

THE PLAGUE EMPIRE

A ROMAN
QUICK START
FOR UNDYING



THE PLAGUE EMPIRE

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Special thanks to Daniele Di Rubbo and Antonio Amato for help
with historical references and impressions about Mithraism.

HISTORY AS WE KNOW IT

Rome 162 AD. The Empire, after reaching the apex of its territorial expansion under the lead of the emperor Traianus in 117 AD., is coming to an end. After a half century of peace, wealth, and development in artistic, urbanistic, cultural, and scientific fields, the specter of war looms once again over Rome, now ruled by emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, brothers in law. The failure of pointless diplomatic politics with the Germanic peoples in the north is about to unleash the barbarian invasions that will so greatly mark Roman history.

Meanwhile to the east, the Parthians, by ravaging the Roman territories of Syria, Cappadocia, and Armenia, force the two emperors to launch a campaign of retaliation. Lucius Verus, driven by Marcus Aurelius, leaves Rome with his armies to recapture these lands and more, up to the enemy's capital, but at a price. The plague outbreak in the last year of the campaign forces the troops to leave the territories just reconquered. The armies bring the plague home with them, which unleashes a contagion that will be referred to as Antonine Plague.

More than two thousand people will die every day and at least four times that will be newly infected. The Roman army will be decimated, allowing the Germanic tribes to score unprecedented victories. The plague will cripple the Empire for twenty years.

ABOUT THE SYBIL

The Sybil is a new playbook introduced in this quick start. It's a female only playbook named after the sybils, Roman maidens gifted with cryptic, prophetic skills from the god Apollo himself. If you want to use this playbook in your setting and make it gender neutral, just rename it "The Seer." No other changes are required.

BEFORE YOU START

- ◆ Briefly describe the setting.
- ◆ Let your players choose their playbook, humanity trait, and heritage.
- ◆ Let your players introduce their characters and describe their look as well.
- ◆ Together, browse the Lore Moves sheet, focusing on the one created specifically for this setting (Plague). If someone highlighted an aspect of predator nature not covered by the suggested moves, create custom lore to cover it.
- ◆ Take some time to define ambitions and agendas for plebeian characters not chosen as PCs. Suggest that players new to the game should skim the basic moves and playbook moves. For players with the Nightmare, Puppet Master, Sensualist, or Wolf playbooks, ask them to read and define their playbook moves: "Blood Slave," "Business as Usual," "Idol," and "Pack."

INTRODUCTION

Healthy prey are now a rarity. Unscrupulous predators feed on the diseased, spreading even further contagion. Those starving predators who have lost their minds, go for the throat of their brethren.

GM, read this to your players:

The plague has spread to the city of Rome. It spread from house to house faster than the gossip about it, despite the precautions and offerings to the Lares* for salvation. Neither magic nor medicine seem to stop it. Rumors among the nobles say that even Galen (respected scholar, physician, and writer at the time) is helpless at confronting the plague. He just takes note of the events to leave a written witness for posterity. Where did it come from? Is it caused by magic? Or is it the punishment of the gods? This disease does not concern you directly, of course... but what will happen to the predator without prey?

You wake up for the night, spend 1 **BLOOD**.

You emerge from your sanctum. Along roadsides, prey lie feverish and covered with pustules. Many have already died. The smell of burnt bodies lingers... The most erudite citizens burn corpses in their courtyards, while the fearful watch them from their homes.

Choose two options below or spend blood 1-for-1 to avoid choosing. Only the options you choose are true.

- ◆ Your hunting grounds are being poached by other predators: reduce its abundance tag by 1.
- ◆ Your hunting grounds are given up to paranoia and superstition: reduce its awareness tag by 1.
- ◆ Your hunting grounds are in the midst of a plague outbreak: reduce its abundance tag by 1.

If your hunting grounds' abundance tag is reduced below 0, then your hunting grounds are now barren.

After the players have made their choices and noted their updated hunting grounds tags, go on to read the prompt.

* The Lares were ancestors, minor deities in ancient Roman religion, watching over the family, the property, and businesses.

THE PROMPT

GM, read this to your players:

Walking your way through the corpses and the desperate live ones begging for help, you reach the center of Rome. The streets, always crowded with prey until well after dark, are now nearly deserted. Many taverns and brothels, normally lively at this hour, are instead shut tight. Still unsure of how to deal with the situation, you meet each other in the area of the Forum.

Now choose a prompt to start:

PROMPT 1. Cries for help from Claudia, **PATRICIAN** and progeny of the **PRINCEPS**, draw your attention to the courtyard of a nearby villa. A NPC **PLEBEIAN** predator is at her throat: the GM decides who (Priscus is the best candidate as aggressor: **REGICIDE** move). The first one to step to her rescue will gain a **MAJOR DEBT**, for sure!

PROMPT 2. The **PRINCEPS** has been murdered! A **PATRICIAN** offers a **MAJOR DEBT** to anyone able to capture the offender. The first suspects are predators owing the prince, or anyone with **GRUDGES** against him.

PROMPT 3. A large leper hospital has opened in the slums; prey showing infection symptoms are treated there.

- ◆ *Is a predator behind this?*
- ◆ *Is a predator in search of easy prey that offer themselves on a platter?*
- ◆ *Is some other dark force behind this?*

This prompt is about Rufus' agenda. It's an important tool in case you are short on time and you need to resolve the crisis, or if you are playing a demo or con game.

PROMPT 4. Hints make the PCs aware that a predator is secretly poaching healthy prey from a PC's **HUNTING GROUNDS**, the GM decides who.

- ◆ *Prey are aware of people disappearing everywhere in the city, one blames a PC for kidnapping a relative or a loved one.*
- ◆ *Claudia doesn't seem to be concerned at all about the scarcity of prey, even offering blood to other predators... for a price.*
- ◆ *Prey related to a PC vanishes: a retainer, lover, employee, supporter, pawn or even a blood slave.*

PROMPT 5. The plague has spread to rural areas behind the city walls anew. Starving predators aim to conquer more central and populated **HUNTING GROUNDS** for themselves. PC's are at risk of having their **HUNTING GROUNDS** encroached and being pushed out to the countryside (-1 **ABUNDANCE**, -1 **PROXIMITY**).

IMPRESSIONS

- ◆ *The temples and the marble columns in the city center. A bronze statue of the Emperor on horseback in the middle of a deserted square.*
- ◆ *The high, oppressive condos in the slums; the loft shops on the first floor; the frequent collapses and fires.*
- ◆ *The patrol of Vigiles, soldiers instructed in safety and fire prevention (ancestors of both the modern fire brigade and local police), on the roads.*
- ◆ *The contrast between the wealth of the nobles, in their houses with inner courtyards, and the plebeians, crammed into condos, the poorest on the upper floors.*
- ◆ *The pyres of corpses; the revolting smell of burning flesh and hair.*
- ◆ *The drunkards leaving the taverns, dragging themselves through the alleys in the night.*
- ◆ *The evicted families sleeping at the edges of the roads after failing to renew their rents.*
- ◆ *The criminals, pickpockets, and prostitutes in the streets.*
- ◆ *The soldiers who are going underground to join rites in honor to a divinity of the lands of the East.*
- ◆ *The blood from sacrifices, which invades the drainage ditches of the basement of a patrician palace.*
- ◆ *The men who re-emerge from underground chambers, drying their bloodstained lips off and holding object wrapped up in red drapes.*

PROMPTS FOR FUTURE CRISES

- ◆ *166 A.D. - 476 A.D. Barbarian invasions and fall of the Western Roman Empire (GM downtime move: War)*
- ◆ *568 A.D. - Emperor Justinian has been dead for barely one year, when a new enemy is standing on the horizon: the Lombards, lead by their king Alboin. Ancient potentates wane and new opportunities arise (GM downtime move: Conquest).*
- ◆ *1095 - 1099 Pope Urban II calls for the first crusade (GM downtime move: Conquest)*
- ◆ *1252 The Holy Inquisition opens hunt for witchcraft (GM downtime move: Death)*
- ◆ *1346 - 1353 The Black Death ravages Europe (GM downtime move: Judgement)*

CHARACTERS

NPCS



AVGVSTVS

THE PUPPETMASTER - MAJOR NPC

STATUS

Princeps

AMBITION

To preserve the status quo

AGENDA

- ◆ To Ruin Priscus to limit damage he can do.
- ◆ To ensure more influence over the sybil.
- ◆ To cement his influence on the community.
 - ◆ To understand Rufus' agenda.

GRUDGES

Enemy (Priscus)

HUNTING GROUNDS

Abundance (3), Awareness (2), Proximity (3)
III - Isis et Serapis (Flavian Amphitheatre - the Colosseum)
X - Palatinum

BLOOD

○○○○○ ○○○○ ○○○○



RVFVS

THE NIGHTMARE - MAJOR NPC

STATUS

Patrician

AMBITION

To depose Augustus, proving his failure to deal with the community's crisis.

AGENDA

- ◆ To run a big leper hospital in the slums.
 - ◆ To stockpile the blood of 200+ prey
- ◆ To perform a dark ritual of blood to defeat the plague.

HUNTING GROUNDS

Abundance (2), Awareness (2), Proximity (2)
IV - Tempium Pacis (Suburra - the slums)
VI - Alta Semita
(Castra Praetoria - barracks of the Praetorian Guard)

BLOOD

○○○○○ ○○○○ ○○○○



CLAVDIA

THE SENSUALIST - MAJOR NPC

STATUS

Patrician

AMBITION

To tighten her grip on the community, preparing the ground to depose Augustus.

AGENDA

- ◆ To gather her herd from among the healthy prey.
- ◆ To offer blood to predators in need, capitalizing on their debts.
 - ◆ To keep an eye on Rufus' activities to discredit him

GRUDGES

Rival (Rufus)

HUNTING GROUNDS

Abundance (2), Awareness (1), Proximity (3)
VIII - Forum Romanum
(Roman Forum - City square, center of Roman public life)

BLOOD

○○○○○ ○○○○ ○○○○

CHARACTERS AS NPCs



TVLLIVS

THE PUPPETMASTER - MINOR NPC

STATUS

Plebeian

AMBITION

AGENDA

GRUDGES

HUNTING GROUNDS

Abundance (2), Awareness (1), Proximity (2)

XI - Circus Maximus (He runs a brothel here)

XIII - Aventinus (Emporium, the first river port of Rome)

BLOOD

○○○○○ ○○○○



PRISCVS

THE DEVIL - MINOR NPC

STATUS

Plebeian

AMBITION

AGENDA

GRUDGES

Enemy (Augustus)

Enemy (Rufus)

HUNTING GROUNDS

Abundance (1), Awareness (2), Proximity (1)

IX - Circus Flaminius (hippodrome)

BLOOD

○○○○○ ○○○○



HORATIVS

THE NIGHTMARE - EXTRA NPC

STATUS

Plebeian

AMBITION

AGENDA

GRUDGES

Rival (Rufus)

HUNTING GROUNDS

Abundance (1), Awareness (2), Proximity (1)

V - Esquiliae

BLOOD

○○○○○

CHARACTERS AS NPCs



PORTIVUS

THE SENSUALIST - EXTRA NPC

STATUS

Plebeian

AMBITION

AGENDA

GRUDGES

HUNTING GROUNDS

Abundance (2), Awareness (1), Proximity (1)

XII - Piscina Publica (Public baths)

BLOOD

OOOOO



LVCIVUS

THE WOLF - EXTRA NPC

STATUS

Plebeian

AMBITION

AGENDA

GRUDGES

HUNTING GROUNDS

Abundance (1), Awareness (2), Proximity (1)

I - Porta Capena (City gate for the consular via Appia)

VII - Via Lata

BLOOD

OOOOO



LARTIA

THE SYBIL - EXTRA NPC

STATUS

Plebeian

AMBITION

AGENDA

GRUDGES

HUNTING GROUNDS

Abundance (1), Awareness (1), Proximity (2)

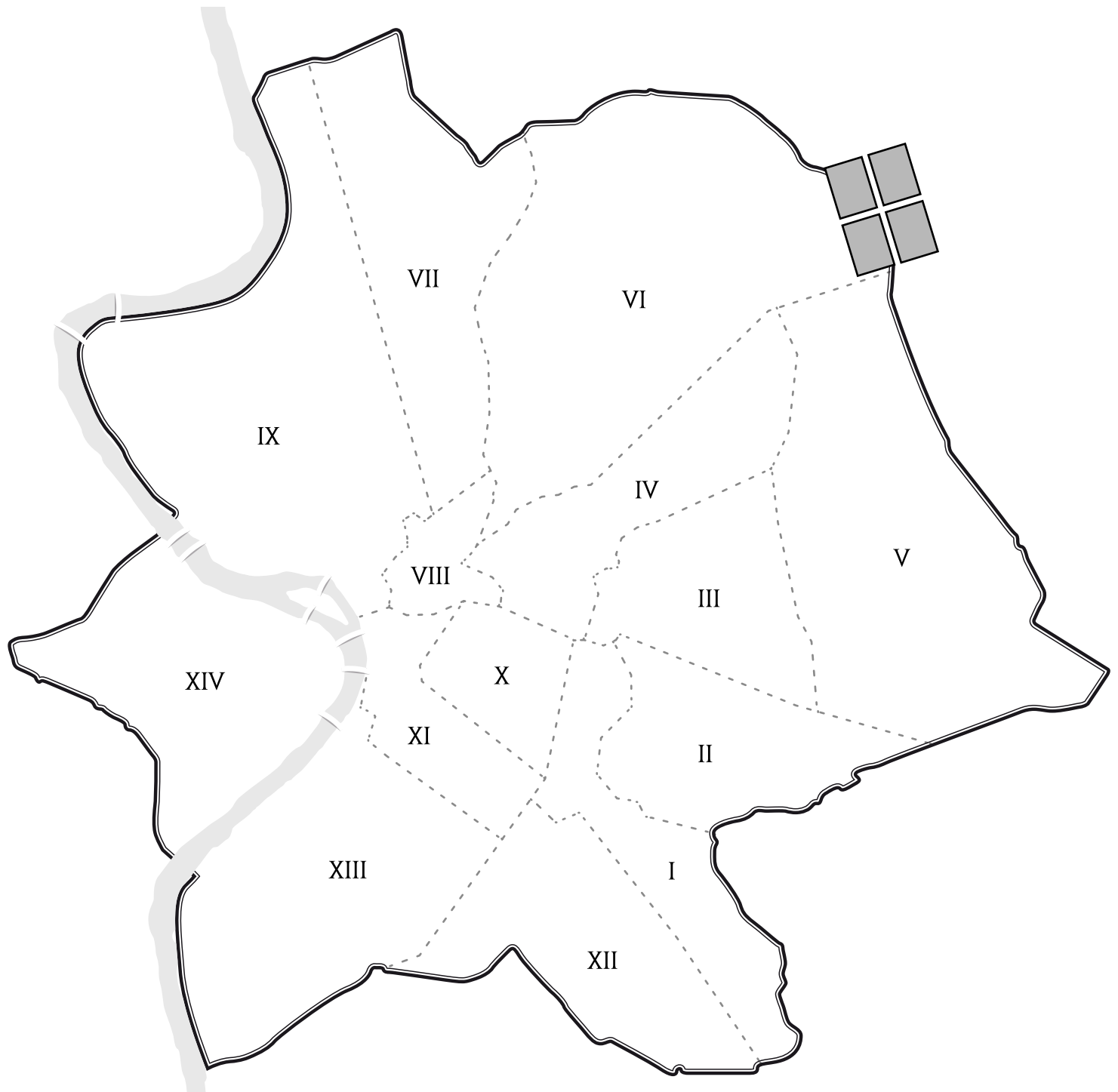
II - Caelimontium

XIV - Transtiberim (Tiberina island in the Tiber river)

BLOOD

OOOOO

- I - PORTA CAPENA
City gate for the consular Via Appia
- II - CAELIMONIVM
- III - ISIS ET SERAPIS
(Flavian Amphitheatre - the Colosseum)
- IV - TEMPLVM PACIS
(Suburra - the slums)
- V - ESQVILIAE
- VI - ALTA SEMITA
(Castra Praetoria - barracks of the Praetorian Guard)
- VII - VIA LATA
- VIII - FORVM ROMANVM
(Roman Forum - City square, center of Roman public life)
- IX - CIRCVS FLAMINIVM
- X - PALATINUM
- XI - CIRCVS MAXIMVS
- XII - PISCINA PVBLICA
(Public baths)
- XIII - AVENTINVS
(Emporium, the first river port of Rome)
- XIV - TRANSTIBERIM
(Insula Tiberina, island in the Tiber river)



PLAYBOOKS & REFERENCE SHEETS

PREDATOR CREATION

The GM introduces the game by describing the predator community and who's who among the NPCs. Then,

1. Each player picks a **PLAYBOOK**.
2. Record your character's **HERITAGE** (your background and culture) and **LOOK**.
3. Your character's social class is **PLEBEIAN** or **PARIAH**, you choose.
4. Each player chooses their starting humanity: **HUMANE**, **CALLOUS**, or **MONSTROUS** (this determines your humanity trait and max blood).
5. Each player exchanges **DEBT**. Each debt owed should be described in a few words – enough to get the gist. These entanglements are also recorded on the relationship map.

Say which predator you owe a **MAJOR DEBT** to. They really came through for you, but, now you're under their thumb.

Say which predator owes you a **MINOR DEBT**. The minor debt owed is business as usual, but business nonetheless.

6. Identify which of the predators on the relationship map is your character's **MAKER** (the predator who created your character), you are their **CHOSEN**. Next to your maker's name, write "maker of..." your character's name. A PC may be your chosen or maker, if you both agree to it. If none of the characters on the R-Map appeal to you, talk to the GM about it. After that, decide if you are **REBELLIOUS** or **DOCILE**. If you are rebellious, the GM creates a grudge for your maker that's aimed at you. You are now their rival.
7. The GM describes your hunting grounds and assigns the **ABUNDANCE**, **PROXIMITY**, and **AWARENESS** tags. The GM tells you where your hunting grounds are, what they are like, and introduces a rival who envies you.
8. You start play with **BLOOD** equal to your humanity + 7. You will spend 1 blood to wake for the evening.



THE DEVIL

The Devil wears sin as a badge of honor. They are strong, resolute, and deadly—and the Devil makes a point of letting everyone know it. With that power comes darkness.

UNDYING

NAME _____

HERITAGE _____

MAKER _____

LOOK _____

STATUS

You become a patrician when established in the fiction or when you trigger the *regicide* move.

REGICIDE: When you destroy a patrician, you take their place as patrician. Your new peers become your rivals, and you make enemies of predators your victim owed major debts to. What goes around comes around: other predators start openly plotting your destruction to gain your title as you have done.

You lose patrician status when another predator challenges your dominance and you yield.



I OWE

DEBT

OWED TO ME

HUMANITY

3 HUMANE
 10 max. blood

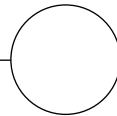
2 CALLOUS
 12 max. blood

1 MONSTROUS
 15 max. blood

0 LOST
 20 max. blood

BLOOD

3 OR LESS:
STARVING



SPECIAL DOWNTIME MOVES

MURDER: Slay a NPC predator whose status is less than or equal to yours. Any predators they owed minor debts to become your rivals and any predators they owed major debts to become your enemies.

STRONG-ARM: Take hunting grounds from a predator whose status is lower than or equal to yours. Increase the abundance of your hunting grounds by one, and you may swap your hunting grounds' proximity tag with theirs. The abundance of their hunting grounds reduces by one, and they become your rival.

THE DEVIL

COLD BLOODED

When you **FIGHT** another predator and spend at least **5 BLOOD**, add 1 to the result. When you tie for most **BLOOD** spent, you win instead.

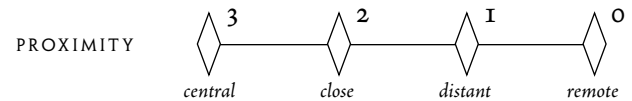
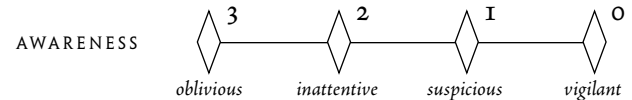
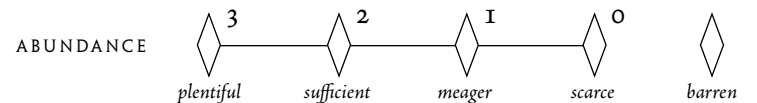
BAD COMPANY

When you exploit your prey's want or vice, spend **1 BLOOD** to sink your hooks into them. They need you for fulfillment and they come to you with a junkie's zeal. When they do, you may give them satisfaction: make any demand within their power to fulfill and they will gladly do it. Then you spend **1 BLOOD** to feed their need... for now

NOTES, MOVE DETAILS

HUNTING GROUNDS

LOCATION



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7. The GM describes your hunting grounds and assigns the **ABUNDANCE**, **PROXIMITY**, and **AWARENESS** tags. The GM tells you where your hunting grounds are, what they are like, and introduces a rival who envies you.
8. You start play with **BLOOD** equal to your humanity + 7. You will spend 1 blood to wake for the evening.



THE NIGHTMARE

The darkness is comforting, like a cloak of shadow. The Nightmare wears darkness as armor and wields it as sword. In bloody ritual, the Nightmare extinguishes life and hope, friends and rivals, with perverse joy.

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THE PUPPET MASTER

The Puppet Master controls not with corruption, nor with vice. No, the Puppet Master pulls the strings through their force of will, making the puppets dance to their tune

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THE SENSUALIST

The Sensualist feeds as much from the pleasures of the flesh as from the blood of their hapless prey. The Sensualist is intimate, deadly, and above all jaded. This vicious cycle pushes them ever toward depravity.

UNDYING

NAME _____

HERITAGE _____

MAKER _____

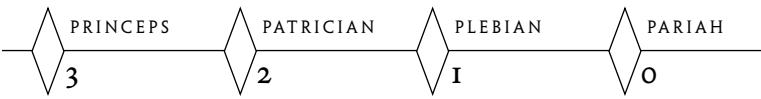
LOOK _____

STATUS

You become a patrician when established in the fiction or when you trigger the *bacchanal* move.

BACCHANAL: When you host a social event for predators that makes a spectacle of prey: blood, sex, revelry—the more debauched, the better—you gain patrician status and the other patricians become your rivals. The current patrician who, in the GMs estimation, is the least popular or most reclusive loses their patrician status and becomes your enemy.

You lose your patrician status when your popularity fades or when another predator upstages you. Fame is fleeting.



I OWE _____ DEBT _____ OWED TO ME _____

HUMANITY

3 HUMANE IO max. blood

2 CALLOUS I2 max. blood

I MONSTROUS I5 max. blood

O LOST 20 max. blood

BLOOD

3 OR LESS: STARVING

SPECIAL DOWNTIME MOVES

ENTERTAIN: Host a soiree on the brink of the pending crisis, earning you patrician status when nightly play resumes. You cause a patrician to lose their patrician status and they are now your enemy.

CULTIVATE: Gain an offering from your devotees or eliminate a trouble.

THE SENSUALIST

IDOL

Wherever you go, prey flock to you. You have devotees: a clique, groupies, cultists, etc. They love you, and they will do whatever they can to please you. Need **BLOOD**, no problem, but there's a catch. They gather around you because they need something from you that they can't get anywhere else. When you create your character, say what you offer them, then choose 2 offerings they give you in addition to **BLOOD** and 2 troubles.

◆ **OFFERINGS:** sex, drugs, secrets, worship, protection.

◆ **TROUBLES:** few in number, rivalries, distractions, commitments, newcomers.

The GM adds and removes offerings and troubles as established in the fiction. When your devotees worship your magnificence, the GM may add assets or remove liabilities to reflect this. When you abuse your devotees or fail to keep them captivated, the opposite.

WRAPPED AROUND YOUR FINGER

When you **MEDDLE** with or are meddled with by a predator who owes you debt, you may cash in your chips without spending **DEBT**. They're wrapped around your finger.

NOTES, MOVE DETAILS

HUNTING GROUNDS

LOCATION _____

ABUNDANCE

3 2 I O barren

plentiful sufficient meager scarce

AWARENESS

3 2 I O

oblivious inattentive suspicious vigilant

PROXIMITY

3 2 I O

central close distant remote

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THE WOLF

The Wolf lets loose a feral howl. It's a cry of freedom and independence and it's a warning to others that they not to be fucked with. But the wolf isn't alone, a chorus of howls echoes their call.

PREDATOR CREATION

The GM introduces the game by describing the predator community and who's who among the NPCs. Then,

1. Each player picks a **PLAYBOOK**.
2. Record your character's **HERITAGE** (your background and culture) and **LOOK**.
3. Your character's social class is **PLEBEIAN** or **PARIAH**, you choose.
4. Each player chooses their starting humanity: **HUMANE**, **CALLOUS**, or **MONSTROUS** (this determines your humanity trait and max blood).
5. Each player exchanges **DEBT**. Each debt owed should be described in a few words – enough to get the gist. These entanglements are also recorded on the relationship map.

Say which predator you owe a **MAJOR DEBT** to. They really came through for you, but, now you're under their thumb.

Say which predator owes you a **MINOR DEBT**. The minor debt owed is business as usual, but business nonetheless.

6. Identify which of the predators on the relationship map is your character's **MAKER** (the predator who created your character), you are their **CHOSEN**. Next to your maker's name, write "maker of..." your character's name. A PC may be your chosen or maker, if you both agree to it. If none of the characters on the R-Map appeal to you, talk to the GM about it. After that, decide if you are **REBELLIOUS** or **DOCILE**. If you are rebellious, the GM creates a grudge for your maker that's aimed at you. You are now their rival.
7. The GM describes your hunting grounds and assigns the **ABUNDANCE**, **PROXIMITY**, and **AWARENESS** tags. The GM tells you where your hunting grounds are, what they are like, and introduces a rival who envies you.
8. You start play with **BLOOD** equal to your humanity + 7. You will spend 1 blood to wake for the evening.



THE SYBIL

The Sybil leaves skirmishes and spites to other predators—when she wants power, she goes straight to the source. The folds of time hide no secrets from her and even the most powerful hang on her every word.

UNDYING: BASIC MOVES

WAKE

When you wake for the evening, time weighs heavily on you and your hunger is sharpened. Spend **1 BLOOD**. If you wake with fewer than **3 BLOOD**, you are starving when you awaken. If you have **0 BLOOD** when the sun sets, you cannot wake and remain in death-like repose until, by some providence, you consume at least **1 BLOOD**.

STARVE

When you have fewer than **3 BLOOD**, you are starving: the beast takes control and does everything in its power to slake its thirst. You lose control of yourself in the carnage, a spectator the havoc you cause. Torn, bloodless bodies are left in your wake. You are covered in the viscera of your victims. The streets now seem cold and deserted. The GM describes the situation you face after you've regained control of yourself and tells you what your objective facts you remember from your killing spree, if anything. Do the faces of the slain haunt you? The GM also decides you how much blood you now have: between **3 BLOOD** and your max blood.

HUNT

When you stalk prey, you track down and corner a victim. The GM describes them and how they try to escape you. You may choose a number of options up to your **STATUS**. Only the options chosen are true. If you hunt on your own hunting grounds, you may choose an additional option. You may choose one additional option for every **1 BLOOD** you spend on this move.

- ◆ *You stalk your victim quickly. They don't evade your clutches for long. (Only available on hunting grounds that aren't **SCARCE** or **BARREN**)*
- ◆ *You stifle your victim's screams to avoid spooking the prey. They aren't roused to action.*
- ◆ *You gently subdue your victim. They don't struggle against you.*
- ◆ *You deftly evade the prying eyes of your fellow predators. They don't confront or interfere with you.*

FEED

When you sink your fangs in and feed from your prey, you take **BLOOD** from them. You are intuitively aware of the physiological impact to your victim of each drop you take. Taking **1** or **2 BLOOD** leaves them tipsy. Taking **3 BLOOD** leaves them ill. Taking **4 BLOOD** leaves them in desperate need of medical attention. Taking **5 BLOOD** kills them. You may choose a number of options up to your **HUMANITY +1**. Only the options chosen are true.

- ◆ *You stop feeding when you want to. Choose how much blood you take.*
- ◆ *You resist the temptation to terrorize your prey and hurt them for sport or pleasure.*
- ◆ *You manipulate your prey's memories so they don't remember you in their nightmares.*
- ◆ *You heal close the wounds you left on your prey's body, concealing the tale tell signs of your predation.*

CAPTIVATE

When you captivate your prey, you mesmerize them with honeyed words or sensuous moves. They fall for you and want so desperately to please you. The higher your humanity, the deeper their fascination. Tell the prey what you want from them. The GM chooses a number of options below equal your **HUMANITY +1**. Only the options the GM chooses are true. For every **1 BLOOD** you spend on this move, the GM must choose one additional option.

- ◆ *Your prey does it eagerly.*
- ◆ *Your prey does it faithfully.*
- ◆ *Your prey exceeds your expectations.*
- ◆ *Your prey is still drawn to you.*

DOMINATE

When you intimidate your prey, they are frightened. When you attack your prey, they are killed or injured as you please. Your victims cannot resist your predation. They are your playthings. You decide what happens to them. If your victims are many or well-prepared, they may draw **BLOOD** in return: the GM may make the overwhelm a PC move in return.

FLAUNT

When you flaunt what your maker gave you and use supernatural predator abilities to your advantage, spend **1 BLOOD** and say what you do. This includes superhuman strength, speed, savvy, allure, intimidation, etc.

FIGHT

When you fight another predator, it's an ugly, desperate struggle for life and death. All warring predators bet as much **BLOOD** as they dare—in secret. Then, in unison, all predators reveal and spend the blood they bet. If multiple predators band together against another, they add their blood together as a single bet after revealing. The predator or band of predators who spends the most blood prevails.

Among the prevailing predators, the predator who spent the most blood decides the fate—life or death—of each predator involved in the conflict. If there's a tie, the GM decides each predator's fate. Each predator describes how they meet their fate.

Those who survive slink off into the night to lick their wounds.

To lose and be spared is utterly humiliating: you become a pariah. Custom dictates that you can have no place in predator society until you repay a major debt to the predator who spared you.

BARGAIN

When you bargain with a predator, describe the goods or services that you desire from them. They may refuse. If they refuse and you are higher in the pecking order than them, they become a pariah. If they accept your bargain, they may demand a new debt from you, demand that

you forgive a **DEBT** they currently owe you, or demand other goods or services in return. The terms are negotiated, but favor the predator that is higher in the pecking order. You are higher in the pecking order when...

- ◆ *Another move tells you so,*
- ◆ *Your status is higher than theirs,*
- ◆ *You are their maker,*
- ◆ *They owe you more major debts than you owe them, or*
- ◆ *They owe you more minor debts than you owe them.*

MEDDLER

When you interfere with another predator and they resist your machinations, you set in motion a high-stakes game where winner takes all. All meddling predators ante up by spending **1 BLOOD**. "Spend" means you spend blood now. "Bet" means you commit to spending blood if your bet is called. You can't bet blood you don't already have. The betting starts with a raise from the predator making the move and passes in turn to each predator involved in the struggle.

On your turn, choose one of the following options and say how you do it:

- ◆ **RAISE:** You escalate, turning the tables on your adversary. Bet more blood than your competitor, and say how you raise the stakes. If no one has raised yet, you must bet at least **1 BLOOD**. If someone has raised, you call first (see below) then raise with a bet of your own.
- ◆ **CALL:** You counter, stopping your adversary in their tracks. Say how you thwart them. When you call another predator's bet, you spend **BLOOD** equal to their bet. If they have not already spent the blood they committed to spend when they placed their bet, they spend that blood now.
- ◆ **FOLD:** You relent, accepting the consequences as established. Once you fold, you forfeit the opportunity to call or raise even if the betting continues. You are no longer a factor and cannot resist the other meddling predators until after the move is resolved.
- ◆ **CASH IN YOUR CHIPS:** Instead of spending **BLOOD** to call a meddling predator, you may forgive a **DEBT** they owe you. You may continue to call against that predator without spending any additional blood or debt until the move is resolved.

If multiple predators act together against another, they add their **BLOOD** bets together as a single bet and they place any future bets together.

If the conflict escalates to violence, you **FIGHT** them instead. Any **BLOOD** already spent in this move carries forward to your bet in **FIGHT**. Of course, you may add to your bet in the **FIGHT** move.

The move resolves when there is no further escalation—when everyone else calls or folds. If you have the highest bet on the table, you get what you want. If your bet is called (or vice versa), you both get something and give up something. If you fold, you lose.

UNDYING: GAME MASTER SHEET

GM PRINCIPLES

- ◆ Follow the PCs' lead
- ◆ Provide external pressures
- ◆ Provide continuity
- ◆ Ask insightful questions
- ◆ Provide colorful description

GM AGENDA

- ◆ Encroach on a PC's hunting grounds to test their strength.
- ◆ Call in an old debt or offer a PC a new one to further a NPC's agenda.
- ◆ Meddle in a PC's affairs to a NPC's benefit.
- ◆ Kick a PC when they're down to exploit weakness.
- ◆ Make the first move to seize the initiative.
- ◆ Bring a PC down a peg to humble them.
- ◆ Make a PC a pariah by destroying their reputation.
- ◆ Fight a PC if you must, to save a NPC's skin or for vengeance.

GM MOVES

- ◆ Overwhelm a PC.
- ◆ Introduce a NPC.
- ◆ Establish a Rival.
- ◆ Establish an Enemy.
- ◆ Establish a Nemesis.
- ◆ Brand a Heretic.
- ◆ Use your NPCs.
- ◆ Sup your NPCs.
- ◆ Change a Predator's Status

GM MOVES

The GM moves are a toolkit that helps you manage your NPCs and helps you make good on your principles and agenda. Only you make GM moves. You also get to make basic, downtime, playbook, and lore moves for your NPC predators, just like the PCs do.

The GM moves work just like any other moves work: each GM move has a trigger and an outcome. The GM moves are more abstract than other moves, so pay special attention to the triggers.

OVERWHELM A PC

When the prey outfox, overwhelm, or trap a PC predator, say how much blood it costs them to claw their way out of the snare: **1 BLOOD** for a nuisance, **3 BLOOD** for a good show, **5 BLOOD** for a close call, or **8+ BLOOD** for a deadly struggle. If they can't or won't pay, the GM decides their fate—life or death. They say how they meet their fate.

INTRODUCE A NPC

When the GM introduces a new NPC predator, write down their name, playbook, status, and hunting grounds on the relationship map. Then decide how important you think they are to the story: extra, minor, or major. Give an extra **5 BLOOD**, a minor NPC **10 BLOOD**, or a major NPC **15 BLOOD**. This is also their max blood. Draw a **MINOR DEBT** owed to the NPC you're introducing and a **MAJOR DEBT** owed by them to one of the existing predators on the R-Map.

ESTABLISH A RIVAL

When a PC predator outsmarts, outmaneuvers, or thoroughly manipulates a NPC predator, they make a new rival. Write "Rival (their name)" next to your NPC's name on the R-Map. Look to The GM's Agenda for how to get even with them.

ESTABLISH AN ENEMY

When a PC predator injures, insults, or hamstringing a NPC predator, they make a new enemy. Write "Enemy (their name)" next to the NPC's name on the R-Map. Look to The GM's Agenda for how to ruin them.

ESTABLISH A NEMESIS

When a PC predator utterly humiliates or outright ruins a NPC predator, they create a nemesis. Write "Nemesis (their name)" next to the NPC's name on the R-Map. Look to The GM's Agenda for how to destroy them.

BRAND A HERETIC

When a predator exposes their true nature to the prey in a way that could threaten the community at large, and the community becomes aware of this transgression:

- ◆ If they call in a major debt the Princes owes them, the whole affair is quietly swept under the rug. Suspicions still run wild.
- ◆ If they call in a major debt owed to them by a patrician, a scapegoat is found to publicly brand a heretic instead.

Otherwise, they are branded a heretic and pursued with the community's full vigor.

When a predator is branded heretic, they become a pariah and every predator in the community becomes their enemy. The Princes nominates a Hunter, who is a personally responsible for bringing them due justice (which is probably summary execution). The Hunter is now their nemesis.

USE YOUR NPCS

When a NPC predator makes a move against a PC predator, they may make basic or playbook moves, same as the PCs. If they make a move against the PCs that requires **BLOOD** or **DEBT**, spend it. If they make a move against other NPCs, it just happens—no need to spend **BLOOD** or **DEBT**.

SUP YOUR NPCS

When the session ends, all NPC predators gain **2 BLOOD** or fill back up to **5 BLOOD**, whichever is higher. NPCs don't starve at fewer than **3 BLOOD** or spend blood to wake for the evening: you only track their surplus. Do use NPC starvation and other blood-needs as storytelling fodder.

CHANGE A PREDATOR'S STATUS

When a predator transcends their station, increase their status. Another predator stands to lose their position as a result and is now their rival (or enemy if they lose their status as a result). When a predator sinks to a new low, decrease their status. Look to your R-map and choose a predator who stands ready to fill that void.

UNDYING: COMMON LORE MOVES

CREATE

When a human dies with the blood in their veins, they become a new predator. They (choose all that apply)...

- ◆ *Are bound to your will by the blood.*
 - ◆ *Awaken a starving, bloodthirsty fiend.*
 - ◆ *Are angry, confused, and emotionally frail. They need your guiding hand.*
- When you create a predator, you are their maker and they are your chosen. The chosen must always show respect for their maker. Between maker and chosen, the maker is always higher in the pecking order

DESTROY

When you obliterate a predator's body or when you... (choose at least one), you destroy that predator.

- ◆ *Sever their head and stuff the mouth full of garlic.*
- ◆ *Put torch to their body, consuming it with purifying fire.*
- ◆ *Bathe their body in the Sun's holy rays.*
- ◆ *Drive a wooden stake through their undead heart.*

DECAY

When a predator is destroyed, its body... (choose one)

- ◆ *Disintegrates, leaving only a chalky film of ash.*
- ◆ *Congeals into a pool of blood and viscera.*
- ◆ *Desiccates into a mummified corpse.*

EAT

When you mimic your prey by eating their food and drink, you gain no sustenance at all and it tastes like... (choose either, both, or neither)

- ◆ *Bitter ashes of wormwood and lye.*
- ◆ *Styrofoam packing peanuts, and rots in your gut.*

DRINK

When a predator drinks blood from their prey, the sensation is pure ecstasy and the predator gains sustenance. Drinking... (choose all that apply)

- ◆ *Preserved blood tastes like cellophane decay, but will do.*
- ◆ *Synthetic blood tastes like candy, but barely curbs your hunger.*
- ◆ *The blood of animals tastes like cat piss, and you must drink it by the gallon to have any relief from your hunger.*

PLAGUE

When you drink blood from a sick prey... (choose all that apply)

- ◆ *The disease cannot kill you but the infected blood in your veins erupts on your skin with sores and boils. When you wake up for the evening if you can choose to spend 2 blood instead of 1 to return to your normal appearance. If you choose not to do so, you are recognizable as infect and every day more disfigured, to return to your normal appearance spend at once all the blood that you should have.*
- ◆ *You become a carrier of infection, the prey of which you are always doomed to an horrible death. GM will make sure you know it.*
- ◆ *Infected prey blandly satisfy your thirst: when you feed you gain 1 BLOOD for every 2 blood you drink from the prey.*

SLUMBER

When the sun's rays grace the earth, the weight of the predator's curse is heaviest. Predators... (choose one)

- ◆ *Inevitably succumb to a dreamless, sleep-like state.*
- ◆ *Are awake during the day, though lethargic, weak, and easily overwhelmed by prey.*
- ◆ *May will themselves ambulatory during the day by spending 1 blood per waking hour.*

HINDER

When a predator is confronted with... (choose at least one), the GM says what they must do and how much blood they must spend blood to overcome the hindrance.

- ◆ *Garlic, strong enough to smell or taste.*
- ◆ *A holy symbol brandished by one of the faithful.*
- ◆ *Consecrated ground, untarnished by evil.*
- ◆ *Entrance to a home, owned by its occupants, without their permission to enter.*
- ◆ *Running water, such as a stream or river.*

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UNDYING: DOWNTIME MOVES

The GM starts with time passes, describing what happens during the expanse of time covered during downtime play and how that sparks next conflict.

GM MOVE: TIME PASSES

When the crucible of conflict cools and a new status quo is cast, predators slink back to their haunts to devise cunning stratagems to further their foul agendas. The nights pass quickly: years, decades, or even centuries fly by before the community is once again embroiled in turmoil. When making this move, you stop scheming night to night, taking a step back to look at the bigger picture. The GM describes events that transpire during the intervening years and sets the stage for the coming storm by choosing one of the following calamities.

CONQUEST – A new claim is made on the title of patrician or Princes, or Rival predators squabble over hunting grounds.

WAR – The prey destroy themselves and all in their path through a contest of arms, or powerful predators seek to annihilate each other, having their revenge.

JUDGMENT – Predators are decimated by a malady, mundane or divine, or Blood is scarce and the prey are sickly, caged, or few.

DEATH – Predators slay predators over crimson droplets, or The prey rise up to destroy their undead masters.

The GM reassigns hunting grounds to each predator, adapting them to the current landscape. A predator's new hunting grounds have the same total tag points as their old hunting grounds. Once their new hunting grounds are established, then the backstabbing begins.

Then, the GM and the players plot and scheme to advance their characters' agendas and posture themselves in preparation for the rough seas ahead.

When these moves conclude, the stage is set and the curtain rises on the next act of nightly play.

PREDATOR MOVE: PLOT AND SCHEME

When survival is not your chief concern, you devote your attention to the high art of plotting and scheming.

Each predator on the R-Map makes this move. Start with the predator who is highest in the pecking order and then work your way down. The GM decides the turn order for predators whose place in the pecking order is equivalent or indeterminate.

Predators who are higher in the pecking order have the ability to thwart, reverse, or supersede the plots of predators who are lower in the pecking order.

Your machinations may change the pecking order. Complete your turn then, for predators who haven't taken their turn yet, revise their subsequent turn order to reflect their changed position in the pecking order.

On your turn, choose a number of plots to accomplish, up to double your status (or 1 if your status is 0). You may choose the same plot more than once, if it makes sense. As you choose each plot, describe your shrewd manipulations.

ATONE – Make peace with a rival or placate an enemy (reducing them to a rival).

INTERFERE – Decrease by one the means of another predator who has not yet made the plot and scheme move. They become your rival.

BOLSTER – Increase by one the means of another predator who has not yet made the plot and scheme move. Gain a minor debt from them.

BANKROLL – Gain a number of minor debts equal to your status from your choice of predators. Say who owes you each of these debts and briefly discuss what you did to earn them.

GENTRIFY – Improve either the abundance or awareness of your hunting grounds by one.

CONQUER – You claim new hunting grounds for yourself through clever dealings or brute force. Your new hunting grounds has a total number of tag points typical for a predator of your status. You make rivals out of the predators you displaced from these hunting grounds.

MURDER (DEVIL ONLY): Slay a NPC predator whose status is less than or equal to yours. Any predators they owed minor debts to become your rivals and any predators they owed major debts to become your enemies.

STRONG-ARM (DEVIL ONLY): Take hunting grounds from a predator whose status is lower than or equal to yours. Increase the abundance of your hunting grounds by one, and you may swap your hunting grounds' proximity tag with theirs. The abundance of their hunting grounds reduces by one, and they become your rival.

MUCKRAKE (NIGHTMARE ONLY): Dig up blackmail-worthy dirt on a predator of your choosing. They are now your enemy.

CURSE (NIGHTMARE ONLY): Use fell blood magic to debase a predator of your choosing, rendering them a pariah. They become your nemesis.

RENEGOTIATE (PUPPETMASTER ONLY): Upcharge a minor debt you hold from another predator to a major debt. They become your rival.

INVEST (PUPPETMASTER ONLY): Add an asset to your enterprise or eliminate a liability.

ENTERTAIN (SENSUALIST ONLY): Host a soiree on the brink of the pending crisis, earning you patrician status when nightly play resumes. You cause a patrician to lose their patrician status and they are now your enemy.

CULTIVATE (SENSUALIST ONLY): Gain an offering from your devotees or eliminate a trouble.

RECRUIT (WOLF ONLY): Welcome a predator to your pack. Your new packmate can be a PC, if they want to join. Say how you recruited them. They may demand a minor debt.

PURGE (WOLF ONLY): Kick a predator out of your pack in disgrace. They are now your enemy.

ADVICE (SYBIL ONLY): You unfold details about another predator's future, that might save his skin or improve their fortunes, they now owe you a minor debt.

CHECKMATE (SYBIL ONLY): You use your foresight to checkmate another predator whose status is less than or equal to your own. If they are a patrician, they are now a plebian and your enemy. If they are a plebian, they are now a pariah and your nemesis.

After all of the characters have had their turn, compare the number of plots you've hatched to your means.

Your means = your status + bolster plots - interfere plots.

You may also cash in debts to increase your means: 1 major debt or 5 minor debts increases your means by 1.

Note: debts earned while making this move cannot be used to increase your means.

Count the number of plots you've hatched from the list above and compare them to your means:

- ◆ *If your means exceed your plots, then you deftly evade further repercussions.*
- ◆ *If your means equal your plots, then you earn the envy of a new rival.*
- ◆ *If your plots exceed your means, then you earn the hatred of a new enemy.*
- ◆ *If your plots more than double your means, you earn the vengeance of a new nemesis.*
- ◆ *If your means are less than 1, then choosing 0 plots earns the envy of a new rival, 1 plot earns you the hatred of a new enemy, and choosing more than 1 plot earns you the vengeance of a new nemesis.*

A PC may volunteer to be your rival, enemy, or nemesis if they've suffered by your hand; otherwise, the GM will name a NPC for this roles. See the GM moves for introducing a rival, enemy, or nemesis.