way to use letters and notes in play is to write them out by hand or on your computer and bring them to the game. You can print them out or even show them on the screen.

If you want more sophistication in your letter-writing, you can make physical props. Imitate the graphic design of a printed email, the letterhead of a fictional organization from your game or the handwriting of a specific character. You can even experiment with different types of paper, as available anywhere stationery is sold. A thicker, heavier paper communicates class and quality.

If you submerge ordinary paper in coffee or tea and then dry it out, you can make it look old.

Online tools such as Google Drive can be useful for distributing the letters you create. If all participants have access to a shared Drive folder, you'll have all the props and messages drafted during your chronicle in one place for easy reference. For short messages, you can use any instant messenger service to discreetly send a quick-and-dirty note to another player, in-game or not.

The Second Inquisition means that *Kindred* avoid electronic communications. This means that as the Storyteller, you can write letters to the players' characters and have them delivered during play. You can ask players to read the letters they receive aloud so everyone can share in the experience.

Letters and even video messages can also be a way to include more players or have missing players be present during a session. Perhaps one participant in your chronicle is playing remotely by letter, representing a mentor the others often call upon for advice. They send letters which are then read during play. Or a player who had to miss a session can send a video message from their character, giving context to what they're doing during the session's activities.

Letters from the Loving Dead

Here are some example letters (and other communications) that you can adapt or use as examples:

A NERVOUS STRING OF TEXT MESSAGES SENT BY A THIN-BLOOD

- Hey! Hope you're doing okay!
- I was just wondering if you'd wanna maybe hunt together sometime this week? Maybe Thursday or Friday?
- I'm really curious about your technique.
- Like not in a weird way. I'm just curious.
- This is actually me asking you out on a date.
- Fuck, sorry, I hope That wasn't too forward.
- You can totally say no.
- Sorry, you don't need me to tell you that you can say no, you obviously can.
- Shit, I sound like a psycho with all these texts. Sorry. Lemme know?

A Note to a Beautiful Mortal Sent by an Obsessed Toreador Ancilla

Lucas,

O Muse of Beauty, Lucas!

To say that you have bewitched my senses would be inadequate to describe how thoroughly you have captivated me. The moment I laid eyes on you—no, the moment I felt your soul approach, for that is the strength of your soul, radiant like the solstice moon—I knew that you would be precious to me. Your eyes are glorious pools of mystery in which I one day hope to drown. Your skin is the burnished copper with which my most private dreams are reinforced. Your lips...to feel the touch of your lips I would ransom nations, kingdoms, empires!

I desire you—I need you—I thirst for you! Be mine, Lucas! Let me worship your footsteps with light kisses; let me bask in the breath you leave behind; let me bathe in the shadows you cast! Yours is the one name I wish to spill from my mouth each night—yours and that of no one else.

I will visit you tomorrow night, at your residence, so that, as you do to me, I may inspire in you a passion that would eclipse all the longings of the celestial poets! Tomorrow, the heady scent of your embrace will intoxicate me—and I relish the delirium.

*Ardently Yours,
An Admirer*

A MESSAGE SCRAWLED ONTO A CRUMPLED BIT OF TORN PAPER, THRUST INTO YOUR HAND BY A RUMPLED GANGREL

*Not gonna play games.
You're fucking amazing. You fire me up in all the right places. I think about how you would squeal when my tongue runs all over your body. I dream about you tying me down and just fucking go nuts on me.
If you feel the same way, we should taste each other sometime.
You know where to find me.*

A TEXT FROM A CAITIFF

-Hey there! I just wanted to say I think you're extremely cute and I wondered if you'd like to hang out sometime? I know this is painfully mortal of me, but, lol, what's the point of immortality if you don't take the time to enjoy it?

-We could do something equally mortal like a movie date? They're showing The Good, The Bad and the Ugly at this indie cinema I like, and well, I was an assistant on that movie's set decades ago. Did you know the Prince in LA at that time wanted to Embrace Clint Eastwood, despite the disaster that might have been for his precious Masquerade?

-Anyway, just thought you might want to relive some pre-Embrace nostalgia with me: old fashioned date and everything. I'd offer to buy you dinner, but I think our food-acquisition styles are a bit different!

-Let me know! I don't want to make this weird, so I won't bother you if you decline or even ghost me!

A NEATLY TYPED NOTE FROM A VENTRUE ANCILLA

*Dear Max,
I find you rather intriguing.
It would please me to get to know you better. I'll take you to the theatre next week. I'll let you pick the play—but please, no musicals.
I suspect that a warmer relationship could be advantageous for the both of us, on many fronts. We can discuss details after the play.
Yours affectionately,*

XXX

AN EMAIL FROM A BRUJAH NEONATE

Hey J,

Couldn't help but notice you the other day. I mean, you were hard to miss. Has anyone ever told you that you're pretty kick-ass?

Fuck, seeing you do what you did...made my blood all hot, you know? In a way that I haven't felt in a VERY long time. I didn't know if I wanted you, wanted to BE you, wanted to EAT you...like, you made all my thoughts & feelings stretch and contort like saltwater taffy at a state fair.

(Remember those? Haven't been to one in decades, hell.)

And it's not just shallow infatuation. Sure I find you hot. Anyone would. But it's more than that. I respect you. I admire you. I might even say that I UNDERSTAND you. Have you ever found someone who really UNDERSTANDS you? Someone who can peek into one of the dark corners of the maze that is your soul (or whatever it is that sits in our bodies as Kindred) and actually sees something among the shadows? I think I can be that person for you. And you for me.

I really, REALLY want to see you again. Humour me? Who knows, we could change the world together.

-XXX

(I was joking about the "eating you" part. Okay, half-joking)

A MESSAGE SCRAWLED ONTO A WALL, BY A MALKAVIAN NEONATE

I—

WASP-STUNG,

WIDE-EYED

HEART-BOUND—

SEE YOU.

I SEE YOU WINGED IN BLOOD.

NOT VITAE—TRAPPED BY PRETTY WORDS AND LAWS AND CUSTOMS AND BLINDNESS—

BUT BLOOD—FREE, RAW, HOT, PASSIONATE.

I SEE CROWNED IN SHADOWS,

THICK AS STORM CLOUDS,

DARK AS THE INSIDE OF A MAN'S THOUGHTS,

DANCING LIKE RAVENS OVER A GRAVE

I SEE—

BEAUTYMADNESSLUSTGLORYSACREDDELIGHTSTRENGTH

MAY I SEE YOU MORE?

A LETTER HANDWRITTEN IN CRIMSON INK BY A TREMERE WARLOCK, DELIVERED
BY A STRANGELY VACANT GHOUL

My Dear Rose,

May I take a moment to enthuse about how pleasant it was to make your acquaintance at our last social gathering? I seldom have the pleasure of such inspiring company. Your wit, your knowledge of the world, your keen observations, and other amiable qualities (with which I shall not bore you by repeating) were a true delight. You are a credit to your clan, and indeed, to Kindred society as a whole in our humble city.

May I be so bold as to request the pleasure of your company on the night of the 15th? My Sire is hosting a ball, and you would honour me as my companion for the evening.

If you condescend to grant me this honour, you may simply hand a note to this ghoul, who will seek me out. He will dissolve within the hour if you do not, whereupon I will graciously accept your polite refusal of me and refrain from future overtures.

Your servant,

XXX

**A Voice Message (Perhaps on an Old-Fashioned Cassette Tape?)
From a Nosferatu Ancilla**

You don't know me. It is unlikely you've even heard of me. The rest of Kindred society don't like to talk about topics they consider unclean.

Apologies, that was not an auspicious start to what I'm hoping will be a pleasant message. Do not be alarmed. I simply meant to convey that I'm going to keep my identity shrouded for a little while longer. Forgive me, but that is a precaution I'm accustomed to taking—please excuse this lowly Sewer Rat her faults!

You see I have grown to...admire you from afar. Your grace. Your stunning competence. The way your hair moves in the breeze. The way your voice resonates across open spaces. The way your fingers...no that's verging on what the kine might call "creepy"...

Ah...now I fear that you're picturing some sort of lecher stalking you from the darkness, fondling herself while leering at your every movement. I don't really have a way of disabusing you from this notion apart from these mere words! I am no pervert, using the shadows to mask my dark desires. I am simply...

A woman. A vampire, yes, a cured one, yes...but still just a woman. I have not fallen so far that I don't consider myself a woman anymore. Or so I'd like to think anyway.

I am a woman, admiring you from afar and I would like to continue to do so for a little while longer—just a little while longer—before making myself known to you.

Because in the twisted, blackened heart that languishes in the prison of my ribcage, I have finally felt the blush of...dare I say...love?

Rules of Desire

Most stories of romance require nothing more than the basic rules of **Vampire: The Masquerade**. The Storyteller should review these optional abilities and Advantages from the perspective of how they want the game to be focused. Using or not using any of them helps make the game into the experience you want it to be.

If you're uncertain about a specific mechanic, discuss it among the troupe and get a feel for how you see it impacting the game. You can then decide together whether to use it or not.

Merits and Flaws

Each of these merits and flaws have been designed to allow for specific types of **Vampire** play.

Looks

The way you want to play sex varies wildly between different chronicles and troupes. Some prefer to fade to black, others focus on the most vampiric aspects of mutual blood drinking. This merit is designed to allow for more mortal-style sex.

•• OR •••• UP ALL NIGHT

Not all Kindred resemble walking corpses as they lose themselves to the Beast. For purposes of the Blush of Life, eating or drinking, and sexual intercourse, treat your Humanity score as one point higher than it is (maximum 10), or two points higher if this merit was purchased for 4 dots. Nosferatu cannot select this merit, and Hecata can only select it as a two-dot merit. This merit doesn't combine with others that treat your Humanity as higher: if you have multiple ways to treat your humanity as higher than it is, choose the most effective one in any situation.

Psychological

Some stories of desire include a fixation on or obsession with another character. The merits below allow you to portray obsessed characters. Work

with the storyteller to determine when a new story begins based on the narrative being told and your intentions with the character.

• SOOTHED BEAST

Choose a storyteller character as your obsession. Once per session when in the presence of your obsession, you can choose to ignore one Bestial Failure or Messy Critical. If this character dies you immediately gain three Stains, but can choose a new obsession at the beginning of the next session.

• FALSE LOVE

Choose a storyteller character as your obsession. When in their presence, treat your Humanity as one dot higher (max 10) for purposes of the Blush of Life, eating or drinking, and sexual intercourse. If this character dies you immediately gain three Stains, but can choose a new obsession at the beginning of the next session. This merit doesn't combine with others that treat your Humanity as higher: if you have multiple ways to treat your humanity as higher than it is, choose the most effective one in any situation.

Supernatural

The Blood Bond is in many ways the antithesis of love. Instead of genuine emotion, the Blood enforces its own affiliations in your mind. Because of this, the Blood Bond may create any number of complicated situations in stories of romance.

TWO MASTERS (• FLAW)

You can be Blood Bound to two individuals at the same time. This may cause no end of trouble if your character is prone to drinking the Blood of other Kindred for recreational reasons. The Storyteller should disallow this Flaw if Blood Bonds are unlikely to be an issue for the player character.

Disciplines

Players may find the following options useful in telling stories of romance, tragedy, and personal horror. Note *Le Sang de l'Amor* was previously published in *Blood Sigils*, but it's too appropriate to not include here.

Obfuscate

Level 2

Doubletalk

Amalgam: Auspex 1

Whereas most Kindred use the powers of Obfuscate to hide objects or their own actions, some Kindred use it to mask their speech. The user can say one thing and secretly convey another to a specific person without bystanders being none the wiser.

This is the power to use when flirting with the Prince's boyfriend right in front of her face.

Cost: 1 Rouse Check

System: The Kindred adds a secret message (up to one sentence) to their words that only a single intended listener can hear. Anyone else present only picks up the message if they can beat the user's Composure + Obfuscate with their Wits + Auspex.

Duration: One utterance.

Oblivion Ceremony

Level 2

Maw of Ahriman

Mystics of the Abyss draw its void inside their own bodies, holding it there ever-ready to smother the very motivation of a another person. The Ceremony's effect can be used to spring a rather nasty surprise on a sex partner, making it possible to use it in situations where the victim is seduced with malign intentions.

Ingredients: A room that no light enters and is quiet as the grave.

Process: The vampire performing the Ceremony contemplates the darkness and the silence, then unleashes their voice as loudly as possible, casting it out to make room for the darkness of the Abyss.

System: The vampire's player makes a Ceremony roll. The character's mouth or another orifice becomes a void of inky blackness, destroying inanimate objects

placed within in a matter of seconds.

For the duration of the Ceremony, the character cannot speak if the power was used on the mouth, as it most commonly is. A bite attack deals 1 aggravated point of Willpower damage in addition to the fang damage. The vampire is unable to slake Hunger while this Ceremony is in effect, though, as any blood swallowed is annihilated.

The Ceremony lasts until sunrise or the vampire cancels it. Canceling the Ceremony requires the character to pay in flesh: they must stick a small portion of their body into an orifice, dealing 1 point of Superficial damage which cannot be reduced in any way as a bit of flesh is consumed by the Abyss. It can be mended normally.

Presence

Level 4

Wingman

The Kindred's Presence can be extended to another subject, helping in all sorts of situations from tense negotiations to hitting the town in search of romance, prey, or both.

Cost: One Rouse Check in addition to power used

System: As a full action and with an additional Rouse Check, the user can provide the benefits of one of their Presence powers to another willing vampire, using the Presence rating and Blood Potency bonus of the vampire using Wingman.

If the subject also possesses Presence, use the higher of the bonuses but not both. The subject cannot gain the benefit of the same Presence power twice. The vampire using Wingman cannot use the same power on themselves while extending it to another subject. Both the user or the subject must be visible to anyone affected by the extended power.

Duration: As power used.

Protean

Level 2

Serpent's Kiss

The Kindred's fangs grow longer and hollow, allowing them to inject a bit of their own blood in return while they feed or bite in combat. Some use their Kiss to subtly start a Blood Bond, while others use it to administer harsh poison.

Cost: One Rouse Check

System: When the Kindred bites or kisses another, they may make a Rouse check to force some of their own vitae into their victim. The victim of the bite or kiss is treated as though they tasted the Kindred's Blood for purposes of the Blood Bond, learning a Discipline Power, becoming a Ghoul, or other effects of imbibing blood.

If the Kindred's Blood normally or temporarily has deleterious effects, those are passed on to the victim as well. Additionally, Blood Sorcerers can use powers such as Scorpion's Touch or Baal's Caress via their bite, much to the surprise of those they Kiss.

The effect lasts for a Scene.

Note: Troupes using the alternate Banu Haqim clan Bane, Noxious Blood, presented in the Players Guide (p. 56) may find this power would trigger that Bane in a mortal bitten or Kissed. For this or similar rules interactions, players should discuss their goals with their Storyteller to determine if the combination of options is appropriate for the chronicle, as Banes should never provide an advantage.

Level 2

The False Sip

Amalgam: Fortitude 1

The vampire's mastery of their own form can prevent any blood (or Blood) swallowed from entering their system, allowing them to avoid poisoning or the forming of Blood Bonds.

Cost: One Rouse Check

System: The character must activate this power immediately upon consuming blood from any source. The user is able to keep the blood down, but it doesn't enter their system nor slake any Hunger, though the user can taste it. No other blood or vitae can be consumed during this time. The Kindred has one scene to vomit the blood back up, otherwise it enters their system. The effect can be extended to another scene by a second Rouse Check.

Duration: One scene or more

Blood Sorcery

Level 3

Ripples of the Heart

The vampire can alter the Resonance of blood, or even implant intense emotions causing a compulsion.

Cost: One Rouse Check

System: The vampire chooses to affect their own Blood, or the blood of a mortal or Kindred from whom they are feeding. Choose any compulsion (including a clan compulsion). The next Kindred to drink the altered blood is affected by that compulsion. In a mortal, the blood remains altered for one month. In a vampire, the blood remains altered until they reach Hunger 5 or one month has passed, whichever happens first. The user of this power does not suffer its effects.

Alternatively, the user may augment or reduce the target's blood Resonance. The user may reduce the target's blood Resonance from acute to intense, intense to fleeting, or fleeting to none. A Kindred may augment a Resonance only from fleeting to intense. The change is instantaneous, but not necessarily long-lasting as blood Resonance naturally changes and can be further influenced. Typically the Resonance of mortal blood has changed again after a few days, a week at the most.



Blood Sorcery Ritual

Level 2

Le Sang de l'Amour

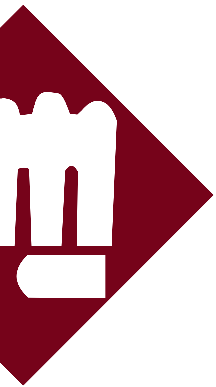
This ritual allows the caster to create a connection between themselves and a lover that's more than just their mutual attraction.

Ingredients: Blood of the caster and their lover, two glass vials on chains (or leather thongs).

Process: The caster collects their own blood and their lover's at the same time, careful to keep the two separate. They don't need much blood—only a teaspoonful. The only requirement: both must desire the other at the time of the casting. The caster seals the two blood samples inside the vials, hanging each from a chain. As the lovers exchange vials and hang them around their necks, the caster sings a song in praise of their lover to Aphrodite, Ishtar or another love or lust deity.

System: With a win on the Ritual test, le Sang de l'Amour allows both participants to concentrate (Resolve + Awareness) and know approximately where the other is on a success. They don't get an exact location, but have a rough sense of distance—in the same city, the same state, across

the ocean from each other. With more successes, they get more information, small details of the sensation of being in the other's location: they feel a deck pitching up and down, the strain of climbing harsh terrain, or the vibration of loud noise. With a critical win, the ritual provides one automatic success on the lover's perception roll. Any other successes let them actually see brief glimpses of their lover and their surroundings, and even hear snatches of conversation. On a total failure, the blood accidentally mixes in the vials and both participants get disoriented and confused if they try to concentrate on the other. Their Composure suffers, reducing by 1 until the end of the next scene even if they break both vials and end the ritual. The ritual only remains effective as long as both wear their partner's vial and as long as the vials remain unbroken. If one of the participants does not actually desire the other during the ritual (if a player, they should state as much privately to the Storyteller), their vial dries and clots the first time they use it, becoming useless muck. This has no adverse effect on the two participants beyond the personal fallout. ■





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