



Mind's Eye Theatre

DARK

Epics



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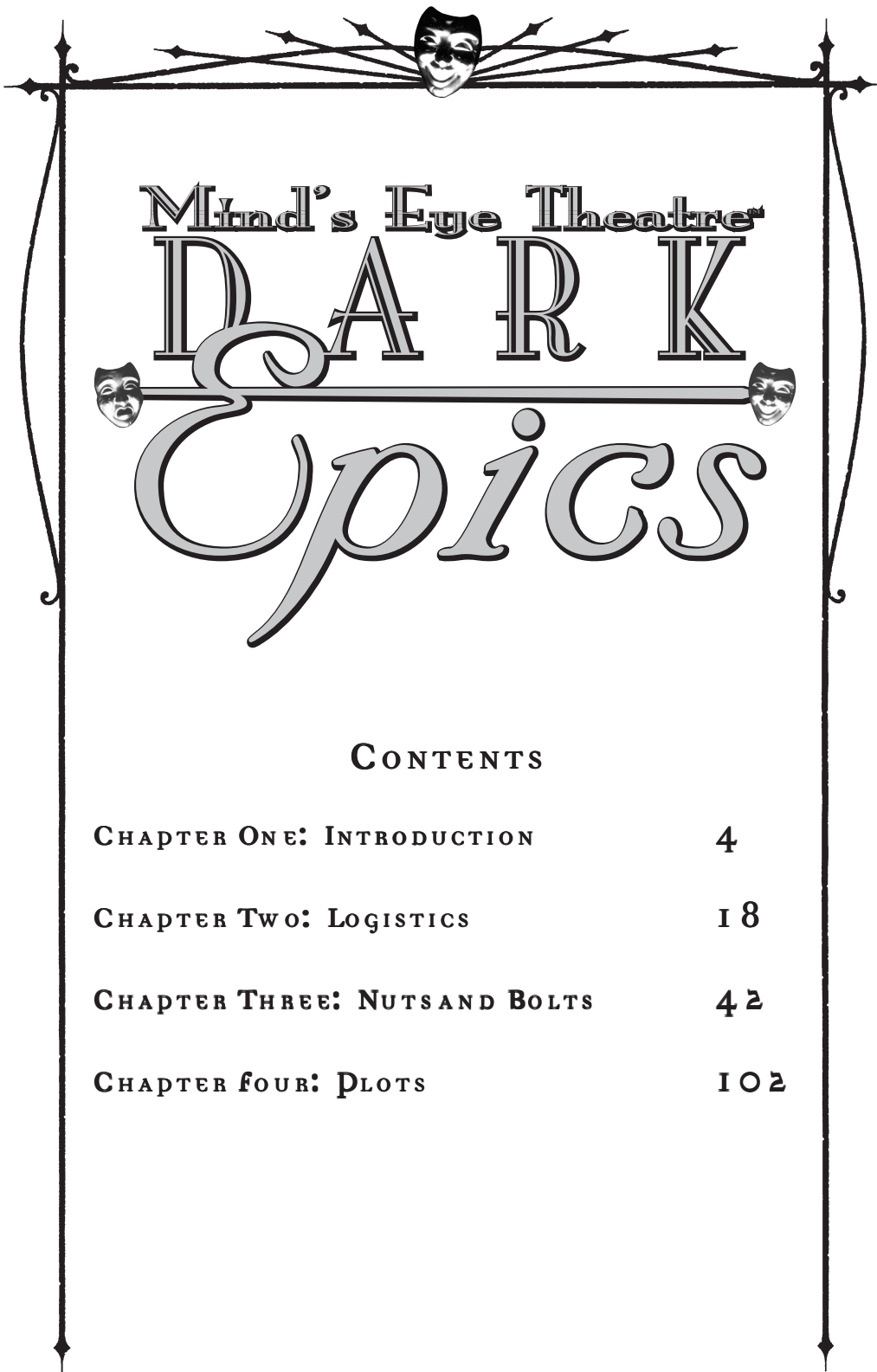
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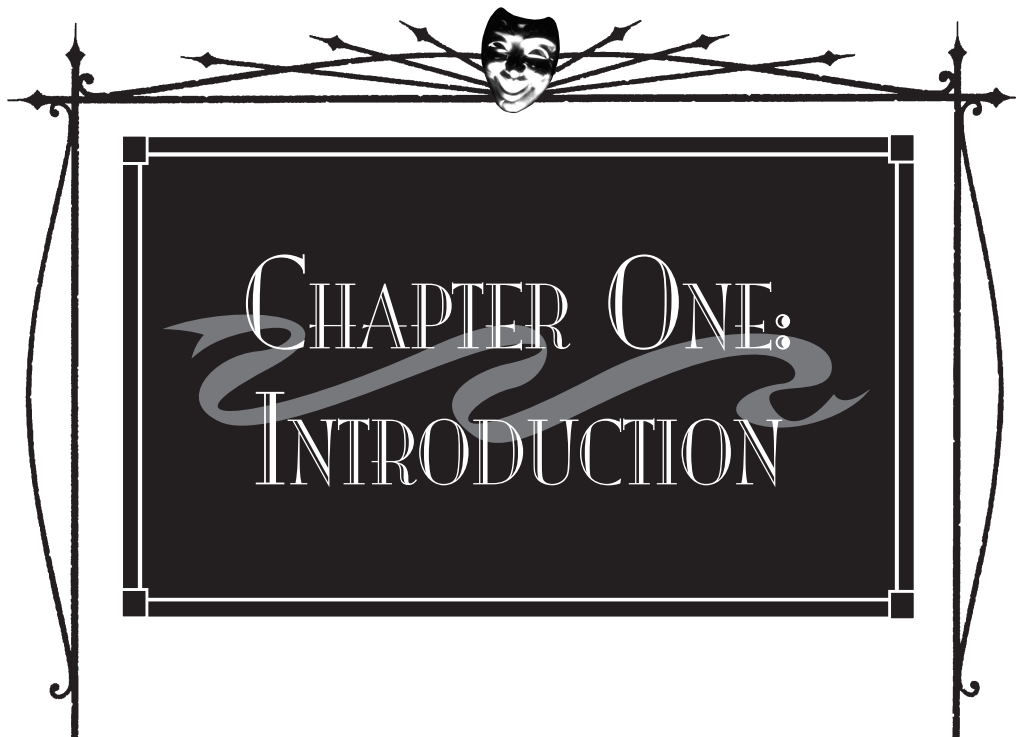
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## A SENSE OF SCALE

When you're sitting at home with your friends playing *Vampire: The Masquerade*, or any other tabletop game, the assembled group consists of your Storyteller and about half-a-dozen players, including yourself. Your characters interact with numerous Storyteller characters throughout the course of the game, all of whom are filtered through the imagination and portrayal of the Storyteller.

When you step into a live-action roleplaying game, however, everything changes. In a tabletop chronicle, your Storyteller represents all the roles that you encounter, be they pivotal to the story or not. Now, it's possible that of the dozens of people milling about the venue, any could be a Storyteller character, could be vital to your character's plot, could be irrelevant, could be... anything. Real one-to-one numbers represent the creatures of the setting, at least insofar as any given scene is concerned. You're now face-to-face with the situation, and you no longer have a central single person presenting the worldview to you.

We all prefer different styles of gaming. Some prefer one-shot games involving immediate plots and resolutions. Some of us prefer smaller, more personal chronicles that focus on the characters and their internal issues and in which the external politics are merely a background to the central characters' lives. Smaller games allow for more personal interaction between Storytellers, players, plots and the rules. If your chronicle consists of seven players and one Storyteller, it can be run like a tabletop game, describing the reactions of the World of Darkness and helping everyone through the challenges they perform. The feel is personal, the plots can be grand and world-changing, and the mechanics of the rules can be governed by the consensus of the players. In a game of this size, the Storyteller has a good idea of what each character is doing, and he can work on character development, personal horror and intriguing plot twists from each character's past.



Most of us play our games for the long haul, however. We want a chronicle that is rich in history and a story that evolves in response to our characters' actions. We want to create something lasting and memorable that we can revisit time and again. Because so many roleplayers have these desires, they share their games with each other, intertwine their stories and invite others to experience the interactivity of this hobby. The numbers in a chronicle swell, and the Storyteller has to take up the slack. Some Storytellers prefer to keep their chronicles small, choosing to emphasize intimacy and ensuring a comfortable workload for their staff and themselves. Placing a limit on the number of players is a reasonable method of controlling the scope of the game, in and out of character.

Others embrace the growth of the chronicle and work hard to produce the best roleplaying environment possible for the swelling mass of players that they must accommodate. Additionally, a popular chronicle may go on for years as old stories develop, characters grow and new ideas and new people keep the game fresh. Any Storyteller will find that tweaks to the rules and systems with which they are familiar will eventually be necessary.

As the game grows larger, conflicts between more players subtly shift the chronicle away from a situation in which the Storyteller describes the World of Darkness to one in which the players define the World of Darkness for each other. Even if the ratio of Storytellers to players is the same as that of a smaller game, the larger game becomes less personalized for each character. Unlike a game with one Storyteller and seven players, no one Storyteller can know the plans of each and every character in a game with 10 Storytellers and 70 players. Many player actions and challenges take place beyond the view of the Storytellers in a large game. Social dynamics also become a factor in the 70-person game, whereas personal dynamics are more prominent in the seven-person game. Therefore, the psychological rules of play change for everyone involved.

## **THERE BE GIANTS**

The sheer scope of organizing a one-shot convention game, administering a network of games or simply keeping a large chronicle going from month to month all have their own challenges. **Mind's Eye Theatre** provides a core system for event resolution, basic information on genre-specific social dynamics and guidelines for running an average game. The viability of some of these guidelines weakens when they are stretched to accommodate a large number of characters over an extended period of time, however.

### **BY THE NUMBERS**

The **Laws of...** books have been written with a single small game in mind. Such a game includes one or two Storytellers, a handful of Narrators and perhaps 20 to 30 players in regular attendance over a few years.

The Storyteller's load is still manageable at this level, but it is significant. If the game has newsletters, rumor sheets, character sheets, item cards, Willpower tokens and other paraphernalia to hand out during each session, these routine tasks can use up time and resources that might be better spent on more important aspects of the game, such as plot development, genre interaction and a Narrator's character portrayal. The Storyteller would be wise to delegate some of these tasks to her Narrators or players.

The average number of people in any given scene is likely to remain low (less than 10) for a small game, barring major gatherings such as a prince's announcement



of judgment, or the arrival of visiting dignitaries. The players will tend to drift into and between groups, staying in smaller, more discrete numbers (coteries, clans or power blocs), until it is necessary for the city's inhabitants to assemble.

With such small average scenes, it is much easier for players and Narrators to follow rules designed to segue easily between roleplaying and so-called "ruleplaying." The detail available through the application of the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rules is more representative of in-game reality at this level. Mass challenges are likely to be resolved quickly, and everyone in the scene can communicate easily to resolve any difficulties or confusion.

The regular **Mind's Eye Theatre** books can stretch comfortably to accommodate a game of up to 50 to 75 players with few problems if the Storytellers and Narrators are capable of running the game smoothly while also handling the details of the game between sessions. As the size of the game expands, the Storyteller may find it difficult to juggle all of the information he requires in order to maintain the game (such as character sheets, status, plots, backgrounds and character goals). No single Storyteller can realistically be expected to remember everything, and keeping records becomes more and more important.

Games usually need an administrative staff by the time they reach the 50- to 75-player mark. One Storyteller might maintain the character database while another handles Influence actions throughout the month, and yet another ensures that newsletters and props are ready for Saturday night. Meanwhile, a Narrator contacts all the players to let them know that the venue has been booked and that the game this week will involve the Ventrue primogen's deathnight celebrations. She then updates the website with directions to the game and sends a copy to the group's email list. Sharing the load is a Good Thing.

If your game continues to grow, you'll find that you need to adjust a few things sooner or later. You'll have to tweak some internal game systems to maintain balance and deal with the growing administrivia, for example. Fortunately, that's what this book is here to help you do.

#### **BY THE BOOK**

The standard **Mind's Eye Theatre** book emphasizes the establishment of core rules for playing the game. For example, **Laws of the Night** gives us a complete system to cover the resolution of most situations that arise in an average **Mind's Eye Theatre** game. That book covers rules for character creation, challenge resolution, a basic set of social structures and all the essential information you will need to run a **Mind's Eye Theatre** game. It establishes a central system around which more detailed (or simplified) rules versions can be constructed, if necessary.

Expansion books, such as the **Laws of the Night Camarilla Guide** and the **Laws of the Night Sabbat Guide**, are rich sources of material for developing your chronicle's background, resources, antagonists and the darker side of its history. These books contain rules for dealing with elders, expanded options for character concepts, more details on the specific societies upon which each book focuses and guidelines for settings and plots. However, as helpful as these books are, they still focus on a smaller game.

The remainder of the available background material for the World of Darkness can be found in White Wolf's tabletop supplements. The various clan-, kith- and tribebooks provide players with more detail on the backgrounds of their character types, and they supply plenty of ideas for new characters. The **...by Night** books present plots and information suitable to the locale in



question, and act as a springboard for ideas that can apply to any chronicle. Some sourcebooks address creatures outside the mainstream, such as mummies. Each has information and misinformation that can contribute to your chronicle or network game. Additionally, supplements such as **Nights of Prophecy** deal with the metaplot — the overall and ongoing history of the World of Darkness as it has been laid out by White Wolf.

As a guide for network games that follow the World of Darkness, these resources are invaluable. They provide a source of consistency that any chronicle can access to stay on the same page as its neighbors. If discrepancies arise in the flow of play in the network (if the Gangrel were treated nicely, for instance, and Xavier is sitting down for tea and scones with Hardestadt tomorrow evening) then the network will need to make those differences known to the rest of the member chronicles. The member chronicles will also need to notify intended players of these differences so that, again, everyone remains on the same page.

For large or convention games, these sourcebooks can be used to paint the backdrop of the rest of the world, if needed. External consistency is less important when your chronicle is not related to or affected by any others.

#### **DURABILITY**

The **Mind's Eye Theatre** books are designed to deal with short- to medium-term chronicles lasting for a couple of years and in which games are held once or twice a month. Usually, the chronicle will cover the development and conclusion of one or two major story arcs, and the overarching theme will remain constant.

The growth of characters over that period of time in terms of Experience Traits would be within the range of 20-30 Traits, depending on the rate of play and advancement. As a slice of the character's life, the chronicle is an active and exciting one in which the character grows and learns.

The chronicle would also address the growth and experience of the city in which it is set, but it is likely that such background evolution will be marked only as the backdrop against which the characters strut their stuff.

It is possible to use the regular books for long-term chronicle play, but the accelerated rate of character growth that derives from the standard rules can give rise to characters who become too powerful too quickly. Games that play frequently (once a fortnight, maybe more) but still award the usual one to three Experience Traits per game will quickly notice the disparity between the rate of growth of a **Mind's Eye Theatre** character and that of a similar tabletop character.

Interconnected chronicle networks present their players with the opportunity to visit other games, and thus to earn additional Experience Traits for their characters. Storytellers must scrutinize the growth rate of those characters in comparison with non-traveling characters in order to make sure that a balanced progression takes place throughout the organization.

#### **EXPANSION**

LARPs become *large* around the 75-player mark. That figure is fairly arbitrary, but experience has shown it to be accurate as a guideline. You may consider a game large if it hits only the 50-player mark, or you might consider a game of 200 players to be perfectly comfortable. As in any generalized demographic, your mileage may vary. The kind of games that you'd find at a convention or a gathering of chronicles from within a LARPing network may have hundreds or thousands of players, which certainly places them within the large category.





Of course, every game has its share of casual players — those who only turn up occasionally, maybe only once — and those people skew the population count somewhat. Players bring along their significant others to show them what they've been involved in on Saturday nights, but the SO might play only a couple of times and then drop out. People also drag friends along for something to do for the evening, but those friends sometimes find that live-action roleplaying is not for them. Some casual gamers may or may not turn up, depending on what's on TV that night. As far as the population figures for a single ongoing chronicle go, we're referring to regular players (i.e., those who attend the game 75% of the time).

Games will grow to the aforementioned size if your local area has the gamer population to support it and if the quality of the game is such that others recommend it to their friends. Some games prefer to vet potential players in order to ensure compatibility with their game styles. Others advertise for interested individuals, and still others allow anyone to turn up to try the game. In any case, players will stay if they have fun and if they see that the chronicle is run fairly and well. They also need to know that the staff is capable of handling the necessary paperwork. In the end, remember, it's not the size of the game that matters; it's the quality that counts.

## LARGE GAMES

As a chronicle matures and develops, it will attract new players, whether they are seasoned roleplayers, newly interested gamers or casual give-it-a-try types. People come and go as their interest waxes and wanes. A game's population is typically dynamic and ever-changing.

Sometimes, the quantity of players in a popular chronicle rises to an overwhelming number. If the game rocks, the population stays high, and the Storyteller finds herself with more players than she knows how to handle or entertain. Roles and plots expand, and the scope of the chronicle expands as well. The entire situation would be a real challenge for any Storyteller to deal with.

Chronicles that enter this upward spiral will eventually encompass all levels of their chosen genre on the city scale. Players will take the roles of elders and princes, bishops and paladins, Garou elders or local dukes. Simultaneously, the lower echelons expand to encompass the underdogs, all of whom are exciting and vibrant characters in and of themselves.

Most of the players would play "average" citizens of the genre — the neonates, ancillae, fosters and wilders of the area — while a few may hold positions of authority in the city's power structure. If your chronicle is large enough, you may have players' characters holding primogen positions, or even portraying the prince and his city officers.

So how does a Storyteller deal with organizing all of these people? The game needs a site large enough to accommodate everyone comfortably. It needs plots that will hold the interest of as many players as possible. It needs to develop sub-plots that will keep the rest of the players happy as well, unless they're comfortable dealing solely with plots of their own creation.

These large games — let's cement a lower boundary of 75 people to that label — are amazing fun when they are run well. They can also be mind-splitting headaches when they are run poorly.



## NETWORK GAMES

Imagine the scope of a game that encompasses not just one city and its internal political structure, but which represents the larger picture of the entire continent or even the globe. Imagine a chain of interconnected chronicles that encompasses and presents the World of Darkness and the machinations of the monsters that dwell therein. Imagine a cohesive mega-chronicle of thousands of characters' intertwining stories that reach around the world and in which the potential repercussions are felt for years to come.

Mind-boggling? Perhaps. An administrative nightmare? Maybe. But is it possible? Very definitely. In fact, several such organizations already exist and have been in operation for a number of years. New groups form and grow with their own styles of administration and interaction, which ensures a wide range of options for any isolated chronicle that might consider becoming a part of such a group.


These network groups consist of like-minded chronicles that have joined together to present their view of the World of Darkness to their players on a local, national or global scale. Sometimes, the groups focus primarily on one genre-group, such as **The Masquerade** or **The Shining Host**. Others admit a cross-section of genres, each of which exists alongside the others.

In a single chronicle, a Storyteller has the freedom to take his stories wherever he wishes. He has complete autonomy, and the genre police are not going to come knocking on his door if he decides that the Camarilla finally wiped out the Giovanni in a fit of pique. A network, however, relies on chronicles working together to remain on the same page. Therefore, the individual chronicles must be prepared to sacrifice some of their autonomy in order to comply with the overall vision of the network.

Individual chronicles within the network do not have to be large, but the total number of players in a network certainly brings the count to staggering proportions. Thousands of people worldwide share their roleplaying experiences under a communal umbrella, knowing that the actions that they take next Saturday night might affect enemies and allies across the continent. The potential for interaction between characters is enormous, whether that interaction occurs via the Internet or players actually traveling to other member chronicles in order to further their own plots, make allies and meet fellow players in person. Given the combined talents of hundreds of Storytellers working together, you can be sure that the games remain interesting and fresh. Every chronicle can touch the next with its plots, and every character can reach the others with his stories.

Such groups rely on communication, compromise and courtesy, just as any smaller single chronicle does, albeit on a larger scale. Networks need a central support structure to guide members in their dealings with other chronicles. Smaller networks (which comprise only a handful of member chronicles) may be able to operate comfortably on a casual consensual basis, but the larger networks require a set of rules to deal with the administration of the networks and the interactivity of their members. An out-of-game council or committee reflects the organizational needs of such groups, looking after the out-of-character maintenance that is necessary for such a network to remain cohesive. In order for the communal game to flourish as a whole, some degree of bureaucracy is required to represent and monitor the interests of the individual chronicles in the network.

The internal structure of these organizations varies according to the desires of those within. Some networks prefer a top-down structure, in which a central



storytelling team administers and directs the overall plot of the network's chronicles, while allowing the individual chronicles to handle sub-plots. Another group may encourage the communal development of plots by representatives from each member chronicle.

The Storyteller workload will vary according to the size of any individual chronicle within the network. The degree of involvement of the network in the usual maintenance of a member chronicle is minimal. The network administrators oversee the shared and universal aspects of the World of Darkness, and they coordinate their efforts with the chronicles involved as necessary.

### **CONVENTIONS**

Some roleplayers revel in convention games, large conglomerations of people who meet annually to game the heck out of whatever scenario is thrown at them. These massive gatherings are usually annual affairs, drawing hundreds of players from around the world together to share their styles of gaming.

Even smaller convention gatherings of 100-200 people can be a challenge for a Storyteller who is accustomed to dealing with a couple dozen of his friends every

### **LOCAL AREA NETWORKS**

An interesting subset of the network arises when a multi-genre chronicle's population grows too large. The split-genre local network consists of a series of games run in parallel in the same setting, one game for each genre (i.e., supernatural creature type). Each game has a specialized set of Storytellers, and the Storytellers from each of the games meet regularly to govern cross-chronicle interactions.

Theoretically, minimal cross-genre interaction should occur on a player level, so the major interaction would occur through the effects that the characters have on their environment. Most types of characters can have the Influence Background, so any individual can affect the Influence of another creature in the same city directly. The responsibility of sorting out these interactions falls upon the Storytellers, who resolve the interactions and report the results back to the players affected.

It is very possible that players may play different characters in several or all of these games, and policies must be made to deal with the potential of overlapping interest or plots with these characters. Players of multiple characters should be able to separate the information and plots of each of their characters, but at times a conflict of interest may arise.

If these games are in violent contention (in character) with each other, then interaction may be more immediate, and rules of engagement on an out-of-character level may need to be resolved by the collective Storytellers. Is it acceptable for the werewolf characters to kill other players' vampire characters during the day if they know where the vampires in question sleep? What sort of impact will direct conflict have on the flow of the individual chronicles and the entire network? Is it okay to wipe out a chronicle for reasons of genre? Well, no, it's not. Players should know better and plan more nefarious and fun ways of dealing with their opponents. Conflict between two characters is common, and it can be dealt with easily. Conflict between two species is to be avoided unless you really enjoy hours of challenges and dealing with embittered players in the aftermath.



third Saturday of the month. The logistics of pre-registering hundreds of players, creating or vetting a similar number of characters and finding venues and accommodations adds a considerable amount of work to the usual duties that a Storyteller would perform in the course of a smaller game.

Stories for convention games often focus on a singular event or series of events, the background for which is outlined for the players when they arrive at the game. Similarly, the characters in play are generated by the convention staff, rather than being the players' regular characters. These one-shot events allow players to exercise their acting skills in different roles than those they may be accustomed to in their regular game.

Networks may also hold their own convention-style gatherings — conclaves or moots or simply Halloween or Christmas gatherings — in which they invite members to bring their regular characters together. These conventions help build the sense of community within the network, and they can serve to play out pivotal events in the network's own metaplot. Due to their origins in the network, the cohesive nature of these games makes the game easier for the Storytellers in terms of constructing plot and characters. These conclaves will already be rife with action from ongoing inter-chronicle plots, as well as personal character rivalries and alliances. The workload decreases due to the valuable assistance of Storytellers from other chronicles who can help with a number of matters.

Stand-alone conventions are a lot of hard work (and we'll discuss them further in the next chapter), but they are very rewarding if all goes well.

## LESS COMMON ITERATIONS

### ISOLATED CHRONICLES

Almost the inverse of a network, an isolated chronicle draws in players from neighboring areas because it is the only game in a large area due to either geographic or demographic concerns. In a vast but sparsely populated area, players are unlikely to live near each other, and would probably travel to a central location to play.


A considerable amount of communication is necessary for a widespread but centralized game to remain cohesive, and the Storytellers will need to be adept organizers. Available transportation and ease of travel may be a concern in some places, and those in the isochronicle will assist each other as much as possible to gather for the game.

If the interest (and therefore, population) in the game continues to grow, then an isochronicle may evolve into a network. This occurs when players who live near each other form their own games once their numbers grow to a level which they can support a chronicle in their specific area.

### ONLINE CHRONICLES

While they are not the focus of this book, a number of online World of Darkness games have been playing for quite some time and have amassed a large number of players. While this style of game is not a live-action game per se, a huge number of people are often involved in the chronicle, and many of the organizational and networking matters that come up in this book may be of interest.

Most of these games revolve around email and require access to the Internet, so they will already be set up in terms of communications. Players in this type of game will be familiar with the concepts of e-scenes (in-character scenes that play out over email or chat programs). As an alternative to a tabletop or live-action game, online



games can be a lot of fun. They also proceed at your leisure, rather than relying on consensual meeting times. Rules of play will vary according to the game's interpretations of the Storyteller system's rules and the systems the chronicle utilizes to determine the outcome of challenges.

#### **SEQUELS AND OFFSHOOTS**

As games grow, players may discover a need to divide themselves into smaller or more defined games, sometimes depending on personal taste or style, or depending on how they'd rather see the game played.

Spin-offs are smaller, more focused games that originate from a larger parent game. They tell stories of a group that is separate from the main parent, but these games can quickly blossom into independent chronicles. Spin-off games sometimes arise after a large multi-genre game splinters into smaller single-genre fragments, but they maintain a network-style consistency of setting. A larger game may separate into several neighboring smaller games (which are either networked or separate), while maintaining the shared history of the earlier chronicle. Another permutation is an intimate regular game involving only a handful of players from the parent game who meet separately, but follow the same continuity as the original game.

Epilogues or aftershocks are games that sometimes stem from convention games, portraying the aftermath in the lives of the convention characters. Sometimes players meet at a convention and decide to resume playing the characters that they were given to play at the event. Players may wish to continue exploring these characters after a chronicle officially ends.

Parallel games usually arise when a group of players splits into two factions over a difference in style preference. The overall plot and history of the resulting parallel games remain the same, but each game may take a different path. As with a spin-off, this type of game may arise due to a split-up of a multi-genre chronicle. Parallel games are not usually networked, and they share little other than a common background.

#### **IN FOR THE DURATION**

A long-running game can be defined as one that has run regularly over an extended period of time. Okay, that's nicely vague, without actually giving any definitive reference points. Let's clarify.

How often does a game have to run to be considered "regular"? You may play your LARP monthly, fortnightly or every full moon. Your LARP may also be an annual event that continues the story and plots from the previous year. You might even play constantly throughout the week.

The duration and frequency of your game will have a marked impact upon its growth and development. A regular game ensures a consistency of characterization and permits a sense of tangible transition as the protagonists and their environment change.

Think of an annual chronicle as a series of feature films, with recurring characters and evolving plots. The same characters appear and take action, and large gaps in time occur between each gathering. Annual chronicles deal with monumental events in the existences of these characters' lives. An annual chronicle maintains a consistent background and allows for considerably more detailed story work to be done by the staff between the actual games. Meticulous care can be taken to maintain theme, mood, plot, story consistency and quality, and back-stories can be written to update the players on their characters' activities throughout the intervening



downtime. Some danger of distancing players from their characters exists, since the players are not interacting regularly as their characters. Additionally, it may be difficult for some players to attend annually, so absent players' characters may have to be played by other people, which causes disparity in the consistency of characterization from one year to the next.

You can overcome some of these challenges by ensuring that the character portfolio that you present to the players is comprehensive and that it includes strong roleplaying guidelines. A few convention games follow an annual story, but it is more common for a convention game to be a one-shot game rather than a chronicle.

Some chronicles run super-intensively, covering the actions of the characters on an ongoing basis, and allowing for detailed (and possibly painful) roleplaying acuity. The "24/7" chronicle is a very active style in which players are potentially in character at any time of the day or (in a **Masquerade** setting) night. You may encounter another player's character at the local convenience store or at the movies, or you can receive phone calls to deal with plot issues at any hour.

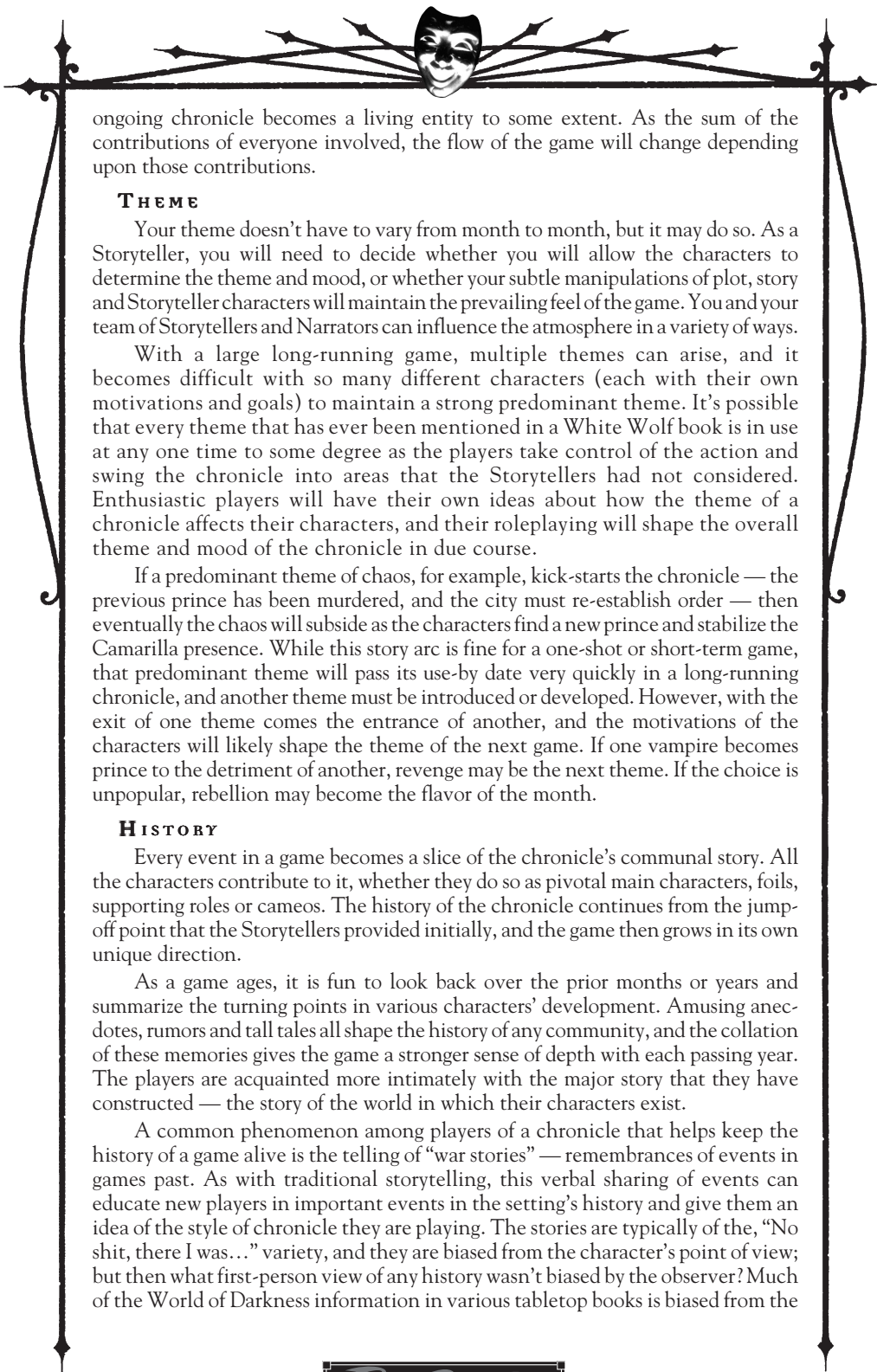
If such a game is to last more than a few weeks, the storytelling team must develop methods for dealing with the rate of earning Experience Traits, resolving conflicts in the absence of a Storyteller, standards of public play and display, how to tell if a player is in or out of character and long-distance storytelling communications. Most importantly, the players and the Storytellers need to learn how to deal with roleplaying overload. A game that requires essentially total immersion can take a toll on a player's everyday life. Remember to keep a reasonable perspective and a sense of reality.

A normal chronicle runs once, maybe twice a month — possibly as often as weekly. Our heroes are caught in summary without an in-depth exposition of their daily routine, but in enough detail that we can appreciate their developing personalities from month to month. We know that the characters are not constantly at Elysium or the caern, and we can appreciate that the gatherings that they have with the others of their kind in the city are sporadic occurrences rather than the norm of an evening.

The long-running or stabilized chronicle can be identified by a number of common elements. It has been in regular play for well over a year, and it has established a strong set of house interpretations of the published **Mind's Eye Theatre** rules. A communications network (email lists and/or phone numbers) is in place, and people are responsible for overseeing and maintaining it. Regular game sites have been found, and a set of protocols for dealing with incoming new players has been developed. The Storytellers have probably changed at some point, although some of the original members may still be in their original position. It's likely that players have moved up to fill Narrator and Storyteller positions, and the chronicle has worked out a way to deal with such transitions. In other words, the hard work has been done, and the chronicle can settle in for the long haul. As long as the stories remain fresh and interesting and the staff is prepared to handle the workload, there is no reason why a chronicle cannot continue for many years.

## GROWING PAINS

Any game that plays regularly for a long time will evolve. Themes and moods that were explored at the start of the chronicle may no longer be applicable to the ongoing plot arcs, perhaps due to the actions of characters or because the plots that pointed up those themes and moods have been resolved. The departure of regular players and the arrival of new people can change the face of the chronicle. An



ongoing chronicle becomes a living entity to some extent. As the sum of the contributions of everyone involved, the flow of the game will change depending upon those contributions.

### **THEME**

Your theme doesn't have to vary from month to month, but it may do so. As a Storyteller, you will need to decide whether you will allow the characters to determine the theme and mood, or whether your subtle manipulations of plot, story and Storyteller characters will maintain the prevailing feel of the game. You and your team of Storytellers and Narrators can influence the atmosphere in a variety of ways.

With a large long-running game, multiple themes can arise, and it becomes difficult with so many different characters (each with their own motivations and goals) to maintain a strong predominant theme. It's possible that every theme that has ever been mentioned in a *White Wolf* book is in use at any one time to some degree as the players take control of the action and swing the chronicle into areas that the Storytellers had not considered. Enthusiastic players will have their own ideas about how the theme of a chronicle affects their characters, and their roleplaying will shape the overall theme and mood of the chronicle in due course.

If a predominant theme of chaos, for example, kick-starts the chronicle — the previous prince has been murdered, and the city must re-establish order — then eventually the chaos will subside as the characters find a new prince and stabilize the Camarilla presence. While this story arc is fine for a one-shot or short-term game, that predominant theme will pass its use-by date very quickly in a long-running chronicle, and another theme must be introduced or developed. However, with the exit of one theme comes the entrance of another, and the motivations of the characters will likely shape the theme of the next game. If one vampire becomes prince to the detriment of another, revenge may be the next theme. If the choice is unpopular, rebellion may become the flavor of the month.

### **HISTORY**

Every event in a game becomes a slice of the chronicle's communal story. All the characters contribute to it, whether they do so as pivotal main characters, foils, supporting roles or cameos. The history of the chronicle continues from the jump-off point that the Storytellers provided initially, and the game then grows in its own unique direction.

As a game ages, it is fun to look back over the prior months or years and summarize the turning points in various characters' development. Amusing anecdotes, rumors and tall tales all shape the history of any community, and the collation of these memories gives the game a stronger sense of depth with each passing year. The players are acquainted more intimately with the major story that they have constructed — the story of the world in which their characters exist.

A common phenomenon among players of a chronicle that helps keep the history of a game alive is the telling of "war stories" — remembrances of events in games past. As with traditional storytelling, this verbal sharing of events can educate new players in important events in the setting's history and give them an idea of the style of chronicle they are playing. The stories are typically of the, "No shit, there I was..." variety, and they are biased from the character's point of view; but then what first-person view of any history wasn't biased by the observer? Much of the *World of Darkness* information in various tabletop books is biased from the



point of view of the “writer,” and disparate views of the “true history” are common. Listeners are welcome to have their own opinions on the validity of any reiteration of events past.

Having said that, a number of chronicles do keep records of their games’ histories with some degree of accuracy so that new players (and old-timers) can gain a sense of the development of the chronicle over time.

### **NEW PLAYERS**

As a game grows, it must develop strategies for dealing with new players, whether those players are experienced roleplayers or complete novices. A new player’s unfamiliarity with the nuances of your chronicle can disrupt the smooth flow of roleplaying your regulars have come to expect.

Training novices can absorb a considerable amount of time, although the majority of their learning will occur as they play the game. They need to learn at least the basics of the genre and setting of the game, as well as some of the parlance, how to handle simple challenge situations and how to interact with the other gamers. A non-roleplayer’s first time at a LARP can be a very daunting experience, and these new players will benefit from some careful attention and mentoring. If the inexperienced player is inundated with information and thrown to the wolves, he may not have a very rewarding experience, and he may not return. You lose more players that way....

Experienced tabletop players may be old hands at roleplaying, but they have never been in a LARP or in a World of Darkness game, they may need training in the new rules and systems. They also need to be brought up to speed on the setting, network protocols and any other situations that are particular to your chronicle. Any player who presents herself to your chronicle thinking that she already knows everything may have a good background in other people’s games and her own interpretations of the rules or genre. However, she needs to be aware that she is entering your unique chronicle, with its own variations and expected behaviors.

An established chronicle should have systems in place to deal with incoming players, perhaps including training sessions (“Kindredgarten”) to introduce them to the various aspects of the game. Even experienced players in your own chronicle may benefit from such education. The more familiar your players are with your interpretation of the World of Darkness, the higher the quality of roleplaying you can expect from them will be. If people are well-trained in the rules systems you use, the burden on your Storytellers and Narrators is less, since your players are more self-sufficient in resolving challenges or rules disputes.

## **MAJOR CHALLENGES**

Organizing any large game will naturally be prone to challenges that are more intense or time-intensive than those of smaller games. The scale of these games raises a number of issues that any team wishing to put on such a game will need to address.

### **LOGISTICS**

How do you handle the chronicle’s project coordination when dealing with hundreds of players? What sort of things will you need to consider when planning a convention? How does a network determine its structure and rules? There’s a lot more to running a large game than initially meets the eye, and most of the work that must be done occurs behind the scenes. The following chapter explores these areas of concern in greater detail.





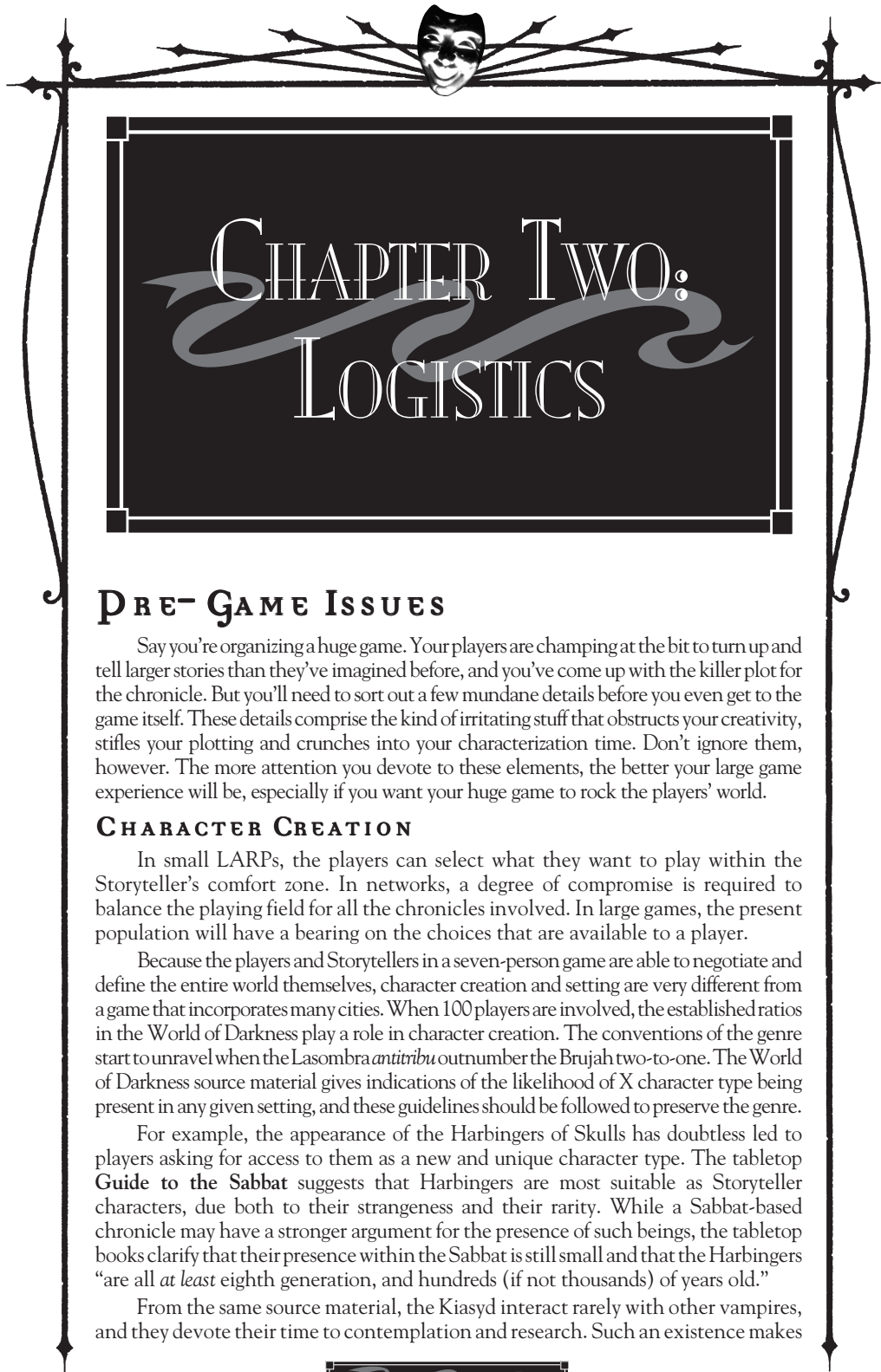
## NUTS AND BOLTS

The goal of the *Mind's Eye Theatre* system is to help players have fun roleplaying and acting out stories. In larger games, some categories of rules begin to fray, and sometimes the rules won't fit the situation. House rules and spot-rules may be suitable for a smaller-scale game, but they may also cause confusion among a mass of visiting players who are not familiar with your personal style. Can you avoid half-hour time stops while a whole room attempts to see through a *Nosferatu's Obfuscate*? What happens when a character attempts to spend Influence across a network to affect a member chronicle located several states away? And just how do you run a 10-second mob combat without stopping the game for an hour and a half? Chapter Three answers these questions and collects some of the disparate basic information that has appeared in various *Mind's Eye Theatre* books thus far.

## PLOTS

Is a story that entertains seven people interesting enough to entertain 70 people? How do you involve everyone in a story when you don't even know everyone at the game by name? Can players entertain themselves with their own goals and schemes rather than waiting for you to hand the story to them? What basic story elements do you need to provide the players in order for them to do just that? Chapter Four answers these questions.





# CHAPTER TWO: LOGISTICS

## PRE-GAME ISSUES

Say you're organizing a huge game. Your players are champing at the bit to turn up and tell larger stories than they've imagined before, and you've come up with the killer plot for the chronicle. But you'll need to sort out a few mundane details before you even get to the game itself. These details comprise the kind of irritating stuff that obstructs your creativity, stifles your plotting and crunches into your characterization time. Don't ignore them, however. The more attention you devote to these elements, the better your large game experience will be, especially if you want your huge game to rock the players' world.

## CHARACTER CREATION

In small LARPs, the players can select what they want to play within the Storyteller's comfort zone. In networks, a degree of compromise is required to balance the playing field for all the chronicles involved. In large games, the present population will have a bearing on the choices that are available to a player.

Because the players and Storytellers in a seven-person game are able to negotiate and define the entire world themselves, character creation and setting are very different from a game that incorporates many cities. When 100 players are involved, the established ratios in the World of Darkness play a role in character creation. The conventions of the genre start to unravel when the Lasombra outnumber the Brujah two-to-one. The World of Darkness source material gives indications of the likelihood of X character type being present in any given setting, and these guidelines should be followed to preserve the genre.

For example, the appearance of the Harbingers of Skulls has doubtless led to players asking for access to them as a new and unique character type. The tabletop **Guide to the Sabbat** suggests that Harbingers are most suitable as Storyteller characters, due both to their strangeness and their rarity. While a Sabbat-based chronicle may have a stronger argument for the presence of such beings, the tabletop books clarify that their presence within the Sabbat is still small and that the Harbingers "are all at least eighth generation, and hundreds (if not thousands) of years old."

From the same source material, the Kiasyd interact rarely with other vampires, and they devote their time to contemplation and research. Such an existence makes



them a poor choice for a live-action game, except perhaps as a Storyteller character mentor or sage whom the characters may encounter eventually.

Would you expect to see a changeling in an Elysium? Not for very long, unless they intend to be overcome by Banality. Then there's the tradition of the Masquerade to consider. Use some common sense when deciding what characters you will allow in your chronicle, especially when it comes to cross-genre concepts. Werewolves and vampires do not play nicely in the sandbox together, despite the common misconception that werewolves are cozy with the vampires of Clan Gangrel. How many Corax or Bastet are acceptable at a caern? If you are running a multi-genre chronicle, you may need to stretch the conventions of each genre a little to allow for these exceptions. If you are in a stand-alone game, this choice is a personal issue for the chronicle. If you are in a network, then you must establish the compromise level in line with the worldview shared by the network.

How many elder-class characters will you allow in your chronicle? If you already have 15 elders in a 70-player game and another player presents you with his new eighth-generation Tremere from 13th-century France, can you justify allowing another elder into play? Genre-based demographics again can assist as a guideline. If you prefer a glib, face-saving line, try, "Too many officers, not enough grunts." In order for your game to portray a reasonably accurate representation of the Jyhad, the Methuselaha have to have someone to toy with, the elders need someone to manipulate, and the ancillae need someone to kick around. Is it vital to the concept that the character's generation be that low? Some Storytellers may prefer that their players alternate their characters' relative power levels when they switch from one character to the next. In such an arrangement, not only is the potential for power shared among the players, it also allows the individual player to experiment with different levels of the political dynamics and expand his roleplaying capacity.

You should also consider the background and outlooks of the character concept as they are presented to you and balance the suitability of the personality type with the personality demographics that are already present within the chronicle. If you already have half a dozen Brujah bikers, do you need another one? Why not make the biker a rebellious Ventrue neonate? You've added a totally cool character twist right off the bat. The archetypes of the clans and tribes allow for an incredible degree of versatility in their membership, and it can be tiresome to reinforce the stereotypes constantly. The flip side of this concern is that you do need to make sure that the stereotype is maintained before the exception becomes the rule and all your incoming Ventrue characters are gum-snapping street-rats.

Any aspect of a character concept can be altered slightly to create a distinctive personality. While it is certainly easier for a new player to dive into an archetype, more experienced players should be able to come up with interesting variances from the norm that still conform to the common expectations.

## SETTING

Similarly, any deviation from the actual place and time in which the players are involved has to be explained meticulously to large groups. This is especially true if you play your game in an environment that is not identical to the in-game location. Imagine the out-of-play disaster that happens when the group patrolling the park accidentally comes into the same play area as the group hunting in the forest, and it takes several rounds to figure out that the groups are not in the same place in character.

In a large game, you will probably have reached the demographic limit of your supernatural population unless you're living in a major city. For the Camarilla, the Masquerade demands a low-impact presence. The common ratio is one Kindred to 100,000 mortals, so seven million people could support a population of roughly 70 vampires as long



### ALTERNATIVE POPULATION CONTROL

If you prefer to keep the city's size within reasonable limits, but you also wish to have a large player base, remember that players can have an equally rewarding game playing ghouls or kinfolk. Having them do so also promotes the internal hierarchical structures of the creatures in the World of Darkness and develops a darker mood for the chronicle.

Sure, it might suck that your character can't get kewl powerz and stuff and you can die really easily, but with clever play, you can develop a character that can challenge the more powerful supernatural creatures on a different playing field. So you're the legal advisor to the Ventrue Whip? How might she reward you if you can use your *Bureaucracy* Influence to tie the hands of an opposing Kindred, especially if you do it before she realizes that it needs to be done? Perhaps you're working for the Setites, and you can lay your hands on better dope than they can.

Players, why limit yourself to playing blood-sucking creatures of the night, when the day can be your playground, and you still get *Potence*? Or rather, why not consider a more dynamic character than a stuck-in-time predator? Consider the potential for drama that is inherent in playing a servitor who both loves and loathes the monster who grants them eternal youth... for a price.

as the vampires took extra care to keep a low profile. If only a few hundred thousand people live in your town, then you should theoretically only have a handful of Kindred present.

Some games basing their chronicles on the town in which they play embellish the in-game mortal population in order to accommodate more vampires. The World of Darkness is more populous and more sprawled than our reality, and a population boost of the faceless masses shouldn't stretch a player's imagination farther than it already has been stretched to play a vampire in the first place.

You will also need to consider how much larger that decision makes the city in terms of geography. You'll want to consider drawing up a new map based on the expanded numbers. Where are the schools and hospitals to support these additional people? How has this expansion affected the economy of the region? Extrapolation of your current real-life setting should provide you with most of the answers to these questions, but you'll need to have that information when your players want to start throwing Influence about.

Actually, Influence is another factor that you'll need to consider, especially if it is an important point of conflict between the characters in your chronicle. How much is now available due to the enlarged population? How high are the standards of leadership and law enforcement? Even if you do not have an expanded populace, consider how much of the Influence available in the city is taken up by the characters, and how much may be in the hands of mortals or other Storyteller characters. A city is not an ever-expanding resource that gains an additional three Traits of *Church* Influence just because another Tremere arrived in town. If you choose to place a limit on Influence, then you will need to tell players who join the game that you are doing so.

If your city setting has been addressed in any of the World of Darkness books, are you using the same information as is written, or have you altered certain pertinent pieces of history or public knowledge that need to be clarified for someone who might have read the source material? Is your Baltimore still a Camarilla city? Perhaps the Ventrue truly rule your Las Vegas?

The chronicle should develop an information package to inform visitors and new players of the notable differences between the real-life city setting and the setting, as their characters will perceive it.



## NETWORK CONSIDERATIONS

Networks require an even higher level of attention to initial characters and setting. Rules for character-type distribution, setting variations and using places that are not in any of the participating cities have to be worked out between all the Storytellers in all the chronicles. Networks must develop policies to deal with these sorts of issues before they arise.

A unified view of the genre will assist in determining acceptable character-entry levels of power or rarity. If the network has established that the Ravnos antediluvian has not died in India yet, then Clan Ravnos may be a freely accessible choice. If he has died, and the clan was decimated as per the World of Darkness setting, then the network may choose to restrict access to that clan since only a hundred or so are supposedly left on Earth. Similarly, if the network decides that characters should be limited to a specific power level (for example, a maximum of eighth generation, or 200 Experience Traits), then that decision must apply across the board.

How will you handle the exchange and manipulation of Influence between networked chronicles? The *Fame* Background gives some basic ground rules for how this sort of interaction could be handled, but you will need to be ready for the possibility of people manipulating Influence that has already been taken by other denizens. If no *Street* is left to tweak, whose toes will get stepped on if a neighboring Glasswalker decides to help out his buddies with some loaned Influence?

Storytellers are advised to avoid making major decisions about how their plots affect places that are not within their geographical area of jurisdiction, in case a game in that area decides to join the network. It is terribly embarrassing when a new city joins a multi-city chronicle with a great background only to find out that the new city was a radiation zone in the existing chronicle. If you do need to do something external to your chronicle, bring it up with the others of your network and make a communal decision to determine a "safe" place for the external event to occur. What are the chances that the other chronicles might pick up the plot and run alongside you with it? Pretty good, since you're all on the same team.

## CHARACTER BACKGROUNDS

While a strong character background is important in any chronicle, a network provides wonderful opportunities for further cross-chronicle interaction through characters in different cities sharing aspects of their backgrounds. If a character originates in Saint Louis, and your network has a member chronicle there, then elements of that chronicle's setting should be reflected in the character's own past. Rather than having to create a background from whole cloth, the player can use highlights from events in the chronicle's past to enrich the character's viewpoints and history.

For vampire characters, the opportunities abound to create detailed and structured lineages that can interlink chronicles through broods. Considerable depth can be added to a character if the vampire has a solid line of Kindred to look back on for examples. This is especially true for familial clans, such as the Ventrue and Giovanni. It opens up possibilities for interaction on a wider scale instantly if the lineage relates characters in several chronicles. Although those characters need not be the best of friends, or even loosely allied, a thread still binds them, and it can be plucked by the clever Storyteller to increase the drama in the network.

## THE GAME SITE

One of the largest and most immediate problems you may face in the ongoing administration of your large game will be finding a place to accommodate everyone. You can hold a smaller game at someone's house, at the park or at a friendly nightclub or cafeteria. Cramming a couple hundred caped carnivores into such a place may be stretching the realms of plausibility, however.



#### **WHAT TO LOOK FOR**

A site for a large game needs multiple rooms for private meetings, centralized halls for assemblies, outside areas for a bit of fresh air (and to allow your smokers some breathing room), just like a smaller chronicle's game site does. The site must be large enough to handle your volume of players, yet small enough so the storytelling and narrating team isn't running the equivalent of a half-marathon each night. Consider convention halls, hotels or large nightclubs. And yeah, it's probably going to cost some.

Finding a site that will be suitable for your chronicle will take some legwork, but you're best to start off letting your fingers do some walking. The phonebook is a great place to start, and it costs less than bus fare or gas. Check for hotels, rental accommodation, clubs, convention centers, camping grounds, parks, schools, entertainment venues, theatres, anyplace that might be able to handle the number of people that you anticipate attending. Your local city council may be able to help, and it may have personnel on staff to deal with just such matters.

While you're looking for a game site, you will definitely benefit from drawing upon the knowledge and experience of your players and staff. Someone may know of a place that might be suitable or know someone who knows. Perhaps they even know whom to contact for costs, availability and capacity.

By the way, this exercise also increases your area knowledge of your hometown, which makes it a very useful research method for locations, areas of importance and likely targets of story focus for your chronicle if it is based there.

#### **SELECTING LOCATIONS**

Now that you've selected a handful of prime sites, check them out in person. (Don't just throw away all your options except the one that has the most Gothic-Punk name.) Make an appointment with the site's staff to walk over the site during the day so that you can get a feel for the room and accessibility. A venue will always feel smaller at night, but if it's small from the outset, it will feel stifling and cramped. Check the place out at night as well, if you intend to play during the darker hours.

Is the site one big hall? A bonus for crowd scenes, but it's not so wonderful if it's the only room you have. It is very hard to run a large game in one open room due to the noise level, if nothing else. Look for enough space to hold two thirds of your players comfortably in the main hall, and enough space in other rooms to accommodate two thirds as well. If you have extra space, consider it a bonus. Treasure it. Silent, deserted areas of large premises beg for covert scenes.

Keep an eye on ambience and layout. Dormitory-style rooms connected by long corridors produce a different mood than partitioned offices. A theater has a different room structure than a hotel. Consider where your props and/or background music will be best suited and which rooms will lend themselves to the various moods you may wish to engender in your players during the game.

Ask which aspects of the premises you may be able to modify and what built-in facilities might be used. It is unlikely that a venue used regularly by a number of different groups will allow you to redecorate to any great extent. If you can get permission to twist out a few light bulbs, however, or even use the PA system for the authority figure's announcements, then you have another set of setting tools for your Storyteller team. Always ask before burning candles, however. The site's fire standards may prohibit their use, or their sprinkler system may be very sensitive. After all, nothing dampens a game like... well, okay.

Accessibility will be another concern. Make sure that you can give easy directions to your players when you notify them of where the site is. Keep an eye out for quick routes from major roads, and note nearby landmarks that will assist in



navigation, such as parks, monuments or large buildings. Also identify other important local conveniences, such as the closest gas station and the local late-night café for the inevitable after-game coffee and chat.

If you are expecting disabled players to show up, make sure that they will be able to move about freely. If you have young players, check the host's policy on their presence. Check to see if any insurance matters must be dealt with in the rental of the premises, or whether the rental fee covers that cost. As with any contractual agreement, know your responsibilities and your rights. Consult a lawyer if you have to.

Privacy is always a concern, and you should cast an eye toward the neighbors when selecting your game site. It may be beneficial to check with the owners of the venue to find out what the patrons of the neighboring premises might think if it looks at all likely that they may take note of the game. Your primary ally remains communication, and it will be worthwhile to talk with those neighbors if you think that they'll be concerned. You do not need the local authorities casting baleful glares over your activities because an uninformed witness is alarmed by the strange events he has seen taking place next door.

Finally, consider the cost of rentals. If you can get the place free, that's all good, but it's likely that you'll have to shell out. How you work out payment is really up to you and beyond the scope of this book. We might suggest considering forming your game into an incorporated club, but your game will need to find out what is required by local laws. If it's for a one-shot event (like a convention), then we seriously suggest financial advice.

#### **MAINTENANCE**

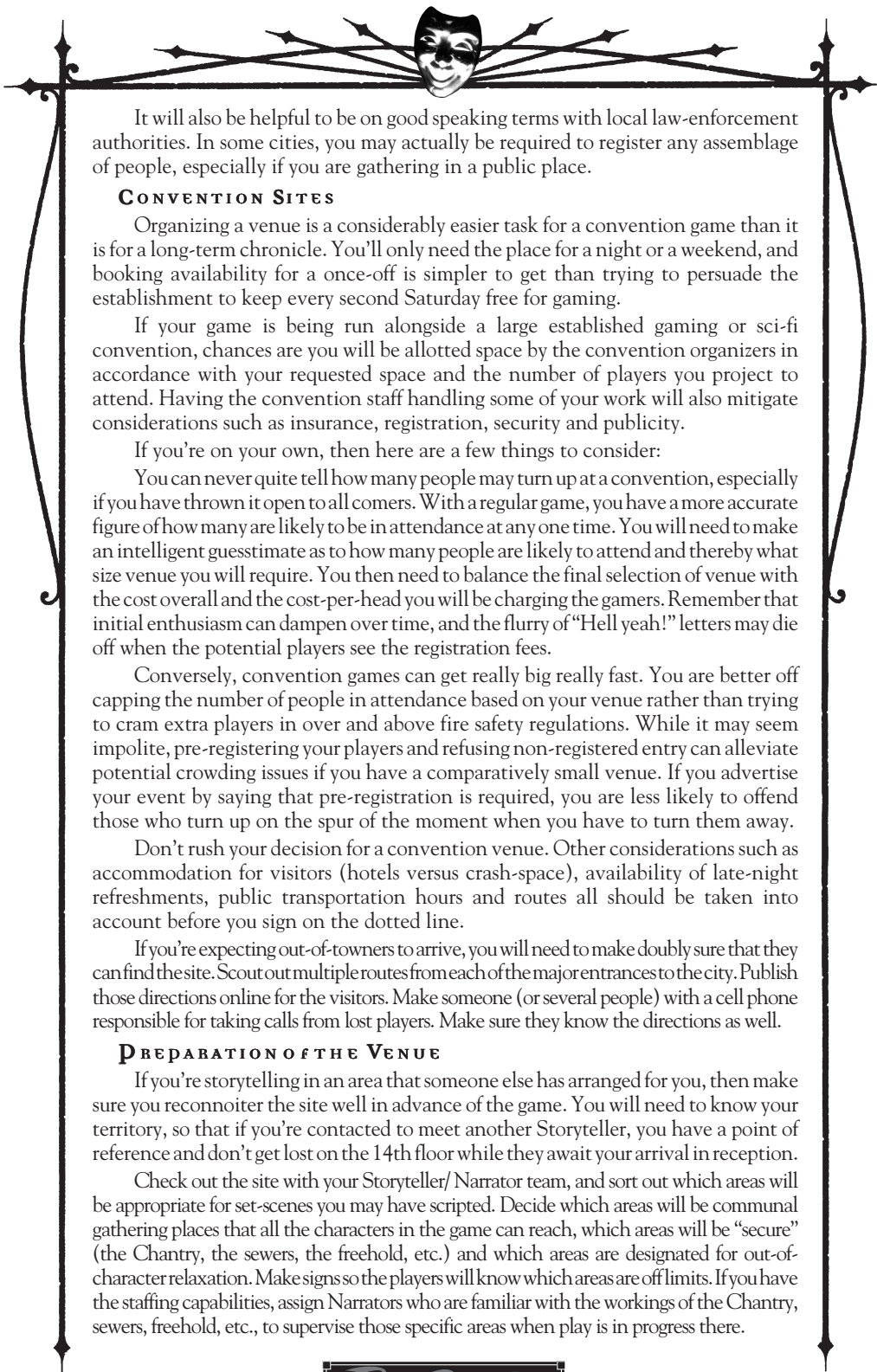
If you have an ongoing large game, then you're likely to want to hang on to the ideal venue you've found. You will need to consider the viewpoint of the host or landlord. On one hand, he's ensuring the booking of his venue on a regular basis. On the other hand, he may have others who want to reserve the venue for the same nights you planned to play. Be prepared to negotiate such matters, and schedule your games around his timetable as much as possible. Is there a difference between Friday and Saturday for you and your players? How about the third Saturday instead of the first? Are Sundays an option? Be flexible, and you will find your host flexible in return.

You'll also need to be prepared to explain your hobby to this person who has no idea of what you're up to. While a convention of strangely dressed people throwing arcane hand signals at each other may be a mild social blip as a once-off, regular occurrences of such behavior may draw some concern from the management. You're better off explaining what you're involved in so they and their staff understand what you're into is just a game. Heck, some of them might even want to join in now and then.

Encourage your players to respect the property. If the management doesn't want people leaving cigarette butts scattered around the premises, make sure that the smokers pick up after themselves or use the appropriate receptacles. Don't allow players to go through "Staff Only" doors. Try to leave the place cleaner than it was when you arrived. Remember that your hosts don't *have* to rent to you, and you don't want to have to go looking for another place too often if you can help it. Actually, this little piece of rocket science goes for any game at any venue. If you want to use the place again, look after it.

All games should observe a kind of out-of-character Masquerade when it comes to dealing with the non-playing public. One of the primary rules of **Mind's Eye Theatre** is *Be Mindful of Others*. This rule becomes ultimately important when you have 400 Gothic-Punk characters in everything from leather to lace milling about. Be aware that you are not just responsible for the reputation of the game, but also the reputation of the venue. The owners make their living from the property. To have it devalued due to the foolish antics of a few misbehaving players can be disastrous to their cash flow. It may also lose you your site.





It will also be helpful to be on good speaking terms with local law-enforcement authorities. In some cities, you may actually be required to register any assemblage of people, especially if you are gathering in a public place.

#### **CONVENTION SITES**

Organizing a venue is a considerably easier task for a convention game than it is for a long-term chronicle. You'll only need the place for a night or a weekend, and booking availability for a once-off is simpler to get than trying to persuade the establishment to keep every second Saturday free for gaming.

If your game is being run alongside a large established gaming or sci-fi convention, chances are you will be allotted space by the convention organizers in accordance with your requested space and the number of players you project to attend. Having the convention staff handling some of your work will also mitigate considerations such as insurance, registration, security and publicity.

If you're on your own, then here are a few things to consider:

You can never quite tell how many people may turn up at a convention, especially if you have thrown it open to all comers. With a regular game, you have a more accurate figure of how many are likely to be in attendance at any one time. You will need to make an intelligent guesstimate as to how many people are likely to attend and thereby what size venue you will require. You then need to balance the final selection of venue with the cost overall and the cost-per-head you will be charging the gamers. Remember that initial enthusiasm can dampen over time, and the flurry of "Hell yeah!" letters may die off when the potential players see the registration fees.

Conversely, convention games can get really big really fast. You are better off capping the number of people in attendance based on your venue rather than trying to cram extra players in over and above fire safety regulations. While it may seem impolite, pre-registering your players and refusing non-registered entry can alleviate potential crowding issues if you have a comparatively small venue. If you advertise your event by saying that pre-registration is required, you are less likely to offend those who turn up on the spur of the moment when you have to turn them away.

Don't rush your decision for a convention venue. Other considerations such as accommodation for visitors (hotels versus crash-space), availability of late-night refreshments, public transportation hours and routes all should be taken into account before you sign on the dotted line.

If you're expecting out-of-towners to arrive, you will need to make doubly sure that they can find the site. Scout out multiple routes from each of the major entrances to the city. Publish those directions online for the visitors. Make someone (or several people) with a cell phone responsible for taking calls from lost players. Make sure they know the directions as well.

#### **PREPARATION OF THE VENUE**

If you're storytelling in an area that someone else has arranged for you, then make sure you reconnoiter the site well in advance of the game. You will need to know your territory, so that if you're contacted to meet another Storyteller, you have a point of reference and don't get lost on the 14th floor while they await your arrival in reception.

Check out the site with your Storyteller/Narrator team, and sort out which areas will be appropriate for set-scenes you may have scripted. Decide which areas will be communal gathering places that all the characters in the game can reach, which areas will be "secure" (the Chantry, the sewers, the freehold, etc.) and which areas are designated for out-of-character relaxation. Make signs so the players will know which areas are off limits. If you have the staffing capabilities, assign Narrators who are familiar with the workings of the Chantry, sewers, freehold, etc., to supervise those specific areas when play is in progress there.



### Props

All the suggestions in the other *Mind's Eye Theatre* books in regards to setting, ambience, lighting and music apply to large games as well, and you will find that a bit of hard work in these areas is eventually rewarding. You are dealing with a larger scale here, and you will find yourself with much more room to fill.

Don't panic and be tempted to cram as many props as you can into each area. Your rooms will fill with people quickly, and people obscure properties. You're probably better off focusing on a few well-placed and well-presented props in any one area to establish the nature of that area. A cloth-draped throne on a dais states "prince's chamber" as eloquently as a dozen tapestries. A few strategically placed candelabra will call up the feeling of a Chantry chamber more effectively than dragging in the taxidermically stuffed alligator and all the glassware from the local chemist. Allow the players to stretch their imagination without overtaxing their attention.

If you are fortunate enough to have an established venue and a fair assortment of regular props, you might be able to negotiate storing your property with your host. It will certainly save you having to drag the damned stuff across town every weekend.

Define in advance (and clear with the venue's staff) the outside borders of your game area. Players may wander out of the game zone and inadvertently disrupt staff at work or others present in the venue.

### RESOURCES

When you run a large game, you'll need to make sure you have the resources to administer your group of players adequately. Booking venues, printing character sheets and badges, website hosting... all these things take time and resources your average mortal may not have available.

Your biggest issue is likely to be financing the ongoing expenses, such as rental of the game venue, printer paper and ink. Of course, the upshot is that if you can't afford the location, you're unlikely to be able to continue using it.

Generally, charging players for game attendance or club membership can cover administrative costs. You are strongly advised to seek accounting advice before embarking on any such mission. Your local accounting laws may require registration of your game as a club, non-profit or not-for-profit organization. The finances may be considered income for one or more of your members and therefore taxable. If you have to fork out your own cash, you may need to obtain reimbursement from the players. Money can be one of the biggest bugbears of a game, and proper handling of the finances of a game will reduce tensions due to such matters.

Time is the other less-considered major resource. There's never enough of it, and if you're trying to run a large game with a minimal staff, you'll run out of it sooner or later... normally sooner. If you're holding down a day job and you find that the chronicle may as well be a second form of employment because you're topping 50 hours a week on it, it may be time to farm out some of the work.

Optimize the use of your storytelling team by arranging cohesive meetings and sorting out issues as or before they arise. If your game is intensive, playing more than twice a month, then weekly meetings become a must to keep on top of things. Monthly games can probably survive on monthly meetings unless there is a considerable amount of downtime activity by the characters to resolve.



## COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

With hundreds of people involved in your chronicle or network, it becomes important that everyone is kept informed of any important events or news, both in and out of character. You will need to be able to notify all your players of the dates and locations of upcoming games, and they need to know where they can find other information pertinent to the chronicle. Additionally, your Storytellers will need to have methods of distributing information quickly to each other and to the players. The storytelling team also needs to develop methods for handling plot contingencies and for maintaining the internal records of the chronicle (such as character sheets).

You should consider your policies and procedures for managing such information with care. Make sure that up-to-date information is available to anyone who needs it, and that they can contact you (or your designated representatives) easily if they have any questions.

With the expanded options available with today's technology, you have a variety of methods for the dissemination of your chronicle's information.

### WEBSITES

Perhaps the easiest way for a chronicle to maintain a central repository of game information is through a website. If you're not an Internet guru, you should delegate responsibility of this site to one or two of your players who know how to handle a website, and make sure that they are fed the necessary information to keep the site current. One of the biggest killers of websites is stagnation, and if you want to keep the interest of your Internet observers, you'll need to update regularly.

Encourage the others in the game to contribute information to the website as well. Have them submit character profiles, photographs, poetry or whatever else they feel will be of assistance. A steady stream of player submissions can help reduce the overall pressure on the Storyteller to create the site from whole cloth while still handling the rest of the chronicle's organization.

Setting information is vital. Your chronicle's historical background, for example, will contribute to both new and old players. If you are setting your chronicle in the city in which you play, reference the differences that would be notable to a resident. You should already have the majority of this information ready to go if you've done your pre-chronicle set-up thoroughly. The *Laws of the Night Camarilla Guide* can help you flesh out your setting if you need some hints.

Your gossip or the player of your harpy (or the Galliards or bards) could be encouraged to write regular reports on recent important events and the elders' announcements. They may even wish to maintain a list of your characters' status or renown, positions and rumors or anecdotes about them so that a visitor to the website (and possibly to your chronicle) can enter the game at least partially informed as to the city's politics.

### EMAIL LISTS

A number of free facilities exist on the Internet that allow you to set up email lists with which you can keep subscribers informed as to the goings-on in your chronicle. As with your website, you ought to post regularly and keep the information current. You should schedule a regular posting of your game date and location, perhaps even your house rules if the file size is small enough. Some of these facilities allow you to share files via the Internet. If your house rules (or any other files you might share) are larger than would be considered polite to post in an email (say, 20 kilobytes) you could provide a link for people who wish to see the latest version when it is released by the Storyteller team. Include a link to your chronicle's website as well.



Players will inevitably wish to maintain communications between games, either in or out of character, so perhaps separate email lists for announcements, in-character and out-of-character conversations might be an option. As the network of your game grows, you might even find players who are willing to assist. They might run clan-, kith- or tribe-specific lists, a list closed to all but the city's officers, coterie or pack lists or whatever other kind of list they can come up with.

If you have a team of Storytellers and Narrators, consider running lists for these folks as well. Having a well-informed staff will result in a slicker chronicle in the long run.

### **PHONE LISTS**

If you have the staff, finances and motivation, you can maintain regular contact with your players by ringing around to notify them of upcoming games and recent events. However, doing so can be a costly option, and it is more suitable for smaller chronicles. You could encourage those players who are on your email lists to contact those without Internet access.

In any case, it is always handy to have a record of the phone numbers of your players in case you do need to speak with them. Email can be such an impersonal method of communication, since it lacks any real indication of tonal inflection other than emoticons and font faces. Additionally, phone conversations are immediate, so you don't have to rely on people checking their email accounts regularly. Many people would prefer to deal with a live voice in real time rather than have to translate an email letter's potential nuances.

Examine the option of having an information hotline that people can call to find out game dates and locations, and where they might be able to leave a message for the Storytellers. If you can afford it, an 800 number (or similar messaging system) makes a great repository for basic game and contact information for those who don't have access to the Internet.

### **INFORMATION OVERLOAD**

The larger your game is (especially in the case of an interconnected network of chronicles), the more email is likely to be swapped between players and staff. Keeping track of all the pieces of information can become a nightmare, so be prepared to delegate responsibility for separating the wheat from the chaff and reporting the pertinent issues back up the chain to the storytelling team.

It is also very tempting for players to continue to further plots during downtime via email. You will need to decide whether this practice is acceptable, or whether you would prefer for all the action to take place during the actual game. E-scenes (which occur in chat rooms or via email) may be permissible, but they can be difficult to adjudicate from a Storyteller's point of view, unless you are participating in or observing the scene electronically. Requiring players to keep archives of conversations can help keep "he said/ she said" situations from arising.

Ultimately, the decision as to what actions are permissible via email or chat rooms is up to you. Determine who is responsible for collating the downtime information, presenting it to the storytelling team and for reporting any issues that may have arisen that require urgent Storyteller attention. Keep an eye out for characters releasing information they don't justifiably possess. Notify the players of which Storytellers are available at what times to supervise e-scenes.

## **AT-GAME MANAGEMENT**

If you are truly a Storyteller legend and you can run a 100-plus player game by yourself, then we worship you. We might also wonder what you do with the rest of your time besides sleep. When your game has reached a point at which the management of the chronicle is taking up all your spare time, it might be prudent to bring in some help.



### SECRETS REVEALED

Your players can gain a large amount of in-character information each game, whether they do so from Storyteller sources or from other characters in the chronicle. In a network, in-character information can come from hundreds of other involved players who presumably have gotten their information from similar sources.

Many of the “secrets” of the World of Darkness are written up in the various books from White Wolf, and they will almost inevitably come into play at some stage during the life of the network. It falls to the Storytellers and the administrators of the network to ascertain whether or not it is acceptable for sensitive information (such as the true story of the Cappadocians) to become publicly known. If a character learns of the information in a valid manner — from a Storyteller, by witnessing the events or from a reliable source — then it is almost certain that that information will reach the ears of other characters, unless the character in question is really good at keeping secrets. Such information then spreads like wildfire via email and other avenues of modern communication, and it becomes “valid” for the entire network to have it. Thus the value of that secret is reduced to doggerel.

If you wish to preserve the mystery, then simply don’t allow the information to be released. Since you’re part of a network, other Storytellers will have decided whether or not they want their characters to know piece of information. Respect their decision to conceal information, and *ask* before you release it. Consultation on these matters will benefit the entire network and prevent you from having to retract information, negating several evenings of roleplay and a significant quantity of email.

Storyteller burnout is a Bad Thing, and an entire game can suffer because of it. Getting others involved in running the game expands your options as a Storyteller, which allows you to delegate or share responsibility for the chronicle. You can give specific roles to others, or you can opt to share the overall workload. Hey, doing so frees up some spare time for eating, at least!

### MULTIPLE STORYTELLERS

Managing a game and supervising a large number of players are mammoth tasks, and many chronicles will find it beneficial to divide the Storyteller’s duties among multiple people.

A Storyteller in a small game has a million tasks and details to look after, including Influence, Storyteller characters, plot arcs, character sheets, Experience Traits, venue organization and contacting players. What a mission! Chances are good that even a small chronicle will need to share the duties of handling the out-of-game organization.

The Storyteller team structure has many forms, depending on the preferences of the people involved. Your preference may be different than the ones we discuss here, but as long as your communication, compromise and courtesy issues are addressed and your players are happy, we’re not going to hassle you.

A common team structure might consist of a head Storyteller and several assistant Storytellers. The head Storyteller has the ultimate guiding control over the flow of the chronicle, and she delegates areas of responsibility to her assistants. Perhaps one assistant is in control of monitoring Influence expenditures and reporting plot developments along those lines back to the head Storyteller, while another is responsible for the antagonists’ actions.

This structure is really just an expansion of the relationship between Storytellers and Narrators, but with an intermediary step. Some games may prefer that the Narrators simply assume such responsibilities. The advantages of this structure are the facts that the buck stops somewhere and that an ultimate decision-maker is available



to resolve any issues that may arise. It can result in the game being somewhat forced, unless the head Storyteller is open to suggestions and discussion from his teammates.

Another viable team structure consists of equal-measure Storytellers. None is dominant over the rest, and decisions are made by consensus. This structure requires a team-development process that is similar to the authority structure, and it involves considerably more trust and communication between the people involved. However, it encourages a sharing and growth of ideas, which can be beneficial to the game as a whole.

Regardless of the structure of your Storyteller team, it requires the acceptance of the players in order to survive. If the players are not happy with the structure of the game or the pecking order, then they have the right to vote with their feet and play elsewhere. If you lose enough players, you won't have much of a game.

#### **SPECIALIZATION**

Consider specific roles for each of the people in your team and how you will determine their responsibilities. For example, you may decide that one Storyteller is responsible for handling plots, Storyteller characters and Influence. Another handles character sheets and Experience Traits between games, is in charge of rules calls during the game, and supervises clans A, B and C. Meanwhile, a third Storyteller adjudicates clans X, Y and Z, organizes venues and the website. A fourth handles interaction with other games in a network and non-vampire concerns.

Inevitably, some overlap will occur between the roles and duties, but as long as everyone knows who is responsible for what aspect of the game, things will run smoothly. Players in a large game have more confidence when they know that people have been appointed specifically to address their individual concerns.

#### **ASSEMBLING YOUR STORYTELLERS**

You will need to schedule downtime meetings for your team in order to keep each other abreast of situations that arise within each of your areas of responsibility. Stay on the same page. If you each forge ahead without knowing what the other heads of the hydra are doing, you will tear apart the team (and possibly the game). Maintaining consistency and unity in the decision process will benefit the game in the long run.

Take time to bring everyone up to speed on current plots and character activity. Consider the reactions of your setting to the plots in motion and how those reactions will be reflected in your next game. If you have information that should be passed on to one of your team specialists, this meeting is the time to do it, so that he can do his job more efficiently.

#### **DURING THE GAME**

Your storytelling team will be very busy during a large game, and the members will spend considerable time covering a large area cross-referencing scenes, adjudicating important challenges and portraying Storyteller character. Unless you have a strong game-plan as a team or you are all naturally telepathic, you need to settle on a method of transferring information or questions between each other quickly and efficiently, with minimal disruption to the game in progress.

One useful method is to invest in a set of short-range multi-channel walkie-talkies or radio-telephones. Separate channels can be set for Storytellers or Narrators, open or closed conversations, tactical talk or chatter, and so on. These items are somewhat pricey (check your local electronics stores), but they can save a considerable amount of walking or having to ask a Narrator to drop out of game to find a player on the other side of the game site. Multiple people can chat on the same channel, which is very useful if you need to assemble a team and update your Storytellers on developments. If your wallet can handle it, cell phones are also useful for such communications. If you're going to use them,



make sure that everyone who requires them has the correct numbers in the cell phone's memory and that the phones' batteries are charged before the game.

Either way, it is useful to arrange meeting place and times for several gatherings of the staff during the game to touch base on the game's progress. Taking a few minutes away from the game will not alter the flow too much, as long as your players are capable of continuing without you present. Take the time to have a snack and a short rest, and refresh everyone with any important plot developments, ideas and events that have come up thus far.

#### **STORYTELLER CHARACTERS**

Although it may seem that they become less important due to numbers, primary or long-running Storyteller characters become more pivotal in a large game. Secondary Storyteller characters, such as incidental mortals or minor flavor characters, remain important, but the inherent size of the game dictates that the Storytellers will be called on the play stronger roles.

In a smaller game, it is likely that the Storytellers and Narrators portray the more powerful characters in a city. In a large game, players will possess most of the authoritarian positions, so the characters that your team portrays are more likely to be central plot devices or external authorities. Who handles these characters? Does one person coordinate all of your Storyteller characters while the team portrays them, or do you allow the individual team members to play the characters as they see fit? If your team is coordinated around a central authority, it is likely that that person will determine these characters' reactions to events in the game. If you have a decentralized team, each character will grow in its own direction. However, it remains important for the team to remain in touch with the plot to determine the required eventualities of the characters' actions.

Storyteller characters are no more static than the players' characters are. Most of the members of your team are likely to be portraying these characters in the chronicle from time to time (or on an ongoing basis if necessary). The actions of the players' characters will affect each of the Storyteller characters differently. Treat each character as an individual, just as you would portray the character if you were a player. As in real life, actions lead to repercussions, and there is no reason that a Storyteller character should not react appropriately to a situation that challenges his own position. For example, if you are portraying a Storyteller prince, and a vampire is caught breaching the Masquerade, then you need to punish that character. To ignore the situation is to ignore one of the conventions of the genre. Of course, the offending character may be able to swing a deal to escape Final Death, but that's all part of the in-character politics.

#### **SHIFTS IN THE TEAM**

Eventually, one of your team members will become tired, jaded or just plain burned out as a Storyteller. Storytelling is a lot of work, much of which goes on behind the scenes, and sometimes it can seem thankless. However, a run-down Storyteller will only drag the game down with him, and any large game should have a policy in place when a Storyteller decides to step down.

Whether someone is groomed for replacement, is elected into the position, gravitates there by general charisma or is just the only person available at the time, the new Storyteller will need to be brought up to date on current plots and team decisions. He'll be exposed to an initial flood of information, much of which has been concealed from him as a player.

You will need to be prepared to bring the new team member up to speed in the areas that she will be dealing with. The outgoing Storyteller should set aside some time to talk with the incumbent and detail the necessary information. Transitional difficulties will reflect themselves into the game, and can cause problems for the players. If a plot suddenly



turns through 180 degrees for no discernible reason other than a change of Storyteller, then the suspension of disbelief required for a good game is shattered.

Storytellers who are stepping down have a challenging time ahead of them if they intend to join in the game immediately as a player. They have a lot of information about ongoing plots and other characters in the game, which gives them an unfair advantage over other players. As long as the game is satisfied that the former Storyteller can separate that knowledge from what his new character may know, then all is good. If doubt persists, it can color the game experience. It is advisable for the ex-Storyteller to create a character who is distinctly removed from any of the plots that he supervised during his tenure.

#### **TEAM UNITY**

As long as everyone is on the same wavelength within the team, it becomes much easier for any member to make a snap decision in the middle of a game without fear of stepping on another team member's toes. A unity of purpose and vision gives rise to additional freedom for interpretation within that vision without disrupting the whole. When you all know the story, you can tell the story equally well.

## **CONVENTIONS**

Organizing a convention game is a very challenging task, and one that involves a considerable amount of planning. In addition to finding a venue you will need to consider marketing and strategic planning of the event, characters, histories, settings... all the stuff that you would normally consider in starting a new chronicle, but on a much larger scale and possibly just for a single night.

Some suggestions follow, concerning how to approach the situations involved in planning a convention.

### **INITIAL PLANNING**

Assemble a core team of organizers and determine their areas of responsibility. Who will locate and reserve the site? Who is a central communication point for external inquiries? Who is handling player and/or character registrations? If the game is to be part of a larger convention, who will interact with other convention staff? Who is handling plots and Storyteller characters? Is someone dealing with pre-generated characters and orientation for novice players? Cross-chronicle plots for network conventions? Who will look after the finances? Who are your Storytellers? Your Narrators?

Ask questions. Identify as many considerations as you can well in advance of your event and work out your team strategy before you become swamped with last-minute matters. You *will* become swamped.

### **PRE-REGISTRATION**

If you are part of a larger convention, then it is likely that the convention's organizers will require registration for the overall event. If you have additional requirements for people attending your game — such as character sheets and backgrounds — ask that they be provided when the players register at the convention itself. If not, you will have to ask the players themselves for the information in some manner. If the organizers will give you a list of players and their contact details, get in touch with the players sooner rather than later and inform them of your needs. If that is not possible, then make sure that the information about your game in their literature includes your contact information.

It will be useful to compose a record of all the players who attend your game, along with their contact information, in case you or other convention staff should need to contact them after the event.





## CHARACTERS

You may have constructed the whole game, including all of the character parts, which you will assign to players at the convention. If so, you need to let the players know this in advance. Avoid disappointing those players who turn up expecting to be able to play their own characters.

If people want to play their own characters, and you are prepared to allow them to do so, they should be prepared to present them to your Storyteller team prior to the event. If you have foreknowledge of the characters that are going to be in attendance and you have some basic information about their backgrounds and driving goals, then you can tailor plots or sub-plots to suit.

You won't have time on the night of the game itself for your team to be vetting characters. You're expecting several hundred people to walk past your registration desk, each with a dozen questions. You won't have time to be sifting through their hand-written notes wondering how they learned out-of-clan Thaumaturgy or whether the item card for their six-Trait broadsword is valid according to **Laws of the...** which book was it in?

Gather the players' character information as soon as possible so that you can get a feel for what sort of event you have looming before you. If you are part of a network, you're more likely to be familiar with the characters you see posting on the network's email lists, or you can deal easily with their Storytellers if you have any questions about the character or player.

If you throw wide the doors to your convention game, you're in for a wild ride, and you will need to seriously consider how to handle the likely interactions that will occur at the event. The characters may have come from wildly disparate game types, and their character histories might clash. The Camarilla might still recognize the Gangrel as a member clan in one player's game. Another might have a different Brujah justicar. Red Star or no Red Star? If your game's planned story differs significantly from the World of Darkness metaplot, then be sure that you let the players know as much before they start playing.

Weigh up all the character submissions in terms of game balance. If something sticks out like a sore thumb as not belonging, contact the player to discuss the matter. Don't be afraid to decline the character if it is likely to be detrimental to the game. The player may be willing to negotiate some fine points of the character to bring it more in line with your vision. You might find it useful to contact the player's Storyteller to verify details of the character.

Even for an event that allows existing characters to attend, your team should create a number of pre-generated characters for players who turn up short a sheet. These characters need not be mainstream or headlining characters. You may not know how many people to expect at the convention. Start with 30 spare sheets, and keep a few blanks handy for emergencies.

Give your pre-gens more than just Traits. Create goals, plots and interaction hooks so that the player has a kick-start into the game. You don't want to get bogged down in character creation and approval when you should be running the game or portraying a plot-critical Storyteller character entrance. You certainly don't want to spend the rest of the evening answering, "So what was my motivation in this scene?"

Don't be tempted into creating a stack of eighth-generation powerhouses. The World of Darkness focuses more closely on the underlings of the various species. Create ghouls, high-generation vampires, fosters and adren. Resist the urge to scatter the sheets with extra Traits unless that character's age, history or experience absolutely demands it. A starting-level neonate can have as much, if not more, roleplaying potential than a brooding but static elder vampire, and a player is more likely to play such a character believably. If you need to have powerful Storyteller characters in the game, then give those characters to your team to play. Your Storytellers and Narrators will already know their expected roles and have rehearsed



them prior to the event. Besides, the more underdogs who are running around for the elders to play with, the more representational of the society in question your game can be.

#### **TEAM COORDINATION**

Before the event, establish who is in control of what aspects of the game. Meet with your team well in advance and coordinate. Know which Storytellers will control which physical areas of your venue and aspects of the overall game.

Nominate your Narrators. Designate those folks who will play your Storyteller characters, and make sure that they are aware of their required roles. Make sure that they are familiar with any genre discrepancies or house interpretations of the standard rules that may apply to the game so that everyone is on the same planet when the questions come flying.

Know your territory and your limits. Communicate with the other convention staff (if you're part of a larger convention) about their expectations, and don't go beyond them. Prepare the same information for presentation to the players. Know where you can play your game and where you are trespassing. Learn the venue's emergency procedures and your roles in an emergency. Think for a moment about potential first-aid requirements. Having a few hundred people in a confined area can lead to accidents, as much as we hope it won't.

Conduct a thorough examination of the site as a team. Learn the quickest routes through the game site so that you and your players won't get lost. Identify any areas that you think should be of concern in regards to safety and consider striking them from the game zone.

Think about how you will handle communication during the game. Consider investing in some short-range, multi-channel walkie-talkies so that you can keep in touch with each other from across the game site. Make sure they meet local radio control specifications. These devices can be invaluable tools for plot coordination, scene timing and even simple rules matters.

#### **THE FRONT DESK**

Encourage players to turn up as early as possible (or feasible) on the day of the event. Deal with all of the bookkeeping and discussions in advance of the actual game. Reserve the game time for the game itself. The front desk is not a hangout.

At this stage, players should receive a copy of their character sheets and any notes that may have been prepared for them. Willpower and special Trait tokens can be distributed alongside item cards. If you are concerned about players altering character sheets, print them on event-specific letterhead, and accept information only from sheets that have that letterhead during the game. Keep copies of all official sheets for Storyteller reference. If you have access to a laptop computer and a portable printer, bring them along so that you can print out more information (or copies) quickly.

Hand each player a copy of the house interpretations of the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rules that are in play for the night, as well as a basic information and rumor sheet so that they have an idea of what they are facing in the hours to come. Take this opportunity to inform the players of any special conditions of play and any out-of-game rules that you (or the convention staff) expect them to abide by, and let them know what might happen if they decide to break those rules.

As your Storytellers and Narrators arrive, hand them pre-printed badges to denote their out-of-character position. Doing so makes them more easily recognizable to players during the game should they be needed.

#### **NEW PLAYERS**

Identify people who are attending your game but who have never played in a **Mind's Eye Theatre** game before. They deserve some extra attention since you will be introducing them to an entirely new style of game, and they will need to learn at



### LATECOMERS

It happens. Your convention game's been rolling smoothly for the last four hours, and now 15 players from the *GeekCon's Last Gloom* — the LARP that you heard about going on downstairs — have decided that they want to join your game because it looks cooler. Meanwhile, the missing pre-registered players whose car broke down on the freeway are finally pulling up outside. You need to have a plan in place for dealing with these people.

If you have a strict pre-registration requirement, then non-registered players are not getting through the door. If you have an open-door policy, then you may choose to bring the stragglers up to date with the events of the evening, or you might just throw them in to sink or swim. The latter option can be a lot of fun for a player — after all, his character wouldn't know what had gone down if he had turned up late, would he?

You will also need to go over the rules of the convention game just as you did with all the players who turned up on time. Sort out a character for them from your pre-generated sheets, then introduce them into the game as smoothly as possible.

If people have come from another game to your game, you will need to decide whether they can join in. It might pay to have a quick chat with the Storytellers of the other game as to why these people have changed their minds, and then make a decision. Let common sense prevail.

least the basics of the rules in order to minimize their potential disruption to the rest of the experienced players.

Naturally, one would expect that any experienced roleplayer would be only too happy to assist a new player in learning the rules as they come up, but having at least a basic familiarity with challenges will make a world of difference.

It may be helpful to form the new players into small coterie or packs under the watchful eye of a Narrator, so that they have a central personal resource for information and rules assistance. Perhaps the Narrator can play an ancilla with her brood of childer, or a den mother with her cubs. The Narrator can then mentor the new players and act as a roleplaying buffer for them as need be.

### YOUNG PLAYERS

Our games deal with mature and adult topics. With this fact in mind, make a policy early in your pre-event organization about whether you will allow minors to attend. If the game that you are planning to run will explore adult themes, consider your local laws on exposing minors to such issues. If young players are going to be at the game, it is advisable that you get a signed permission and disclaimer form from their parents. Of course, you might like to invite the parents to come and play with their children.

### THE INTRODUCTION

Before the game starts, assemble all the players in a central area for some Storyteller quality time. With a large number of players present, it will be too difficult to give each person the individual attention he needs. Take half an hour to an hour to cover any salient points that you need to address with the players.

At this time, introduce your Storyteller and Narrator staff, so that the players will know whom they can deal with for out-of-character matters. Point out their nice badges. Note that they are the officials for the event and that they have final say in any rules interpretations or plot calls. Also introduce any administrative staff that will be available for player queries or matters of emergency. Outline any safety issues and procedures.



Introduce your plot and setting. Much of this information should be included on the information sheets that you have already distributed to the players, but it is helpful to them to reinforce that information verbally. Call forward your key characters so that they can be identified easily. It's not very helpful if the Garou of a caern can't identify their sept's Warder, nor does it assist matters if the local established Kindred don't know who the prince is.

Field reasonable questions and allow some time for chitchat. If the noise level rises too high, call people back down to order and move the conversation along. People will by now be champing at the bit to game on. Frantic roleplayers are a scary lot, and you're already eating into their game time. Deal with any lingering issues quickly and firmly, and move on to the next question. Allow a few moments of comic relief, sure, but don't waste too much time.

Announce the start and end times of your game, as well as any intermissions or scheduled assemblies. If the game is to continue over several nights, talk about the timing and procedures that pertain to the subsequent nights.

Split the players up into their respective coteries, cities, septs, social cliques, whatever. They should spend the next half-hour or so getting to know each other's characters and faces. This is where your prepared background and information sheets come in handy again.

Then let them loose.

## **DURING THE GAME**

You're going to be run ragged keeping track of dozens of scenes, coordinating numerous Storyteller characters and tweaking an amorphous plot that will change with the wind and at the whim of the players. Here are some basic pointers for keeping some semblance of control over the masses and making sure that people are having fun.

### **PROBLEM PLAYERS**

Deal with these people as quickly as you discover them. You will have laid out your ground rules at the start, so all the players will be aware of the expected codes of conduct. You have too many people to deal with and too few staff to be policing the game constantly, and you will have no time to deal with cheese-heads, whiners, gun-bunnies or whatever you want to call them. Make it a "one warning then you're out" situation. That said, deal with all such situations politely. Courtesy will not hurt the situation, and it may defuse it before it escalates into a nasty situation. For example, if a character is about to start a combat in a game that you have stated will be politically based, and that will result in a huge time bubble for dozens of players, check the character's motivations. If it's inconsistent with the character's general personality, advise the player of the likelihood of disruption and ask him to reconsider the action.

If a player is in breach of the core rules of **Mind's Eye Theater**, handle him as you would any other player. Just because you're at a convention does not mean that the rules of play or civility fly out the window. It's easy for people to become a little over-excited and make a few simple mistakes, but the core rules exist for a reason. When people break said rules, you must deal with them firmly and immediately for the sake of the game. For instance, if the player is engaged in an illegal or harmful activity, call security and have him removed. You're not the police, and the people in charge of the convention or premises have the authority and ability to deal with criminals. Don't endanger yourself or others. Also, you don't want yourself or your large friends being brought up on assault charges for helping a troublesome miscreant find the door.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

With so many players active in a confined area, the game is bound to get a little loud. Depending on what your game site is like, consider the impact of your presence on others nearby. If you're part of a larger convention, be aware of the effect your players



may have on other people's games. If you're running a stand-alone convention, remain conscious of the neighbors, and avoid disrupting their normal lives. If you cause overt disruption, you may find yourselves pointedly uninvited in the future.

It's possible that your players will intermingle with other convention-goers who are not involved in the game itself, which can add strain to your game. It can be very difficult for a player to maintain an in-character posture if he is being distracted by an elf babe showing more bosom than brassiere or if he's being glowered at by a passing Klingon. Encourage your players to keep away from the other non-players during game play for everyone's sake. Don't let non-players get dragged into the game.

#### **DEAD PLOTS**

If you find that your plots are dying, have a back-up plan. You need to either spark their interest further or be ready to replace the plot. You can conceivably combine the two concepts by inserting a new, fresh and exciting plot device that leads the characters back to the over-arching story. If the plot is a dead duck, cook it and eat it. There's little point in letting it stink up the game. Have spare plot threads available for such contingencies. Even red herrings can spark a whole new concept for story that you might not have thought of. Be prepared to wing it.

#### **EXCESSIVE OUT-OF-GAME ACTIVITY**

Your players have come a long distance to play, so encourage them to remain in character as much as possible. Although it is very tempting for players to sit around and chat about what's happened in their character's histories, they are there for a reason, and that reason is to play your game. Ask people to save their out-of-character moments for non-game time. There is plenty of time afterward for chitchat.

#### **"CHEESE" CALLS**

Someone is going to complain about something somewhere along the line, be it due to plot ("This is nuts! Since when did the Brujah know so much about the Salubri?"), rules ("But we play *Aura Perception* like this back home.") or events ("I don't think it's in character for the Ventrue justicar to deal with that situation by killing the prince"). If your Storyteller team is well organized, you should be prepared to deal with all of these situations. If your convention is part of a network or ongoing chronicle, then you have the contact information for the players involved in any specific scene so you can sort issues out after the game is finished. To avoid situations of this sort, keep your plots and character motivations simple, and keep your rules clear.

#### **NETWORK CONVENTIONS**

If you're running a convention as part of a network of chronicles, abide by the network's rules. Get clearance for anything that requires it well in advance of the event. Remember that the event is going to become part of the network's communal history, and it will affect the development of any network character who attends. The appearance of any international-level Storyteller characters should be cleared through the appropriate authorities. Any plots that will affect multiple member chronicles in the network should be discussed with the Storytellers concerned.

#### **CHARACTER DEATH**

While a predominantly political game can carry on with minimal character removal, it remains a fact of game that characters may die due to plot or character reasons. Losing your sole character at a convention while several hours of playtime remain is disappointing, and players may justifiably complain. Again, be prepared. Have available a selection of alternative characters that are ready for play and insertion into the story.



## NETWORKS

While conventions and large games have much to offer, the potential for plot and interaction that is available through network games surely overshadows them both. With the expanded scope and scale of such organizations come a number of issues that will need to be addressed. Many of the concerns that large games or conventions need to address are equally applicable to networks, but such mega-chronicles have considerations all their own.

### CORE NETWORK QUALITIES

In order for a network of chronicles to prosper and grow, three primary policies need to be considered and developed.

#### COMMUNICATION

Networks need to establish systems of communication that will address the needs of the organization adequately. While a few simple email lists will suffice for a small local group of chronicles, when the network grows to encompass an international audience, the sheer daily volume of email can quickly grow to be overwhelming. Thousands of emails will pass between characters, either in private or on established lists. The administrative staff will likewise be in constant communication as they develop systems and deal with situations as they arise.

Individual member chronicles will be responsible for monitoring local lists (those that apply to their specific chronicle or geographic area of responsibility) and for making sure that the quality of information distributed to their players or characters is consistent with the network's agreed rules and/or genre. If it is not public knowledge that the Assamites have lost their curse, then that information should not appear in the network unless a justifiable reason exists for the character who releases that information to have discovered it. Of course, the Storyteller that permitted that character to have that information will have checked with the administration as to whether it would be appropriate for the character to know the facts in the first place.

The network will have policies in place to monitor and prevent the release of such genre-sensitive information, and contingencies planned for informing the network of any falsely released "facts." A simple fix for such situations is to require the characters involved to have an appropriate level of *Lore Ability* in the specific area before they are permitted to speak of such issues.

Regular information updates from chronicles to the administration staff are required in order to monitor the overall status of the organization. Such chronicle reports can serve to update the network on changes in Storyteller staff, plots or events that may affect other chronicles, as well as any other matters that are of specific relevance to the network. These updates allow the network staff to remain in touch with the member chronicle and deal with any issues as they arise.

In return, reports from the various appointed officials in the network will keep member chronicles abreast of their opinions and actions, so that the whole can work as one. That ideal may sound a little airy-fairy, but if you can't maintain communications, you can't maintain a cohesive network.

#### COMPROMISE

An independent chronicle has the world at its fingertips. If the staff wants Tipperary demolished by Godzilla in order to further a plot, so be it. In a network, though, the players in the Tipperary chronicle may be a tad annoyed to find that their two-year old chronicle has been demolished at the whim of the Storyteller in Kalamazoo. Member chronicles



need to be prepared to limit their impact on the world outside their immediate area. Joining a network involves sacrifice, but the reward for that sacrifice is scope.

The degree of compromise will depend on the communal agreement that forms the foundation of the network. If the network agrees to be guided by a central authority, then the individual chronicles must be prepared to allow that authority to guide and even override the Storytellers in how their game develops. If the network provides for strong chronicle autonomy, then the entire network must be more flexible in order to allow for variations in interpretation of the overall worldview.

Establishing the level of compromise during the creation of the network will prevent a number of potential future disruptions. Not every level of compromise will suit every chronicle that is considering joining a network. Be prepared to shop around to find a group that suits your preferences.

#### **COURTESY**

Any community relies upon accepted social graces to survive. A chronicle has an expected level of behavior, beyond which the individual can expect to be expelled from that chronicle. Similarly, a network relies upon a communal agreement as to what constitutes acceptable behavior. Those who decide to transgress those accepted norms and who disrupt the unity of the organization in so doing can expect to be likewise dismissed.

In a single chronicle, personal problems can be dealt with on an intimate level, but allowing those personal issues to spill into the community in a network can be very disruptive. No longer are you dealing with a handful of people, you are presenting yourself to several hundred — perhaps several thousand — who will expect you to be civil and understanding of others' viewpoints. You sure as heck can't please all of the people all of the time, however, and it's generally considered polite to know when to bow out of a contentious issue and agree to disagree.

When dealing with email through a network, the additional layer of "netiquette" must be applied. Many of the folk who are familiar with email will already have expectations of acceptable levels of behavior, and they will be quick to jump on those who transgress. Game-related lists are not the place to send your favorite jokes or surveys unless it is an in-character action. Also, be aware of the typical risks of the Internet, such as viruses or the sharing of personal out-of-character information.

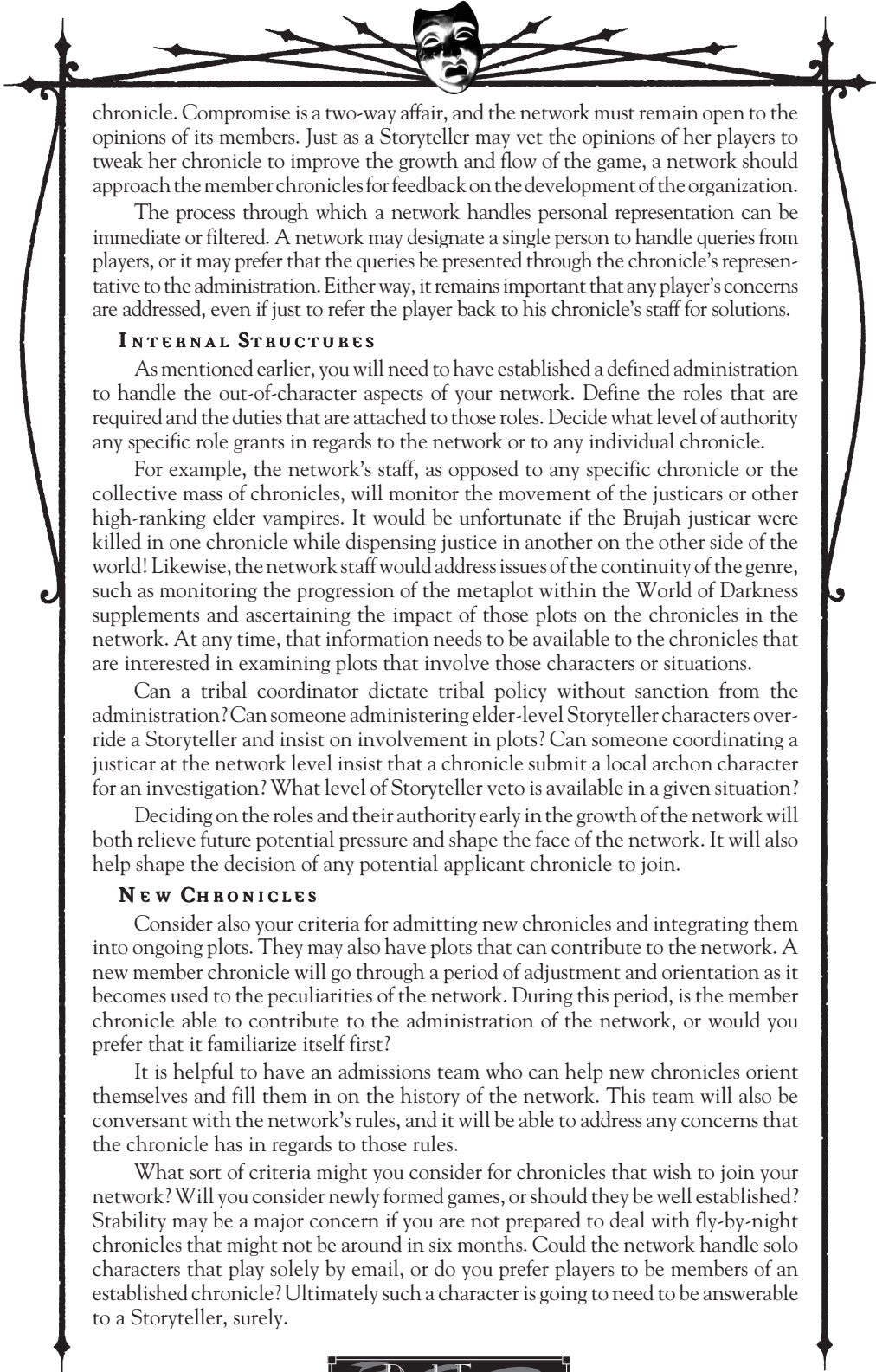
#### **NETWORK ADMINISTRATION**

In order for a network to function efficiently, it will require a staff of responsible and reliable people to coordinate the integration of the chronicles and to supervise the interactions between players' characters, Storyteller characters and chronicles.

#### **CHRONICLE REPRESENTATION**

The majority of the internal administration of a network's member chronicles will fall to the chronicles themselves. It is unreasonable of a member chronicle to expect that the network will handle all of its local affairs. The network will have expectations of the member chronicles in terms of communications, and it will ask that the member chronicle share some of the administrative load, especially as it applies to them. The member chronicle is expected to share any issues that will affect the network, even in part, and it agrees to abide by the network's accepted rules and code of conduct. Additionally, the chronicle is prepared to compromise in order to conform to the unilateral views of the network in any given area.

The network should not, however, expect a member chronicle to simply be slavishly devoted to following the party line, nor should the member chronicle be without voice in matters that affect it. Representation of the chronicle's interests to the central authority is required in order to avoid the potential alienation of the



chronicle. Compromise is a two-way affair, and the network must remain open to the opinions of its members. Just as a Storyteller may vet the opinions of her players to tweak her chronicle to improve the growth and flow of the game, a network should approach the member chronicles for feedback on the development of the organization.

The process through which a network handles personal representation can be immediate or filtered. A network may designate a single person to handle queries from players, or it may prefer that the queries be presented through the chronicle's representative to the administration. Either way, it remains important that any player's concerns are addressed, even if just to refer the player back to his chronicle's staff for solutions.

**INTERNAL STRUCTURES**

As mentioned earlier, you will need to have established a defined administration to handle the out-of-character aspects of your network. Define the roles that are required and the duties that are attached to those roles. Decide what level of authority any specific role grants in regards to the network or to any individual chronicle.

For example, the network's staff, as opposed to any specific chronicle or the collective mass of chronicles, will monitor the movement of the justicars or other high-ranking elder vampires. It would be unfortunate if the Brujah justicar were killed in one chronicle while dispensing justice in another on the other side of the world! Likewise, the network staff would address issues of the continuity of the genre, such as monitoring the progression of the metaplot within the World of Darkness supplements and ascertaining the impact of those plots on the chronicles in the network. At any time, that information needs to be available to the chronicles that are interested in examining plots that involve those characters or situations.

Can a tribal coordinator dictate tribal policy without sanction from the administration? Can someone administering elder-level Storyteller characters override a Storyteller and insist on involvement in plots? Can someone coordinating a justicar at the network level insist that a chronicle submit a local archon character for an investigation? What level of Storyteller veto is available in a given situation?

Deciding on the roles and their authority early in the growth of the network will both relieve future potential pressure and shape the face of the network. It will also help shape the decision of any potential applicant chronicle to join.

**NEW CHRONICLES**

Consider also your criteria for admitting new chronicles and integrating them into ongoing plots. They may also have plots that can contribute to the network. A new member chronicle will go through a period of adjustment and orientation as it becomes used to the peculiarities of the network. During this period, is the member chronicle able to contribute to the administration of the network, or would you prefer that it familiarize itself first?

It is helpful to have an admissions team who can help new chronicles orient themselves and fill them in on the history of the network. This team will also be conversant with the network's rules, and it will be able to address any concerns that the chronicle has in regards to those rules.

What sort of criteria might you consider for chronicles that wish to join your network? Will you consider newly formed games, or should they be well established? Stability may be a major concern if you are not prepared to deal with fly-by-night chronicles that might not be around in six months. Could the network handle solo characters that play solely by email, or do you prefer players to be members of an established chronicle? Ultimately such a character is going to need to be answerable to a Storyteller, surely.





### **DISCIPLINARY ISSUES**

The network must be prepared to deal with problem players or chronicles, and it must have systems in place to deal with these matters. Options range from probationary periods to outright dismissal or removal. All members of the network will respect a firmly stated policy in regards to accepted levels of conduct if you enforce that policy firmly.

Although this topic is an unpleasant one, problems can arise with people that wish to consider themselves above and beyond the rules of the community. Having systems in place to deal with these people can act as a deterrent to such behavior, as well as giving the network a method of dealing with the situations when they do arise.

### **CROSS-CHRONICLE CHARACTERS**

Ninety-nine percent of the time, character interaction between chronicles will be amicable, and no major problems will arise. After all, that's one of the primary reasons people become involved in networks — to share their games. As the games become more closely interrelated, it becomes possible for players to move between them regularly, especially if those chronicles are geographically close to one another.

Situations may arise in which characters or players decide to move their base from one chronicle to another for whatever reason. A network must be prepared for these situations. Is a generic character based in a specific chronicle, or is it considered to be a part of the network as a whole? If the former is the case, are Experience Traits from chronicles that the character has visited viable, or should all Experience Traits be awarded by a character's "home" chronicle? If the latter is the case, who will award the character Experience Traits, and who keeps track of the player's character sheet?

If a character is considered to belong to a home chronicle, what sort of systems might be needed to administer the transferal of that character to another chronicle, ensuring consistency of plots in regards to that character? Is it acceptable for a character to be based in one chronicle when he plays primarily in another? Consider the impact that such rules will have on the other players in the network.

### **NETWORK RULES**

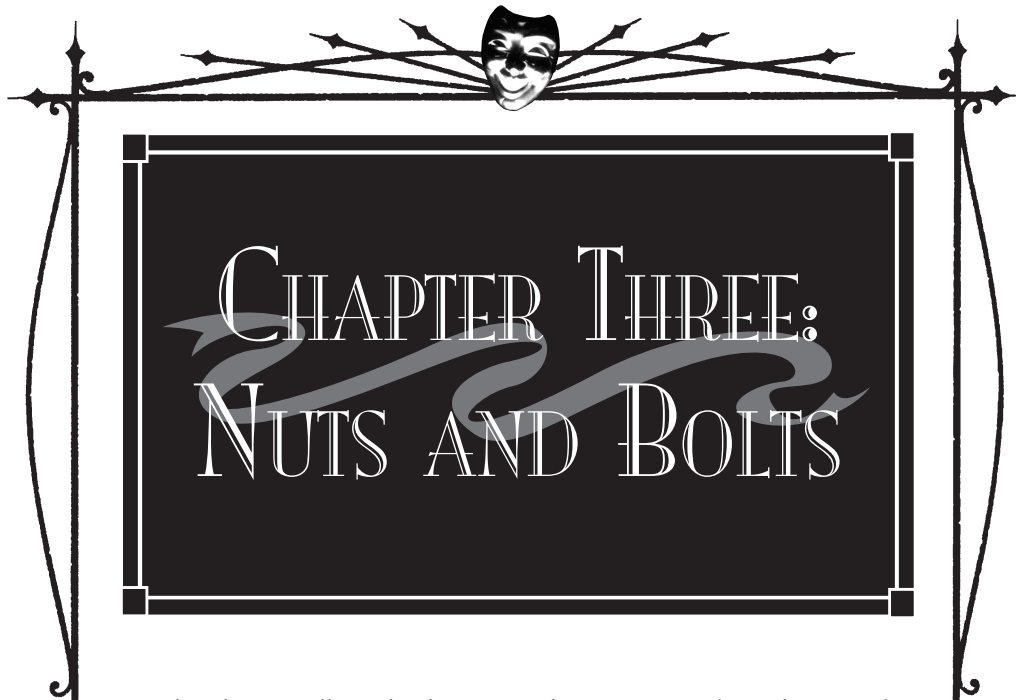
As a network grows, it will develop its own interpretations of the *Mind's Eye Theatre* systems and rules. It is important that these interpretations be readily available to any member chronicle and player therein, perhaps through a website or regular email system. Since you expect every member of your network to share in your understanding of the published rules, it makes sense to make every effort to make them available to those members.

### **GAME RULES**

Will you have a central set of game rules that every chronicle will use, or will you allow member chronicles to tailor the *Mind's Eye Theatre* individually? The former will ensure consistency within the network whenever a player goes to visit another chronicle, and it will reduce the confusion a player may encounter in regards to her character sheet in such a situation. The latter will allow an individual chronicle to have its own flavor and maintain its own internal balance.

Construction of a universal set of rules is a huge undertaking (although we've done most of the work for you already), and it involves further compromise on behalf of the member chronicles. Chronicles that intend to join need to be aware of your rules when they consider joining. Also consider whether you, as a network, are prepared to allow exceptions to your established rules. If such is the case, what mechanisms do you have in place to monitor and permit such exceptions?





This chapter collects the disparate and inconsistent rules and systems from preceding *Mind's Eye Theatre* publications in an attempt to reconcile them with the particular concerns of a large or long-running live-action chronicle. While clearing up every lingering question or point of contention to which MET rules are heir is beyond the scope of this book, this chapter brings together rules and systems that are common to most kinds of live-action games. It also offers systemic solutions to problems that are specific to large or long-running chronicles, it offers additional systems for using the Influence Background, and it answers some sticky questions that arise when live-action settings cross over.

## CHARACTER CREATION

In any live-action roleplaying game, the main ingredient is not plot or Storyteller characters or even a realistic world background. The key ingredient is the players' characters. The group of characters active in the game will create the core of stories that everyone who plays in it will be retelling when they all get together out of game. It is the moments of beauty created between players that mark your game as something special. A large part of the Storyteller's responsibility and reward is getting the players excited about their characters while still having those characters fit within the larger world that you have created. The Storyteller builds the stage, but the players are writing the speaking roles in the play.

## RARITY APPROVALS

Every group needs to decide what type of game it wants to play. They have to decide if they would like to play within just one setting, such as *Laws of the Night* or *Laws of the Wild*, or if they want to explore the possibilities of a fully integrated World of Darkness, in which all types of creatures appear. Regardless of what the group decides, some character types just don't fit. Every setting has a few character types that are rare or which simply don't mix well with the standard choices. The obvious examples are the rare creatures of each genre such as the Nagaraja, True Brujah and Salubri in *Laws of the Night*, or the Thallain and Shadow Court in *The Shining Host*.



Likewise, every game has a few players who will want to play those rare creatures. It is perfectly natural to want to play the special characters, so don't be surprised when you get roughly half of any single game asking to play things like Daughters of Cacophony or Siberakh. One of the best ways to combat this potential is to define your game early and not be afraid to steer potential players toward similar concepts that fit within the game's bounds of reason. If the game is set up as a standard grouping of Camarilla vampires in an Elysium-style game of politics, it usually doesn't make sense if the representation of non-standard clans outnumbers the standard clans.

Eventually, though, you will receive your fifth application for a modern-day Bunyip or a Scathach Sidhe, and you will come to the point that every Storyteller dreads: telling the player no. Take a moment to really analyze what the player is asking for. Frequently, players request to play a special kind of creature, but the character concept that the player has in mind can work just as well in another, much more reasonable character type. Try to look at the application from the standpoint of helping the player realize his vision of a character. Try to find out what that player really wants, then work with him to fit those goals into the game. Make sure that you resist the urge to simply deny requests without making suggestions or offering an alternative. No matter how large the game gets, it still lives and breathes on the perceptions of the players. If the players feel that they will be denied the opportunity to play what they want — or that the Storytellers are not considering their wishes — they will find another game.

If Storytellers aren't careful, they may look around one night and realize that they have a Camarilla game with almost no Camarilla clans in play, or a Garou game with more Fera than Garou. There enters into the game a dichotomy that the players may not be able to voice, but that they will notice. If the game is intended to be a gathering of the rare and unique, then it will likely go for some time without being a problem. However, there is a very real risk of becoming known as a game where anything goes.

The opposite is also true, though. Games that keep the levels of rare characters to very reasonable levels become known for their even-handed approach to portraying the World of Darkness. If players look around and see only one public vampire, who is obviously the odd man out, they will receive a very visible message that your game takes the source material seriously and that you are going to use the oddities of the setting to reinforce the normal.

When deciding how many rare birds are too many, the Storyteller needs to examine the expected attendance of his game. Making such a decision is rarely as simple as setting a straight ratio of one abnormal character for every 20 normal ones; it's more of a sliding scale. For a game of 20 or fewer members, one special approval might be plenty. When the size of the game gets to 50, add in a second. At 75 or 100, maybe one more. In general, you need to keep the special characters to less than 10% of the game's population.

With larger games, that percentage should go down, not up, because you will not have full attendance at every session in a large game. You will, however, get almost full attendance from anyone who has spent the time and effort to play a rare character type. This phenomenon will create the illusion that the ratio of rare characters to regular ones is far greater than it really is, because those odd ducks will tend to be the more active characters.

## **BASIC CHARACTER APPROVAL**

The largest crush on any new game is the initial work and time one must spend on character approvals. To make this daunting task less troublesome, we recommend that you take the following few small steps.



First, decide what the demographics for your game will be. Decide your game's theme and mood, then set the limits of roughly how many rare characters will be allowed in at the start. Make sure that both the players and any other Storytellers who are helping understand the limits and expectations, and that they are prepared to adhere to them.

Second, try to complete the majority of your approvals as soon as possible. The longer the task lingers, the less likely you are to be satisfied with the results. For any game of 20 or more characters, the main Storyteller will likely want help from Narrators or assistants. Before everything gets busy, meet with any Storytellers you have and spend some time going over the players' backgrounds and character sheets. Turn the meeting into a planning session for your first game, setting aside anywhere from one night to one week to accomplish the initial planning.

Third, have a character creation party for your group's first meeting rather than an actual game. Invite as many of the players as you can, and invite them to discuss their characters' connections to each other and to the game setting's history. For instance, are you having a Storyteller character portray the city's prince and primogen when the game starts, or are the players' characters going to fill those roles? Will the players' characters be encouraged to play a big role in the governance of the city, or are they trying to bring down the powers that be? Whatever background you've written for the setting, use this first gathering of the players as an opportunity to meet with them and generate ideas. Players' characters who enter your game with connections already in place have far more invested into the game than those players who make a character with no pre-existing connections.

Finally, allot your storytelling team approximately one week to go through all of the character sheets and backgrounds before the game. The more time you give yourself the better, but try to stick to the same schedule you will be using for games. If you play every other week, then try to get it all ready within a two-week timeframe. Don't let yourself procrastinate on these initial preparations, because it may infringe on everyone's enjoyment of playing the game.

When reviewing the backgrounds and sheets, look for plot hooks that can be used in various stages of the game. Look for items, such as an *Enemy*, that can be expanded to affect a sizeable portion of the game. Flaws and other hooks that you can showcase will help draw the spotlighted characters into the chronicle. Players will realize that the characters they've created have an impact on the world around them. It is important for players to feel that their characters have significance within the game, especially if you want them to keep coming back.

Once the game is underway, you will undoubtedly be asked to approve characters during game-play while you are trying to attend to other business. If you are faced with a player in need of immediate approval and you don't have the time to examine the character sheet in depth, scan the character sheet for obvious abusive powers and fuzzy math. If the basics look all right, approve the character for the game. Then make sure to tell the player that although the character is approved for this session, he will need to leave it with you at the end of the session so that you can examine it in more detail before the next session. Typically, these steps are sufficient for in-game approval, since they enable you to deal with more pressing game issues.

### **UNEVENING THE PLAYING FIELD**

The World of Darkness is rarely a level playing field. Most of the *Mind's Eye Theatre* and tabletop source material makes it clear that no player's character is ever at the top of the pecking order. Each supernatural setting has someone at the top looking down upon the players' characters, as well as an entire range of positions in between. A



game of vampiric politics in which the Ventruue prince has the same basic statistics as his downtrodden Caitiff antagonists doesn't offer quite the same dynamic as one can find in the tabletop version of **Vampire: The Masquerade**. To remedy that disparity, you can simply start some of the characters off with more free Traits than others.

At the beginning of a chronicle, the Storyteller needs to decide if he will allow anyone to enter play with a more powerful character for the sake of the story. If so, the Storyteller must then decide how he is going to pick who gets to play those more powerful characters. This decision is important because the players chosen for these more potent characters must agree to not abuse the power given to them. The Storytellers need to keep an eye on the powerful characters and keep those players informed about how they are doing, as well as what the chronicle needs from them. Establishing the personal communications between Storyteller and player in these situations can be a tremendous boon to the game's flavor.

Over time, the longer-running characters will accumulate power in ways that make raw statistics irrelevant. As time goes on then, the characters will redistribute the power according to the way they roleplay. This approach works best in games that focus on **Laws of the Wild** or **The Shining Host**, since both of those settings have mutable in-game hierarchies through which the players' characters can rise. Being an Elder Garou is much more impressive if the character began as a cub and earned the renown for the higher rank through hard experience. In this system, the Storyteller usually has to use Storyteller characters to fill in leadership roles that the players' characters do not meet, then phase those Storyteller characters out as the players' characters increase in power. Vampire games rarely manage to benefit from this approach simply because one of its main indicators of power — Generation — is not something that a character generally earns through play. The problem here is that it does take time for this approach to pay off. It can sometimes be a year or more of play before the players' characters are truly ready to take over the full spectrum of a chronicle's key characters.


If and when you make the decision to make some starting characters in your chronicle more equal than others, your sense of fair play (or the players themselves) will demand that you not make the concomitant decision arbitrarily. The following three methods will help you choose which characters to boost or reward as the chronicle begins.

#### **LOTTERY**

If you throw a character creation party before your chronicle's first session, you might offer your players the chance to participate in a lottery-style drawing. Prepare a deck of index cards before the party by writing a small bonus award on each and shuffling the deck. These awards can range from an extra three to five free Traits to an extra level of one Influence to one free Basic level of an out-of-category supernatural power of that character's creature type. Hold this drawing only once, and use it as an incentive to attend the pre-chronicle character creation party. This method is the most arbitrary and random of the three, but it remains fair for everyone involved.

#### **AUDITIONS**

In chronicles in which the size and scope are still limited to approximately a dozen close cities and well under a thousand members, you might hold auditions for key parts and more powerful characters. Through the audition system, a Storyteller or a team of Storytellers interviews the players for the privilege of playing rare or more powerful characters. The dangers of this system are obvious — favoritism and workload. Favoritism is a frequent problem, no matter what system you use, but it is a particularly serious drawback to the audition method. To minimize this potential abuse of power, it is recommended that auditions not rely on a single Storyteller but on a team.



The workload required to hold auditions also presents a real dilemma as the chronicle's number of participants increases. Once a chronicle's size nears a thousand players, it becomes extremely difficult to track the rising stars of a chronicle accurately.

#### **IN-GAME BONUSES**

This system can work for any size game, but the overhead devoted to supporting the system becomes harder to manage as the game grows. This system allows its Storytellers (past and present) to come into play with more powerful characters once they become regular players themselves. The system might also benefit people who take on other activities that the group wants to emphasize. Storytellers can award extra Experience Traits for record-keeping work or for tracking the group's funds and site fees.

The principal danger in this reward method becomes apparent when those players who are doing the work are doing it simply to get a more powerful character rather than looking after the health of the chronicle. Such players will make themselves readily apparent, however, so spotting them shouldn't be particularly difficult.

#### **BALANCING THE SCALES**

As the chronicle matures, characters will die off and be replaced by new ones. When the chronicle isn't expected to last any longer than a year, or if it's confined to a single group, this fact of life might not present an issue. In larger chronicles, however, it can become a real hurdle. When a new player looks at the chronicle from the outside, the chronicle can appear to be a daunting and dangerous setting in which he will be overwhelmed by existing characters and plots. The successful chronicle will develop ways to bring those new players into the fold and help them cope with the opportunities presented in such a grand endeavor. Some suggestions follow on doing just that.

#### **MENTORING**

Every chronicle has its experts and experienced members. It is a good idea to identify those players who enjoy helping out the new players and who are willing to spend some extra time with someone who is still unfamiliar with the game and system. Building an established network of mentors and then systematically linking new members to them will have lasting positive effects on the chronicle.

Mentors can help with all aspects of integration. They offer newcomers a method to learn about the ways in which the organization operates, and they keep newcomers from feeling overwhelmed by the systems that keep such a large game running smoothly. During the game itself, mentors help newcomers find an in-game niche and establish the in-game contacts that will allow them to excel. In both arenas, a well-done mentoring system can have a dramatically beneficial effect.

In *Laws of the Night* chronicles, for instance, a large number of subordinate characters (such as ghouls and mortal retainers) typically make up the entourage of the dead. In *Laws of the Wild* games, kinfolk and cubs are a great place to start out, because they tend to be sheltered by the older characters by their very nature. Any character who is attached to another in a way that removes the need to take a lot of independent action — but which still allows the player to be around the action — is a good place to start.

#### **SETTING STORYTELLERS**

A variant on the mentoring approach is to assign a set of Storytellers to each deal with and track smaller portions of the ongoing chronicle. The Setting Storytellers are responsible for maintaining a top-down view of their portion of the game and helping any new members who interested in that part fit in. Therefore, as a new character enters the game, he can check in with a Setting Storyteller and look for key links that establish the character in the setting's history.



These Storytellers then become “librarians” for the chronicle, storing information about the current makeup of the chronicle and dispensing it to those who need it. This information can be a valuable asset and tool for any new player who is trying to understand the world he has just stepped into.

### **THE CONSEQUENCES STORYTELLER**

Flaws and Negative Traits come up often during character creation and integration. They provide great hooks to pull the characters into the larger story and game. Likewise, backgrounds can be a way for players to provide wonderful plot points that everyone can share. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these hooks will be ignored unless the Storyteller actively uses them against the players’ characters. Therefore, your game may find it very useful to pick one Storyteller to be the Consequences Storyteller.

This person reads through the players’ character sheets and brings to life the plots and problems that the players have already written for their characters. Obviously, no one can do so effectively for every character in a very large game, but it can be very effective to pick perhaps five characters a month and make a point of focusing on those characters throughout that month. If the Consequences Storyteller times his activities correctly, these characters will be ones who are not otherwise engaged in the game through more conventional plots and activities, and this can serve as a way to keep characters involved who would otherwise be watching the action from the sidelines.

## **ABILITIES AND BACKGROUNDS**

### **ABILITIES**

#### **ACADEMICS**

You possess a level of education and general knowledge beyond rudimentary schooling. With *Academics*, you can express artistic criticism, debate the classics, consider philosophy and indulge in studies of culture. This broad Ability covers all sorts of humanities in learning.

*Academics* allows you to recognize historical, art and cultural references. You can use *Academics* when working in such fields, when developing a critique or researching. Calling on *Academics* Ability may require a Mental or Social Challenge to determine your exact level of competence.

You may further direct your studies by choosing a specific field, such as *Art Criticism*, *Classical Studies*, *History*, *Journalism*, *Theology* or any subject that can be studied with higher education.

#### **ARCHERY**

You have studied the difficult skill of using a bow or crossbow. You can care for weapons of this type and identify the quality of various bows and arrows. When firing a bow, you can choose to use your Mental Traits to attack instead of testing with Physical Traits. You may also use this Ability for retests when firing a bow. Also, wooden bolts and arrows are quite effective in staking vampires through the heart.

#### **ATHLETICS**

You are skilled in all manner of athletic endeavors due to a background in sports or just personal talent. You can throw a ball, sprint, climb, jump and swim with ease. This last talent can be especially useful to vampires, who do not float naturally.

Your *Athletics* Ability applies to retests on most forms of raw physical activity — acrobatics, swimming, jumping, throwing, climbing and running —





but not combat. It also applies to aerial maneuvers for characters that have some means of flight.

#### **AWARENESS**

With *Awareness*, you notice that things are not as they should be. This Ability is useful in detecting evidence of supernatural powers or beings, as well as sensing when something contrary to the laws of nature is about to happen.

#### **BLINDFIGHTING**

You've trained to accommodate yourself to low-light conditions, or perhaps you have naturally good night vision. Whichever the case may be, your other senses compensate adequately for darkened conditions. *Blindfighting* allows you to mitigate the two-Trait penalty for taking actions in darkness. Each level of this Ability removes one penalty Trait. Additionally, you can expend a level of *Blindfighting* to avoid having to retest after each successful challenge in a single turn because of darkness. The character can still use another Ability for a retest in the same challenge if he loses the initial test.

#### **CRAFTS**

Depending on your area of expertise, you know how to manufacture items and make handy tools or decorations. You must choose a focus for *Crafts* and specify your form of creation. *Carpentry*, *Clockworks*, *Blacksmithing*, *Leatherworking* and the like are all possibilities. You can fashion works of art by studying *Painting*, *Drawing* or similar physical media. The *Crafts* Ability also covers more technical skills, such as *Mechanics* and *Electronics*.

Making or repairing an item with *Crafts* usually involves a Physical Challenge of your dexterity, for which the Storyteller sets the difficulty based on the type of job. Making a concealed spring-loaded trap is far more difficult than planing a board, for instance.

#### **DEMOLITION**

You know how to blow things up. More specifically, you've trained in the use of various explosives, such as C-4, dynamite and possibly white phosphorous. When setting an explosive, you have a decent chance of arming the device without blowing yourself to smithereens. You can also try to disarm explosives with a Static Mental Challenge. The difficulty equals the total Mental Traits of the individual who set the explosive. If you do not possess this Ability, you cannot use or disarm explosives at all. Similarly, *Demolition* does not help you aim a thrown bomb or grenade. It simply allows you to build, arm and disarm explosive devices.

Note that the use of explosives in games should be regulated strictly. While in reality it is quite easy to acquire or create a myriad of explosive devices and substances, we must acknowledge that such things rarely aid in the telling of stories.

#### **DODGE**

When trouble rears its ugly head, you know how to get out of its way. Unhesitating reactions let you evade blows and gunshots. You can use *Dodge* for a retest when defending against an attack that you can see or sense coming. *Dodge* is not an appropriate retest Ability for challenges in which you are attempting to harm someone.

#### **ENIGMAS**

The *Enigmas* Ability concerns your ability to solve mysteries and puzzles. In essence, it is a measurement of your problem-solving skills and how well you combine vital details into a coherent solution. *Enigmas* comes in handy when solving mazes, answering riddles and the like. This Ability is used with Mental Challenges to see if you can figure out the problem before you.



### EMPATHY

You are sensitive to the moods and emotions of people around you. When you listen to someone, you understand her feelings. You can identify with others and tell when people are lying or holding back while talking to you.

With a Social Challenge and the expenditure of an *Empathy* Trait, you can determine if the last thing that someone said was a lie (although *Subterfuge* can defend against this expenditure). Alternatively, you can attempt to determine the subject's current Demeanor.

### ETIQUETTE

Even though knowing which fork to use isn't terribly important to many supernatural creatures, you do know the proper way to greet someone, when to rise and how to make introductions. You can make a toast with the best of them, and you keep your cool in any social scenario, from high tea to a gang's rally.

You can use the *Etiquette* Ability with Social Tests to impress or blend in at parties. If you make a social *faux pas*, you may expend an *Etiquette* Ability immediately to negate the gaffe. After all, your character knew better than to make the mistake.

### EXPRESSION

Words and feelings flow freely from you. When the muse strikes, you put pen to paper (or fingers to instrument) and pour out a torrent of emotion and stirring imagery. You can convey message and meaning in your art, from symphonies to poetry, and whatever you write is both clear and moving.

When you write or compose something in order to generate a specific emotional response, you may spend one *Expression* Trait on the effort. Thereafter, a character who spends at least one turn contemplating the completed work must engage in a challenge of his Social Traits against a static difficulty equal to your Mental Traits. If the viewer wins the challenge, he experiences no particular effect. If the viewer loses the challenge, he is overcome with a brief burst of the emotion that you set out to generate.

### HOBBY/PROFESSIONAL/EXPERT ABILITY

In a certain esoteric area of expertise, you have achieved some level of skill. You may have a small grasp of a trade due to some work on the side, or perhaps you've studied a topic specifically.

*Hobby/ Professional/ Expert Ability* is a catchall category for highly unusual Abilities such as *Thanatology* or *Torture*. Any Ability of this type must be approved specifically by the Storyteller.

### INTIMIDATION

*Intimidation* represents any of a broad variety of techniques for terrifying people into compliance. Your method of intimidation could be anything from using your physical size to wearing a particularly frightening grin to knowing which emotional buttons to push.

### LORE

*Lore* Abilities are similar to *Academics* or *Science* Abilities in that they represent accumulated knowledge and training. The difference is that *Lore* pertains to less mundane topics in the World of Darkness. It covers a diverse set of subjects, but most are specific to the history and politics of a supernatural type of creature or organization of supernatural creatures.

*Lore* is rated at levels one through five. A player can purchase *Lore* with Experience Traits as with other Abilities, but doing so usually requires special approval from the Storyteller. Consult your Storyteller to discover what kind of



limitations she wishes to impose on each type (or level) of the *Lore* Ability. Each type of *Lore* is considered to be a separate Ability, so a character could have *Camarilla Lore* x4 and *Sabbat Lore* x4 without exceeding the maximum level.

*Lore* is not meant to restrict what information a character can remember about what he is told in a game. A few bits of information hardly constitutes as lore of the subject (or a valid reason to learn the *Lore* Ability), even if the information passed includes secrets known only to those with high levels in the Ability. *Lore* is meant to allow characters to know certain important pieces of information from the World of Darkness sourcebooks, such as the history of the Silver Fangs or the natural weaknesses of changelings.

One level of *Lore* represents a more-than-passing knowledge of the subject, and it is the lowest level of understanding that requires *Lore* to back it up. The character can cite basic, widely known concepts within the lore's area, such as the Escheat (for *Changeling Lore*) or the Litany (for *Garou Lore*).

A second level of *Lore* represents a higher-than-basic understanding of the subject in question. At this level, the character has heard of a few bloodlines, special societies or other low-level secrets from within, but he has no expansive knowledge of them.

Having three levels of *Lore* represents a specialized study in the particular subject. This level is generally more common to the leaders and powerful political figures within the subject lore's area. The character becomes more familiar with the workings of many secret societies, and can probably name a few members. The character understands higher-level politics better at this level, as well as some of the truth behind the whispered secrets.

Those who attain four levels in a *Lore* are aware of the goals and the movements of most of the secret factions within the lore's area. Their knowledge of the subject's secrets lays bare the truths to which the elders and ancient texts only allude. *Lore* at this level and higher represents many elements specific to your chronicle, so work closely with your Storyteller to get the information.

Having five levels of *Lore* represents the pinnacle of understanding. You can often expound upon ancient historical texts as though you'd been present at the time in question. This level goes beyond the books and delves almost entirely into chronicle-specific information.

#### **MEDITATION**

You are able to center your thoughts, calm your emotions, control your mind and relax your body. This Ability is useful for reaching the state of mind necessary for using Psychic Phenomenon and regaining True Faith Traits. A Storyteller may allow a character to regain Willpower or True Faith Traits by meditating out of play at a game session for an hour and making a Simple Test for each level of *Meditation* Ability expended. A success or tie returns a Willpower Trait (one maximum per session) or a Faith Trait.

#### **STEALTH**

By blending into cover, blurring your lines and moving carefully and quietly, you can evade notice and sneak past people. You know how best to take advantage of surrounding cover and how to use light and shadow. With an appropriate Physical Challenge, you can sometimes sneak past the notice of guards and searchers (who contest your Ability with their Mental Traits and *Investigation* Ability).

#### **THROWING**

You've spent a lot of time as a hard-core survivalist with a throwing ax, a wannabe ninja with shuriken or an aspiring professional pitcher with baseballs. You



### GETTING LORE

How long should a level of the *Lore* Ability take to learn? Who should have access to the higher levels? How should it be taught?

A character can attain a single level of a *Lore* in just a few months of diligent study. Learning the second level is more substantial task that requires at least a year of study and training. It is effectively the highest level that one can learn in the course of a live-action chronicle unless the Storyteller does not follow a real-time timeline, and he allows years to pass in the game world between sessions. One attains the third level in a *Lore* through in-depth study for a decade or more. The fourth level is available only to those who have made it a lifelong study, as at least a lifetime is required to attain such a level of scholarly understanding. It is effectively the highest level that non-immortal characters can achieve without some means of greatly extending their life span. Attaining the fifth level in a *Lore* is extremely difficult. Those who have achieved this level of expertise have spent several lifetimes or more in pursuit of knowledge pertaining to the subject. Therefore, the fifth level is only truly available to immortal or undead creatures.

For the Storyteller, laying down restrictions on the types of *Lore* available to characters becomes more important the larger her game gets. She may wish to restrict the number of characters that have access to high levels, or she may restrict out-of-setting *Lores*. (For instance, a Storyteller in a **Shining Host** chronicle might not allow her players to buy *Wraith Lore*.) Talk to your Storyteller to see what levels and types of *Lores* she will let you start with.

After character creation, characters must be taught *Lore* in order to gain more levels in it. Simple observation of the subject can hardly justify learning levels of the Ability. Since it is difficult for one person to teach someone the entirety of her knowledge on a subject (especially in an unbiased manner), a character must learn *Lore* levels beyond the first from multiple teachers. The number of teachers required is equal to the level of *Lore* being learned, and each teacher must have that level of *Lore* to be able to teach it. For example, in a game where the Storyteller advances the story line by 50 years or so between games, a character could learn *Brujah Lore* to level four in “downtime” if he had four teachers that each had four levels of that *Lore*. At your Storytellers discretion, *Lore* can be learned from tomes and texts, but such a source should never count as being more than a single level, regardless of how many ancient libraries the character sifts through.


have the techniques of throwing in combat down pat, and you can hit your targets with ease almost every time. While most people don't even know how to hold a throwing knife, you're a virtuoso with any sort of thrown weapon, from a spear to a rock. You can use Mental Traits instead of Physical Traits when throwing a weapon, and you may use this Ability to retest with thrown objects.

### ABILITY SPECIALIZATIONS

Within a given area of expertise, some practitioners further hone their knowledge to a razor's edge. By choosing a specialization in an Ability, you hone your skills with a particular facet of that talent.

Ability specializations are wholly optional. Remember to ask your Storyteller before taking a specialization.

Taking a specialization requires that you spend one Experience Trait or free Trait on an Ability that you already have. Whenever you perform a task with that specializa-



tion—even if you do not expend the Ability—you gain a one-Trait bonus on resolution of challenges, as long as you have at least one Trait of the Ability left. You may have only one specialization in any given Ability. You cannot take *Firearms: Pistols* and *Firearms: Rifles* together, for instance. You also can never gain more than one bonus Trait at a time from specializations, even if more than one would be appropriate to a given challenge. That is, even if you have *Medicine: Physiology* and *Science: Biology Research*, you get only a one-Trait bonus on a test of biochemistry, despite your multiple specializations.

A specialization is a fairly narrow area of research or practice. You cannot, for instance, take a *Firearms* specialization in “guns,” nor could you have an *Occult* specialization of “writing.” An appropriate specialization refers to one small class of items or to one type of practice within the Ability, such as *Firearms: Antique Pistols* or *Occult: Superstitions*.

You may take a specialization in an Ability with an area of study. In such a case, you concentrate your research in one particular facet of that sub-Ability, or in one application of it. Therefore, you could have *Crafts: Woodworking* with a specialization in *Hidden Panels*, or *Science: Botany* with a specialization in *Exotic Flora*.

Note that the bonus Trait from a specialization does not have an adjective, and it is not bid or used like other Traits. You simply are one Trait up on challenges within the specialization.

**Example:** *Marcus von Schlagenhanz is an experienced fighter, but he is especially good with fencing weapons. He has Melee x3 with a specialization in fencing. When Marcus engages a foe in combat, he normally uses his 11 Physical Traits. With a fencing blade, however, he has 12 Physical Traits because of his intense training. Of course, if he gets tired out or wounded (after losing several challenges), he may not have as many Traits, but as long as he has at least one level of his Melee Ability left, he gets to add the one bonus Trait to his remaining Physical Trait total.*

## BACKGROUNDS

Your character’s Backgrounds help flesh out his ties with mundane human agencies, as well as reflecting beneficial elements of your character’s history. Each Background works differently. In general, having multiple Traits in a given Background allows for better or more common use of that benefit, but characters are limited to having no more than five levels in any single Background. Some Backgrounds affect your character’s creation and development directly. Others come into play later during the game.

### ALLIES

You have powerful or useful friends who help you out in your endeavors. You can make a few calls and cut a few deals to get assistance in a wide range of activities. Your Storyteller will probably require you to define how you keep your allies and their relations to you.

Each *Allies* Trait possessed represents one person whom you can call upon for aid. Unlike *Influence*, your *Allies* have special talents that make them better than the average person on the street. Although your allies may not be aware of your supernatural nature (if you have any), they can be quite useful if you direct them properly.

In general, your allies do not appear during game-play. Instead, you can use them for certain services between play sessions, by notifying your Storyteller.

An ally can be directed to follow up on research or activities that you have started. If you undertook a specific task previously (such as tailing someone, researching a project or building a device), your allies can continue the work, doing so with one Ability Trait’s worth of expertise. As long as they work on the project, your *Allies* Trait for the individual is tied up.



If you need a particularly competent ally, you can expend multiple Traits to gain access to a mortal with multiple levels of an Ability or Influence. Each *Allies* Trait that you spend after the first gives an extra level of expertise to your allies. They may use this expertise on your behalf, though rarely with your own skill, and they help only as long as you tie up your *Allies* Background Traits in this manner.

Be wary of calling on your allies too often. An ally may call on you for mutual aid or refuse to help if you press him into dangerous or illegal activities.

### CONTACTS

With the right contacts in all walks of life, you can get a line on all sorts of useful information. Although having an “ear to the wall” doesn’t necessarily provide you with good help or loyal servants, it does mean that you know whom to ask when looking for the movers and shakers behind the scenes.

In game terms, your rating in *Contacts* allows you to gather rumors and information. When you call on your contacts, you make a few phone calls, check with likely snitches and grease a few palms. In return, you get rumors and information. Doing so lets you find out exactly what’s going on in the city within a particular area. You can get information of a level equal to however many contacts you use. If you use *Contacts* x3 on *Industry* Influence, for instance, you get information as if digging up dirt with *Industry* Influence x3. The advantage of the *Contacts* Background is that contacts can be switched from place to place.

*Contacts* levels can also be spent as Influence to perform the Follow, Trace and Watch endeavors.

Using *Contacts* for especially dangerous or secret information may require you to spend money or perform a few favors, at the discretion of a Storyteller. On occasion, accidents can cause contacts in one area to dry up, such as a strike that affects your *Industry* contacts, or a particularly unlucky astronomical conjunction sends your *Occult* contacts running for the hills. Your contacts will not generally function as aides or lackeys. That sort of service is the purview of the *Allies* and *Retainers* Backgrounds.

### FAME

Some characters come from the ranks of the wealthy or talented elite. Although such notoriety often fades with the years, your *Fame* lingers on to influence mundane society.

*Fame* allows you to exercise your connections over a longer distance than usual. Certainly, if you’ve got the right Influence, you can push things around on an interstate or even a national scale, but with *Fame*, you can just make a few calls and exert your *Contacts*, Influence or *Resources* over a greater range without any impediment. You do not necessarily have to have *Fame* to get things done, but it helps. Your total *Fame* determines your maximum range for unimpeded use of your *Contacts*, Influence and *Resources*.

### FAME RANGES

Fame Traits	Maximum Range for Backgrounds
1	Local scene
2	City
3	State
4	Adjoining states
5	Entire country



When you make an effort to exert your *Contacts*, *Influence* or *Resources* over a long range, you lean on your popularity and image, which expends your *Fame* Traits until the next game session. *Fame* is most often used in the downtime between sessions to facilitate long-range plans.

In a less mechanical fashion, your *Fame* also dictates how recognizable you are to members of mundane society, for one reason or another. The Storyteller will certainly make the effects of your *Fame* apparent, and people may take notice of you at bothersome times. Being profiled on *America's Most Wanted* or spotted at the Academy Awards does things for one's reputation, after all.

*Fame* does have its limitations. *Fame* does not always indicate widespread instant name recognition. You may be known to only a subset of a particular group, or you might just be a recognized expert in a field who's unknown to those outside.

### **MENTOR**

An older or more experienced individual looks after you and comes to your aid occasionally. Whatever the case is, you can get assistance from your mentor, although his favor may be fickle.

When you call on your mentor, you risk a certain number of Traits to achieve a given effect. A lowly one-Trait mentor probably knows only little more than you, while a five-Trait mentor may well have luminous standing within your sect and a wide range of potent powers. Regardless, taking up your mentor's valuable time is costly. You must engage in a Simple Test when you call on your mentor. If you succeed, your mentor deigns to aid you. If you tie, your mentor grants you assistance, but he requires something in return. If you fail, your mentor demands the favor first before helping. In any case, you can call on your mentor only once in any given game session, and only if you have an appropriate way to contact him or her.

The level of aid that your mentor can give depends on the number of Traits you have in this Background (and Storyteller approval, of course):

- For one Trait, your mentor is privy to a single piece of specialized information at a level above your own. If you have *Wraith Lore* x2, for instance, your mentor can be called on to gift you with one piece of information from *Wraith Lore* x3.
- For two Traits, you can borrow one level of *Contacts*, *Influence*, *Resources* or *Status* from your mentor for the duration of the game. If your mentor is very powerful (four or five Traits), you can borrow two levels.
- Having two Traits allows your mentor to instruct you in a Basic power that you do not know.
- For three Traits, your mentor can instruct you in an Intermediate power that you do not know.
- Also at a cost of three Traits, your mentor can train you in the ways of a special *Hobby/Professional/Expert Ability* that is outside your normal ken, such as *Mage Lore*.
- For four Traits, your mentor can train you in an Advanced power beyond your grasp.
- For five Traits, your mentor can train you in the phenomenal powers of the elders, if you are puissant enough to learn such secrets.

Since mentors can prove unbalancing by providing too many different powers over the course of a long game, the Storyteller may lower your total *Mentor* Traits as you call on his knowledge. This decrease represents the fact that as your character learns the mentor's secrets; the mentor has less left to teach.

### **RESOURCES**

You have access to liquid capital and spending money. You also have some solid resources that you can use when times are tight. Unlike the use of *Finance*, these



resources are always readily available, and they come to you automatically due to your investments, jobs and holdings.

Your number of *Resources* Traits determines the amount of money and capital that you can secure. By expending temporary *Resources* Traits (which return at the next game session), you can draw on your regular income, as shown in the accompanying table. If you expend permanent *Resources*, you can divest yourself of holdings, allowing access to 10 times the amount shown on the table. However, the limits of what you can buy are always adjudicated by the Storyteller. Truly powerful uses of *Resources* are best left to downtimes and moderation between game sessions.

#### RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Traits	Income
0	Poverty. \$200. Get roommates and a bus pass.
1	Small savings and holdings. \$500. You have an apartment and a cheap means of transportation.
2	Modest savings and holdings. \$1,000. You have a condo and a motorcycle or modest car.
3	Significant savings and holdings. \$3,000. You own a house and car.
4	Large savings and holdings. \$10,000. You own a large house or some small properties, two vehicles, some luxuries and unusual items.
5	Rich. \$30,000. You own an estate and grounds, multiple small properties, several vehicles, treasures and luxury items.

#### RETAINERS

Whether out of personal loyalty, love, supernatural coercion or some other means, you have managed to secure the fellowship of a person (or small group) who obeys your every whim. Unlike your allies, your retainers are nearly always around, overseeing your personal effects, defending your property and furthering your goals. They may not have the specialized knowledge of allies, but they are mostly loyal to your cause, and they serve your needs first.

You should work with your Storyteller to determine how you managed to secure a loyal retainer. Your retainer's exact capabilities are up to the Storyteller. A retainer may be skillful but unmotivated, or loyal but inept. No retainer is ever perfect, but he can be a great help nonetheless.

- A retainer can be assigned to watch over a particular location. Generally, if someone attempts to break into your house, the retainers there will attempt to stop the intruder.

- A retainer can manage your assets and perform tasks. Retainers who are tied up in this fashion allow you to manage more Influence than normal. They add to the number of Attribute Traits that you possess for purposes of counting your total Influences. Each retainer directed in this fashion adds one to your maximum Influence Traits. If retainers are later lost, killed or reassigned, the excess Influence Traits disappear, starting with the highest levels of Influence held you hold.


- A retainer can perform other menial functions, as allowed by the Storyteller.

If it becomes necessary to have a character sheet for a retainer, use the standard mortal creation guidelines.

#### INFLUENCE

The additional Influence rules here expand upon the systems presented in the various *Mind's Eye Theatre* source books. They are intended to add a level of





intrigue to larger games, facilitating a shadow war of characters struggling behind the scenes to maintain their tenuous grip on the mundane world.

### KEEPING IT FUN

For the Storyteller, it is important to maintain the flavor of Influences when using them in a game. Being descriptive when reporting the results of Influence endeavors to the players is critical. Otherwise the interactions of Influences in a city will degrade into a sub-game of number-crunching, in which no story is being told at all. Much of the burden of this task falls upon the shoulders of the players themselves. When a player wishes to perform an endeavor, the Storyteller should have her give him a write-up of the activity, complete with a description of exactly how her Influences are going about executing the desired task. Examples of descriptive use of Influence are given with each new endeavor type.

### POSSESSING AND USING INFLUENCE

You cannot manage more Influence than the sum of your permanent Physical, Social and Mental Traits. This limit counts against all of your total Influence — your combined levels cannot exceed this total. After all, there are only so many things you can do in a day.

When you exercise Influence, you expend temporary Influence Traits. The tables for various Influence areas detail what you can do with a specific number of Traits. Performing an endeavor requires a number of Traits equal to the level of the action. Therefore, with high levels of Influence, you can perform many small actions or a few significant ones. To perform the new Influence endeavors presented here (such as Attack, Grow and Watch), you must spend Traits just as you would for endeavors on the traditional charts.

Certain levels of Influence gift you with items, money or aides. Unlike the *Resources* Background, money and equipment garnered with Influence does not come automatically each month. If you want a steady income from Influence, you must direct your Influence in that direction continually, and this income does not come with any associated trappings of wealth. (You'd have to buy a house and car separately, for instance.) Aides garnered with Influence generally help for only one specific task, and they usually have the equivalent of only one level of Ability in their area of skill. For more competent and readily available help, take the *Allies* Background.

Most cities have only a set amount of Influence in various areas. For instance, Atlanta has a great deal of *Transportation* Influence, while Hollywood would have a lot of *High Society* and *Media* Influence. A Rust-Belt city in which manufacturing and heavy industry has all but disappeared would have very little to no *Industry* Influence.

Storytellers should map out the total amount of each type of Influence to be had in the city setting. Once all of the Influence of a given type is used up, the only way to get more is to use existing Influence to grow that area of society (making new projects or sponsoring investment) or to destroy someone else's Influence and free up those resources. Also, each city may have different reflections of the Influences listed here. A city with a thriving independent film community is going to have a different picture of *Media* or *High Society* Influence than a city in which the arts are being literally starved out due to budget cuts.

### Bureaucracy

You can manage various government agencies and bureaus. By dealing with social programs and public servants, you can spin red tape, bypass rules and regulations or twist bureaucratic regimentation to your advantage. *Bureaucracy* is useful in operating or shutting down businesses, faking or acquiring permits and identification papers and manipulating public utilities and facilities. Government clerks at the city and county level, utility workers, road crews, surveyors and other civil servants are potential contacts or allies.



Cost	Effect
1	Trace utility bills
2	Fake a birth certificate or driver's license Disconnect a single small residence's utilities Close a small road or park Get public aid (\$250)
3	Fake a death certificate, passport or green card Close a public school for a single day Shut down a minor business on a violation
4	Initiate a phone tap Fake land deeds Initiate a department-wide investigation
5	Start, stop or alter a city-wide program or policy Shut down a big business on a violation Rezone areas Obliterate records of a person on a city or county level

#### Church

Although the modern church has arguably less control over temporal society than it did in the Middle Ages, church policies still exert considerable influence over the direction of politics and communities. Knowing the appropriate people gives a character insight into many mainstream religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Shinto or Buddhism. (Fringe or alternative groups, such as Scientology, are the purview of the *Occult Influence*.) When you exercise *Church Influence*, you can change religious policy, affect the assignment of clergy and access a variety of lore and resources. Contacts and allies affected by *Church Influence* would include ministers, priests, bishops, Church-sponsored witch-hunters, holy orders and various attendees and assistants.

Cost	Effect
1	Identify most secular members of a given faith in the local area Pass as a member of the clergy Peruse general church records (baptism, marriage, burial, etc.)
2	Identify higher church members Track regular church members Suspend lay members
3	Open or close a single church Find the average church-associated hunter Dip into the collection plate (\$250) Access private information and archives of a church
4	Discredit or suspend high-level church members Manipulate regional branches of the church
5	Organize major protests Access ancient church lore and knowledge

#### Finance

Manipulating markets, stock reports and investments is a hobby of many, especially those who use their knowledge to keep their wealth hidden. Although your actual available money is a function of your *Resources*, you can use *Finance*



Influence to start or smother businesses, crush or support banking institutions and alter credit records. Clearly, such power over money is not to be trifled with. Fortunes are made and destroyed with this sort of power.

**Cost Effect**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Learn about major transactions and financial events<br>Raise capital (\$1,000)<br>Learn about general economic trends<br>Learn real motivations for many financial actions of others |
| 2 | Trace an unsecured small account<br>Raise capital to purchase a small business (single, small store)   |
| 3 | Purchase a large business (a few small branches or a single large store or service)  |
| 4 | Manipulate local banking (delay deposits, alter credit ratings)<br>Ruin a small business   |
| 5 | Manipulate an aspect of city-wide banking (shut off ATMs, arrange a bank "holiday")<br>Ruin a large business<br>Purchase a major company   |

**Health**

Some creatures rely on connections in the medical community to acquire blood. Necromancers and practitioners of arcane arts may also require body parts or medical data to further their studies. These sorts of research and development fall under the purview of *Health* Influence. Coroners, doctors, lab workers, therapists, pharmacists and specialists are just a few of the folks found in this field.

**Cost Effect**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Access a person's health records<br>Fake vaccination records and the like<br>Use public functions of health centers at your leisure<br>Get a single Blood Trait of mortal blood  |
| 2 | Access some medical research records<br>Have minor lab work done<br>Get a copy of a coroner's report<br>Instigate minor quarantines  |
| 3 | Corrupt results of tests or inspections<br>Alter medical records   |
| 4 | Acquire a cadaver<br>Completely rewrite medical records<br>Abuse grants for personal use (\$250)<br>Have minor medical research performed on a subject<br>Institute large-scale quarantines<br>Shut down businesses for "health code violations" |
| 5 | Commission special research projects<br>Have people institutionalized or released  |

**High Society**

The glitterati at the top of society move in circles of wealth and elegance. Many people find such positions alluring, and they indulge in the passions of the famous and wealthy. Access to famous actors, celebrities and the idle rich grants a certain sway over fashion trends.



Combined with *Fame*, a modicum of *High Society* Influence turns a character into a debonair darling of the most exclusive social circles. Among these circles, one finds dilettantes, artists of any stripe, old money families, models, rock stars, sports figures and jet-setters.

**Cost    Effect**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Learn what is trendy<br>Obtain hard-to-get tickets for shows<br>Learn about concerts, shows or plays well before they are made public  |
| 2 | Track most celebrities and luminaries<br>Be a local voice in the entertainment field<br>“Borrow” idle cash from rich friends (\$1,000) |
| 3 | Crush promising careers<br>Hobnob well above your station  |
| 4 | Minor celebrity status   |
| 5 | Get a brief appearance on a talk show that’s not about to be canceled<br>Ruin a new club, gallery, festival or other posh gathering    |

**Industry**

The grinding wheels of labor fuel the economies and markets of the world. Machines, factories and blue-collar workers line up in endless drudgery, churning out the staples of everyday living. *Industry* Influence sways the formation of unions, the movements of work projects, locations for factories and the product of manufacturing concerns. Union workers, foremen, engineers, construction workers, manual laborers and all manner of blue-collar workers exist among these ranks.

**Cost    Effect**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | Learn about industrial projects and movements   |
| 2 | Have minor projects performed<br>Dip into union funds or embezzle petty cash (\$500)<br>Arrange small accidents or sabotage |
| 3 | Organize minor strikes<br>Appropriate machinery for a short time  |
| 4 | Close down a small plant<br>Revitalize a small plant  |
| 5 | Manipulate large local industry   |

**Legal**

Since many of the operations that supernatural characters tend to undertake are at least marginally illegal, a good amount of sway over judges and lawyers is indispensable. Those who dabble in *Legal* Influence often pull strings in the courts to make sure their questionable practices go unpunished. Of course, a little *Legal* Influence is also excellent for harassing an enemy’s assets. Such Influence ranges from law schools and firms, to lawyers, judges, district attorneys, clerks and public defenders.

**Cost    Effect**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Get free representation for minor cases  |
| 2 | Avoid bail for some charges<br>Have minor charges dropped  |
| 3 | Manipulate legal procedures (minor wills and contracts, court dates)<br>Access public or court funds (\$250)<br>Get representation in most court cases |



- 4 Issue subpoenas  
Tie up court cases  
Have most legal charges dropped  
Cancel or arrange parole
- 5 Close down all but the most serious investigations  
Have deportation proceedings carried out against someone

#### Media

Directing media attention away from one's activities is a key component of survival for some supernatural creatures. Putting specific emphasis on certain events can put an enemy in an uncomfortable spotlight or discredit a rival. With *Media*, you can crush or alter news stories, control the operations of news stations and reporters and sway public opinion, with DJs, editors of all varieties, reporters, cameramen, photographers and broadcasters at your disposal. At the Storyteller's discretion, *Media Influence* may also allow access to the more technical areas of television, radio or movies.

#### Cost Effect

- 1 Learn about breaking stories early  
Submit small articles (within reason)
- 2 Suppress small articles or reports  
Get hold of investigative reporting information
- 3 Initiate news investigations and reports  
Obtain project funding and squander it (\$250)  
Ground stories and projects
- 5 Broadcast fake stories (local only)  
Kill small local articles or reports completely

#### Occult

The hidden world of the supernatural teems with secrets, conspiracies and unusual factions. Obviously, most supernatural creatures are aware that strange things exist out there by dint of their very existence, but acquiring hard knowledge of such things is a function of Abilities. By using *Occult Influence*, you can dig up information to improve your knowledge, get inside the occult community and find rare components for magical rituals. Cult leaders, alternative religious groups, charlatans, occultists and New Agers can be found here.

#### Cost Effect

- 1 Contact and make use of common occult groups and their practices  
Know some of the more visible occult figures
- 2 Know and contact some of the more obscure occult figures  
Access resources for most rituals and rites
- 3 Know the general vicinity of certain supernatural entities and (possibly) contact them  
Access vital or rare material components  
Milk impressionable wannabes for bucks (\$250)  
Access occult tomes and writings  
Research a common Basic ritual or rite
- 4 Research a common Intermediate ritual or rite
- 5 Access minor magic items  
Unearth a common Advanced ritual or rite



### Police

“To protect and serve” is the motto of the police, but these days, many people have cause to wonder who is being protected and served. That said, *Police Influence* can be very handy in protecting one’s holdings or raiding the assets of another. Police of all ranks, detectives, clerical staff, dispatchers, prison guards, special divisions (such as SWAT or homicide) and local highway patrol officers make up these ranks.

Cost	Effect
1	Learn police procedures Hear police information and rumors Avoid traffic tickets
2	Have license plates checked Avoid minor violations (first conviction) Get “inside information”
3	Get copies of an investigation report Have police hassle, detain or harass someone Find bureau secrets
4	Access confiscated weapons or contraband Have some serious charges dropped Start an investigation Obtain money, either from the evidence room or as an appropriation (\$1,000)
5	Institute major investigations Arrange sting operations Instigate bureau investigations Have officers fired

### Political

Altering party platforms, controlling local elections, changing appointed offices and calling in favors all fall under the purview of *Political Influence*. Well-timed blackmail, bribery, spin-doctoring and sundry other tricks are the stock in trade on both sides of this fence. Some of the likely contacts and allies include pollsters, lobbyists, activists, party members, spin-doctors and politicians from rural zoning committees to the mayors of major cities or representatives in Congress.

Cost	Effect
1	Minor lobbying Identify the real platforms of politicians and their parties Be in the know
2	Meet small-time politicians Garner inside information on processes, laws and the like Use a slush fund or fund-raiser (\$1,000)
3	Sway or alter political projects (local parks, renovations, small construction)
4	Enact minor legislation Dash careers of minor politicians
5	Get your candidate into a minor office Enact encompassing legislature

### Street

Ignored and often spat upon by their “betters,” those in the dark alleys and slums have created their own culture to deal with life and any outsiders who might



intrude. When calling on *Street Influence*, you use your connections on the underside of the city to find the homeless, gang members of all sorts, street buskers, petty criminals, prostitutes, residents of the slums or barrios and fringe elements of so-called “deviant” cultures.

**Cost Effect**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Open an ear for the word on the street               |
|   | Identify most gangs and know their turf and habits   |
| 2 | Live mostly without fear on the underside of society |
|   | Keep a contact or two in most aspects of street life |
|   | Access small-time contraband                         |
| 3 | Get insight into other areas of Influence            |
|   | Arrange some services from street people or gangs    |
|   | Obtain pistols or uncommon melee weapons             |
| 4 | Mobilize groups of homeless                          |
|   | Panhandle or hold a “collection” (\$250)             |
|   | Get hold of a shotgun, rifle or SMG                  |
|   | Have a word in almost all aspects of gang operations |
| 5 | Control a single medium-sized gang                   |
|   | Arrange impressive protests by street people         |

**Transportation**

Most supernatural creatures make their homes in defensible parts of cities. Traveling across the wilderness is difficult without this Influence, with the problems of marauding werewolves and other supernatural threats. Getting access to special supplies and services can also take a measure of *Transportation*. All these things can be controlled with a bit of sway over truckers, harbors, railroads, airports, taxis, border guards, pilots and untold hundreds, as well as more mundane aspects like shipping and travel arrangements.

**Cost Effect**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | Know what goes where, when and why   |
|   | Travel locally quickly and freely  |
| 2 | Track an unwary target if he uses public transportation  |
|   | Arrange passage that is safe (or at least concealed) from mundane threats (robbery, terrorism, sunlight, etc.) |
| 3 | Seriously hamper an individual’s ability to travel   |
|   | Avoid most supernatural dangers when traveling   |
| 4 | Shut down one form of transportation (bus lines, ships, planes, trains, etc.) temporarily                      |
|   | Route money your way (\$500)   |
| 5 | Reroute major modes of travel  |
|   | Smuggle with impunity  |

**Underworld**

The world of crime offers lucrative possibilities to strong-willed or subtle leaders. Anyone talented or simply vicious enough to do so can traffic in guns, money, drugs and vice. *Underworld* Influence lets you reap the benefits of all manner of illegal dealings, and its ranks are filled with drug-dealers, bookies, hit-men, fences and criminal gangs.



Cost	Effect
1	Locate minor contraband (knives, small-time drugs, petty gambling, scalped tickets)
2	Obtain pistols, serious drugs, stolen cars Hire muscle to rough someone up Fence stolen loot Prove that crime pays (and score \$1,000)
3	Obtain a rifle, shotgun or SMG Arrange a minor "hit" Meet someone in "the Family"
4	Make white-collar crime connections
5	Arrange gangland assassinations Hire a demolition man or firebug Supply local drug needs

#### University

Institutions of learning and research are the purview of the *University Influence*. Access to the halls of learning can grant any number of resources, from ancient languages to research assistance to many impressionable young minds. School boards, students from kindergarten through college, graduate students, professors, teachers, deans, Greek orders and a variety of staff fill the ivy-covered buildings.

Cost	Effect
1	Know layout and policy of local schools Have access to low-level university resources Obtain records, up to the high school level
2	Know a contact or two with useful knowledge or Abilities Have minor access to facilities Fake high school records Obtain college records
3	Call in faculty favors Cancel a class Fix grades Discredit a student
4	Organize student protests and rallies Discredit faculty members
5	Falsify an undergraduate degree

#### INFLUENCE ENDEAVORS AND MODIFIERS

In addition to the actions listed on the Influence charts in the various *Mind's Eye Theatre* source books, characters may perform the additional endeavors listed here. It is important to note that Influence can generally only affect other Influences of the same type. A character can use his *Street Influence* to aggress another player's *Street Influence*, but he would have a hard time getting it to interact with a player's *High Society Influence* successfully.

#### Attack

You can Attack another's Influence with your own, provided you have previously Traced the target Influence. To Attack, you assign a number of Influence Traits, and that number becomes the level of the Attack endeavor. If the level





exceeds the victim's Influence level, the victim drops a level of her Influence at the end of the month. Traits banked for Growth are lost as well, even if they would have given the victim a new, higher level Influence at the beginning of the next month.

**Mechanics Example:** Scott and Wade both have Media Influence, at levels five and two respectively. Scott Traced Wade's Influence successfully last month, and he desires to make an Attack upon it this month. He spends four Traits on the endeavor, meaning that the Attack's level is four. Since the level of Scott's Attack is greater than the level of Wade's Media Influence, Wade will only have a level-one Media to work with next month. If Wade had been spending Traits for Growth, and had accumulated three or more, he would immediately apply three of them to bring it back to level two.

**Descriptive Example:** *When Scott made his character, he decided that his Media Influence would be represented by his control over various media moguls through Blood Bonding and the use of Dominate. To Attack Wade's Influence, Scott performed the necessary prerequisite of succeeding in a Trace on it. Having done so, Scott discovered that Wade's Media Influence was represented by his control over one of the city's major newspapers. When writing an explanation of the Attack endeavor for the Storyteller, Scott describes influencing his media mogul thralls to have their networks broadcast a television news story about Wade's newspaper. The television news story highlights the paper's "long history of poorly researched news articles" and describes a number of incidents in which the paper was forced to print retractions. The television news story goes on to rate the various other papers in the city, giving them a far more favorable rating than Wade's paper. When the Storyteller looks at the Influence numbers and decides that Scott's Attack is successful, he informs both Scott and Wade of the resulting decline in the paper's circulation, which represents Wade's Media Influence dropping to level one at the beginning of the next month.*

### Block

You can use your Influence to prevent Influence endeavors from taking place for that month. Any action from the other sourcebooks may be blocked, provided that your Influence level is at least equal to the endeavor's level on the chart. The Block's effective level is the total number actions spent toward it. A Block will affect all attempts at the selected endeavor during that month; anyone attempting the Blocked action in the city will not succeed unless they have added enough levels of Boost to the endeavor. Multiple Blocks against the same endeavor type are not cumulative in effect. If more than one Block is put in place on the same endeavor, use only the highest level when calculating the success of those attempting the endeavor.

**Mechanics Example:** Jana has four levels of Legal Influence. Because she is capable of arranging a parole, she is therefore able to put a Block on that endeavor type as well. She decides to spend two of her Legal Influence Traits to create a level two Block. Anyone wishing to arrange a parole in the city that month must spend two or more additional Influence Traits into Boost in order to be successful.

**Descriptive Example:** *When Jana made her character, she decided that an extensive network of judges, lawyers and corrections facility officials who are accepting bribes from her would represent her Legal Influence. Now that one of Jana's character's enemies has just been arrested, she doesn't want anyone to arrange for his parole. When writing an explanation of the Block endeavor for the Storyteller, Jana describes bribing members of the parole board to stop proceedings, or at least delay them until the end of the month.*

### Boost

Boost is simply a term used to describe spending additional unneeded Influence Traits to perform an endeavor, just in case someone has put up a Block that needs to be overcome. If the Traits spent into Boost equal the level of the Block, the action is successful. The Block does not go away if one action beats it, though. It can still be effective against any additional attempts at that endeavor in that month.



**Mechanics Example:** Mathew has used a Trait of his *Health Influence* put a level one Block on getting mortal blood. Sue attempts to acquire a Blood Trait using a Trait of her level-four *Health Influence*. When the Storyteller informs her that she is not successful because of a Block, Sue tries it again, this time adding her last two Traits into Boost, thereby raising the cost of her second attempt to three *Health Influence Traits*. Since the level of the Boost is at least equal to the level of the Block, Sue is successful, and she acquires the Blood Trait.

**Descriptive Example:** *When Sue made her character, she decided that ownership of a small, private clinic would represent her Health Influence. She uses her clout to have a small amount of blood delivered to her while she is off-site. She finds out that there is a major shortage of blood in the city and that her request for whole blood isn't prioritized highly enough to acquire it (thanks to Mathew's Block). Sue's second attempt is backed by an urgent request from two of her clinic's doctors, who falsely claim to need the whole blood for an emergency surgery. This time, the request is granted.*

### Combine

Combine allows you to aid the Influence endeavor of another character. No action on the **Mind's Eye Theatre** sourcebook charts can be attempted by a character who doesn't have the required Influence level according to that chart. For every two Traits that you spend on Combine, the character you are helping gains one action to use toward his endeavor. Influence borrowed through the *Allies* and *Mentor* Backgrounds are also subject to this rule. A character can spend no more than 20 Traits toward a single endeavor in any given month, including all actions spent for modifications such as Combine.

**Mechanics Example:** Corey has four levels of *Political Influence*. He wants to enact some minor legislation in the city, which would cost him all four of his *Political Influence Traits* for the month. Corey has already used a *Political Influence Trait* this month, so he doesn't have enough. He asks a friend to Combine her *Political Influence* with his. Cynthia has only two levels, but she loans them both to Corey. Since the number of Traits loaned is effectively halved when using Combine, Corey nets only one extra *Political Influence Trait* for the month, but that's all he needs to enact the minor legislation.

**Descriptive Example:** *When Corey made his character, he decided that blood bonding the city's mayor would represent his Political Influence. Since he'd already had the mayor ask the city council for a small favor this month, he knows that getting him to push for the minor legislation would be straining the mayor's authority. Corey asks his ally Cynthia to help him with the endeavor, using Combine. Cynthia manipulates a member of the city council through regular uses of Dominate, and she has this council member propose the minor legislation. With the issue on the table, the mayor can throw his full support into it without burdening his relationship with the council.*

### Conceal

Conceal can be used to hide your Influence from uses of Trace. The number of actions spent toward Conceal generates that month's Conceal level, which you pit against attempts to Trace it.

**Mechanics Example:** Jess has heard a rumor that Tim is going to Trace his *University Influence*. He spends all four of his *University Traits* to generate a level-four Conceal over them. For three months in a row, he continues to spend his four Traits on Conceal. On the fourth month, Jess hopes that Tim has lost interest in his *University Influence*, and goes back to using it for Growth.

**Descriptive Example:** *When Jess created his character, he decided that his University Influence would be represented by the sway he has gained by providing major contributions to the local universities in the past few years. Now that he fears that Tim will be able to follow the paper trail of his donations (Tim's Trace), Jess quickly uses his clout to convince the universities that the records of his donations and other dealings should be suppressed for the time being.*



### Defend

You use the Defend endeavor when you fear that someone is going to Attack your Influence. To employ this special endeavor, assign a number of Traits as the level of the defense. The level of any Attacks directed at that Influence must exceed the Defend level plus the level of your Influence in order to be successful.

**Mechanics Example:** Eric fears that someone is going to attack his *Underworld* Influence this month, so he puts up a defense to protect it. He assigns three of his four *Underworld* Traits to the defense. An incoming Attack must now be level eight or higher to affect his Influence.

**Descriptive Example:** *When Eric made his character, he decided that his Underworld Influence would be represented by his control of the Lasciano Family, a major organized crime syndicate. Fearing an Attack, Eric writes a description of his Defend endeavor, detailing how he is having all of the family members lay low for a while, out of the sight of other crime families and the authorities.*

### Follow

If you want to keep an eye on what someone is doing with his Influence, you can attempt to Follow them with your own. Follow is similar to Watch, except that it only keeps a lookout for actions performed by a single Influence. To Follow someone's Influence, you must have a successful Trace on it already. To use Follow, assign a number of Traits to establish the level of the endeavor. The Follow endeavor will reveal all activities performed by the targeted Influence, less any activities hidden with an equal or higher level of Stealth.

**Mechanics Example:** Jean successfully used her level-three *Occult* Influence to perform a Trace on Toby's *Occult* Influence several months ago. This month, Jean is curious as to what Toby is up to, so she spends all three Traits of *Occult* Influence to Follow Toby's *Occult* activities. She finds out that Toby attempted to acquire a minor magical item. If Toby had put three or more levels of Stealth on that endeavor, Jean would not have been able to detect it.

**Descriptive Example:** *When creating her character, Jean decided that her level-three Occult Influence would be represented by her hold over a couple of millennium cults dedicated to the research of mystical writings and prophecies. With the successful Trace, Jean discovered that Toby's Occult Influence is represented by his sway over an organized group of "psychics" whose clientele are powerful and wealthy VIPs in the city. When Jean writes down her Influence activities for the Storyteller, she describes how she will have the leaders of her cults direct their followers to research groups of "psychics" in the city, specifically the group that Toby controls.*

### Growth

To raise one of your Influences to the next level, you must spend a number of Traits equal to three times your current level. In general, you can gain a new level in an Influence once every three months, provided you are using your Influence for nothing else. Unlike other endeavors, Traits spent for Growth can be banked from month to month. When you bank Traits thus, they accumulate until you reach the number required for an increase. If you meet the number of Traits required to increase to the next level, the Influence level improves by one at the end of the month.

**Mechanics Example:** Cheyana has three levels of *Street* Influence, meaning she would need nine Traits spent to get to level four. In one month, she spends two of her three Traits on Growth (two banked). In the next month, she spends two more Traits on Growth (four banked). In the month following that, she spends all three Traits on Growth (seven banked). In the fourth month, Cheyana spends two more Traits on Growth, meeting the requirement to achieve level four. At the end of the month, her *Street* Influence improves by one. Cheyana could have grown her *Street* Influence a little faster if she had spent all of her actions on Growth each month.



**Descriptive Example:** *Cheyana decided when she made her character that a network of informants consisting of gang members, homeless people and prostitutes would represent her Street Influence. When writing a description of her Growth activities for the Storyteller, Cheyana describes encouraging her contacts in several gangs to push for mergers with other gangs across the city. The next month, she describes organizing the homeless people into small "communities" for safer living, which draws more homeless people into the area to spy for her. The month following, Cheyana describes convincing the prostitutes that sometimes report to her to recruit more prostitutes to her cause. In the fourth month, she describes working with the gangs again to direct their spare time toward more high-profit activities such as the buying and selling of guns and other contraband. Now that Cheyana has strengthened her contacts enough to warrant an increase in her Influence, the Storyteller agrees to raise her Street to level four at the end of the month.*

### **Stealth**

Stealth is added to endeavors to counter the use of Follow and Watch. If the number of Traits spent to add Stealth to an endeavor equals or exceeds the level of the Follow or Watch, the endeavor remains undetected. Stealth can be applied to any of the actions on the charts, as well as to Attack, Block, Follow, Growth or Watch.

**Mechanics Example:** Donny wishes to use his *Finance* Influence to raise the capital to purchase a small business. Doing so would normally only require two of his five *Finance* Influence Traits, but because Donny doesn't want anyone else to know what he's up to, he throws in the other three Traits for Stealth. If someone had instituted a Watch of level three or less to notice that activity in the city, she would not detect Donny's sneaky acquisition of the capital. If the observer had put up a Watch of level four or higher, Donny's stealth would not have hidden him from her prying eyes.

**Descriptive Example:** *When Donny made his character, he decided to have his Finance Influence be represented by his controlling interest in a large acquisitions company. When writing out his Influence activities for the Storyteller, Donny describes the added Stealth as using a large network of dummy corporations through which to move the money so that it could not be tracked back to him through his acquisitions company.*

### **Trace**

You can use this endeavor to establish the identity of a character whose Influence you have come into contact with. You cannot simply guess that a character has an Influence in a particular category and then attempt to Trace it. You must first have come into contact with it in one of the several ways. This can be accomplished by suffering an Attack from the target's Influence, by noticing one of the target's endeavors with the use of Watch, by stopping one of the target's endeavors with a Block, or by having one your own endeavors stopped by the target's use of Block. Additionally, if someone ever loans you Influence Traits with Combine, you can Trace them. Finally, if the target ever tells you in great detail about his Influence (i.e., agrees to let you Trace it), you can perform the Trace. The total actions spent on the Trace define its level. If the level of this Trace exceeds the highest level of Conceal or Stealth put up to guard the Influence that month, the Trace is successful. Success tells you the Influence owner's identity, and whether their Influence level is higher than your own or not. It also gives you a general description of the Influence and the ability to spend Traits to Attack it.

Using Trace is specific to one city. Therefore, if a character has Influence of the same type in more than one city, your Trace only tells you about the Influence in the city you are searching. If you have succeeded in a Trace on an Influence, you may not simply relay that information to someone else for his or her Influence to make an Attack on. The information is too complex for them to relay to their own Influence contacts without them actually performing a Trace themselves. If you have performed a successful Trace, you can relay enough information for someone else to perform a Trace with his or her own Influence.



**Mechanics Example:** Pauline has a level-four *Police* Influence. Recently her attempt to access confiscated weapons was stopped by Carl's level-two *Block*. Having established contact, Pauline decides to *Trace* the influence. The next month, she spends all four Traits to *Trace*. Carl, who has level-five *Police* Influence, is spending two Traits to *Block* again this month, and because he fears others will *Trace* him, he puts his remaining three Traits into *Conceal*. As the level of Pauline's *Trace* more than equals the level of Carl's *Conceal*, Pauline discovers that the Influence that blocked her endeavor last month belongs to Carl. She discovers its general description (defined by Carl when he created his character) and that its level is higher than hers.

**Descriptive Example:** *When Pauline made her character, she decided that her bribery and blackmail of the members of the local precinct would represent her Police Influence. To make a Trace, Pauline writes up her Influences activities for the Storyteller as simply having every one of her contacts poke around until they discover who tightened the security on the confiscated weapons lock-up. After all, the police are supposed to be practiced investigators, right?*

#### **Watch**

You use *Watch* when you want to notice a certain Influence action in a city from the chart listed in the sourcebooks. Your Influence must be of sufficient level to perform that action before you can *Watch* it. A *Watch* will let you know when and how often the action is attempted in the city for that month, and you will even discover uses of the action that occurred earlier in the same month before the *Watch* was instituted. The total number of Traits spent on the *Watch* define its level. You can also use *Watch* to look for the following endeavors: *Attack*, *Block*, *Follow* (only those targeted at you), *Growth* and *Watch*.

**Mechanics Example:** Mark decides to spend one of his five *Church* Influence Traits into a *Watch* this month. He decides to *Watch* for individuals attempting to contact church-associated hunter groups. Because Mark is paranoid, he decides to put up a level-two *Watch* on the *Watch* activity to see if anyone else is doing the same thing. Mark's *Watch* for individuals attempting to contact church-associated hunter groups doesn't get him anything. His second *Watch* (the one on the *Watch* endeavor) notices his own *Watch* of course, and discovers that someone has put up a *Watch* to notice anyone attempting to peruse general church records.

**Descriptive Example:** *Mark decided when he created his character to have his Church Influence be represented by an extensive network of blackmail against highly placed members of the local churches. When writing up his activities for the Storyteller, Mark describes how his blackmailed network of priests, deacons and elders are going on "crusades" within their various churches to discover any corrupting Influences that might be at work. They are using their authority to persuade other impressionable church members to report any suspicious activities or requests to them immediately.*

#### **WHEN TO RESOLVE ACTIONS**

For the purpose of these rules, Influence Traits spent on endeavors return at the beginning of the month after they are spent. The Storyteller may desire to extend this time for large games that run less often than once a month. Either way, this period of time should remain constant, giving all of the players the same opportunity to employ their Influences on a regular basis.

*Attack*, *Follow*, *Growth*, *Trace* and *Watch* endeavors should only be resolved at the end of the month. This limit gives everyone a chance to put up levels of *Conceal*, *Defense* and *Watch*, and it lets the Storyteller take everyone's Influence actions into account so that he can produce better descriptive results of each person's endeavors.



### THE SCOPE OF INFLUENCES

As stated previously, an Influence can only affect Influence from the same category. In very rare circumstances, the Storyteller may allow Influences from one category to assist endeavors in another, but only in the same city. In this case, each action is spent as though it was only half of an action. In this way, it is even possible for you to simulate the effects of Combine by loaning Influence to yourself from another category. This type of cross-category Influence use should be rare, and it should be regulated strictly lest it become a common thing. You may have Influences in multiple cities (subject to local Storyteller approval), which are considered to be entirely separate Influences even if they are of the same category.

### GAMES IN MORE THAN ONE CITY

Some endeavors on the Influence charts state that they can affect an area larger than a city, but this can be difficult to run for large-scale games. In a network game, you will need to clear an Influence action or endeavor that is intended to affect another city with the Storyteller from the member chronicle who presides over the city you are trying to affect.

If you wish to attempt an endeavor in a city other than the one in which your Influence is located, you may attempt to do so, but each action is effectively halved. If you wish to affect a city on another continent, then each Trait you spend functions as one quarter of a Trait.

## SYSTEMS

These systems are optional, but they have been developed by the Camarilla (White Wolf's official fan organization) to suit large-scale games more easily. Some of the systems have been included in only the most recent *Minds' Eye Theatre* publications, so they are reprinted here to be usable in any live-action setting.

### MISCELLANEOUS SYSTEMS

#### RETESTS

A character may retest a single challenge only once from each of the following categories, when applicable: Abilities, Willpower, Merits or supernatural powers (Disciplines, Gifts, etc.). For example, a character resisting *Dread Gaze* could use one Ability Trait to retest (as could his opponent), but he could not use a second Ability for another retest. If he fails the challenge even after his Ability retest, he may still call for another retest from another category, such as Willpower.

When a character calls for a retest to a challenge, his opponent can employ an appropriate retest to negate it. The retest used to negate must be from the same category. A retest called for with a Willpower Trait may not be negated in this manner.

#### EXTENDED CHALLENGES

Extended Challenges are often too cumbersome for quick play in large games. When engaging in an Extended Challenge, the player may optionally perform the first test as normal, gaining one "success" if he wins the test. If he gets that first "success," he can opt to spend up to four additional Attribute Traits from the appropriate category to gain extra "successes." For example, a wraith attempts to use *MindSpeak* (Basic *Mnemosynis*). After winning the Mental Challenge, the wraith may spend up to four Mental Traits for extra successes. With this system, or the original system, no power that relies upon Extended Challenges to inflict varying degrees of damage should be allowed to inflict more than three levels of damage per application, regardless of the number of "successes."



### ORDER OF CHALLENGES

A single character may be subjected to only one Mental and one Social Challenge in a turn. A single character may be subjected to only one Physical Challenge per turn. (Multiple attackers may take part in that challenge.) The term turn refers to the normal action taken in a turn (“Everyman/First” Turn), as well actions taken for *Celerity* and similar powers.

### MOVEMENT IN COMBAT

Anyone in or just entering combat is subject to the three-step rule. You may take up to three steps during any combat action and still attack. (Moving two or three steps causes the character to be down one Trait in Physical Challenges, though.) These steps are allowed in conjunction with each extra attack given by speed-increasing powers. A character who is not attacking may move twice his allowed distance in a single action by taking drastic measures such as diving, leaping or sprinting.

### TWO-WEAPON COMBAT

Characters may use an additional weapon in their off hand, but they must have special training in order to achieve the benefits of doing so. If the character has four or more levels of the Ability appropriate to the weapon being used (i.e., *Firearms*, *Melee*, etc.), he may add one to the number of Bonus Traits given by the weapon he is using. Characters using a weapon and a shield are required to have only one level of *Melee* to make use of the shield's additional Trait(s).

During the challenge, only one weapon is considered to have a damaging effect, while the other simply aids with parrying or spraying. Therefore, a character with Incendiary ammunition in one pistol and Armor-piercing rounds in the other may not take advantage of both types of ammunition in the same attack (although rounds from both guns would be expended). For another example, a character with *Baal's Caress* on his sword, and a *Ward versus Kindred* on his dagger could not apply both effects to the same attack.

### COMBAT IN DARKNESS

In darkness, characters suffer a two-Trait Penalty on all combat challenges. In the case of absolute darkness (or blindness) they must also retest any successful challenges that they make (once per challenge), unless their opponent is suffering the same penalty for darkness. Certain powers can affect the Trait penalty, while others can allow the character to disregard darkness penalties altogether.

### HEALTH

A character in a *Mind's Eye Theatre* game has different health levels that represent the amount of injury the character can endure. These levels include: Healthy, Healthy, Bruised, Bruised, Bruised, Wounded, Wounded, Incapacitated, Torpor and/or Final Death. If a Healthy character loses two health levels from a combat challenge, she becomes Bruised. If she loses three more health levels, she becomes Wounded, and so on.

- **Healthy** — When a character is Healthy, he is virtually or completely uninjured. He suffers no penalty aside from possibly being cosmetically scuffed up a bit.
- **Bruised** — A Bruised character is more seriously roughed up, and his injuries have started to impair his viability a bit. He is considered one Trait down on all tied challenges.
- **Wounded** — When a character is Wounded, he is seriously injured in one or more locations. To reflect this injury, he must risk an additional Trait to attempt a challenge, and his opponent wins all ties, regardless of who has more Traits. If the injured character has a power which normally allows him to win all ties, ties are resolved through comparing Traits instead. Note: A character may always attempt to overbid.



• **Incapacitated** — When a character is Incapacitated, he is completely out of play for at least 10 minutes. Once awake, the character is still effectively immobile, although he may whisper pained sentences. He may not enter into challenges until he has healed at least one health level. He is at the mercy of other characters, and he may do nothing more than heal himself.

• **Mortally Wounded** — Bleeding profusely and suffering from shock, a Mortally Wounded individual has little time left. Mortally Wounded characters do not regain consciousness normally. Instead, the character loses one Physical Trait every 20 minutes. Once the character runs out of Physical Traits, he dies. Only the assistance of someone with the *Medicine* Ability can halt this inexorable loss, and the character will not even begin to heal unless he is treated by magic or full hospital resources. Vampires who are injured beyond Incapacitated fall into a deathlike sleep known as torpor.

• **Death** — To kill a character in combat requires that the character first be brought to the Mortally Wounded or Torpor health level. His attacker must then declare that he is performing a “killing blow” and defeat him in a Physical Challenge. Vampires can be killed thus only if the blow involves aggravated damage or decapitation.

If a character is at the Mortally Wounded/ Torpor health level and is left in a position that would logically lead to his demise, such as in a flaming building or a trash compactor, the Narrator will declare the character to be dead after the appropriate amount of time.

Narrators should never allow an “instant kill” without the consent of the target (i.e., he agrees to die for story purposes). An instant kill is any single challenge or effect that takes a character from his first Healthy health level to Mortally Wounded or Torpor. The **Mind’s Eye Theatre** rules are designed to be theatrical, not strictly realistic, so emphasize story over combat.

#### **NOTICING POWERS IN EFFECT**

When a power is used unsuccessfully upon a character, that character can initiate a Static Mental Challenge to detect its use. (The difficulty equals the Mental Traits of the character using the power.) The *Awareness* Ability may be used as a retest in this challenge. If the original character wins the Static Challenge, he might also recognize the power and/ or who used it on him (at Narrator discretion). Some powers are obvious in their effect, target, and/ or source. The Narrator may rule that any of the pertinent information is available without testing.

#### **NARRATING THE MOB SCENE**

Any Narrator who has worked with a large group of players has probably noticed the tendency for mob combats to develop into huge, time consuming affairs that can turn a fun game into a boring session of rock-paper-scissors. This outcome can be avoided, but the Narrator should be the one who controls the situation and keeps the scene on track. Players will usually diverge into out-of-character conversations and mill about waiting to find out what happens for as long as the Narrator allows.

##### **Keeping Things Moving**

The faster the characters move with speed-enhancing powers, the slower the players move in reality. One of the most important goals to strive for when running a mass combat is to keep things moving so that players can get through with the scene while still maintaining their focus on the game. When combats drag out, the spirit of the scene can easily be lost in a sea of hand signals.

With that goal in mind, the Narrator must take two more things into consideration before employing any of the following techniques. The first thing to consider is whether the results of this scene are likely to cause such harm to one of the





characters that you ought to follow each and every rule just to be fair. The second question is whether the players involved are going to enjoy a quick, narrative scene, or if they'd prefer a drawn-out, by-the-book scene. If you're not sure, it's okay to ask the players directly. A good rule of thumb is that if any real out-of-character tension arises between the players over the scene, you should likely just stick to a by-the-book style and leave the more diplomatic negotiation-oriented styles for later.

#### **Playing It Conservatively**

If you have determined that the players really want a more structured approach to the mob scene, this can be effectively accomplished if you stay focused throughout the scene. The Storyteller needs to keep things moving at a reasonable pace throughout the scene and not lose the players' attention. It's very easy in these situations to let the focus drift away from the scene at hand or to become bogged down in the minutiae of details that pertain to only a single challenge or retest. When playing the scene using the straight-and-narrow approach, taking some basic steps will help keep things moving in the proper direction.

Time spent arguing about the rules is time lost. Through the course of any long mob combat, the Storyteller will have to make several rules calls. Don't worry about pleasing everyone, but focus instead on making the fairest call possible, given the information you have. If a player wants to object after you make a call, let him. A single objection is sometimes quite helpful, because the players may notice things that you missed. However, if you still feel after hearing the objection that you made right call, simply stick to the original call and move on. If the players still want to argue, tell them to abide by the decision for the time being and to bring it up after the game for further debate if they would like. This approach allows the players to voice their concerns, but it also lets them know that no one is going to receive preferential treatment.

If the scene is in a public or high-traffic area, passersby will want to get involved. You can handle this eventuality in a number of ways, but it has to be addressed, because the inclusion of new participants on any side of a fight can alter the outcome dramatically. At the very beginning of the scene, establish who is in the scene, then limit any outside inclusion strictly. You can either move the whole group to a secluded area outside the general area, or simply record who is involved at the beginning with a snapshot of the scene or a written list of participants. However you record it, the scene should be considered closed until the mob combat is over.

Once the scene begins, it is recommended that you keep tight control on the flow of the combat. Everyone should progress through the turns and *Celerity*/ *Rage* actions at the same pace, with no one moving farther ahead of the group in time or lagging behind. At the beginning of each turn, simply call for everyone's stated actions, then break the situation down into its smallest component parts. Work on each of these components until everything is resolved, then start over for the next turn. As long as you keep things moving at a steady pace and you strive to incorporate everyone's goals, the scene should play out without much difficulty.

#### **The Narrative Approach**

If the players are amenable to a more cooperative approach, then it might be easier to take a more freeform style to completing the scene. In this style, the players agree that the exact rules are not as important as the final outcome, and they agree to some give and take. Obviously, this approach doesn't work as well if everyone's goals are to kill their enemies mercilessly, but sometimes it can be very rewarding.

First off, the Narrator is responsible for making sure that things move forward at a reasonable pace and that everyone is focused on completing the scene as smoothly as possible. The Narrator needs to remember that even in using this style,



he is the final authority on how things proceed, and he should keep a close eye on the negotiations to make sure that everyone is treated fairly.

For this scene to proceed, everyone participating needs to divulge what they want out of the scene. Frequently, the answers to this simple question can provide hints to the solution. If multiple or conflicting goals come up, it can be a good second step to go back through the group after the first question and ask about each player's limits. In other words, the Narrator establishes each player's best and worst conclusion to the scenario and then sets about trying to negotiate a way to satisfy as many players as possible without letting anyone's worst-case scenario come up.

If any diametrically opposed goals arise, then it is suggested that the Narrator find a way to meet (as much as possible) both goals without denying either outright. For instance, a neonate has gravely insulted his elder, and the elder is attempting to kill the young upstart. The neonate's goal might be to simply get away, while the elder's goal might be to kill the neonate. The Narrator can easily suggest that the elder mitigate his goal down to putting the neonate into torpor and sending him to his clan's elders. The neonate may accede to capture if it doesn't result in his death. Therefore, both parties could have what they want, while the path to get there may be different than either expected.

If the Narrator fails to reach an equitable solution between the groups, it is recommended that the entire party default back to the conservative approach of playing out every challenge as best as possible. The desired end of the narrative approach is to keep the story moving as long as possible and to give each party just enough closure to move on from this chapter without unnecessary problems. The goal of the conservative approach, on the other hand, is to play out a single gambit in the larger story to the bitter end. Neither approach is intrinsically any better than the other, but both have their place in the Narrator's arsenal.


#### **A Cinematic Approach**

A compromise between the conservative and narrative styles is a more cinematic blend, which still attempts to pay close attention to the structure of the mob combat while making each turn as narrative as possible. Like the straight narrative style, this approach works best if the combatants are not all absolutely set on killing each other as the only outcome. In this format, start as before by inquiring what everyone's goals and limits are. These answers should inform the individual turns as the scene moves forward. Then at each turn, inquire again what everyone wants to do. If some goals can be met without problems, simply narrate what happens instead of worrying about the challenges for everything.

#### **Dealing with the Innocent Bystanders**

In most mob combat situations, you will have a collection of onlookers who are either there watching the scene in character and they chose not to get involved in the chaos, or they have an out-of-character interest, and they are watching to see how their friends do in the melee. Either case is usually fine, as long as the Narrator makes it clear who is purely a spectator and who's a participant. Regardless of the method he uses, the diligent Narrator will likely want to keep these onlookers at least informed as to what is happening in the scene so that everyone gets the most out of it. The easiest way to do so is to call out what happens during each turn. Doing so serves two purposes, since it not only informs and entertains the audience, but it also will cue the participants that they have to decide what their next actions will entail.

Throughout the battle, it's always good to keep track of roughly how much time has passed in game, as well. Obviously this tally will never be exact, and it will never sync up with the real time that has passed, but it's important nonetheless. When large combats break out, the local authorities tend to want to get involved to stop



things and restore order. It's important to track how much time has passed inside the scene so that the Narrator can understand when to allow outside agents to start affecting things. Since most turns do not take longer than about four seconds, it's usually not feasible to allow outsiders into the combat until it is already over.

Another factor to watch for is the passerby. Players always just happen to be walking by, and they will typically want to either watch what's going on or join in. Just like the authorities, you don't want the random passerby joining in either, since it's unlikely that they would actually be able to get into the situation by pure chance unless they come by during the very first turn. After that first turn, it is advisable that the Narrator not allow anyone new to enter the combat who was not forewarned about it. If you notice that several people are preparing to walk back to the rest of the game, simply inform them that if they leave the area before the scene is over, they should refrain from making any announcements or warnings to other players based on this situation. Frankly, it is not realistic to have the general bystander walk leisurely by the site of a fracas, watch for a moment, go tell other people about it, then come back with reinforcements or just more onlookers. Doing so would take several minutes at the least, and the whole combat could be over in that much game time. Therefore you have the time-bubble effect, which usually traps people within its influence until the scene is done unless the bystander is willing to walk away and pretend he really did not see any of the events taking place. Often, you will find that players are quite happy to accept that condition if it means that they do not have to wait out of character for an hour while the mob combat runs its course.

## VAMPIRE SETTING SYSTEMS

### TEACHING DISCIPLINES

In large games, actual players' characters often take the place of mentors and teachers for other characters. As such, these additional rules on Discipline teaching will help maintain balance in an environment in which free trading may detract from the overall flavor of the setting by allowing characters too great an access to supposedly rare powers.

All teachers must be active characters, and they may teach up to one level less than they possess of their in-clan Disciplines. For example, a vampire who possesses an Intermediate level of his clan Disciplines may teach the Basic levels. With the exception of those who are portraying characters' mentors, Narrator may not teach Disciplines.

To teach Advanced *Necromancy* or *Thaumaturgy*, the teacher must be a sixth- or seventh-generation vampire, and he must have the Advanced level in at least two paths of the Discipline. A character who possesses the Advanced level of two paths may teach the Advanced level in both paths, provided she is of the appropriate generation.

## WEREWOLF SETTING SYSTEMS

### RAGE

A Rage Trait allows a character to make a follow up attack after a successful Physical Challenge, thus creating a new challenge immediately. To make this extra attack, the player declares his intention to do so and risks a Rage Trait in the follow-up challenge instead of a Physical Trait. This follow-up challenge may not be followed by additional extra attacks. If an opponent is using follow-up attacks (i.e., *Celerity*, *Rage* or similar powers), Rage may be spent to participate in these challenges as normal.

### RISKING TRAITS: RAGE AND GNOSIS

Risking a Rage or Gnosis Trait for such things as extra actions or fetish activation counts as an expenditure for the purpose of limiting Rage and Gnosis spent in the same challenge.



### **SILVER**

Carrying silver reduces the size of a Garou's Gnosis Trait pool by at least one per item. Ten silver bullets counts as one object. Larger objects (such as melee weapons big enough to inflict two damage levels) reduce the Gnosis pool by two each. Even carrying a klaive penalizes the wielder. These penalties last for a full day after the Garou stops carrying the object(s).

### **HABANO**

Harano is an inexplicable gloom and inexpressible longing for unnamable things. Some say it is caused by contemplation of Gaia's suffering. Garou who suffer from Harano are prone to depression, lassitude and sudden mood swings. They may not act at all, or they may explode into intense but ill-advised activity. One never knows. What is certain is that a Garou suffering from Harano is certainly not at his best, and he may well be a liability to his pack, his sept and the fight to defend Gaia.

It is not common for a Garou to plunge into Harano, but it happens often enough to make it a concern. At the Narrator's discretion, any werewolf who has suffered some sort of crushing defeat recently (failure of a plan, loss of a loved one, extended humiliation) must make a Mental Challenge against 10 Traits. If he fails, he slips into Harano. Although this condition is not permanent, the gloom of Harano is hard to lift.

A player whose character suffers from Harano must make a Willpower Test against seven Traits each scene. If he fails, the Garou plunges into either of the following:

**Fanatical, Desperate Activity** — The Garou must succeed on a Simple Test to avoid acting immediately on any impulse that comes to mind. Furthermore, he is down three Traits on all Mental and Social Challenges, and loses all ties.

**Deep Gloom and Depression** — The Garou must succeed on a Simple Test to act at all. Otherwise he simply curls up and hopes the world goes away. In addition, he is down three Traits on all Mental and Social Challenges, and loses all ties.

These effects last for the duration of a scene. A new test must be made at the beginning of the next scene.

Furthermore, the senses of any Garou in Harano are inevitably distorted by his intense inner torment; all Garou in Harano are down one additional Trait in any challenges involving sight, smell or hearing.

Those who suffer from Harano may have moments of lucidity after the expenditure of a Willpower Trait. This expenditure lifts the gloom for as many hours as a character has permanent Willpower. Harano is not necessarily permanent. Extraordinary Garou may free themselves from its grip after exceptional travails (at Storyteller discretion).

Given the crippling effects of this condition, only extreme circumstances should sink a player's character into Harano.

### **TEACHING GIFTS**

All spirit teachers of Gifts must be approved by the Storyteller. Spirits will teach in-breed/auspice/tribe Gifts if the character has a Renown Trait that has not previously been dedicated to the learning of another Gift. Spirits will teach out-of-breed/auspice Gifts if the character has two Renown Traits not previously dedicated to the learning of another Gift.

Tribal Gifts are treasured secrets. Spirits will not teach tribal Gifts unless an athro or elder of that tribe (who is also a player's character) authorizes it.

#### **Fellow Garou Teaching Gifts**

Any time your character teaches or is taught a Gift from another werewolf without the approval of a spirit that could teach it, both teacher and student of the Gift gain a Notoriety Trait. This penalty represents the jealous nature of spirits in their role as teachers of Gaia's Gifts.



## WRAITH SETTING SYSTEMS

### ABILITIES

#### Soulforging

Among players' characters, this Ability is possessed widely only by members of the Artificers Guild, although each guild has its own soulforgers. All Artificers must take at least one level in this Ability at character creation, or the character must buy a level when adopted into the guild.

### BACKGROUNDS

#### Haunt

There are some places in the Skinlands where the Shroud is not as strong as it should be. Whether the place is old and spooky or actually haunted, wraiths in that place find it easier to cross the Shroud or use Arcanoi. A circle of wraiths can create a haunt by crossing the Shroud repeatedly and using their Arcanoi to suspend the disbelief of the Quick (usually by scaring them), but doing so takes many years. Most haunts are either found by a lucky few, taken over by an ambitious circle or given to a wraith by one of the factions.

- X You're homeless, and you have only your Fetters for refuge
- 1 It's so small you have to sleep standing up
- 2 It's not too fancy, but at least you have room to move around (A small studio)
- 3 You finally have room for some guests (An apartment or a tiny house)
- 4 You're either living in luxury (or as close to it as you can get in the Shadowlands), or you have an unusual or fortified haunt (A large house or mobile home)
- 5 Your haunt's in Deader Homes and Gardens (A mansion)

Each level of *Haunt* lowers the Shroud rating in the area by one. For example, if the Shroud rating would normally be eight, a second-level haunt would lower it to six. While performing Arcanoi in the haunt, a wraith gets one free retest per *Haunt* rating. These retests can only be performed once per session. While anyone may receive the benefits of the lowered Shroud rating, the retests can only be used by the haunt's owner.

A circle of wraiths can share the benefits of a haunt, but each wraith must put in enough Background Traits to make the *Haunt* rating equal to three or higher. They must also provide ample background justification for it. While anyone in the haunt can share the lowered Shroud rating, only those who put background points into it can share the free retests for Arcanoi. In this case, the number of retests for Arcanoi for any particular character is the number of Background Traits that that character invested, plus one. If a player's character donated Background Traits to *Haunt*, and that character is destroyed or otherwise is put out of the game, then the *Haunt* rating is made of the Background Traits of the remaining characters. If the new *Haunt* rating or number of remaining circle members is less than three, then the circle will not receive free retests for Arcanoi until the situation is remedied.

#### Legacy

People dedicate their lives to leaving something behind to mark their existence after they're dead and gone. A legacy is not the memories that people have about a wraith or things that represent their ties to the Skinlands, but rather it is a measure of the accomplishments that they have left behind. A wraith's legacy can be just about anything such as a work of art, a term of slang or a scientific formula.

- X You left nothing behind that marks your existence
- 1 Somebody printed a poem that you wrote in an obscure journal



- 2 Your paintings still hang in an art gallery
- 3 You helped found a charity
- 4 You drafted important laws during your tenure at public office
- 5 You started the disco craze

Once per story, a wraith can travel to the site of her legacy (or some representation of it) and engage in a Simple Test for each level of the *Legacy*. Each success heals a normal wound instantly, or an aggravated wound (with an additional half an hour spent at the legacy site). For example, a wraith with a *Legacy* rating of two makes two Simple Tests, but wins only one. In this case, the wraith can only heal one wound in that one sitting at his legacy.

A wraith can only use a legacy for himself; he can't use the legacy to heal others. Wraiths cannot combine *Legacy* Traits as they can those for the *Haunt* Background.

#### Relics

Relics are the ghosts of items that somehow crossed over to the Shadowlands after being destroyed, or items that were so loved by their owners that they crossed over after their owners died. Unlike Artifacts, Relics have no special powers, they're just useful in and of themselves.

- X You're broke
- 1 Something functionally useless but important nonetheless (A wedding ring)
  - 2 Something you might trade or find some use for (A pair of sunglasses)
  - 3 Something useful, but simple (A knife)
  - 4 Something with moving parts (A gun)
  - 5 Something powerful or really useful (A car)

It takes a Pathos Trait to power complex relics (or relics with moving parts) for a scene. It should be noted that some relics need more than Pathos to work. (For example, relic guns need relic bullets.)

#### ATTUNEMENT

Players' characters should know automatically when a wraith is making them into a Consort. There is no challenge to detect this activity, and they can feel it each time the wraith expends a Willpower Trait for attunement.

Attunement benefits only apply to the wraith who successfully manifested, skinrode (or otherwise hid in the Consort), and spent the Willpower for attunement. Therefore, if a wraith attunes a mortal to itself, then only that wraith receives the benefits of attunement, unless other wraiths spend the time and energy to attune the mortal as well. The process of attunement takes time. Each successful manifestation and Willpower spent for attunement must occur on different occasions, and they can occur no more than once per night. A Consort can be attuned to more than one wraith at a time at Storyteller discretion. If a wraith wishes to attune someone else's Consort to itself, then the wraith must make a greater number of manifestation attempts and spend a greater amount of Willpower to do so. A Storyteller determines the specific number of attempts and the Willpower cost.

Mortals with True Faith cannot become Consorts. Wraiths tend to find the presence of such people uncomfortable to say the least. An exorcism on a Consort by a character with True Faith will remove the effects of being a Consort.

#### EXPERIENCE TRAIT EXPENDITURES

Innate Abilities of an Arcanos cost two Experience Traits. If the character spends two more Traits, she has purchased the entire first Basic power, along with all Innate Abilities in that Arcanos path.



## CHANGELING SETTING SYSTEMS

### COLD IRON

Being exposed to cold iron affects fae strongly. While in possession of such objects, a changeling is one Trait down on all challenges, and her maximum Glamour decreases by one Trait. Weapons forged of cold iron inflict aggravated damage on changelings and give them one Trait of temporary Banality.

Being manacled in cold iron prevents a changeling from casting any Cantrips or employing Birthrights. In addition, the manacles will burn the changeling's wrists over time. Other effects of the burning manacles are up to the Storyteller's discretion.

### THE ENCHANTED STROKE

The Physical Challenge for the Enchanted Stroke is always considered to be a surprise challenge (which incurs the concomitant penalties).

### ENCHANTMENT

Generally, most enchantments last one day per Trait of Glamour that the character spends if the character is not within a freehold. Some creatures will stay enchanted longer at Storyteller discretion.

### CALLING UPON THE WYRD

While the character is Calling Upon the Wyrd, he needs not spend an additional Glamour Trait in order to make subsequent Cantrips Wyrd as well.

### FREEHOLDS

#### Ownership

If a character discovers or inherits a pre-existing freehold or glade, she must swear an oath to protect it and then invest an amount of Glamour into it equal to the rating of the freehold. If the freehold is destroyed, the owner gains as many temporary Traits of Banality as the level of the freehold.

A freehold may be taken at the previous owner's death, or the owner can give it away. A noble with a pennon (Count or higher) can take a freehold from someone with a lesser title by demanding a fior. If the person refuses the fior, the freehold mystically transfers to the noble. The sidhe reclaimed many freeholds in this way upon returning to Earth.

If a freehold owner becomes Undone, the freehold drops one level per year, and the balefire gains a bluish light. It will dry up until the owner awakes or someone else claims the freehold. Seelie typically believe that if the previous owner returns, the freehold should go back to them, whereas Unseelie believe that the previous owner was weak and has lost any claim to the freehold.

#### Gaining Glamour

If no one is using the freehold's balefire to heal, one person per evening may gain an amount of temporary Glamour Traits from the balefire equal to the level of the freehold.

### REAVING

Reaving is the act of sucking extra Glamour from a freehold. Anyone may do so, but it is considered a terrible crime. A Simple Test must be won in the presence of the balefire, giving the Reaver a point of temporary Glamour for every three points of permanent Banality she has. On a tie, the character gains one point of temporary Glamour for every two points of permanent Banality she has, and the freehold drops one level permanently. On a loss, nothing happens. The owner of the freehold will immediately become aware of the Reaving unless the Storyteller deems that he is too far away or insufficiently in tune with his freehold.



## CHIMERA

The four basic types of Chimera include Incidental Chimera, Dreamed Chimera, Crafted Chimera and Forged Chimera. Incidental Chimera are the most common type found in the Enchanted World. They are stray dreams that have popped up here and there, and they are almost always tied to a specific place or person. While these Chimera may seem solid in their proper setting, they are actually very frail, and they will crumble if removed. Most sentient Chimera in the real world are Incidental Chimera.

Dreamed Chimera are the type that are found most commonly in the Dreaming. They are those that are most generally turned into Crafted Chimera. While these Chimera are much sturdier than Incidental ones, they are still likely to dissolve if they are not crafted or forged properly. Sentient Chimera in the Dreaming are usually this type of Chimera. Chimera or companions created with Dream Weaving are of this type.

Crafted chimerical items are the kind that most Kithain are familiar with. These Crafted Chimera are items such as leather, wood or metal that have been made into something. Generally, Chimera cannot be crafted into items more complicated than a simple mechanical device. Crafted Chimera are still as vulnerable to Banality as Dreamed Chimera are.

Forged Chimera are the rarest type because generally only nockers can make them. Forged Chimera have been altered on the most fundamental level. Forged Chimera have an amazing resilience against Banality, and they are not connected to a certain person or place like most other Chimera are. Through their Arts, nockers can create a wide variety of forged mechanical monstrosities.

### Creating Chimera

Incidental Chimera may be changed into Crafted Chimera as per the rules in **The Shining Host** with the following changes. After all the Glamour has been spent, a point of Willpower must be spent as well. A Simple Test must then be won allowing the Chimera to last until it comes in contact with high levels of Banality (7+ Traits). These Chimera may still erode over time, and they may need to be infused with additional Glamour each session at the Storyteller's discretion.

Dreamed Chimera may be changed into Crafted Chimera as per the rules in **The Shining Host**. These Chimera are much sturdier than Incidental Chimera, but they still may fade if they come into contact with high levels of Banality (9+ Traits). This is up to the Storyteller who may call for a Challenge or Simple Test as desired.

### Chimera Creation Time

The Storyteller has final say on how much time is required to create Chimera and companions, but it generally ranges from six hours to one year (depending on the Background level simulated).

### Treasure Creation

Treasures are not Chimera, and they are not created like standard Chimera or companions. The creation of a treasure is an epic undertaking, one that should require an appropriate quest of some sort. There are no raw mechanics for making treasures. Their creation should be a story in itself, and the Storyteller should determine when (and if) the proper moment of completion has come. Treasures are granted powers by the supervising Storyteller with approval restrictions equivalent to the *Treasures* Background. Characters who quest for a treasure must pay an amount in Experience Traits equivalent to the rating of the treasure before being able to harness its magic.





## OATHS

Taking an Oath multiple times does not grant cumulative effects.

### Oath of Adoption

Sidhe who change Houses do not change their original House Boon or Flaw, nor do they gain the Boon or Flaw of their new House.

### Oath of Clasped Hands

The benefit of this Oath may be gained only once.

### Oath of Fealty

A character can be under only one Oath of Fealty at a time. To swear another Oath of Fealty is to break the first.

### Oath of the Long Road

A character may swear have only one Oath of the Long Road at a time, and he may gain the benefit of the permanent Willpower and Glamour only once. Use of this oath on a trivial quest results in consequences as dire as if the Oath were broken.

## WEAPONS AND ARMOR

This section expands the weapon lists from the different *Mind's Eye Theatre* sourcebooks and introduces some new rules that help simplify combat situations in large games.

## WEAPONS

### CONCEALABILITY

Each weapon has a concealability rating. If the weapon is not concealable, or if you do not have the proper amount of clothing or cover to conceal it, you must display that card at all times. You cannot, for example, pull a broadsword out of your pocket. Instead, you must carry that card in hand at all times or, optionally, you could pin the card to your shirt, indicating that the weapon is slung over your shoulder.

Someone with the *Investigation* Ability who wins a Mental Challenge may notice when a character is carrying concealed weapons or items. Searching the carrier physically reveals hidden weapons automatically without a test in most cases.

### AVAILABILITY

Serious firearms and archaic melee weapons can take some time to locate. Obtaining firearms also requires a permit, which involves undergoing background checks or waiting-periods in some areas. A character can turn to more “colorful” channels in order to procure equipment, but shopping the black market often means shady dealings and vastly inflated prices. The Influence values listed under many weapons’ Availability indicate the level and type of Influence required in order to procure the weapon through illicit channels. Otherwise, a character must have some level of the *Finance* Ability or money-raising Influence to procure exotic melee weapons and nearly all firearms.

Once a character has a weapon, he can’t necessarily keep it forever. Too often, characters run about firing shotguns and large automatic weapons without facing the massive police manhunts that such battles invariably provoke. Take care that characters with powerful weapons understand the equally powerful repercussions that follow irresponsible use. These consequences not only preserve game balance, but they enforce a sense of realism and keep the game from turning into an arms race.

### SPECIAL WEAPON CAPABILITIES

Some weapons have special abilities that allow an attacker to inflict extra damage, ignore certain types of protection or strike multiple opponents.



#### **Armor-Piercing**

Special rounds, which are generally Teflon-coated, are able to pierce armor with ease. Although they do not inflict extra damage, armor-piercing rounds ignore any defenses from armor. Such rounds are typically tricky to acquire, though, and legal inquiries often follow their use.

#### **Destroy Shield**

Although they are rare in this day and age, certain Inquisitors and anachronistic elder vampires still use shields. A weapon capable of destroying a shield penetrates it automatically and renders it useless after three successful blows, no matter what size or strength the shield may be.

#### **Fully Automatic**

A firearm with this ability is capable of emptying dozens of rounds into a single target at close range. By expending 10 bullets in a single attack, this weapon inflicts an extra health level of damage automatically due to the sheer volume of fire. Once the clip is empty, the character must spend one action reloading the weapon before he may fire again.

#### **High-Caliber**

Firearms of particularly high caliber can cause crippling wounds with only a few shots. When a high-caliber bullet hits a target, the attacker should make a Simple Test immediately. A win or tie indicates that the target suffers an additional health level of damage from the shot.

#### **Incendiary**

Burning weapons cause aggravated wounds to just about anything. Some, such as flame throwers or Molotov cocktails, burn the target with streams or explosions of fire, while others such as incendiary rounds ("hot loads") burn the target with superheated ammunition.

#### **Mass-Trauma**

Certain weapons are so powerful that they inflict massive damage on a target, literally tearing away portions of flesh. Such weapons score an extra health level of damage when they are used appropriately.

#### **Speed**

In close combat with someone whose weapon has a Negative Trait of *Slow*, *Clumsy* or *Heavy*, you gain one additional bonus Trait, provided you have at least one level of the *Melee* Ability.

#### **Spray**

The weapon can strike up to three closely grouped targets at once, as long as they are farther than five feet from the shooter. The shooter makes one test against all the targets simultaneously. Each target who fails the test suffers the weapon's damage, while each target who succeeds avoids the weapon's damage. The shooter risks only the Traits required to test against each member of the group, and he loses only those Traits if any of the defenders wins the test. Submachine guns and assault rifles expend 10 rounds to spray, and the shooter cannot use this capability at the same time as Fully Automatic.

#### **Staking**

Staking weapons paralyze vampires when a successful blow penetrates one's heart. The attacker must win or tie two successive Simple Tests in order to stake the vampire successfully.

#### **Two-Hand Requirement**

Characters must employ two-handed weapons with both hands regardless of their strength, meaning that they may not also make use of a shield or second weapon when doing so.



## MELEE WEAPONS

All melee weapons use the *Melee* Ability for retests.

### Broken Bottle

Bonus Traits: 1

Negative Traits: *Fragile, Short*

Concealability: Pocket

Damage: One health level

Availability: Any

### Knife/ Dagger

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Short*

Concealability: Pocket

Damage: One health level

Availability: Any

### Club/Stake

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Clumsy*

Concealability: Jacket

Damage: One health level

Availability: Any

Special Ability: Staking (if wooden)

### Mace/Small Axe

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Clumsy*

Concealability: Jacket

Damage: One health level

Availability: Any

Special Ability: Destroy Shield

### Shortsword

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Short*

Concealability: Jacket

Damage: One health level

Availability: Any

Special Ability: Speed

### Fencing Blades

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: *Fragile*

Concealability: Trenchcoat

Damage: One health level

Availability: Any.

Special Ability: Speed

### Spear/Staff

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: *Heavy*



Concealability: NA  
Damage: Two health levels  
Availability: Any  
Special Ability: Staking (if wooden), Two-Hand Requirement

**Broadsword**

Bonus Traits: 3  
Negative Traits: *Heavy*  
Concealability: Trenchcoat  
Damage: Two health levels  
Availability: Any

**Large Axe**

Bonus Traits: 3  
Negative Traits: *Clumsy, Heavy*  
Concealability: Trenchcoat  
Damage: Two health levels  
Availability: Any  
Special Ability: Destroy Shield

**Greatsword/Polearm/Scythe**

Bonus Traits: 4  
Negative Traits: *Clumsy, Heavy*  
Concealability: NA  
Damage: Two health levels  
Availability: Any  
Special Ability: Two-Hand Requirement

**THROWING WEAPONS**

These weapons use the *Throwing* Ability for combat retests.

**Thrown Rock**

Bonus Traits: 0  
Negative Traits: *Clumsy*  
Concealability: Pocket  
Damage: One health level  
Availability: Any

**Thrown Dagger, Knife or Shuriken**

Bonus Traits: 1  
Negative Traits: *Clumsy*  
Concealability: Pocket  
Damage: One health level  
Availability: Any

**Molotov Cocktail**

Bonus Traits: 2  
Negative Traits: *Fragile*  
Concealability: Jacket (until lit!)  
Damage: One health level  
Availability: Any  
Special Ability: Incendiary, Spray, Two-Hand Requirement



**Grenade**

Bonus Traits: 2  
Negative Traits: *Clumsy*  
Concealability: Pocket  
Damage: Two health levels  
Availability: *Police 5*, or *Underworld 4*  
Special Ability: Spray, Two-Hand Requirement

**Thrown Small Axe**

Bonus Traits: 2  
Negative Traits: *Clumsy*, *Heavy*  
Concealability: Jacket  
Damage: One health level  
Availability: Any

**Thrown Spear**

Bonus Traits: 3  
Negative Traits: *Clumsy*, *Heavy*  
Concealability: Jacket  
Damage: One health level  
Availability: Any  
Special Ability: Staking (if wooden)

**RANGED WEAPONS**

This category covers non-thrown projectile weapons other than firearms. These weapons use the *Archery* Ability for retests in combat.

**Crossbow**

Bonus Traits: 2  
Negative Traits: *Heavy*, *Slow*  
Concealability: NA  
Damage: Two health levels  
Availability: Any  
Rate: One  
Special Ability: Destroy Shield, Armor-piercing, Staking (if wooden), Two-Hand Requirement

**Shortbow**

Bonus Traits: 2  
Negative Traits: *Fragile*  
Concealability: Trenchcoat  
Damage: One health level  
Availability: Any  
Rate: One  
Special Ability: Armor-piercing, Staking (if wooden), Two-Hand Requirement

**Compound Bow/Longbow**

Bonus Traits: 3  
Negative Traits: *Fragile*, *Heavy*  
Concealability: NA  
Damage: Two health levels



Availability: Any

Rate: One

Special Ability: Destroy Shield, Armor-piercing, Staking (if wooden), Two-Hand Requirement

#### **FIREARMS**

Firearms, as would be expected, use the *Firearms* Ability for combat retests. Unless otherwise noted, Firearms have a clip or magazine capacity of 10 rounds.

Firearms have an additional capacity called rate, which governs their interaction with *Celerity* and similar powers. The number of times a firearm is fired in a single turn cannot exceed its rate. Other special weapon capabilities may be employed without affecting rate.

##### **Pistol**

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: Pocket

Damage: Two health levels

Rate: Five

Availability: Any, if registered; *Police* 4, *Street* 3 or *Underworld* 2 otherwise

##### **Heavy Pistol**

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: Jacket

Damage: Two health levels

Availability: Any, if registered; *Police* 4, *Street* 4 or *Underworld* 3 otherwise

Rate: Three

Special Ability: High-Caliber

##### **Submachine Gun**

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: Jacket

Damage: Two health levels

Rate: Four

Availability: Any, if registered and non-automatic. *Police* 4, *Street* 4 or *Underworld* 3 otherwise

Special Ability: Fully Automatic, Spray, [30-round clip]

##### **Rifle**

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: NA

Damage: Two health levels

Rate: Three

Availability: Any, if registered; *Police* 4, *Street* 4 or *Underworld* 3 otherwise

Special Ability: Two-Hand Requirement

##### **Shotgun**

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: *Loud*



Concealability: Trenchcoat

Damage: Two health levels

Rate: Two

Availability: Any, if registered. *Police 4, Street 4* or *Underworld 3* otherwise

Special Ability: Mass-Trauma, Spray, Two-Hand Requirement

**Sniper Rifle**

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: NA

Damage: Two health levels

Rate: Two

Availability: *Police 4*, or *Underworld 5*

Special Ability: High-Caliber, Two-Hand Requirement

**Assault Rifle**

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: NA

Damage: Two health levels

Rate: Four

Availability: *Police 5*, or *Underworld 5*

Special Ability: Fully Automatic, Spray, Two-Hand Requirement, [30-round clip]

**Combat Shotgun**

Bonus Traits: 3

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: NA

Damage: Two health levels

Rate: Three

Availability: *Police 5*, or *Underworld 5*

Special Ability: Fully Automatic, Mass Trauma, Spray, Two-Hand Requirement, [20-round magazine]

**Flame Thrower**

Bonus Traits: 0

Negative Traits: *Clumsy, Hot, Heavy*

Concealability: NA

Damage: Two health levels

Rate: One

Availability: *Underworld 5*

Special Ability: Incendiary, Two-Hand Requirement, Spray

**Stake Thrower**

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Loud*

Concealability: Trenchcoat

Damage: Two health levels

Rate: One

Availability: Each stake thrower must be crafted individually from a shotgun



Special Ability: Staking

#### **FIREARM ADD-ONS**

These items modify the stats for firearms as shown.

##### **Armor-Piercing Ammunition**

Availability: *Police 4, Street 4 or Underworld 3* [10 rounds]

Special Ability: Armor-piercing

Description: This ammunition cannot be used with combat shotguns, flame throwers, shotguns and stake throwers.

##### **Incendiary Ammunition**

Availability: *Police 5, Underworld 4* [10 rounds]

Special Ability: Incendiary (limited as described below)

Description: This ammunition cannot be used with flame throwers or stake throwers. Incendiary ammunition turns the first level of damage from a firearm into aggravated damage, provided the target suffers aggravated wounds from fire. Incendiary ammunition is most often crafted from white phosphorus.

##### **Scope**

Availability: Any

Description: This add-on cannot be used with combat shotguns, flame throwers, shotguns and stake throwers. Scopes add a bonus Trait to the weapon if the user aims for the entire turn before firing. Scope refers to actual scopes of various types or laser sights.

##### **Sound Suppression**

Availability: *Police 4, Street 4 or Underworld 3*

Description: Only pistols, submachine guns and sniper rifles may make use of sound suppression. This hardware removes the *Loud* Negative Trait by dampening the sound of the weapon's discharge. A weapon with sound suppression loses one bonus Trait.

#### **ARMOR**

Since it stops incoming damage, armor effectively grants a character extra health levels. These health levels are lost before the character himself suffers any damage in combat. Of course, armor does not soak all attacks. A suit of chain-mail does little good for a character whose blood is being boiled by *Thaumaturgy*, for instance.

Different types of armor can absorb different amounts of punishment before losing their effectiveness. It should be noted that armor that has lost all its health levels is not necessarily completely destroyed. It is more likely that it has been temporarily rendered useless instead. Of course, some attacks may destroy armor beyond repair. Fixing armor requires the proper tools and a Static Physical Challenge with the *Crafts* Ability.

Armor has two different traits for game purposes. Health levels indicate how many levels of damage the armor can absorb before needing of repair. Negative Traits are the drawbacks a wearer gains for donning a particular type of armor. Multiple armor types cannot be layered.

##### **ANTIQUE ARMOR**

Antique armor does not provide protection from firearms.

##### **Leather**

Health Levels: 1

Negative Traits: None

Concealability: Leather armor can be concealed if it is specifically made to look like normal clothing (i.e. leather pants, jacket and gloves)





Availability: Any

**Chain-mail**

Health levels: 2

Negative Traits: *Heavy*

Concealability: Trenchcoat. Chain-mail armor is bulky, and it extends below the waist.

Availability: Any. Chain-mail generally must be custom made, and it can cost upward of \$500 or more.

**Plate mail**

Health levels: 3

Negative Traits: *Heavy, Clumsy*

Concealability: NA

Availability: Any. Plate mail generally must be custom-ordered, and it can cost upward of \$3,000 or more.

**MODERN ARMOR**

Most modern armor is made of materials designed to stop and reduce shock from bullets. A ballistic vest does not protect against melee weapons.

**Ballistic Vest**

Health levels: 2

Negative Traits: None

Concealability: A ballistic vest can be worn concealed under a normal shirt, or clothing can be disguised to mimic its effects.

Availability: Any, mail order

**Reinforced Vest**

Health levels: 2

Negative Traits: *Heavy*

Concealability: Jacket

Availability: *Police 4, or Underworld 3*

**Riot Suit**

Health levels: 3

Negative Traits: *Heavy, Clumsy*

Concealability: NA

Availability: *Police 4, Underworld 5*

**SHIELDS**

Shields give their user one or more extra bonus Traits in hand-to-hand combat, which can add to the Traits that come from a melee weapon. In order to receive these bonus Traits, the wielder must possess at least one level of the *Melee* Ability.

**Small Shield**

Bonus Traits: 1

Negative Traits: none

Concealability: Jacket

Availability: Any

Description: Small shields (or bucklers) protect against melee and unarmed attacks.

**Large Shield**

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Heavy*



Concealability: NA

Availability: Any

Description: Large shields protect against melee and unarmed attacks, as well as ranged weapons and thrown weapons.

#### **Body Shield**

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Clumsy, Heavy*

Concealability: NA

Availability: Any

Description: Body shields protect against melee and unarmed attacks, as well as ranged weapons and thrown weapons.

#### **Riot Shield**

Bonus Traits: 2

Negative Traits: *Clumsy, Heavy*

Concealability: NA

Availability: Any

Description: Riot shields protect against all manner of attacks.

### **EXPLOSIVES**

The use of explosives rarely adds depth to the telling of stories. For the sake of dramatization, the Storyteller may have explosives destroy large tracts of land, buses full of helpless victims (Narrator-driven characters) and floors of skyscrapers if it adds to the story. For use among the characters of players, bombs should not be available as offensive weapons.

Storytellers should limit the availability of explosives to prevent them from becoming commonplace. Attempting to use explosives without having the *Demolition* Ability should result in bad things for the foolish character. Lost limbs, hands and nasty scarring should all be consequences of handling explosives cavalierly.

### **DURATION AND SCOPE OF POWERS**

Many of the powers and Backgrounds listed in MET sourcebooks provide a frame of time during which they are active or a set of circumstances after which the power ends. In the course of any single evening's game, these definitions are often enough to define the boundaries of the powers in use. However, when the scope of the game extends past a single night or location, things get more complicated. A small set of these powers becomes truly problematic as the effects begin to extend beyond even the jurisdiction of a single Storyteller. When dealing with these powers, it's usually best to define the basics first and then expand the concepts from that starting point.

One of the important aspects of the **Mind's Eye Theatre** rules is the idea of husbanding resources. The system is built with this game of limited resources in mind. The players have a pool of Attributes that decreases continuously over the course of a session, a Willpower rating which is used to invoke a large number of powers and is very difficult to refresh and a special Trait pool (be it Blood, Gnosis, Glamour or whatever) that takes time and effort to replenish. Retaining these expendables correctly is a large part of the game, so regulating the times over which they can be used effectively is a key tool in the Storyteller's arsenal for enforcing the tension of a game. The last few hours of any long game weekend can be especially terrifying to the players if they haven't been able to refresh some of those pools and the Storytellers are enforcing the duration limits in creative ways.



## THE SCENE

Within any live-action session, the possibility of having a coherent scene with an easily marked beginning and end is unlikely at best. Most sites have an open area that ends up being the central gathering point, and the “scene” that takes place in that room almost never actually ends. This approach is common enough that players have grown to expect it as a focal point of activity in a game. As a consequence, the Storytellers are left redefining the scope of their game.

In a traditional tabletop session, a scene is marked by the change of location or a major shift in the action of the story. The demands of a live-action game alter this expectation dramatically, as the number of participants rises. The Storytellers have less and less direct control over the indicators of scene. Therefore, it is best to set a standard that everyone knows and can rely on. In the case of the scene, wherever there is a doubt about how long something should last, the scene duration defaults to one hour or one scene, whichever is shorter. If characters get into such situations, we still want them to act within the confines of the scene, and not have the effects of powers spilling over into other scenes once the immediate need is over. For example, if the local anarchists make an attack on the prince of the city and the prince invokes *Majesty* and manages to escape, he won't have that *Majesty* still active when he walks into the Elysium later on to rally the primogen. He'd have to invoke it again and pay its corresponding cost again.

## THE SESSION

The usual definition of a session includes the events of one night's game, starting at character check-in and ending with a wrap-up. Surprisingly, in a long-running game, even this value needs to be evaluated and either reinforced or tossed aside. In any serial game, one in which the overall chronicle runs through multiple game sessions, then the standard definition works well until the group decides to run a full weekend-long event with multiple evenings worth of play. The plots and stories designed for such games almost always take the multiple nights into consideration, but the rules still just say “session.”

There are several ways to handle this, and they can even be made to handle the time between weekly or semi-weekly games as well. The largest issue is the replenishment of Traits. The Storytellers need to decide the rates at which Traits are replenished. For long-running games, the following is recommended:

Attributes are replenished at the end of each evening. In a game in which things run 24 hours a day and seven days a week, it is recommended that these Traits be replenished only after the character sits out of play for the equivalent of a night's sleep. At some conventions, this measure can be an effective prod to encourage the more exuberant participants to get some much-needed sleep.

Willpower replenishes one Trait per week on its own. A character can replenish one additional Trait per week for satisfying the requirements of her Nature.

All special Traits (such as Blood or Gnosis) have character-driven replenishment methods. These methods can even form the basis for stories all on their own. The more organized games find a lot of utility in the idea of an Influence and Feeding Center for exactly this purpose. When using such a central Storyteller base, a game typically establishes a small area that's considered out-of-play and always has at least one Storyteller on duty at all times. That on-call Storyteller is then responsible for running the feeding challenges or Influence expenditures that happen during any game. In a **Laws of the Wild** game, this position is sometimes combined with the Spirit Keeper post. In an **Oblivion** chronicle, this Storyteller sometimes runs Harrowings.



In games lasting for a few days — usually in a convention style setting — the Storytellers need to decide how quickly the characters can recover Traits. The choice they make can reinforce the themes and moods of the overall game. For instance, if one of your key issues in an event is the scarcity of resources, then you will likely want to limit and slow the rate of recovery. You may even wish to keep characters from recovering Attribute Traits until the entire event ends, thereby forcing the players to truly think about how they will spend Traits, and what challenges are worth their effort. To establish a more cinematic and action-oriented theme, you may wish to make Trait-replenishment happen much faster. Willpower, for instance, is a key Trait for using some vampiric Disciplines, so if it is replenished in full every morning, you will encourage people to use it far more often.

Sessions have yet another connotation. In a chronicle composed of numerous gaming groups running separate sessions in which players can travel freely between them, it becomes important to look at the possible frequency of sessions. Many powers and refresh rates are set on a “per session” basis. For instance, a character overcomes *Conditioning* in six sessions minus one session for each Willpower Trait spent. If one of the gaming groups of your chronicle runs once a month and its neighbor runs every weekend, which time frame is the character supposed to use? Inconsistency will leave the players feeling like there is an inherent bias toward or against some of them, so you will want to set a standard that is not dependent upon the actual sessions available, or on the frequency of the gaming groups gathering. Typically, just as a scene can default to one hour, a session can default to one month.

### THE STORY

The last, and largest, of the variable time durations used is the story. In its original context of a limited time frame game, or a serialized collection of stories, this limit may work very well, but in the rolling field of a game that never stops (or which has multiple Storytellers running multiple stories), it can be very vague. The story duration tends to be a long-term marker of time, and it is usually composed of several sessions. If the session equals roughly one month of time, then it is recommended that a story be either three months or six months of real time. This measure of time may seem unusually long, but when discussing the long term items like gaining a new Path Trait or Virtue Trait, such a frame of time is not uncalled for.


## CROSSOVER POWERS

Few creatures in the World of Darkness welcome the idea of dealing and mingling openly with other supernatural creatures. The denizens of the World of Darkness all have secrets that they struggle to keep hidden. Every kind of monster, after all, has some prohibition against revealing its true nature to anyone who is not already in the know. This secrecy is an important aspect of the world, and it helps the Storyteller establish a sense of mystery and exploration. The world is much more frightening when the characters don’t understand the fine points of werewolves and ghosts. Times come, though, when the crossover game is exactly what you want.

Most crossover games present a stylistic risk to the unprepared Storyteller. That risk is that the crossover game, more so than any single setting on its own, tends to devolve into one of three unfavorable scenarios. Note that there are generally positive versions of all three of these scenarios, but the following represents the most likely end when things don’t go the way you planned.

### BIASED VIOLENCE

One side is attempting to assert its control and/ or dominance over the other. This is the frequent end of Sabbat/ Camarilla and vampire/ werewolf crossovers, and



it inevitably results in one side losing — with all the accompanying hard feelings. An example of this pitfall would be a Shadow Lord walking into an Elysium, overbidding the prince's *Majesty* and slaughtering him while a shocked court looks on with no means of overcoming the beast's frightful *Icy Chill of Despair*. As a plot device, it could be great, but when the Shadow Lord was supposed to be a cunning infiltrator until the player decided to branch out... well, that can get messy.

#### **UNHEARD-OF ALLIES**

This pitfall occasionally is the result of vampire/ werewolf crossovers, but is just as prevalent in the werewolf/ changeling dynamic. It typically leads to the free exchange of lores and items that truly do not belong in the opposite setting, which wreaks havoc on a Storyteller's ability to control the flow of information in the game and upsets the themes we strive to establish.

#### **NOISE**

This is the typical result of wraith/ vampire crossovers, although it has been known to characterize the results of almost any crossover combination. Typically this pitfall occurs when an interaction fails to produce a definable result or add to the host setting's themes or plots. The interaction is reduced to background noise subtracting from the inherent mood and ambiance of the host genre. For example, your local game plays in a small bar and the wraith that you just approved for the subtle shock and horror value is drowned out by the background noise of the club and most of the other participants simply tune the intruder out.

A successful crossover requires that the Storytellers pay special consideration to the two most basic tools at their disposal: plot and mechanics. Loss of plot leads either to senseless violence and friction or to the lion and lamb lying down together. Loss of mechanics inevitably ends in making players angry when they feel that they've played at the expense of their character. While this can be said of almost any chronicle, it's particularly evident during the cross-genre event as creatures of vastly different aims and abilities attempt to get the better of each other. Despite all the pitfalls of such an endeavor, though, a successful crossover game can add immensely to the story. In any crossover, you can limit the number of intruders into the host setting (such as a pack of werewolves coming into a Camarilla Elysium), make the game a free-for-all crossover with relatively equal portions of two or more supernatural creature types.

#### **GENERAL RULES**

When two powers conflict, the Storyteller or Narrator should first decide who is the more potent contestant. Compare the vampire's Discipline level, werewolf's Rank, mage's Sphere rating, wraith's Arcanoi, or changeling's Art level and determine the higher level. If any question of effectiveness arises, decide in the favor of the more potent contestant, as noted in the Power Interaction chart. Obviously doing so is unnecessary in some cases (such as when a vampire tests damage down with Fortitude), but it can save a lot of time in resisted efforts.

This approach will generally speed up the interactions and dispute resolutions immensely, but it will have the side effect of favoring vampires, fae and wraiths, who can buy up to Advanced powers without the accompanying hassle of buying up expensive Arete Traits or Rank.

As an example, a vampire with Intermediate *Obfuscate* should be able to hide from the Rank One or Two werewolf with *Heightened Senses* without much difficulty. If the Garou is of Rank Three or Four, they should test as normal. If the Garou is Rank Five, he would see through the vampire's effect.



#### POWER INTERACTION

Vampire	Werewolf	Changeling	Wraith	Mage
N/A	Cub and Kinfolk	N/A	Innate	N/A
Basic Discipline	Rank One and Two	Basic Arts	Basic Arcanoi	Basic Spheres
Intermediate Disciplines	Rank Three and Four	Intermediate Arts	Intermediate Arcanoi	Intermediate Spheres
Advanced Disciplines	Rank Five	Advanced Arts	Advanced Arcanoi	Advanced Spheres
Superior Disciplines	Legends	N/A	N/A	N/A

Many of the individual notes here are of a cautionary nature. They give tools to the Storyteller in order to help control the flow of the story. The Storyteller should always feel free to loosen any or all of these controls if the desired goal is a World of Darkness in which all the worlds' denizens interact with regularity.

#### VAMPIRES

Vampires are unchanging, immortal and mostly uncaring. In short, they are the physical embodiments of a wraith's Angst and a changeling's Banality. They are creatures of the Wyrms even if they have never heard of the Wyrms. Standing in a roomful of vampires should be remembered as a frightening brush with Death's favorite agents. Changelings should walk out of the room clutching their coats tightly against the cold, while the restless dead try desperately to remember what it was they love without drowning in the oblivion these creatures exude. Garou caught making deals with vampires over a long period of time should expect to at least be challenged on the "rightness" of such dark dealings. No one wants to deal with vampires, but they are the undisputed masters of the cities and the mortals. They do not have as many of the innate tricks and advantages as the other types of supernatural creatures do, but no one else blends in as well as the dead.

Few vampire-specific rules present problems between vampires and other supernaturals. Simply keep the comparison chart in mind when dealing with opposed abilities.

#### WEREWOLVES

Garou cross over into other genres frequently as antagonists. Their holy war against the Wyrms gives them a reason to hunt almost any of the other denizens of the World of Darkness.

The following is a short list of key issues:

##### The Gauntlet

Vampires tend to be rather static and unnatural creatures. In the Garou's terms, they are creatures of the Wyrms who are powered by the Weaver. As such, feel free to make the Gauntlet in areas that vampires frequent fairly high. An 8 would not be unreasonable for someplace such as Elysium. This limit alone will help cut down on the tendency for Umbral incursions or strikes against vampires.

Fae, wraiths and mages all hold places of power, which are known as freeholds, haunts and Chantryes respectively. These places of power usually have lower Gauntlet ratings except where a concerted effort has changed the Gauntlet. For instance, a Technocracy lab is still going to have a Gauntlet rating of 9 or 10, but



the Gauntlet rating in a Dreamspeaker's sweatlodge may be as low as it is in a powerful caern.

#### **Banes and Vampires**

Banes love vampires. Vampires are innately unnatural, and their existence is dependent on inhumane and "evil" acts. They spawn feelings of pain and betrayal, and they bring out the worst in people. Any Garou attempting to approach vampires through the Umbra should expect to deal with several Banes as the spirits harvest the ill will that surrounds vampires. After interacting with vampires, they may also pick up a Bane that may plague them for days or weeks to come. Most Banes will not bother to affect vampires. They recognize the fact that they both are on the same side, even if the vampires don't. Obviously, the larger the gathering of vampires is, the more Banes will be attracted to the area. Therefore, a conclave of several hundred Cainites might bring together hundreds of hungry Banes in a weekend long feeding frenzy, of which the vampires themselves remain blissfully ignorant. If you want to encourage the interaction between vampires and werewolves, then reduce the number to a more manageable level, but this is one of the few limiting factors on the abuse of the Umbra against Cainites.

#### **WRAITH INTERACTIONS**

Mixing wraiths and vampires is popular due to the similar themes expressed in each setting. Special care needs to be taken in such a crossover, though. Vampires have almost no natural defenses from wraiths, and the wraiths have several Arcanoi that allow them to affect and harm a physical creature directly. Werewolves and the fae are more evenly matched versus wraiths, although still not entirely so. When judging an interaction between wraiths and anything in the Skinlands, keep the following things in mind at all times:

##### **The Shroud**

This rating defaults to an 8, and it must be beaten in a Static Mental Challenge at the start of every scene in which the wraith is attempting to affect something on the other side. Using *Embodiment* to cross it physically will negate this challenge and allow the direct usage of all other Arcanoi. Crossing the Shroud thus also leaves the wraith open to such retaliations as Disciplines, Gifts and Physical Challenges. Note that particularly intense scenes may require testing against the Shroud for every turn at the Storyteller's discretion, instead of every scene. If you would like to make things easier to cross between vampires and wraiths, any gathering of vampires is bound to lower the Shroud slightly since a gathering of the undead tends to lend a creepy and gothic feel to any place.

##### **Right-Minded Wraiths Fear Angst**

Any collection of vampires is a veritable festival of Angst. A good technique to bring this point home: Have a wraith make a simple test every time he enters a scene with more vampires than his permanent Angst rating, in order to resist gaining a temporary Angst. Spectres, of course, are immune to this aspect of the collected psychic baggage of a roomful of the dead, although they may attempt to harvest Angst as normal. Conversely, Spectres in the presence of several Garou or fae should likely test for temporary Composure in the same manner as wraiths for Angst.

##### **Lifesight Works Against Vampires.**

Lifesight will function as *Aura Perception* for the purposes of information yielded. However, it is only an innate ability of wraiths, so any level of *Obfuscate* that the vampire possesses will defeat it. For instance, while this ability will not allow a vampire with only *Unseen Presence* to mask his true feelings (*Soul Mask* is still needed for that), it will allow him to remain hidden when the wraith using Lifesight is looking for him.



### **Presence (including Majesty) and Dominate Cannot Cross the Shroud.**

A wraith may act against a character with *Majesty* without testing. This also pertains to gifts such as *Roll Over* and *Icy Chill of Despair*, Arts such as *Sovereign*, and the mortal arts of *Fascination*. The wraith must embody in order to be affected by these powers.

### **Obtenebration is a Manifestation of Oblivion.**

The vampiric Discipline of *Obtenebration* can be treated as if it accessed Oblivion directly. Any wraith caught within the confines of an effect of *Obtenebration* should test for a temporary Angst Trait as the Shadow siphons a small bit of Oblivion into itself.

### **CHANGELING INTERACTIONS**

The fae and vampires don't interact much on widespread levels, although a few very notable exceptions do occur. Mixing these two settings is a wonderful opportunity to highlight all the things that vampires have lost. The undead can generally be considered as walking manifestations of Banality and loss. The only exceptions to this guideline are the Malkavians who have both relatively low Banality levels and an affinity to the Dreaming. Therefore, they should not count against the total Banality of a room. The Kiasyd have an affinity for the Dreaming, but normal Banality for a Vampire. Ravnos vampires have a low Banality, but no affinity to the Dreaming.

Garou are more likely to interact with the fae, due to similarities of setting more than anything else. While Garou do not inherently exude Banality as vampires do, they are still fearsome creatures with an extremely quick temper, and care should be taken in the interactions of the two groups. These interactions should highlight the similarities between their struggles but make it clear that the struggles are not really compatible. A good theme here is to play the differences of each race against the similarities.

The restless dead have little to do with the fae, or more precisely, the fae want little to do with them.

#### **The Mists**

Everyone is subject to the Mists, with the sole exception of Malkavian vampires.

#### **Banality**

Most fae Arts are fairly fragile in that retests are almost unheard of, but they are also unfettered in what they can accomplish. Banality is one of the few natural defenses that all other creatures have against the fae Arts. Setting the Banality of the other creatures in the chronicle is a great way to help limit or control interactions of a magical nature. The average vampire, for example, has a Banality of approximately 8. However, if you would like the interactions to be more difficult, feel free to raise the Banality to a 9 or even a 10.


#### **Individual Powers**

As far as powers go, several Arts can be rather heinous when used against another creature type. Some examples are *Elder-Form*, *Quicksilver* and *Flicker Flash*. A Storyteller should never feel out of line for stating that it is not possible to convert the angry Get of Fenris into a toad by kissing it on the nose with *Elder-Form*/Dire Enemy. *Chicanery* should be treated just like *Obfuscate* for purposes of testing against *Auspex*, and Thaumaturgical countermagic does work against fae Arts.

### **THE FREE-FOR-ALL CROSSOVER**

All of the preceding suggestions are primarily tips aimed at allowing the Storyteller to introduce controlled elements of another creature type into a host setting, such as injecting a handful of Garou into a large vampire chronicle. It is entirely possible to simply open the floodgates and allow all five main types of supernaturals into one chronicle setting, though, either by running all of the various creatures in separate but connected games or by simply allowing all of them to mix at the same game. In a free-





for-all game, you will need to decide ahead of time how special abilities are handled and how the many genres will interact. The setting-specific scores that affect others need to be assigned — such as giving all characters a Banality score and assigning a base Banality, Shroud and Gauntlet rating for each major game area of your site. Decide if you will be using the Power Interaction chart for competing powers or if you will be simply allowing everyone to test. The first option speeds things up but puts more emphasis on the Storyteller to make sure that weaker creatures don't get completely run over. The second option will likely seem more level, but it will result in far more challenges.

#### **THE MORTAL QUESTION**

While the other supernatural creatures all hunt and stab at each other, the mortals slide by unnoticed and try desperately to avoid being caught. A mortal in an interaction with almost any other creature type will die in an outright fight. If he plays intelligently and carefully, he has a much better chance of surviving in the long run. Mortals should represent the best agents for the dissemination of information between groups and one of the greatest security risks to each supernatural type. That is, after all, why there's a Veil, a Masquerade, a Dictum Mortuum and a Right to Ignorance. Mortals risk their lives every time they enter even play with supernaturals, simply because of what they are. It's part of the thrill of being human.

#### **LORES**

Lores gained on subjects outside the host setting should almost always be purchased with Experience Traits. While they may be granted by the Storyteller, the willingness of a player to spend an Experience Trait on the odd lore is a show that he truly is devoting time and effort to learning this information. It will also help cut down on extremely high lores for characters outside of the setting. It is certainly not unreasonable to ask them to spend points on information to reflect a level of true understanding.

### **EXPERIENCE TRAIT STANDARDS**

In any chronicle in which there are multiple Storytellers or multiple games running (not just multiple sessions), it is important to set a standard for Experience Trait awards. If one chronicle runs twice as often as a chronicle in a neighboring area, characters in the more commonly played chronicle will grow in power at twice the rate of their neighbors. To facilitate a balance of power in networks made up of multiple chronicles, the Storytellers should set a maximum possible award per each given period of time. It is recommended that the number of Experience Traits one can earn be capped with a per-month maximum. The exact number of Experience Traits one can earn per month should be based upon the desired learning curve.

#### **LEARNING CURVE**

A large chronicle's learning curve is one of the more important aspects to consider before beginning. How powerful should the characters be at the start of the chronicle? In the middle? Near the end? How quickly should a character be able to learn something new? Should certain things (such as high level *Lores* or Superior Disciplines) be off-limits characters within the chronicle's time span? When you have answered these questions, you will be prepared to set the maximum for your monthly Experience Trait cap or devise a similar system to regulate the power of the characters.

#### **EXPERIENCE TRAIT BUILD UP**

In long-running games, the issue of Experience Trait build-up arises. Some players will come to every single game that they can, earning the maximum that you allow



each month. You will find that the longer your chronicle runs, the greater the diversity in power levels grows between the characters of such players and the players who attend only occasionally. This diversity is not a bad thing. People will put into your chronicle what they expect to get out of it. Often though, this escalation creates an arms race among players as they build their characters to new heights in an attempt to keep up with one another's power levels. Experience Trait build-up leads to several problems. The first and most important is that players lose track of the goal of the game, which is to have fun in a live-action setting, not to build stats on a piece of paper.

Another problem is that if a player's character is killed after the player spent the last two years investing Experience Traits into it, she can be disheartened by her reduced standing in the race. For similar reasons, players who have a lot of Experience Traits invested into their character will be reluctant to retire their character in favor of exploring fresh new concepts.

One way to get around this problem is to allow a player to use a portion of the earned Experience Traits from her last character on her new character. It is recommended that if you use this system, you set that amount at about 25 percent, and certainly no more than 50 percent. Giving too much back encourages players to make careless decisions with their characters, since they have little to lose if their character is killed. Likewise, players may retire their characters *too* often, which keeps a balance of power and politics from being developed in the game.

For chronicles that are intended to run in excess of several years, a more complex system may be required to address the problem. Varying your chronicle's Experience Trait caps as they apply to each character individually (based upon total Traits earned) may be the answer. For example, if a starting character can earn a certain amount of Experience Traits in a month until the total reaches 50, and characters with over 50 Experience Traits can earn only half that much, older characters still end up being more powerful. However, the gap between old and new characters can be closed a bit. If the player of the new character earns the maximum amount each month, she will find that she is not as far behind the other characters as she would have been if everyone had the same cap.

For more finite control of this effect (with a touch more complexity), consider applying this graduated Experience Trait cap in several tiers, gradually reducing the maximums for characters as they increase in power. This system allows you to better control the learning curve in your chronicle and extend its lifetime. Each month, the player checks her total earned Experience Traits and compares it to your graduated chart to find out what her maximum will be for that month. If you give extra Experience Traits at character creation to some characters, do not consider these Traits when calculating "earned" Experience for these purposes.

### **AUTOMATIC AWARDS**

Sometimes the Storyteller may wish to exercise even more control over the characters' growth in a chronicle. In this case, it might simply be better to award Experience Traits based on the desired rate of increase, rather than the standard method. In chronicles that run with large periods of time between sessions (such as an annual event), the Storyteller may wish to award Experience Traits in a similar manner rather than relying on the standard method.

## **CHANGING THE RULES**

The World of Darkness is a constantly expanding and changing work, and many players want to feel that they are in a chronicle that reflects the major changes in that world. These changes are realized in two principle ways — through rules and through plot.



### MODERATELY LONG CHRONICLE

Here is an example of the graduated Experience Trait caps in use. The Storytellers desire to run a chronicle for five years. They want the characters to start out at the standard power level, then develop to about 100 earned Experience Traits near the middle of the chronicle, and then slow their progression so that they will have earned no more than 150 by the end of the chronicle.

Total Experience Range	Experience Trait Cap
0-59	Five Traits per month
60-95	Three Traits per month
96 or more	One Trait per month

In the case of character turnover, a new character can become of comparable power level to older ones within two years of creation.

### LONG CHRONICLE

In another example, the Storytellers desire to run a chronicle for about 10 years. They want characters to start out at the standard power level, develop about 200 to 250 earned Experience Traits near the middle, then slow progression so that the characters will have no more than 300 Experience Traits by the end of the chronicle.

Total Experience Range	Experience Trait Cap
0-71	Six Traits per month
72-131	Five Traits per month
132-179	Four Traits per month
180-215	Three Traits per month
216-239	Two Traits per month
240 or more	One Trait per month

In the case of character turnover, a new character can be of comparable power level to older ones within five years.

The rules evolve as the Storyteller system matures. New rules and creatures get added in, and new powers are created. These new features are all additions to the basics defined in the main rulebooks, which you can use or discard as your chronicle warrants. The core mechanics of the systems stay relatively stable, while much of the additional material is quite easily updateable and changeable.

The Storyteller is responsible for establishing the system for converting new material into the chronicle in a fair and consistent manner. The goal of any conversion is to make new material available to the players without upsetting the balance of your existing game world. Where possible, it's beneficial to try and incorporate anything new with story lines that will explain the additions while adding an element of mystery and surprise to the chronicle.

Adhering to the White Wolf metaplot is usually the best way to incorporate new material if your game stays true to the published materials. Most of the published plot points are far enough removed from the everyday activities of the characters to be run as background elements which the characters can then investigate if they chose but which still impact on the characters' existence if they choose to ignore them. The large-scale chronicle has to look at these points carefully since the events usually assume that most of the world is composed of Storyteller characters, which is not



usually the case in a truly large game. Therefore, it is sometimes useful to break the changes down into changes that are justification for rules additions and changes that are purely setting additions. Rules addition changes should be implemented if the chronicle is going to use the new rule, while setting additions need to be evaluated on the basis of the chronicle's commitment to stay true to the White Wolf story line.

An example of a change implemented for the purpose of making a rules addition is the advent of the plague which afflicted the Malkavian clan and left the clan with *Dementation* instead of *Dominate*. Clearly, this event is something that you can run in your chronicle to explain the change. It can have a positive impact on the stories of every Malkavian in your chronicle and give them the reasoning to transition over to *Dementation*.

The destruction of the Ravnos Antediluvian, on the other hand, does not explain any changes in the rules since it is a more purely story-driven plot point. It is a part of White Wolf's published story line, and can be easily implemented through the **Time of Thin Blood** sourcebook. However, if you aren't following the official story line, there's little express need to run the story in that book, except that it would be fun for the players involved.

### IMPLEMENTING NEW RULES RELEASES

New releases are part and parcel of the gaming experience. Players will constantly ask if they can use the latest gadget or ability that was published in a new supplement. Being prepared for this situation is essential to any long-time Storyteller. As long as the Storyteller understands how the new rules fit into the chronicle, and he sticks to a plan to implement them, there is no reason for such things to be unduly painful to a game. Your game can implement new materials as soon as they are available, which becomes less about Storytellers implementing changes according to plots run in the chronicle, and more about when your players can purchase the new books. You can also schedule points in the game when new rules will generally be implemented. Scheduling regular intervals for updates will make anticipating those updates easier for the players and minimize the negative impact of not having a direct control over the game's growth in this area, but it also can remove some of the spontaneity of the constantly growing chronicle.

When making changes to a chronicle, decide whether the change needs to be explained in the world with a plot that alters things to accommodate the new rule, or if it simply needs to change and be done. Major system changes and rules that are not tied to the setting are best to simply drop into place on a set date and be done with, since doing so forces the players to change and everyone has to deal with it together. Setting-related changes are best explained through a plot that the players can experience for themselves.

### CONVERTING OLD OR OBSCURE RULES

While most of White Wolf's core rules have been converted to **MET** — and even many of the more obscure rules have been brought over to **MET** by now — your players will always want to bring forward a few small rules to have them converted for their characters. If you choose to allow this conversion, it is highly recommended that you develop a small system for converting these tabletop rules to the **MET**. Our recommendation would be to assign this duty to a specific Storyteller or team of Storytellers and let them do it for the entire chronicle. Relying on this team will help keep consistency high, which helps keep the converted rules fair and balanced in relation to other, more established rules.



When converting rules from the tabletop sources, try to keep to a few simple tips in mind:

Try to stay as true as possible to the original idea. If you didn't like what the rule or power was trying to accomplish, you wouldn't be converting it. That sounds like an obvious point, but as you try to translate ideas from one system to another, it's sometimes easy to warp the original intent of a rule beyond recognition.

Try to maintain definable benefits and flaws in your conversions. It's great to say that a certain power makes the character more attractive when activated and that people can't resist their presence, but that benefit alone doesn't really describe anything that can be enforced as a mechanic. It's always better to include some form of mechanics that will add or subtract defined Traits and abilities. Stating that a power makes someone more attractive and adds the Social trait of *Attractive* and gives a free retest on *Presence* Challenges is much more helpful.

Try to avoid powers that allow one character or character type to have a huge statistical advantage. While it may seem great for a new discipline to have the ability to stake anyone without a test, the people who are victims of that power won't likely be having much fun. Try to always allow for a way to counter the power, or at least provide a test so that some element of escape is available.

Don't make up completely new mechanics when existing ones will do. Part of the danger of any new rule is that it won't fit in well with the rules that are already in play, or that it will needlessly complicate matters. Be familiar with other published conversions and look for similar powers in supplements that can be modified slightly to arrive at the goal you want. Doing so can relieve you of the necessity of making up wholly new material, while assuring you that the new rule will fit in well with the established material.

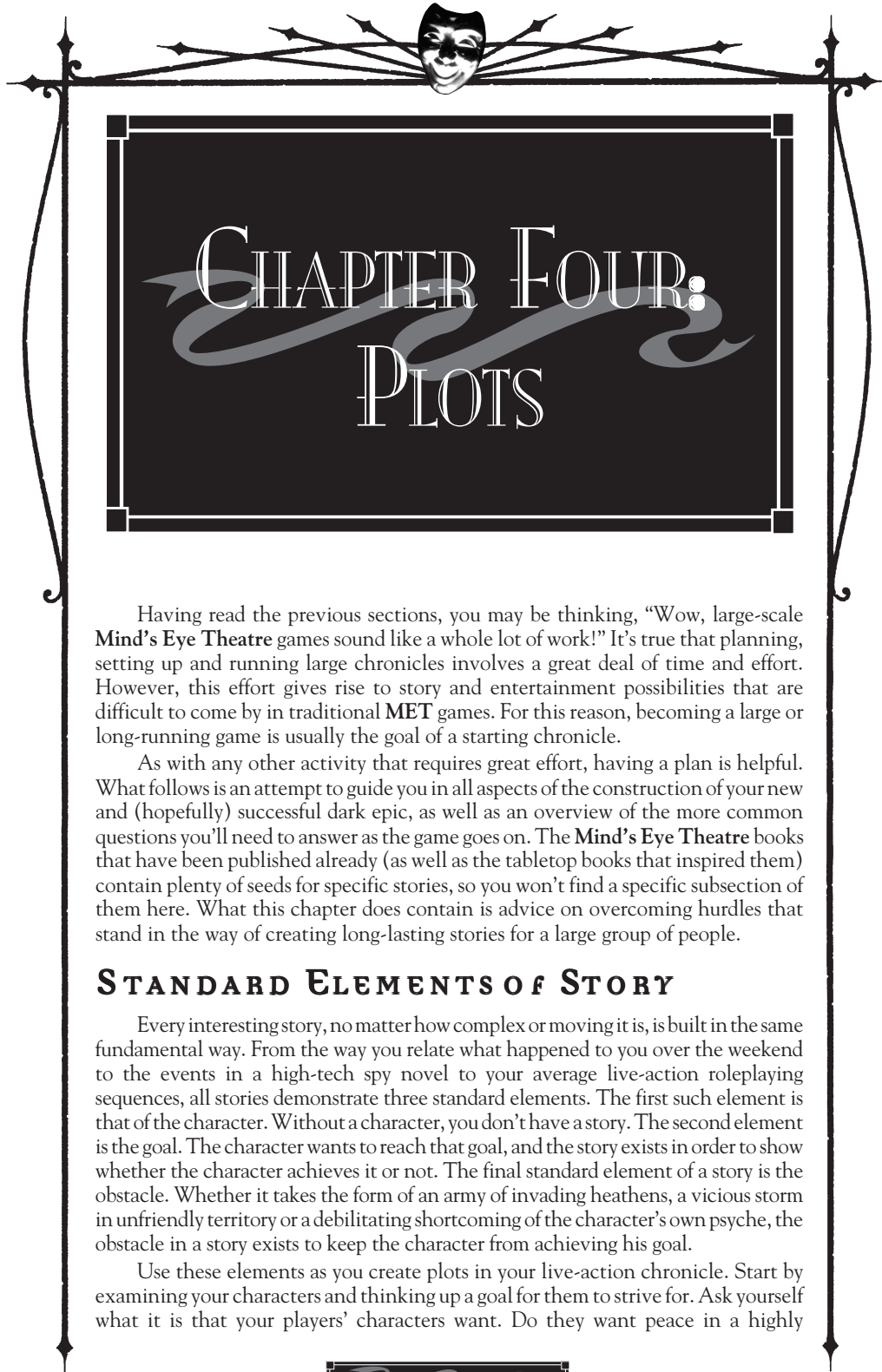
Activation costs such as Blood, Gnosis, Rage, Willpower and Glamour that must be expended to initiate or fuel a power usually rely on a straight one-to-one conversion. For instance, all *Thaumaturgy* powers cost one blood point to activate in tabletop, and the same is true in the **MET** version.

Tabletop rules sometimes require a roll against a standard difficulty to activate a power. Usually, this mechanic can be translated as an appropriate Static Test against a difficulty slightly higher than the tabletop version. For instance, if the original write up requires a Wits roll with a difficulty of 5, it is perhaps best translated as a Static Mental Challenge against six traits. If the tabletop power called for a Wits roll with a difficulty of 10, the translation should likely be against 12 to 15 Traits, which simulates more accurately the difficulty of rolling 10s.

Powers that add successes to another roll or add dice to the roll should usually be translated as a number of Traits added to the character's total. It is unadvisable to add more than three or four Traits for any single power; a two-Trait addition is more reasonable. Another way to translate these powers is to provide a retest in a failed challenge rather than extra Traits.

It is almost always best to translate extended challenges as expending Traits. For instance, if the original write-up requires a success for each degree of damage done or level of success in the power, it is advisable to have the translation require the expenditure of the appropriate Traits to increase the damage done or level of success.





# CHAPTER FOUR: PLOTS

Having read the previous sections, you may be thinking, “Wow, large-scale **Mind’s Eye Theatre** games sound like a whole lot of work!” It’s true that planning, setting up and running large chronicles involves a great deal of time and effort. However, this effort gives rise to story and entertainment possibilities that are difficult to come by in traditional **MET** games. For this reason, becoming a large or long-running game is usually the goal of a starting chronicle.

As with any other activity that requires great effort, having a plan is helpful. What follows is an attempt to guide you in all aspects of the construction of your new and (hopefully) successful dark epic, as well as an overview of the more common questions you’ll need to answer as the game goes on. The **Mind’s Eye Theatre** books that have been published already (as well as the tabletop books that inspired them) contain plenty of seeds for specific stories, so you won’t find a specific subsection of them here. What this chapter does contain is advice on overcoming hurdles that stand in the way of creating long-lasting stories for a large group of people.

## STANDARD ELEMENTS OF STORY

Every interesting story, no matter how complex or moving it is, is built in the same fundamental way. From the way you relate what happened to you over the weekend to the events in a high-tech spy novel to your average live-action roleplaying sequences, all stories demonstrate three standard elements. The first such element is that of the character. Without a character, you don’t have a story. The second element is the goal. The character wants to reach that goal, and the story exists in order to show whether the character achieves it or not. The final standard element of a story is the obstacle. Whether it takes the form of an army of invading heathens, a vicious storm in unfriendly territory or a debilitating shortcoming of the character’s own psyche, the obstacle in a story exists to keep the character from achieving his goal.

Use these elements as you create plots in your live-action chronicle. Start by examining your characters and thinking up a goal for them to strive for. Ask yourself what it is that your players’ characters want. Do they want peace in a highly





contested piece of prime real estate? Do they want to overthrow a villainous authority figure and establish a more egalitarian regime? Do they want to purge their ranks of those characters who will not get with the program?

Once you find out what they want, provide some means of achieving those goals. Have your Storyteller characters drop hints about certain current or upcoming opportunities that the characters will have for pursuing those goals. If the players' characters don't bite right away, start to show them what will happen to the setting (or in their personal lives) if they do achieve the goals in question. Give them plenty of reasons to take action.

Once the characters are motivated, set up the obstacles. If the characters want to achieve these goals so badly, who else might be interested in pursuing said goals? When you're setting up whatever the goal is, it's a good idea to make it something that both the protagonists and antagonists want.

After you've set up the goal, gotten the characters motivated and engaged the obstacles in the characters' path, your plot-creation work is all but finished. The rest of the plot-related work that goes into a chronicle is that of making sure that the characters remain on track until they have either achieved their goal or failed to do so. Once the outcome of the players' characters struggle (or the story arc) ends, it's up to you to set another goal up with which to tantalize the characters.

It's awfully cavalier to make that kind of statement, though, and make the job in question sound so easy. The toughest part of being a Storyteller and dealing with plots in a large live-action game is that you have to perform the same process for multiple stories of varying scope and complexity all at the same time in order to incorporate as many players as possible. Fundamentally, however, the task of creating a story is just that simple, and the text of this chapter goes over some of the considerations that go into each step of story-creation. Once you get these basics down, you should be just as ready to handle live-action plots in a dark epic chronicle as you would be in a standard-size chronicle. The hardest part is really the legwork.

## PLOT CREATION AND TIMING

When considering a plot idea, remember to devote an amount of time to creating the plot that's proportional to the time you expect the plot to be active. If you want a plot to run for months on into years, don't think that you can scratch off an outline over lunch. A common mistake Storytellers of large games make is to create plots without fleshing them out. This mistake is usually revealed when an unforeseen action on the part of the players causes the plot to unravel far earlier than the Storyteller would have preferred. Trying to account for all the variables in the way a plot plays out (especially a plot that involves a large number of characters) takes a long time. To avoid this problem, consider the following questions when constructing a plot:

*What is the time frame for this plot?*

Do you intend to make this idea a centerpiece of your chronicle, or will it be a short diversion or follow up to previous character actions? Depending on your answers, you'll need to budget your time both in and out of game to do justice to the idea. There is nothing so annoying to a player as a plot that fizzles just as it's getting interesting or a fairly minor plot that drags on and on.

*Is this plot idea something that would appeal to the player base?*

You may think that the immortal globe-trotting veteran of the Finnish War that you've been fleshing out since your seventh-grade World History class is the neatest character concept since Hamlet. You may think that his search for his family's lost signet





ring makes for the most heart-wrenching story since *Schindler's List*. It is unlikely, however, that your players will agree. Players are looking for substance in live-action stories, but that substance must be of interest to them. Never rely on ideas that are too obscure or too tedious to be of immediate interest to a majority cross-section of your players.

*Can I tie character backgrounds into the plot?*

Following up on the previous question, your players are much more likely to be interested in a plot line that includes elements that affect their characters directly. Tying your local underworld kingpin into a plot that has to do with a power play in the arms-smuggling business via a long time friend (from his character history) is a much better idea than having a random source in the player's downtime report relaying news to him anonymously.

*What is the threat level of this plot?*

Plot can kill, but it does not have to kill. Should you arrive at the conclusion that characters can die in the course of your plot, you need to ensure that the story payoff will be such that they will feel rewarded even if they do not come out alive. Having a character die is painful, but knowing that his death was worth something lessens the blow somewhat. Also, remember that not every antagonist should seek to kill a story's protagonist(s), even if a major difference of opinion on one or more issues separates them.

*Can I involve characters of various potencies in this story?*

Generally speaking, your plots should be accessible to all levels of players, from those who are new to your game to those who have been around from day one. Granted, certain plot lines do not lend themselves easily to upholding that ideal. Plots that set the characters against minor threats are imminently accessible to weak or inexperienced characters, but they are consequently uninteresting to more experienced ones. The challenge of major threats may be perfect for higher-level characters, but they will very likely destroy any low-level characters who have the gumption to tag along.

When you create stories for groups of characters of various strengths, try to separate the characters' identifiable goals into sub-goals of equal importance but varying difficulty. Doing so can be as simple as making sure that antagonists in a mob-combat scene attack protagonist characters of an equal or greater degree of power, or as complex as arranging circumstances in such a way that the characters decide to split up into internally consistent specialty groups.

## SCOPE AND SCALE

Whether they are character-generated or Storyteller-generated, plots must fit the chronicle that you are creating. Based on the earlier decisions you made when setting up the chronicle, you should have some idea of how grandiose you want your setting to be. Depending on your decisions, your chronicle will be one of three sizes. Usually, chronicles will start at the local scale and progress to the mixed scale, where they tend to stay. World-spanning chronicles are comparatively rare due to the heavy plot involvement that is required of the Storytellers, but they are not so very difficult if you give yourself plenty of time to prepare them.

### LOCAL SCALE

Best suited for smaller player groups, the plot and world background of this chronicle centers around the immediate political landscape. Plots involve local problems created by local threats. The antagonists, while possibly tied to world-spanning organizations (such as a nomadic Sabbat pack that operates out of the barrens or a wandering collection of Banes that has drifted into the nearby Umbra)





will not rely on their connections to those organizations. Individual motivations are especially important to both the antagonists and the protagonists, and the characters' goals will be personal on almost every level.

Even at this basic scale, however, plots can be complex and have long-lasting effects. A plot in which the leadership of the local sphere of influence changes can change the entire dynamic of the chronicle. Member chronicles in a network tend to tell stories of this scale, however, no member chronicle is an island.

#### **MIXED SCALE**

When plots reach this scale, some elements of the local setting have begun interacting with elements of the greater community to which they belong. Examples include the local vampire prince who has achieved sufficient power and respect to influence neighboring cities and states, or the wise Theurge of the Garou who now accepts students and questing tribemates from nearby septs. Plots of this scale tend to affect the heads of the society in question first then trickle down to smaller movers on the local scene.

This scale is a very comfortable level for both players and Storytellers, since it provides the variety of a connection to non-local events while retaining the focus on local events that the previous level of involvement had. It is important, however, to ensure that the stories of this scope that you tell are entertaining for all players. Due to the monopolization of societal connections by more experienced players, new players or lower point players may feel left out of the equation. To keep as many people as possible busy in a mixed-scale plot, make sure that the larger events in the story have a definite and immediate impact on the local scene.

#### **WORLD-SPANNING SCALE**

Generally speaking, world-spanning settings are rare in live-action gaming, and they are difficult to construct. One method of creating a world-spanning plot requires that your player's characters and your Storyteller characters possess sufficient political and personal power to make them the center of the culture of which they are a part. For this level of scale to serve as an ongoing chronicle, you must also see that you have a sufficient reason for such powerful characters to be massed in one area. Resist the urge, however, to trot out the All-Consuming End of the World Threat. Saving the world once makes for a fine and fulfilling story; having to save the world time and again will eventually bore your players and make you feel like a scriptwriter for *Dragon Ball Z*.

An easier way to create a world-spanning plot is to drop a key element of that plot into your chronicle and make clear the chain of events that will result when your players' characters resolve that part of the plot. The scope of the *action* of your plot remains local, but the ramifications of your characters' actions resound throughout the World of Darkness. Similarly, you can use the outcome of an individual chronicle's local plot as the genesis for a broader chain of events throughout a chronicle network. Like knocking over dominoes, one chronicle's actions will affect its neighboring chronicles, and their reactions will affect still more neighboring chronicles until the entire network feels the effects of what was originally a local story.

## **WORKING WITH THEME AND MOOD**

Before you can scout out potential players, create characters, construct plots or determine the breadth of your version of the World of Darkness, you should determine what sort of theme and mood you want your chronicle to uphold. Theme and mood considerations affect all aspects of your chronicle. Deciding on a mood will



help you create advertising materials (should you be planning an open-access game), determine what sites are best suited for your game, decorate the play areas and figure out what day and time you will be running the event. An understanding of the chronicle's theme helps players create characters that will flourish in your game and avoid types that will fail. Storytellers and Narrators will build plots and characters based on these considerations, and the success of your story can be judged based on how well it has stayed true to the theme and upheld its mood.

Books, magazine articles, plays or movies you've enjoyed can all provide ideas for you to choose from. They need not even be supernatural in nature. The air of scholarly intrigue and whodunit mystery in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* would suit a number of factions in the World of Darkness perfectly, ranging from the vampires of Clan Tremere in **Vampire: The Masquerade** to the enlightened wizards of the Order of Hermes or Celestial Chorus in **Mage: The Ascension**. Also, don't be afraid that you'll ruin a perfectly good theme by pulling it out of its original context and applying it to a modern story. A good theme appeals to something central in the human mindset, and it can be recast in any number of settings and genres. A good example of how a theme (or even just a good story) can last the ages would be Akira Kurosawa's *The Seven Samurai*, which subsequently was adapted in the United States as *The Magnificent Seven*. Despite major changes in setting and time period (not to mention language), the theme still shone through.

The best place to start in your review is your potential player base. You could choose a theme because it seems interesting to you, but will this same theme appeal to those people you would like to see playing the game? For example, a player base that is young, immature or new to **MET** might not appreciate (or even recognize) a particularly subtle or complex theme. Such players might also have trouble separating their appreciation for a well-constructed mood from the way they actually feel when they are exposed to it. Creating a perfect mood of morbid despair with a story is an impressive feat, for example, but your work won't be worth anything if the players are too depressed by your chronicle to come back for more. As players grow in experience and artistic taste (should you even want them to), you can vary your choice of theme and use more subtle means of evoking dramatic mood. Otherwise, keep your theme basic and rely on direct action to get your mood across.

When considering which genre of **Mind's Eye Theatre** game to play, don't be afraid to play against type in support of your theme and mood. While the core setting of a game may present certain facts as gospel, you do not necessarily have to transfer these 'facts' faithfully. Rather than the standard themes of redemption or freedom that **Masquerade** games are heir to, consider the theme of honor. What would the honorable action be should a Camarilla neonate receive direct proof that the Sabbat sect is *telling the truth* and that the Camarilla really is the tool of the eldest vampires? Playing with setting conventions thus is an excellent way to give existing settings great new twists, and it will go a long way toward increasing excitement and interest in your chronicle.

The final consideration when choosing themes and moods for your chronicle is your logistical base. In other words, are the themes and moods that you are considering ones that can be supported by your available site and the time you will be able to devote to the game? If your potential play site is a series of unfurnished basement rooms, trying to evoke the regal grandeur of Renaissance Europe will probably not be successful. On the other hand, if your play site is out in the middle of nowhere and well beneath the notice of overeager societal watchdogs, it will be easier to explore the theme of the consequences of growing decadent. Your site will encourage images in the mind of your players, and these images will determine what they will bring both to their characters and to exploration of the theme and mood.



## CHANGING THEMES AND MOODS

Even the greatest stories change direction now and then, and your chronicle will be no different. The important thing to keep in mind is that themes and moods can change for both good and bad reasons. It is your job as a Storyteller to differentiate between the two.

These changes occur for a variety of reasons, the most common of which derive from your player base. The characters in your chronicle are going to run with any theme that is central to their existence, and they will eventually exhaust the central theme. At this point, they will either explore related elements of different themes, meld the existing theme with a new one or abandon the old theme entirely in favor of a completely new one. When these things happen, consider these points as a measure of the value of the change:

*Is the change player-driven or character-driven?*

A very fine line exists between these two forces, despite the fact that they both originate from the same place. Character-driven change can best be described as development or deviation from a what you (the Storyteller) had in mind, which is due to the dictates of what a player has defined as his character's motivations. This sort of change in your theme is usually for the best, since it means that your chronicle is supporting the sort of in-depth character development that is always enjoyable.

Player-driven change results when players make adjustments to their style or the portrayal of their character for purely out-of-game reasons. This type of change can involve either a desire to try something different or reflect a desire for an out-of-game result, such as playing with a different subsection of the player base. The effect of this kind of change on the theme and mood will usually be more abrupt and direct than a character-based change, since it usually involves a fundamental retooling of the current character's goals and values. This type of change is less desirable than one that derives from in-game changes in the characters' lives. However, it may also indicate that your players are not happy with the way you are running the chronicle and that they'd have more fun doing something else.

*Is the change due to dissatisfaction with the theme?*

If your theme is changing due to player dissatisfaction with the current theme, there is usually very little that you can do directly or forcibly to prevent that change. If it happens, talk with your players. Are they generally dissatisfied (i.e., totally sick of the way things are going)? If so, work with them to develop a theme and/or mood that they will enjoy playing and that you will enjoy supporting. You shouldn't force your players to suffer through a game that they don't like, but you shouldn't sacrifice the artistic sensibility with which you create your stories just because they aren't immediate hits.

Remember, any MET chronicle is founded on a guiding principle: People are coming together to tell great stories and have a great time doing it. Getting upset with each other defeats the purpose. When players and Storytellers are contentious with each other out of game, the chronicle involved is in a great deal of trouble.

## STANDARD ROLES

The single most important aspect of any story is the collection of characters who populate it. Actions that will take place in a story and themes that will come out during the telling of the tale are all well and good, but they are useless without characters to carry out those actions or display those themes. As such, most of the *Mind's Eye Theatre* material that has been published to date revolves solely around characters and



the players who portray them. One could even argue that populating a large live-action game with good characters is more important than making up good plots, since those characters will end up creating stories just by virtue of being themselves. For the most part, character quality is not even the Storyteller's concern once the game is underway. The way in which the character element of a story does concern the Storyteller, though, lies in the overarching purpose that certain types of characters serve.

If you have had previous experience in constructing or running a small-scale live-action roleplaying game, then you will already know that certain types of characters appear time and again in manifold variety. Certain types of characters are practically essential in a large chronicle that is just beginning. Should your players not provide them, you may even need to supply these types of characters yourself in the form of Narrator or Storyteller characters. Having these character archetypes in a chronicle gives you a set of basic starting points on which to hang your plots.

#### **THE AUTHORITY**

This character will either be the total authority of the setting (e.g., a city's prince or the leader of the Garou sept), or he can be the point man and liaison for the authority group (such as a representative for the Council of Nine or a visiting Anacreon). Regardless of his actual title or his personal power, this character represents the accepted laws and customs of the group around which your chronicle is centered. This is not to imply, however, that this character's power must be great and terrible. Weak authority characters are perfect for a chronicle centered on a theme of chaos, war or millennial disruptions.

Many chronicles will begin with a Storyteller character in this role, but the role will usually pass on to a player's character over time, either through Storyteller design or through player action. You will likely find that your players will prefer to have a one of their own in this role after a few games, since they will enjoy being able to support or defend a fellow player.

#### **THE OPPOSITION**

The direct opposite of the authority archetype, the character who upholds the opposition archetype does not necessarily have to be a violent anarchist. Rather, this role is intended to provide a wrinkle in the social order, one that creates questions and issues for the characters to deal with without plunging the setting into revolt. Unlike an antagonist, the opposition character is accepted on some level by the society of the player group. Opposition characters include disillusioned neonates, Hollow Ones and Ragabash Garou. Their presence is intended to raise objections, not revolutionary armies. In other words, characters of the opposition tend to approve of the general status quo, but they object to the specific characters in charge of it.

Storytellers or Narrators can portray opposition characters, but you should encourage the players to assume these roles. Generally speaking, players make more convincing members of the opposition, since their separation from the Storyteller community makes their arguments more convincing. Furthermore, some players really enjoy playing members of the community whose quirks or philosophical differences make them stand out.

#### **THE ANTAGONIST**

Every chronicle is going to have a need for conflict, and the outside threat posed by the antagonist character is the most common source of conflict in a roleplaying setting. The antagonist is a threat to the social order, someone or something that wishes to destroy the status quo rather than tinker with it and make it better.



Antagonists are considered anathema by the established society, and characters who join the ranks of the antagonist will no longer be accepted by the society (unlike persons allied with the opposition).

Regardless of whether your chronicle is new or ongoing, your players cannot portray antagonist characters. Why? By the strictest definition of the word, each player's character represents a protagonist in your chronicle. That is, he pursues goals and endures conflict based on his own motivations. In effect, every character is the main character. Therefore, the antagonist archetype represents the characters that you (as a Storyteller) put in the players' characters' way to prevent them from achieving their goals. As games get larger and more characters get involved in your stories, the players themselves take on the roles of antagonists as their characters come into conflict in the course of play.

#### **THE MERCHANT**

When large numbers of supernatural creatures group together, a desire will arise for *things*, and the merchant character fills that need. Merchant characters are dealers in anything in which another character or group of characters has expressed an interest. The desired things need not be physical items, although physical items such as weapons, armor, cell-phones, computers, limousines and meeting areas are often the most desired items. The merchant most often supplies the information needs of the community as well, either openly or in secret. Regardless of the manner in which they do business, merchants will always receive payment, either in hard goods or favors.

The merchant role is excellent for players' characters, due to the networking effect that their interactions with other players cause. Merchants *create* relationships between disparate groups. In a starting game, merchant characters will need some starting support from the Storytellers, since they will not be able to enter game with the backing necessary to set up shop otherwise.

#### **THE SOCIALITE**

Players who enjoy the role of the socialite are interested in the subtle interactions that occur in structured social environments, and their numbers are many.

As in the case of the merchant role, the socialite archetype is a role best suited for players' characters. Unlike the merchant, however, Storyteller characters can work well with players' characters in this regard. The socialite's player will probably want to work with you on the decoration of your play site, since atmosphere is one of the great aids for this character's role. Working closely with the socialite's player pays dividends, in that you can get a good feel for how the players are enjoying the chronicle.

#### **THE MYSTIC**

Many plot and background story elements in an **MET** setting have occult or arcane trappings, and the mystic role is best equipped to deal with them. Depending on which **MET** game system you have selected, mystic characters can either be comparatively rare or very widespread, such as they are in the **Mage: The Ascension** setting.

Mystics can either be Storyteller- or player-filled roles, as they will rarely take a lead position in the plot. Advising the players as a Storyteller, however, should be handled carefully. Your mystic should not have all the answers, but only those that will point the players in the right direction.

### **ARCHETYPE TRENDS**

One of the best ways to judge your game's health is to check the status of the various archetypal roles. Reviewing the status of the roles can take many forms, including asking for comments in downtimes, watching what plot actions the players



take, and just *asking* players whether they're having fun in a certain archetypal role. The roles we've talked about are not set in stone, and they will fluctuate as players try new things. As such, the temporary absence of a certain role from your game does not necessarily indicate that disaster looms. However, should absences of a certain character type develop, you might find it difficult to create certain types of plot. For instance, you can't very well tell a story about an internal play for power if you have no opposition characters. You can't engender in your characters deep soul-searching about the ethics of their way of life if your chronicle has no antagonist characters to provide conflict.

Should you find that your game lacks important archetypal characters and your players don't seem willing to take up the slack, you may want to consider inserting a Storyteller or Narrator character into the mix. Once this character (or characters) has become a recognizable fixture, you can use him to help tell the story that his absence precluded.

Should you be unable to fill the archetypal gap, asking yourself the following questions about the situation will help immensely:

*Is the character climate of the chronicle to blame?*

Having the right mix of characters is necessary for certain roles to succeed. When too many players have chosen to play a particular type of character, the utility of other types of characters will suffer. A socialite's love of conversation and low-tension-level character interaction will suffer in climates in which the vast majority of players are portraying either violent characters (such as certain versions of the opposition role) or characters who are cerebral but not talkative or sociable (such as the mystic archetype). Socialites who lack people with whom to socialize become bored, and roleplaying suffers. They may even add to the problem by jumping ship to the same faction that is already overpopulated, just for the sake of interacting regularly with others.

It is possible that the problem will solve itself, as players move on to different roles and the different roles become repopulated. Should this not happen, though, you should encourage players gently to diversify their roles, either through development of existing characters or by taking on new roles. Furthermore, you may want to change your current plots or add new plots in order to encourage a return to a more balanced atmosphere. The arrival of Storyteller or Narrator characters who have a social emphasis can restart the atmosphere that a socialite thrives in and possibly turn some of the attention of the players to the societal aspects of the game.

*Is your plot encouraging an unfriendly atmosphere?*

When the antagonist is running around with a gun in one hand and a torch in the other, very few characters are going to have time to interact with the socialite. Your ability to set the climate of the chronicle is a powerful tool for solving imbalance in roles, but it very often can be the cause of that imbalance. Review what you hope to accomplish with the plot, and change those elements that can be changed to encourage a more balanced game.

#### **KNOWING WHEN TO SAY WHEN: STOPPING ARCHETYPE TRENDS**

All of the role types presented here have the potential for going over the line. The desire for a character to seek total success in a role (i.e., to look for a way to "win") is a threat that you should watch out for constantly. If unchecked, that desire can create chronicles in which only one or two types of characters are really viable. Don't be afraid to encourage the rise of other archetypal characters through the use of Storyteller and Narrator characters as well as direct (though even-handed) plot intervention.



## CHARACTER PLOT VERSUS STORYTELLER PLOT

Plot is the lifeblood of your game. Luckily for you, however, Storytellers are not the only providers of plot. Assuming that you have quality players in your game, you can rely on them to furnish you with characters whose motivations and backgrounds will either provide elements for you to work with or which are fully formed plots in and of themselves. However, you are not relieved of the responsibility to create a world of plot for your players to interact with. After all, Storyteller plots and character plots fulfill very different goals.

Character plot and background material provides a way for a self-directed player to keep herself entertained over the course of several games. As such, the elements of these plots are self-centered. Character plots are imminently fulfilling for the player or players who created them, but they tend to lose appeal the further they grow from the characters who set them into motion. Storytellers should endeavor to tie these plots into the main plot line of the game as soon as possible.

The characteristics of great Storyteller-generated plots are mirror images of the characteristics of character-created plots. Trying to visit a huge, world-spanning plot upon a small group of characters is not the way to go. Start small, with a few minor hints to a broad group of players. Throwing your net wide will ensure that the maximum section of your game will be involved and entertained. Grow your plot slowly, attaching appropriate character plots to the body of your plot. Eventually, you will have created a plot in which many disparate characters are involved each for their own reasons with varying levels of investment at stake. Once the characters are motivated thus, the players will have all the more reason to roleplay and work together against the obstacles in their characters' way.

## RESOLUTION

At some point, the character's struggle to achieve his goal has to end one way or another. No player will wait in line indefinitely to see if his characters' schemes will ever come to fruition, and no story is truly satisfying unless it concludes. The same is true even in a long-running chronicle that you hope will still have years of life left in it. Players may come to live-action games simply to be characters, but characters get involved in stories in order to achieve something.

As a Storyteller, you must make sure that every story arc you create has some way to play itself out. You need not feel inclined to make sure that the players' characters always get what they want, but you must see that the struggle to get it comes to a close. However, as in any novel or motion picture, a live-action story's resolution must always leave room for a follow-up tale. If you can, try to end every story with a question that makes the characters want to know or find out more. Answer the lingering questions that arose during the story arc itself, but leave enough clues for the characters to realize that a whole new set of questions awaits. Keep your players on the hook, and they'll keep coming back to play in your game.