



the World of Darkness®

GOD-MACHINE
RULES UPDATE

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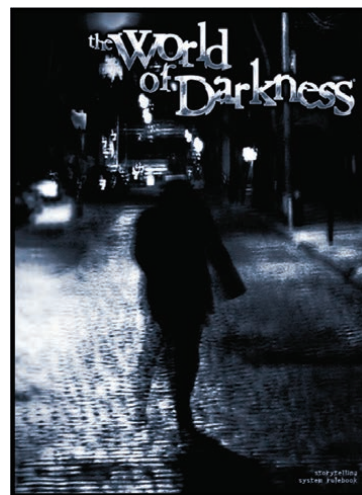
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the World of
Darkness® Rulebook



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This book uses the supernatural for settings, characters and themes. All mystical and supernatural elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only. Reader discretion is advised.

Check out White Wolf online at <http://www.white-wolf.com>

Check out the Onyx Path at <http://www.theonyxpath.com>



We go
for a walk in the snow. Together.
The change of scenery works like a charm
— the never+quite+started fight forgotten,
depressurized by the outside world and the cold
November night. And then we find it. It's lying,
twisted and broken, under the tree at the end of
the road. Something must have mauled it. I grimace,
swallow acid, and say I'll go back for a shovel. Put
it out of its misery.

She stays with it, kneeling in the snow. I look back as
I start back up the hill, and she's reaching out to it. By
the time I return, it's licking her hand with a long tongue,
blinking slowly. It looks like it'll make it after all.

She grins up at me, relieved and happy. Tomorrow,
she'll be back at work at the hospital. Tonight, she
doesn't have to watch anything die.

It comes back with us. A cardboard box under the kitchen
table, lined with an old blanket. Somewhere it can heal, and then be
on its way.

IT NEVER LEAVES.

• • •

She calls it her little angel. Dotes on it. It eats better than we do and has a bed near the stove it
never uses. Time after time I come back after a long haul to find it on my side of the bed, blinking
at me with its damned grey eyes.

After the first time I make something of it, we fight. After that, when it's there, I sleep on the couch.
I guess I understand — she needs something for company, when I'm away. Why shouldn't she have a pet?

AND THEN SHE GETS SICK.

I call in favors with the agency, swap dates around so I can spend Valentine's at home. I get
back after dark, flowers behind my back, hoping to surprise her. She's lying unconscious on the
couch, her little angel lapping at her fingertips.

The Emergency Room give us the news, once they manage to bring her round. Treatable, they say.
They don't have to add the "but expensive."

I can't lose her, not my Becky. I work every shift offered, cross the country again and again,
desperate to keep up with the bills. I get it into my head that if I can just drive fast enough, racing
through the night, then I can catch her. Save her. Bring her back with me.

• • •

It's not enough. I can tell, when I get back, exhausted from another long haul, that she's worse.
The windows are all shut, and inside the house is like a sweat lodge in the summer heat. She says
she's cold, still, and I see it in her eyes. She knows she doesn't have long.

I stay with her, holding her, ignoring the calls from the agency. Let them fire me.

I hold her as she leaves me. The ambulance gets there too late.

• • •

I listen to their condolences, fill out their forms, and slowly go back to the dark, empty house. I
sit, crying, on the edge of the bed. I can still smell her there.

THE DOOR OPENS. ANGEL PADS IN. IT BARES NEEDLE+SHARP FANGS,
AND I SEE WHAT IT REALLY LOOKS LIKE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

Appendix: World of Darkness Rules Revisions

In the years since the *World of Darkness Rulebook* was released, dozens of supplements and eight game lines have added to the Storytelling system. In the “blue book” line, as well as *Vampire*, *Werewolf*, *Mage*, *Promethean*, *Changeling*, *Hunter*, *Geist*, and *Mummy*, we’ve invented new mechanics to emphasize new themes and play styles. Some of those mechanics have been carried over to further books. *Werewolf* defined rules for spirits that were used in almost every line, *Hunter*’s tiers have been adopted by several other games, and the *Mirrors* supplement for *World of Darkness* introduced shards. The core Storytelling system, though, has remained the same.

The remaining part of this book is taken up with updates to Storytelling — the changes we feel, after eight years’ experience, are needed to tighten the rules up for the intended setting going forward. This isn’t a rejection of what’s gone before, but the end result of our increasing familiarity with the Storytelling system and how it’s used in play. Future *World of Darkness* books will take these rules revisions as their baseline, the same way the *World of Darkness Rulebook* has been the basis for all the supplements and game lines so far. Individual game lines may produce “chronicle” books similar to this one that build off these revisions to revise and update the rules found in those lines, but these are the rules revisions for use with mortal characters in chronicles that do not use one of the other cores.

Not only does God play
dice, but he sometimes
throws them where they
cannot be seen.

— Stephen Hawking

Character Creation and Advancement

These rules supplement the character creation rules and replace the experience point rules in the *World of Darkness Rulebook*.

Attributes, Skills, and Merits

Purchasing the fifth dot in an Attribute, Skill, or Merit does not cost two points at character creation.

Note on Specialties

You may only purchase one instance of a given Specialty, although multiple Specialties may apply to a given roll. For example, Surgery and Cardiology may apply to a Medicine roll to perform heart surgery.

Aspirations

Determine Aspirations as part of the “Final Touches” stage of character creation. Choose three Aspirations for your character.

Aspirations are goals for your character. They’re also statements to your Storyteller that show the types of stories you want to play through.

Aspirations are simple statements of intent; things that can be accomplished within the scope of the game you’re playing. If you’re playing a single session, be sure to choose realistic and short-term goals or goals that are already very close to fruition. If you’re playing a single story arc that should span a few weeks of game

Sample Aspirations

Achieve a promotion at work
Make something that'll outlast me
Prove my loyalty to the team
Show myself I'm not cursed
Give something important to someone in need
Put myself in mortal danger
Forget responsibility and enjoy myself
Get a new car
Show restraint when tempted
Indulge my addiction
Say my last goodbyes
Volunteer at the cancer center
Meet a ghost
Interview my idol
Plant a garden
Show respect to my enemies
Establish a new identity
Learn what hurts shapeshifters
Have a one-night stand
Escape jail
Replace my broken guitar
Tell a long-kept secret
Say no without regrets

time, choose similar short-term goals, with one expressing longer-term interests. Even if you're set to play a game you intend on running a year or more, don't choose more than one very long-term goal. Ideally you should be able to accomplish at least one of these Aspirations per game session.

It's important to phrase Aspirations as active achievements or accomplishments. Do not phrase them as avoidances. "Do not betray my friends" isn't really an appropriate Aspiration. Instead, consider "Prove my loyalty to my friends." Phrasing as an action as opposed to a lack of action helps to determine when the Aspiration is met and when it should be rewarded.

When choosing Aspirations, use them to help to customize your character and give her identity and purpose outside of whatever plots the Storyteller cooks up. Find a balance between being general enough that the statements can be fulfilled realis-


tically, and being specific enough to inform on your character's identity. Use the listed examples as a jumping off point.

In many World of Darkness games, we explore the strange and horrific. This can often mean visiting those things upon our characters. If you're interested in seeing certain things happen to your character, note them as Aspirations. Or if you expect something to occur, it would be worth noting it. If you know tonight's story will deal with an angry ghost with a penchant for eating human flesh and you never seem to roll well when your character's using her Medium Merit, it's worth using as an Aspiration. In that example, you might phrase it, "Fail in communicating with the dead." That way, while your character might fail in her efforts against the ghost, you'll be rewarded for achieving the Aspiration.

Storytellers, pay close attention to players' Aspirations. Aspirations are one of the best ways for a player to communicate her expectations for your stories. If you're planning a cold and

Sample Long-Term Aspirations

Put my daughter's ghost to rest
Take control of the company
Become a parent
Take down the mayor
Outlive my boss
Pass on my most important skill
Become fully independent
Bring an end to the Chosen of Mammon
Find the witch that cursed my family
Become independently wealthy
Master my chosen art
Become a vampire
Find my soul mate
Prove my father was wrong about me
Buy back our ancestral home
Show the world that fairies are real
Open a branch in three nations
Become psychic
Uncover my mother's killer's identity
Find an unknown biblical gospel
Prove my uncle wasn't insane
Discover the cure for mortality



heartless zombie-slaying mission full of action and suspense, but a character has contemplative, brooding, romantic, and cerebral Aspirations, think of how you might cater your intended story to his particular interests. You don't necessarily have to scrap your plans. Instead, note minor details and add Storyteller characters that can help the players fulfill their characters' Aspirations.

Changing Aspirations

For the first session of play, you might not have a good enough sense of your character to choose Aspirations. We recommend you give it a try anyway, and if during the first session the Aspirations you've chosen just don't fit with the way you're playing the character, change them. No harm, no foul.

After you've started playing the character, you might still find that an Aspiration becomes inappropriate or that it becomes impossible to fulfill. For example, a character might have a long-term Aspiration of "buy back our ancestral home." During the third chapter of the story, the home burns down. Buying it back is now impossible. Or, for a less dramatic twist on that premise, what if the character discovers that his family has been using that land to conduct unholy overtures and sacrifices to the God-Machine for decades. Maybe the character doesn't *want* the place anymore. What does that mean for the Aspiration?

If circumstances warrant it, a player can change Aspirations between chapters with the Storyteller's approval. This shouldn't become a way to ditch goals that aren't coming together quickly enough. Rather, it's an option to keep the character's goals in line with the natural flow of the story.

Virtue and Vice

The following rules update those found on pp. 100–105 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Rather than selecting from the set lists of Virtues and Vices during character creation, the player should define one Virtue and one Vice for their character in conjunction with the Storyteller. The Virtue and Vice descriptions should follow the following criteria.

- Both Virtue and Vice should be adjectives that describe dominant personality traits. Physical descriptions ("un-kempt," for example) are not appropriate.
- Similarly, traits that describe existing Attributes, Advantages, or Skills aren't suitable. "Strong" or "Composed" are not appropriate, for example.
- A character's Virtue should be something that gives her a great sense of self-actualization, but which she is often tempted to ignore. It's her higher calling, the personality trait that would be at the fore all the time if she didn't live in the World of Darkness. It should be both difficult to act upon and make her feel good when she does make the effort.
- A character's Vice, on the other hand, is a source of short-term comfort and a distraction from the world. Vice should be the easy way out, the sand he buries his

head in, like a bully lashing out to avoid his own fear or an alcoholic drinking to forget.

- The adjectives chosen for Virtue and Vice should be different, but only within a single character — it's fine for one character in a chronicle to have "Ambitious" as a Virtue while another character has it as a Vice, for example.
- Virtue and Vice aren't linked to Integrity. You shouldn't pick "Moral" as your Virtue, "Immoral" as your Vice or similar adjectives. It should be possible to suffer breaking points (see p. 155) while acting in accordance with your Virtue.
- While characters aren't forced to keep the same Virtue or Vice for their entire lives, they shouldn't be transitory or easily-overcome. Both traits should be deep-seated, the core of the character as an individual.
- The entire troupe should agree on the Virtues and Vices in play. Because they're the primary means of recovering Willpower in-play, Vice conditions in particular signal how a player intends to roleplay their character repeatedly. If your intended Vice makes another player uncomfortable, you should pick a different one.

Virtue and Vice in Play

When a character acts in accordance with his Virtue or Vice during a scene, his sense of self is reinforced and his reserves of inner strength are refreshed.

If the Storyteller judges that your character's actions during a scene reflect his Vice, he regains one spent Willpower point. Note that in a change to the rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, acting on a Vice does **not** need to pose difficulty or risk to your character.

If the Storyteller judges that your character's actions during a scene reflected her Virtue while posing her difficulty or risk, she regains all spent Willpower. She may regain Willpower up to twice per chapter/game session in this way.

Modifying Virtues and Vices

Characters may change Virtue or Vice during play in response to life- or personality-altering events. One of the following conditions must be met.

- The character has lost four or more dots of Integrity after character creation.
- The character is merged with an ephemeral entity, spending time under the Claimed Condition.
- The character has become a supernatural creature.

Multiple Virtues or Vices

Although even the most immoral characters still have a Virtue and the most saintly still suffer the temptations of a Vice,

some characters identify so strongly with doing the selfish thing or risking themselves on behalf of others that they develop a second trait, as represented by one of the following Merits.

Virtuous (• •)

Effect: Your character is a light of good in the World of Darkness. She has two Virtues. The limitations of how many times she may refresh Willpower using a Virtue remain the same, but it's up to you which Virtue she uses each time.

Vice-Ridden (• •)

Effect: Your character is one of the worst examples of humanity in the World of Darkness. He has two Vices, although he may still only regain one Willpower per scene in which he indulges himself.

Example Virtues

The following Virtues are not intended to be an exhaustive list, but an aid to players in arriving at their own Virtue conditions.

Hopeful: Somehow, your character doesn't despair at the World of Darkness but remains optimistic, believing that everything will work out eventually. Regain Willpower when your character refuses to abandon hope, putting herself at risk in expectation of a better tomorrow.

Loving: Your character is defined by a great love, perhaps for an ideal or an institution, but usually for a person or group of people. Regain Willpower when your character puts himself in danger for the object of his love.

Honest: Your character's defining duty is to the truth. Although the World of Darkness puts every pressure on her to dissemble or tell white lies to protect others from the God-Machine, her sense of self is built on fundamental honesty. Regain Willpower when your character puts herself in danger by refusing to lie.

Humble: Your character doesn't want power or status. Even if he earns a position of authority, he sees himself as one of the guys. Putting himself above others would deny the importance of their lives. Regain Willpower when your character turns down the opportunity for power that would solve his problems.

Trustworthy: When your character makes a promise, she keeps it. Her sense of self relies on others being able to trust and believe in her. Regain Willpower when she keeps a promise, even only an implied one, despite keeping it putting her at risk.

Loyal: Your character is loyal to a group, possibly the other player's characters. His loyalty isn't blind — he's capable of seeing the flaws in whatever cause he's signed up to — but once given it's unshakable. Regain Willpower when he puts himself in danger by refusing to act against the group's interests.

Ambitious: Your character is going places. She has goals she wants to accomplish, and the drive to achieve them. In some people who don't deserve the accolades they seek, ambition is a Vice — for her it's a guiding mission. Regain Willpower when your character puts herself at risk for the sake of following her long-term goal.

Just: Your character is driven by a sense of fair play and justice — the desire to see everyone get what they deserve. He'll stick his neck out to make sure everyone is treated fairly, even if that acts against his own interests. That includes

Rate of Return

To pull the curtain back for a moment, Willpower is the Storytelling system's main "resource" mechanic. The various supernatural games (Vampire, for example) all add additional point-spend pools, and there's always Health, but Willpower is the one players spend when they *want to ensure their characters succeed*. It's a way of marking an action as significant within the fiction of the game, but it relies on the Storyteller granting enough Willpower gains that the players feel confident in spending.

Several game mechanics are predicated on this pattern of spending — for example, it's very much intentional that it takes Willpower to outright kill someone in most circumstances. We've adjusted the rate of Willpower return in this rules revision to reflect how often players should be spending it. For example, surrendering in combat grants a small Willpower bonus, and Vice no longer requires significant risk to the character.

On average, characters should regain a point of Willpower every few scenes, depending on how easily they fulfill their Vices. They'll be spending it quicker than that, but the diminishing resource until a character is exhausted is another part of the game, modeling the genre of increasingly tired and desperate investigators confronting the supernatural, making the full Willpower refreshes from Virtue special. A character shouldn't always fulfill their Virtue in a game session — once every few stories is enough in big dramatic moments. We removed the risk limit from Vice to allow Storytellers to keep characters "topped up" in service to the game. If your players over-spend, give them easy opportunities to fulfill Vice. Keep the small gains trickling in to prevent players from sitting on Willpower to their characters' detriment, and look for the right point to showcase Virtue.

punishing those who deserve it and owning up to his own wrongdoing. Regain Willpower when your character's drive for Justice leaves his own goals half-done.

Peaceful: Your character is a pacifist in a dirty, dangerous world. Whether it's because of deeply-held religious beliefs, philosophical decision or simple lack of stomach for violence, he can't bring himself to hurt another human being. Regain Willpower when your character resolves a conflict that puts him at risk without the use of bloodshed.



Generous: Your character gains comfort from giving to others. She might be especially charitable or just be willing to lend possessions and aid to her friends, no questions asked. She's often taken for granted but she knows she makes a difference. Regain Willpower when your character has deprived herself of a vital resource through her generosity, putting herself at risk.

Righteous: Your character knows he walks in a corrupt world and he's angry about it. He's willing to confront hypocrisy and evil where he sees it, no matter who it pisses off, and to Hell with the consequences. At best, he's a defender of those the system — or the Infrastructure — grinds down. At worst, he's a stone-faced, uncompromising obstacle to the powerful, just waiting to be taken out. Regain Willpower when your character's refusal to let injustice go unopposed puts him in danger.

Courageous: Your character is simply straight-up brave. She gets a thrill from meeting and overcoming challenges, whether they're physical or social. She's not necessarily stubborn or even especially confident — true bravery is the willingness to carry on *despite* being afraid, not the absence of fear. Regain Willpower when your character's bravery causes or prolongs risk or danger to her.

Patient: Your character doesn't believe in rushing in half-cocked or unaware. She wants to plan every course of action and bides her time when investigating, waiting for situations to develop and play out for a while before she intervenes. The World of Darkness doesn't wait anyone, however, and her preparations are often overtaken

by events. Regain Willpower when your character is caught wrong-footed because she was too busy planning to properly react to events.

Example Vices

As with the Virtue list, the following Vices are intended as a starting point for character creation, and not an exhaustive list.

Pessimistic: Your character has a tendency to wallow in bad situations, vocally bemoaning his lot and believing that everything is hopeless. Regain a Willpower point when he refuses to act in a scene because he believes anything he does will be fruitless.

Hateful: Your character is blinded by hatred for something — a person, a group, a belief or for the God-Machine itself. His antipathy is so strong it prevents him from seeing clearly and leads him into fruitless attacks on the source of his hatred. Regain a Willpower point when he spends time in a scene persecuting the object of his hate.

Deceitful: Your character can't tell the truth to save her life. She might be in the habit of telling little white lies or be covering up one major secret, but deception is the cornerstone of her personality. Regain a Willpower point when she successfully maintains a lie despite others having the opportunity to see through it.

Arrogant: For your character, self-image becomes self-aggrandizement. He defines himself by being "better" than other people, whether that's by lording his superiority in an Attribute or Skill, expressing dominance in a social situation or basking in other characters looking up to him. Regain a Willpower point when he takes an opportunity to express his greater worth relative to someone else.

Untrustworthy: Your character can't be relied on. She might mean well and even keep promises when it costs her nothing, but when the stakes are raised and there's a choice between her own self-interest and keeping her word, her word loses. Regain a Willpower point when your character breaks a promise for her own sake.

Treacherous: Your character's loyalties are defined by what's convenient, not for any sentiment towards loyalty itself. He will turn on allies if given a better offer or simply walk away from responsibilities if he finds them too difficult. Regain a Willpower point when your character betrays a person or group, but be very careful about using this Vice against other players' characters.

Ambitious: Your character wants to get ahead, above and beyond the respect that she receives for her actions. She craves advancement — not necessarily to lead, but in some measure of rank. Regain a Willpower point when your character attempts to increase her social standing instead of pursuing more useful activity.

Cruel: Your character has a mean streak, an instinct to twist the knife and inflict pain once he has someone at his mercy. He might habitually refuse surrender in combat or be the bastard boss who humiliates employees just because it makes him feel better. Regain a Willpower point when your character needlessly victimizes someone in his power.

Violent: Your character loves getting her way by means of physical force. She frequently Goes For Blood (see p. 195) to settle conflict. Regain a Willpower point when your character resolves a scene by using needless violence.

Greedy: It's not that he wants it more than anyone else, it's more that he *needs* it. Your character likes to hoard resources that might come in useful one day, rather than allowing others to use them now, minimizing his future risk at their expense. Regain a Willpower point when you deny another character an advantage by taking it yourself.

Corrupt: The world may be a system run by the God-Machine, but your character is an expert at getting what she wants out of systems. A habitual abuser of institutions, once she's in a position of authority she turns that office to furthering either her own ends or those of the highest bidder. Regain a Willpower point when your character misuses status or influence over a group on behalf of herself or another interested party.

Cowardly: Your character shies away from danger, going beyond simple caution to true cowardice. If danger *must* be faced, he would much rather someone else face it — regain a point of Willpower when your character persuades or tricks another character into a risky situation instead of doing it himself.

Hasty: Your character doesn't have the patience for long, convoluted plans, but prefers to improvise as she goes. She frequently enters situations she doesn't fully understand — but this Vice isn't the measure of how well she copes when rushing in, only that she acts before thinking. Being able to quickly adapt, as many Hasty characters are, is determined by the Wits Attribute. Regain a point of Willpower when your character forces a scene to start by taking decisive action.

Breaking Points

As explained on p. 184, the Morality trait has been replaced by Integrity. Integrity measures how well a character can cope with the traumatic and supernatural events of his life. A character stands to lose Integrity when she experiences a *breaking point*.

When a character performs certain actions or endures certain experiences, he might reach a breaking point. A breaking point (replacing a “sin” in the original rules) simply means that what a character has done or seen has outstripped his ability to rationalize or handle it.

A breaking point can fall into one of the following categories:


- The character performs an action that either violates his personal moral code or that is considered unacceptable in society.
- The character witnesses something traumatic, terrifying, or that rattles his understanding of the world.
- The character is the victim of a supernatural attack, whether physical, emotional, or mental.

Breaking points are somewhat subjective, obviously. A homicide detective with 30 years of experience in seeing dead bodies and hearing confessions of killers has a somewhat higher tolerance for human depravity than a sheltered 20-something in a middle-class liberal arts college. During character creation, it might be advisable for the Storyteller to come up with several hypothetical situations, so that the player can determine if, in her judgment, those situations would be breaking points.

Note that a breaking point is not necessarily something that the character considers wrong. A character might kill someone in a clear-cut, unambiguous case of self-defense, but the experience is probably still a breaking point, even if the player (and the character!) feels the act was entirely justified. Actions take a toll on the psyche, regardless of whether the actions were righteous.

During character creation, the player should answer the following five questions. Each question provides a breaking point for the character. If, during the character creation process (or the Network process described in Chapter One), additional breaking points become apparent to the player, add them to the list. There's no limit to how many breaking points a character can have. The list isn't a strict list anyway; the Storyteller can stipulate that a given occurrence is a breaking point regardless of whether or not it appears on the players' list. However, the better-defined your character's outlook is, the better your Storyteller's understanding will be of what constitutes a breaking point for that character.

- *What is the worst thing your character has ever done?* This doesn't have to be anything dastardly. If the worst thing your character ever did was steal money from his mother's purse and lie to cover it up, that's fine. What's important here is to consider something that



your character did that made him hate himself. The superlative “worst” is something that the character would apply. Choose a breaking point based on the answer to this question.

- *What is the worst thing your character can imagine himself doing?* We imagine ourselves in various scenarios to test our own self-image against a hypothetical situation. When children do it, it’s called imaginative play, but it fills the same niche. What can you can character reasonably see himself doing, but still know that it would be wrong? Can your character imagine killing someone in self-defense? Torturing someone for information? How about robbing a store with a gun?
- *What is the worst thing your character can imagine someone else doing?* Of course, we all know that people are capable of some hideous atrocities. What tops your character’s list? Serial murder? Rape? Torture? Spree killing? If your character is extremely sheltered or misanthropic, he might have a skewed view, here; he might hang on to some lofty, cerebral notion of “dishonor” or “betrayal” as the nadir of human behavior.
- *What has the character forgotten?* In the World of Darkness, it’s next to impossible to grow up without any exposure to the supernatural. Decide what your character saw and forgot. Did she see a vampire take the form of mist and vanish? A man turn into a wolf? Maybe she caught a glimpse of the God-Machine through a door that should never have been propped open? Describe this scene in as much detail as you can. This is a breaking point that already occurred, but it helps set a benchmark for what your character would have to see in order to experience one now.
- *What is the most traumatic thing that has ever happened to the character?* No one goes through life with no trauma. Your character might have been mugged, beaten as a child, in a serious car accident, been kidnapped by a parent during a divorce, survived a life-threatening disease, attempted suicide, been attacked by a supernatural (or natural!) creature, or any number of other traumatic experiences. The goal here, again, isn’t to make a traumatized character. It’s to set a bar.

Examples

Below are three examples of defining breaking points for starting characters:

Matt is making a character for Michelle’s God-Machine Chronicle. His character, Mike Dashell, is a divorcee who owns a small landscaping business. He sets about answering the questions to build Mike’s breaking points.

- *What is the worst thing Mike has ever done?* Mike got divorced a few years back, but it wasn’t because Mike did something wrong, Matt decides. Instead, Matt decides that Mike got into a bar fight a few years back and broke

a beer bottle over a dude’s head. The guy needed 18 stitches in his scalp and was covered in blood. That scared the shit out of Mike — he’d never hurt anyone like that. Matt jots down “Causing visible injury to another person” as a breaking point.

- *What is the worst thing Mike can imagine himself doing?* Here’s a better place to involve the divorce, Matt thinks. Mike and his ex had a couple of good fights, and while they never turned physical, Mike had to calm himself down a couple of times. He knows, on some level, that it didn’t turn physical because he deliberately kept himself under control. Matt notes “Lose temper and physically hurt a loved one” as a breaking point.
 - *What is the worst thing Mike can imagine someone else doing?* Mike’s a normal guy: he read the news, he sees what everyone sees. He can’t wrap his brain around how someone picks up a gun and shoots kids. Matt writes down “witnessing the murder of children” as a breaking point.
 - *What has Mike forgotten?* When Mike was at summer camp, he went outside the cabin one night to go the bathroom, which was across a path. He saw something sitting on the roof of the cabin. It was humanoid, but short and squat, and it was carrying something long and thing that wriggled like a fish. Mike looked at it, and then ran. In the morning, he thought he’d dreamed it, and by adulthood he’d forgotten it. Matt thinks about what kind of breaking point this might be, and writes down “seeing a supernatural creature lurking in the dark.”
 - *What is the most traumatic thing that ever happened to Mike?* The divorce was stressful, but not traumatic. Matt decides that it was after the bar fight — Mike was arrested, and very nearly charged with aggravated assault. The charges were dropped when the guy he hit left town and didn’t bother to follow up with the complaint, but the experience of being through the system, being viewed as a criminal, took a toll on Mike. “Being arrested” is the breaking point.
- Jennifer, making a character for the same chronicle, makes a former cop named Mallory. Mallory was thrown off the force after her drug habit got too big to hide. She’s recovering, now, but still off the force (obviously).
- *What is the worst thing Mallory has ever done?* Mallory let a drug dealer go who had dirt on her. A week later, the drug dealer shot a cop and killed him. That moment really broke Mallory (though she didn’t hit bottom until later). Jennifer takes “let a violent criminal go” as a breaking point.
 - *What is the worst thing Mallory could imagine herself doing?* When she was using, Mallory would have done almost anything for a fix. One thing she was asked to do, but refused to do, was steal drugs from police evidence. To do that would have meant betraying everything she was as a cop, not to mention that it would have compromised existing drug cases. “Stealing from/tamper with evidence” is the breaking point.

- *What is the worst thing Mallory can imagine someone else doing?* As a cop, Mallory's seen a lot. One of the worst, though, was finding the body of a woman with broken glass under her eyelids. Mallory never found out who did that or why, but the image stuck with her. Jennifer writes down "witnessing torture involving eye trauma" as a breaking point.

- *What has Mallory forgotten?* When Mallory was in the academy, she went out and got drunk with a few of her fellow cadets. One of her cadets gave her a ride home, but when they got there, the cadet got out of the car, took a few steps into the street, and fell apart. Arms fell off, and head tumbled back and rolled away. Mallory woke up in her bed, surrounded by vomit, and learned that the cadet had left the program. She assumed it was all a dream. The breaking point, though, is "see a person divided into pieces."

- *What is the most traumatic thing Mallory has ever experienced?* It seems logical to go back to Mallory's drug problem. Mallory was fired from the force and she fought it all the way. The union got involved along with Internal Affairs, and her decision to let the drug dealer go nearly came out. "Having my secret revealed" is her fifth breaking point.

Charles is playing Ellie, a sheltered woman who sings in her church choir and works as a secretary for a medium-sized corporation. His character's breaking points are likely going to be a bit a more mild than the other two.

- *What is the worst thing Ellie has ever done?* Ellie had a crush on a girl in high school. She never acted on it — her conservative family would never have understood — but it consumed her attention for several months. She spread rumors about the other girl and bullied her in an effort to compensate, and the girl wound up leaving the school. The breaking point here is "deliberately harming another person's reputation" (the Storyteller asks if "feeling attracted to a woman" might also be a breaking point; Charles says he isn't sure, but he might add that later).

- *What is the worst thing Ellie can imagine herself doing?* Ellie sometimes thinks about the money the church takes in through donations and how it sits in the collection box for weeks with no one checking it. She'd never actually take it, but she thinks that maybe, just maybe, if she had a good enough reason, God would understand. Charles notes "steal from the church" as a breaking point.

- *What is the worst thing Ellie can imagine someone else doing?* Ellie is terrified when she watches the news. She sees stories of murder and violence and tries not to internalize it. The fear-mongering in the media works pretty well on her, though, because the worst thing she can imagine is violent assault on her. "Being physically attacked by another person" is the breaking point.

- *What has Ellie forgotten?* When Ellie was four, one of her playmates was yanked into a jungle gym by a pair of long, ugly arms. Ellie screamed, but her friend was back a moment later, apparently unharmed ... except that he had forgotten Ellie's name. Ellie doesn't remember this instance anymore, but playgrounds still make her uneasy. "Seeing a supernatural creature abduct or attack a person" is her breaking point.

- *What is the most traumatic thing that ever happened to Ellie?* Charles decides that Ellie went to college and tried to rush a sorority, but during the hazing she was asked to drink a lot of alcohol and find her way, blindfolded, out of the house. The girls taped the blindfold on and Ellie fell down a flight of stairs trying to get it loose (she eventually lost a lot of her hair doing it). She never quite got over that feeling of powerlessness, and Charles notes that as "being blinded and/or drugged" as a breaking point.

Experience

These rules replace the **World of Darkness Rulebook** experience point system. They integrate with the Aspirations, Conditions, and dramatic failure systems in this book. They also shift character progression to a more mathematically linear path, removing costs that increase with higher ranks.

Throughout the game, Aspirations, Conditions, and certain other criteria allow you to "take a Beat." A Beat, in dramatic terms, is time enough for the audience to recognize a plot point or a change for a character. For our purposes, think of it as a unit of drama. Once you've taken five Beats, you gain an Experience.

One of these Experiences can be used to purchase one Merit dot or a Skill Specialty. Two of these buy one Skill dot. Four add an Attribute dot.

Criteria for Beats

Each time your character fulfills one of the following criteria, take a Beat. Certain criteria have limits: for example, you may only gain one Beat for a Dramatic Failure in a scene.

Experience Costs

Merit: 1 Experience per dot

Skill Specialty: 1 Experience

Skill: 2 Experiences per dot

Attribute: 4 Experiences per dot

Integrity: 3 Experiences per dot

Willpower: 1 Experience per dot

- If your character fulfills an Aspiration, take a Beat. At the end of the game session, replace the Aspiration. Choosing a new Aspiration is an excellent activity between games or to handle before the next game session.
- Some rolls and powers may impart Conditions on your character. Each Condition has criteria for resolution, usually requiring a difficult choice for the character. If resolved, take a Beat. You may only take one Beat for a Condition in a given scene.
- Once per scene, if you fail a roll, you may opt to take a Dramatic Failure instead. If you do so, take a Beat. Certain Conditions can have you take an automatic failure as part of their resolutions; you may make these failures Dramatic and take two Beats.
- If your character takes damage in one of her last (right-most) Health boxes, take a Beat.
- The Storyteller can choose to award a Beat for any exceptional example of roleplaying, tactics or character development. If this involves more than one character, all of them should receive the Beat.
- At the end of any game session, take a Beat.

Advanced Characters

For more advanced starting characters, the Storyteller can give Experiences as part of character creation.

Seasoned Characters: 5 Experiences

Expert Characters: 10 Experiences

Heroic Characters: 15 Experiences

Merits

This section replaces the Merits section in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. It includes all of the Merits from that book (though the systems have been revised in many cases), as well as various Merits from other World of Darkness books. If a Merit from the **World of Darkness Rulebook** is not reprinted here, it was deliberately omitted because the Merit was redundant or has been reworked into something else.

Style Merits

Merits marked as Style Merits allow access to specialized maneuvers. Each maneuver is a prerequisite for the next in its sequence. So if a Style Merit has a three-dot maneuver and a four-dot maneuver, you must purchase the three-dot version before accessing the four-dot.

Sanctity of Merits

While Merits represent things within the game and your character, they're really an out-of-character resource, a function of the character creation and advancement mechan-

Optional Rule: Group Beats

Under these rules, players who understand the rules and work toward resolving Conditions and Aspirations will receive the most Beats and therefore Experiences. While your troupe may appreciate this reward system for learning and using the rules, some players would rather just play their characters and only glance down at the character sheet when the Storyteller asks them to roll something. Either approach is fine, but if you have a mix of the two approaches, characters can advance in a lopsided fashion.

One solution is for all Beats to go into a pot (use coins or beads or spare dice to represent them). At the end of the chapter, Beats get divided evenly among the players. This way, all players are encouraged to help one another realize Aspirations, resolve Conditions and otherwise take Beats. This should help the players work as a team, even if the characters don't necessary need to.

ics. These Merits often represent things that can go away. Retainers can be killed. Mentors can get impatient and stop dispensing wisdom. So while Merits may represent temporary facets of your character, Merit points continue to exist. At the end of any chapter where your character has lost Merits, you can replace them with another Merit.

For example, your character has three-dot Retainer, a loyal dog, and an eldritch horror eats that dog out in the woods. At the end of that chapter, you may re-allocate those Retainer dots. You may choose to purchase Safe Place, to reflect your character's choice to bunker down from the monster, and perhaps Direction Sense (one dot) so your character is less likely to get lost in those woods in the future. When the character leaves his Safe Place, you can replace those two dots with something else.

When replacing a Merit, consider what makes sense in the story. Pursue the new Merit during the course of the chapter if possible, and make the new tie something less superficial than a dot or two on a sheet.

With Storyteller permission, you may "cash in" a Merit voluntarily and replace it with Experiences. This should not be used as a way to purchase a Merit, take advantage of its benefits, and then cash it out for something else. If a Merit has run its course and no longer makes sense for your character, however, you may use those points elsewhere.

Merits such as Ambidextrous, Eidetic Memory and the various Fighting Style Merits reflect abilities and knowledge that your character has and therefore shouldn't be cashed in or replaced. Then again, if an Ambidextrous character loses his left hand ...

3rd July 2012

Dear Lucy,

So I returned. It took two days, but I returned, and I found myself, almost as in a dream, at that door in room 913, that threshold.

I stood there this time for what must have been hours. I was not afraid, nor really was I curious. It was not a thing I wanted to do, or did not want to do. Just a thing that I was going to do. I felt that I had done this before.

This door opened silently.

I was dazzled by what appeared to be a spotlight, swinging across the corridor, side by side, occasionally blocked by something swinging just above my head. I stumbled in a few steps, arm over my face, and leaned against one side of what I made out to be a corridor, shod in rusty metal. I peered along its length. It seemed to go on for miles, far beyond the inside of the building, certainly. I was surrounded by machinery — wires that throbbed with electricity, roaring pipes, swinging chains. I looked up.

Someone's bare foot brushed against my face. I jumped back, looked up. A rail stretched into the depths of the corridor; along its length dozens of apparatuses hung, from each of which dangled a human being, men and women, apparently suspended by a riveted casing that covered the head. Cables and pipes occasionally wrapped round twitching limbs, invading orifices. I stepped forward, fascinated by the beauty of it, watching a trickle of liquid running down a tube from a man's penis, around his leg, and up into the box from which the whole affair was suspended.

I fell to my knees then, and sang a hymn of praise, and sang in tongues at the wonders I had seen, for I had entered the God-Machine. I do not know how long I was there, weeping and singing, my hands clasped together, before the Angel found me.

The Angel folded itself from the metal of the machine that throbbed at my back, all in clockwork and hydraulics, its eyes indicator dials, its fingers cruel, beautiful hypodermic needles, and it said to me, "Why are you here?"

"I came to find the God-Machine," I said, "To worship it."

"Why are you here?" the Angel said again.

I did not know.

The Angel asked a third time. "Why are you here?"

Something shifted inside my head then, something else, and I said, "I exist to obey."

And I did not want to obey then, nor was I forced to obey. I could only obey.

The Angel seemed to nod, and reached for me with its needlefingers and I closed my eyes and I felt the exquisite pain in my throat, and my mind grew calm and my eyes were heavy and I fell deeply asleep.

I awoke on a chair made of riveted metal in the middle of a room that was relatively quiet, compared with the noise of the room I had entered before, which I now knew was called the Rack. I both did and did not know where I was; the room was perfectly square, and had no doors, and was lit by a red lightbulb on a simple fitting, dangling from the ceiling. I had a tremendous sensation of depth, as if I was infinitely far beneath the deepest surface. The sounds of machinery were far away. They lulled me to sleep again.

I woke up once more and now I was standing up and could not move. My arms and legs were so very stiff. I could not even move my eyes. A bald-headed woman with metal sockets over her scabby, ill-kept scalp and empty, glazed eyes entered my field of view. She reached forward and lifted my head off my shoulders, and carried me helpless through a door that had not been there before through a short corridor into a circular room. She put my head down on a table. I could not scream, only watch what I could through the vantage point of what might have been a table top.

The woman walked from the table to what looked like a faceless mannequin body. She began to work at the rough-hewn face with a sort of chisel. I might have been there days or weeks, but I could not lose consciousness, or move or even blink, only watch as with reference to my head on the table, the woman made the mannequin's face look more and more like my own. When the process was complete, the woman picked up my head, my face obscured under an arm clad in thick, filthy fabric, and put it in a box of some sort. Then she went away. I heard a whirring motor noise, and caught a glimpse of a circular saw in the woman's hands as she brought it to my forehead. I passed out again then.

I woke up the third time back in the room with no doors, on the chair. The woman was there. I could move normally again.

"You are awake," she said. I became aware that a thick bundle of cables ran from what looked like a socket inside the back of her head and into a collection of terminals on the wall.

"What did you do?" I said.

"You came back," she said. "Before it was time."

"I don't understand," I said.

"You were not supposed to come back. You must be shown a thing," she said. "Stand."

I stood up. Turning around, I saw the wall of the room fold out of itself and by some complex mechanical turns and shifts become the Angel, or perhaps another Angel exactly the same, leaving behind an archway. The Angel stood aside. I walked through into another chamber, long and I think oval-shaped. Several more bald-headed people, each connected to the wall by the same arrangement of cables running into their skulls, stood, working on an assembly line, one attaching a component to an object, the next removing a component, the next removing a different one again, the next adding another, and so on, a different process for each object, so that the unidentifiable objects on the assembly line bore no relation to the objects that had entered the line. I realised that the Angel was standing behind me.

"Observe the third man."

I looked at the third man on the assembly line. Although devoid of hair, his skin scabby and pale, I recognised him. As Stephen Escher.

"I don't understand," I said.

"The third man was Stephen Escher. It suited the Purpose to remove the man's thoughts and memories after using the flesh, and to create a tool the better to obey the Purpose."

I realised that this was true. I had been here before, more than once.

"And I came back."

"You are the ninth. You have never left here."

I realised that this was also true and that I was new and that remembering what the last mannequin had experienced did not make me the same.

"So when I leave I will forget this place?"

"You will remember. It is the Purpose."

"What is the Purpose?"

"It is the Purpose."

"It is the Purpose," I repeated. And they let me go. And it is and everything is good and fine and nothing you can do and no objection you can raise will touch me because I am not me and you can never tell me otherwise or prove to anyone else, because it's not as if I will be sending this letter to you anyway. What would be the point otherwise?

These things are all interconnected. The man I set to work calculating for me, I think he is significant. No coincidences exist. I will be rich. I was made to be rich.

Yours as ever

Stephen

Mental Merits

Area of Expertise (••)

Prerequisite: Resolve •• and one Skill Specialty

Effect: Your character is uncommonly specialized in one area. Choose a Specialty to assign to this Merit. Forgo the +1 bonus afforded by a Specialty in exchange for a +2.

Common Sense (••••)

Effect: Your character has an exceptionally sound and rational mind. With a moment's thought, she can weigh po-

tential courses of action and outcomes. Once per chapter as an instant action, you may ask the Storyteller one of the following questions about a task at hand or course of action. Roll Wits + Composure. If you succeed, the Storyteller must answer to the best of her ability. If you fail, you get no answer. With an exceptional success, you can ask an additional question.

- What is the worst choice?
- What do I stand to lose here?
- What's the safest choice?
- Am I chasing a worthless lead?

Danger Sense / (••)

Effect: Your character's reflexes are honed to the point where nothing's shocking. You gain a +2 modifier on reflexive Wits + Composure rolls for your character to detect an impending ambush.

Direction Sense / (•)

Effect: Your character has an innate sense of direction and is always aware of her location in space. She always knows which direction she faces and never suffers penalties to navigate or find her way.

Eidetic Memory / (••)

Effect: Your character recalls events and details with pinpoint accuracy. You do not have to make rolls for your character to remember past experiences. When making Intelligence + Composure (or relevant Skill) rolls to recall minute facts from swaths of information, take a +2 bonus.

Encyclopedic Knowledge / (••)

Effect: Choose a Skill. Due to an immersion in academia, pop culture, or obsession with a hobby, your character has collected limitless factoids about the topic, even if she has no dots in the Skill.

You can make an Intelligence + Wits roll at any time your character is dealing with her area of interest. On a successful roll, the Storyteller must give a relevant fact

or detail about the issue at hand. Your character knows this fact, but you must explain within the scope of your character's background why she knows it. For example, for Encyclopedic Knowledge: Medicine: "Do you remember that time on that show, when the doctor said it doesn't manifest before puberty?"

Eye for the Strange / (••)

Prerequisite: Resolve ••, Occult •

Effect: While your character does not necessarily possess a breadth of knowledge about the supernatural, she knows the otherworldly when she sees it. By perusing evidence she can determine whether something comes from natural or supernatural origin. Roll Intelligence + Composure. With a success, the Storyteller must tell you if the scene has a supernatural cause and provide one piece of found information that confirms the answer. With an exceptional success, she must give you a bit of supernatural folklore that suggests what type of creature caused the problem. If the problem was mundane, an exceptional success gives an ongoing +2 to all rolls to investigate the event, due to her redoubled certainty in its natural causation.

Fast Reflexes / (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Wits ••• or Dexterity •••

Effect: Your character's reflexes impress and astound; she's always fast to react. +1 Initiative per dot.



Good Time Management ,(•)

Prerequisite: Academics •• or Science ••

Effect: Your character has vast experience managing complex tasks, keeping schedules, and meeting deadlines. When taking an extended action, halve the time required between rolls.

Holistic Awareness ,(•)

Effect: Your character is skilled at non-traditional healing methods. While scientific minds might scoff, she can provide basic medical care with natural means. She knows what herbs can stem an infection and what minerals will stave off a minor sickness. Unless your patient suffers wound penalties from lethal or aggravated wounds, you do not need traditional medical equipment to stabilize and treat injuries. With access to woodlands, a greenhouse, or other source of diverse flora, a Wits + Survival roll allows your character to gather all necessary supplies.

Indomitable ,(••)

Prerequisite: Resolve •••

Your character possesses an iron will. The powers of the supernatural have little bearing on her behavior. She can stand up to a vampire's mind control, a witch's charms, or a ghost's gifts of fright. Any time a supernatural creature uses a power to influence your character's thoughts or emotions, add two dice to the dice pool to contest it. If the roll is resisted, instead subtract two dice from the monster's dice pool. Note that this only affects mental influence and manipulation from a supernatural origin. A vampire with a remarkable Manipulation + Persuasion score is just as likely to convince your character to do something using mundane tricks.

Interdisciplinary Specialty ,(••)

Prerequisite: Skill at ••• or higher with a Specialty

Effect: Choose a Specialty that your character possesses when you purchase this Merit. You can apply the +1 from that Specialty on any Skill with at least one dot, provided it's justifiable within the scope of the fiction. For example, a doctor with a Medicine Specialty in Anatomy may be able to use it when targeting a specific body part with Weaponry, but could not with a general strike.

Language ,(•)

Effect: Your character is skilled with an additional language beyond her native tongue. Choose a language each time you buy this Merit. Your character can speak, read, and write in that language.

Library ,(• to ••••)

Effect: Your character has access to a plethora of information about a given topic. When purchasing this Merit, choose a Mental Skill. The Library covers that purview. On any extended roll involving the Skill in question, add the dots in this Merit.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times to reflect different Skills. Its benefits can be shared by various characters with permission.

Meditative Mind ,(•, ••, or ••••)

Effect: Your character's meditation is far more fulfilling than for other characters. With the one-dot version of this Merit, the character does not suffer environment penalties to mediation (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 51), even from wound penalties.

With the two-dot version, when the character has successfully meditated, she gains a +3 bonus on any Resolve + Composure rolls during the same day as she's steeled herself against the things of the world that would shake her foundation.

At the four-dot level, she only needs a single success to gain the benefits of meditation for the day, instead of the normal four.

Multilingual ,(•)

Effect: Your character has a strong affinity for language acquisition. Each time you purchase this Merit, choose two languages. Your character can speak conversationally in those languages. With an Intelligence + Academics roll, she may also read enough of the language to understand context.

If you purchase the Language Merit for either of these languages, replace the Multilingual language. For example, if you have Multilingual (French, Italian), and purchase Language: Italian, you may choose to take Multilingual (French, Portuguese).

Patient ,(•)

Effect: Your character knows how to pace herself and take the time to do the job right the first time. When taking an extended action, you may make two additional rolls above what your Attribute + Skill would allow.

Professional Training ,(• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has extensive training in a particular profession, which offers distinct advantages in a handful of fields. When choosing this Merit, choose or create a Profession for your character (see the sidebar). Mark the two Asset Skills on your character sheet. The advantages of Professional Training relate directly to those Asset Skills.

- **Networking:** At the first level of Professional Training, your character builds connections within her chosen field. Take two dots of Contacts relating to that field.
- **Continuing Education:** With repeated efforts in her field of choice, your character tends toward greater successes. When making a roll with her Asset Skills, she benefits from the 9-again quality.

... Breadth of Knowledge: Due to advancement in her field, she's picked up a number of particular bits of information and skill unique to her work. Choose a third Asset Skill and take two Specialties in your character's Asset Skills.

.... On the Job Training: With the resources at her disposal, your character has access to extensive educational tools and mentorship available. Take a Skill dot in an Asset Skill. Whenever you purchase a new Asset Skill dot, take a Beat.

..... The Routine: With such extensive experience in her field, her Asset Skills have been honed to a fine edge and she's almost guaranteed at least a marginal success. Before rolling, spend a Willpower point to apply the rote action quality to an Asset Skill. This allows you to reroll all the failed dice on the first roll.

Tolerance for Biology / (••)

Prerequisite: Resolve •••

Effect: Most people turn away at the sight of blood, other bodily fluids, or exotic biology. Your character has seen enough that nothing turns her stomach. When other characters must resist shock or physical repulsion from the disgusting and morbid, your character stands her ground. You do not need to make Composure, Stamina, or Resolve rolls to withstand the biologically strange. This doesn't mean she's immune to fear; she's just used to nature in all its nasty forms.

Trained Observer / (• or •••)

Prerequisite: Wits ••• or Composure •••

Effect: Your character has spent years in the field, catching tiny details and digging for secrets. She might not have a better chance of finding things, but she has a better chance of finding *important* things. Any time you make a Perception roll (usually Wits + Composure), you benefit from the 9-again quality. With the three-dot version, you get 8-again.

Physical Merits

Ambidextrous / (•••)

Effect: Your character does not suffer the -2 penalty for using his off-hand in combat or to perform other actions. *Available only at character creation.*

Crack Driver / (•• or •••)

Prerequisite: Drive •••

Effect: Your character's an ace at the wheel and nothing shakes her concentration. So long as she's not taking any actions other than driving (and keeping the car safe), add her Composure to any rolls to drive. Any rolls to disable her

Professions

Here is a list of the most common Professions, and their Asset Skills. Feel free to create your own to suit the needs of your characters and stories. Also, you may adapt the Asset Skills as fit. For example, your police officer might be more proficient with Politics and Intimidation than Firearms and Streetwise.

Profession	Asset Skills
Academic	Academics, Science
Artist	Crafts, Expression
Athlete	Athletics, Medicine
Cop	Streetwise, Firearms
Criminal	Larceny, Streetwise
Detective	Empathy, Investigation
Doctor	Empathy, Medicine
Engineer	Crafts, Science
Hacker	Computer, Science
Hit Man	Firearms, Stealth
Journalist	Expression, Investigation
Laborer	Athletics, Crafts
Occultist	Investigation, Occult
Politician	Politics, Subterfuge
Professional	Academics, Persuasion
Religious Leader	Academics, Occult
Scientist	Investigation, Science
Socialite	Politics, Socialize
Stuntman	Athletics, Drive
Survivalist	Animal Ken, Survival
Soldier	Firearms, Survival
Technician	Crafts, Investigation
Thug	Brawl, Intimidation
Vagrant	Streetwise, Survival

vehicle suffer a penalty equal to her Composure as well. With the three-dot version, she may take a Drive action reflexively once per turn.

Demolisher / (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Strength ••• or Intelligence •••

Effect: Your character has an innate feel for the weak points in objects. When damaging an object, she ignores one point of the object's Durability per dot in this Merit.

Double Jointed (••)

Prerequisite: Dexterity •••

Effect: Your character might have been a contortionist or spent time practicing yoga. She can dislodge joints when need be. She automatically escapes from any mundane bonds without a roll. When grappled, subtract her Dexterity from any rolls to overpower her as long as she's not taking any aggressive actions.

Fleet of Foot (• to ••••)

Prerequisite: Athletics ••

Effect: Your character is remarkably quick and runs far faster than her frame suggests. She gains +1 Speed per dot; anyone pursuing her suffers a -1 per dot to any foot chase rolls.

Giant (••••)

Effect: Your character is massive. She's well over six feet tall and crowds part when she approaches. She's Size 6 and gains +1 Health. *Available only at character creation.*

Drawback: Buying clothing is a nightmare. Fitting in small spaces is difficult at best.

Hardy (• to ••••)

Prerequisite: Stamina •••

Effect: Your character's body goes further than it rightfully should. Add the dots in this Merit to any rolls to resist disease, poison, deprivation, unconsciousness, or suffocation.

Iron Stamina (• to ••••)

Prerequisites: Stamina ••• or Resolve •••

Effect: Each dot eliminates a negative modifier (on a one-for-one basis) when resisting the effects of fatigue or injury. For example: a character with Iron Stamina •• is able to ignore up to a -2 modifier brought on by fatigue. The Merit also counteracts the effects of wound penalties. So, if all of your character's Health boxes are filled (which normally imposes a -3 penalty to his actions) and he has Iron Stamina •, those penalties are reduced to -2. This Merit cannot be used to gain positive modifiers for actions, only to cancel out negative ones.

Parkour (• to •••••, Style)

Prerequisites: Dexterity •••, Athletics ••

Your character is a trained and proficient free-runner. Free-running is the art of moving fluidly through urban environments with complex leaps, bounds, running tricks, and vaulting. This is the type of sport popularized in modern action films, where characters are unhindered by fences, walls, construction equipment, cars, or anything else the city puts in their ways.

Flow (•): Your character reacts instinctively to any obstacles with leaps, jumps, and scaling techniques. When in a foot chase, subtract your Parkour from the successes needed to pursue or evade. Ignore environmental penalties to Athletics rolls equal to your Parkour rating.

Cat Leap (••): Your character falls with outstanding grace. When using a Dexterity + Athletics roll to mitigate damage from falling (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 179), your character gains one automatic success. Additionally, add your Parkour rating to the threshold of damage that can be removed through this roll. Parkour will not mitigate damage from a terminal velocity fall.

Wall Run (•••): When climbing, your character can run upward for some distance before having to traditionally climb. Without rolling, your character scaled 10 feet + five feet per dot of Athletics as an instant action, rather than the normal 10 feet.

Expert Traceur (••••): Parkour has become second nature for your character. By spending a Willpower point, you may designate one Athletics roll to run, jump, or climb as a rote action (reroll all failed dice once). On any turn you use this ability, you may not apply your character's Defense to oncoming attacks.

Freeflow (•••••): Your character's Parkour is now muscle memory. She can move without thinking in a zen-like state. The character must successfully meditate (see p. 51 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) in order to establish Freeflow. Once established, your character is capable of taking Athletics actions reflexively once per turn. By spending a point of Willpower on an Athletics roll in a foot chase, gain three successes instead of three dice.

Quick Draw (••)

Prerequisites: Wits •••, a Specialty in the weapon or fighting style chosen

Effect: Choose a Specialty in Weaponry or Firearms when you purchase this Merit. Your character has trained enough in that weapon or style that pulling the weapon is her first reflex. Drawing or holstering that weapon is considered a reflexive action, and can be done any time her Defense applies.

Sleight of Hand (••)

Prerequisite: Larceny •••

Effect: Your character can pick locks and pockets without even thinking about it. She can take one Larceny-based instant action reflexively in a given turn. As well, her Larceny actions go unnoticed unless someone is trying specifically to catch her.

Small-Framed (•••)

Effect: Your character is diminutive. She's not even five feet tall and it's easy to walk into her without noticing. She's Size 4 and thus has one fewer Health box. She gains +2 to any rolls to hide or go unnoticed. This bonus might apply any time being smaller would be an advantage, such as crawling through smaller spaces. *Available only at character creation.*

Drawback: In addition to the lower Health, your character might be overlooked or not taken seriously by some people.

Social Merits

Many of these Merits use the Social rules (p 188), influencing Doors and other facets of the interaction.

Allies (• to •••••)

Effect: Allies help your character. They might be friends, employees, associates, or people your character has blackmailed. Each instance of this Merit represents one type of ally. This could be in an organization, a society, a clique, or an individual. Examples include the police, a secret society, crime, unions, local politics, and the academic community. Each purchase has its own rating. Your character might have Allies (Masons) ••, Allies (Carter Crime Family) •••, and Allies (Catholic Church) •.

Each dot represents a layer of influence in the group. One dot would constitute small favors and passing influence. Three could offer considerable influence, such as the overlooking of a misdemeanor charge by the police. Five dots stretch the limits of the organization's influence, as its leaders put their own influence on the line for the character. This could include things such as massive insider training or fouling up a felony investigation. No matter the request, it has to be something that organization could accomplish.

The Storyteller assigns a rating between one and five to any favor asked. A character can ask for favors that add up to her Allies rating without penalty in one chapter. If she extends her influence beyond that, her player must roll Manipulation + Persuasion + Allies, with a penalty equal to the favor's rating. If the roll is successful, the group does as requested. Failed or successful, the character loses a dot of Allies. This dot may return at the end of the chapter (see Sanctity of Merits, on p. 158.) On a dramatic failure, the organization resents her and seeks retribution. On an exceptional success, she doesn't lose the dot.

One additional favor a character can ask of her Allies is to block another character's Allies, Contacts, Mentor, Retainer, or Status (if she knows the character possesses the relevant Merit). The rating is equal to the Merit dots blocked. As before, no roll is necessary unless the target's Merit exceeds the character's Allies. If the block succeeds, the character cannot use the Merit during the same chapter.

Alternate Identity (•, ••, or •••)

Effect: Your character has established an alternate identity. The level of this Merit determines the amount of scrutiny it can withstand. At one dot, the identity is superficial and unoficial. For example, your character uses an alias with a simple costume and adopts an accent. She hasn't established the necessary paperwork to even approach a bureaucratic background check, let alone pass. At two dots, she's supported her identity with paperwork and identification. It's not liable to stand up to extensive research, but it'll turn away private investigators and internet hobbyists. At three dots, the identity can pass thorough inspection. The identity has been deeply entrenched in relevant databases, with subtle flourishes and details to make it seem real even to trained professionals.

The Merit also reflects time the character has spent honing the persona. At one or two dots, she gains a +1 to all Subterfuge rolls to defend the identity. At three dots, she gains +2.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times. Each time representing an additional identity.

Anonymity (• to •••••)

Prerequisites: Cannot have Fame.

Effect: Your character lives off the grid. This means purchases must be made with cash or falsified credit cards. She eschews identification. She avoids any official authoritative influence in her affairs. Any attempts to find her by paper trail suffer a -1 penalty per dot purchased in this Merit.

Drawback: Your character cannot purchase the Fame Merit. This also may limit Status purchases, if the character cannot provide sufficient identification for the roles she wishes to take.

Barfly (••)

Prerequisite: Socialize ••

Effect: Your character is a natural in the bar environment and can procure an open invitation wherever she wishes. Whereas most characters would require rolls to blend into social functions they don't belong in, she doesn't; she belongs. Rolls to identify her as an outsider suffer her Socialize as a penalty.

Contacts (• to •••••)

Effect: Contacts provide your character with information. Each dot in this Merit represents a sphere or organization with which the character can garner information. For example, a character with Contacts ••• might have Bloggers, Drug Dealers, and Financial Speculators for connections. Contacts do not provide services, only information. This may be face-to-face, email, by telephone, or even by séance in some strange instances.

Garnering information via Contacts requires a Manipulation + Social Skill roll, depending on the method the character uses. This Merit can either be used generally, in which case only the field is necessary, or it can be personalized by identifying an individual within the field whom the character can call. If using the latter method, the Storyteller should give a bonus or penalty, dependent on how relevant the information is to that particular Contact, whether accessing the information is dangerous, and if the character has maintained good relations or done favors for the Contact. These modifiers should range from -3 to +3 in most cases. If successful, the Contact provides the information.

One use of a Contact is to dig dirt on another character. A Contact can find another character's Social Merits and any relevant Conditions (Embarrassing Secret is a prime example.)

A character can have more than five Contacts, but the Merit's rating is limited to five, for the purposes of Allies blocking.

Fame (• to •••)

Effect: Your character is recognized within a certain sphere for a certain skill, or because of some past action, or just a stroke of luck. This can mean favors and attention, but it can also mean negative attention and scrutiny. When choosing the Merit, define what your character is known for. As a rule of thumb, one dot means local recognition or reputation within a confined subculture. Two dots means regional recognition by a wide swath of people. Three dots means worldwide recognition to anyone who might have been exposed to the source of the fame. Each dot adds a die to any Social rolls among those who are impressed by your character's celebrity.

Drawback: Any rolls to find or identify the character enjoy a +1 bonus per dot of the Merit. If the character has Alternate Identity, she can mitigate this drawback. A character with Fame cannot have the Anonymity Merit.

Fast-Talking (• to •••••, Style)

Prerequisites: Manipulation •••, Subterfuge ••

Your character talks circles around listeners. She speaks a mile a minute and often leaves her targets reeling, but nodding in agreement.

Always Be Closing (•): With the right leading phrases, your character can direct a mark to say what she wants, when she wants. This trips the mark into vulnerable positions. When a mark contests or resists your character's Social interactions, apply a -1 to their Resolve or Composure.

Jargon (••): Your character confuses her mark using complex terminology. You may apply one relevant Specialty to any Social roll you make, even if the Specialty isn't tied to the Skill in use.

Devil's Advocacy (•••): Your character often poses arguments she doesn't agree with in order to challenge a mark's position and keep him from advancing discussion. You can reroll one failed Subterfuge roll per scene.

Salting (••••): Your character can position herself so a mark pursues a non-issue or something unimportant to her. When your character opens a Door using conversation (Persuasion, Subterfuge, Empathy, etc.) you may spend a Willpower point to immediately open another Door.

The Nigerian Scam (•••••): Your character can take advantage of her mark's greed and zeal. When the mark does particularly well, it's because your character was there to set him up and to subsequently tear him down. If a target regains Willpower from his Vice while your character is present, you may immediately roll Manipulation + Subterfuge to open a Door, regardless of the interval or impression level.

Fixer (••)

Prerequisite: Contacts ••, Wits •••

Effect: Your character is somebody that knows people. She can not only get in touch with the right people to do a job, but she can get them at the best possible prices. When hiring a service (see p.234), reduce the Availability score of the service by one dot.

Hobbyist Clique (••)

Prerequisite: Membership in a clique. All members must possess this Merit and the chosen Skill at ••+

Effect: Your character is part of a group of hobbyists that specialize in one area, as represented by a Skill. It may be a book club, a coven, a political party, or any other interest. When the group's support is available, you benefit from the 9-again quality on rolls involving the group's chosen Skill. As well, the clique offers two additional dice on any extended actions involving that Skill.

Drawback: This Merit requires upkeep. You must attend at least monthly, informal meetings to maintain the benefits of Hobbyist Clique.

Inspiring (•••)

Prerequisite: Presence •••

Effect: Your character's passion inspires those around her to greatness. With a few words, she can redouble a group's confidence or move them to action.

Make a Presence + Expression roll. A small clique of listeners levies a -1 penalty, a small crowd a -2, and a large crowd a -3. Listeners gain the Inspired Condition. The character may not use this Merit on herself.

Iron Will (••)

Prerequisite: Resolve ••••

Effect: Your character's resolve is unwavering. When spending Willpower to contest or resist in a Social interaction, you may substitute your character's Resolve for the usual Willpower bonus. If the roll is contested, roll with 8-again.

Mentor (• to •••••)

Effect: This Merit gives your character a teacher that provides advice and guidance. He acts on your character's behalf, often in the background and sometimes without your character's knowledge. While Mentors can be highly competent, they almost always want something in return for their services. The dot rating determines the Mentor's capabilities, and to what extent he'll aid your character.

When establishing a Mentor, determine what the Mentor wants from your character. This should be personally important to him and it should reflect on the dot rating chosen. A one-dot Mentor might be incapable of dealing with modern society and want to live vicariously through your character. This might mean coming to him and telling stories of her exploits. A five-dot Mentor would want something astronomical, such as an oath to procure an ancient, cursed artifact that may or may not exist, in order to prevent a prophesized death.

Choose three Skills the Mentor possesses. You can substitute Resources for one of these Skills. Once per session, the character may ask her Mentor for a favor. The favor must involve one of those Skills or be within the scope of his Resources. The Mentor commits to the favor (often asking for a commensurate favor in return); and if a roll is required, the Mentor is automatically considered to have successes equal to



his dot rating. Alternately, the player may ask the Storyteller to have the Mentor act on her character's behalf, without her character knowing or initiating the request.

Mystery Cult Initiation (• to •••••)

Cults are far more common than the people of the World of Darkness would like to admit. Mystery cult is the catch-all term for a phenomenon ranging from secret societies couched in fraternity houses and scholarly cabals studying the magic of classical symbolism to mystical suicide cults to the God Machine.

Mystery Cult Initiation reflects membership in one of these esoteric groups. The dot rating dictates standing. One dot is an initiate, two a respected member, three a priest or organizer, four a decision-making leader, five is a high priest or founder. If you wish your character to begin play in a cult, work with your Storyteller to develop the details.

Designing a Mystery Cult requires three things, at bare minimum. First is a Purpose. This is the defining reason the cult exists. Usually, it's tied in with the cult's history and recent background. Second is a Relic. This is an item that grounds members' faith. For example, a piece of the God-Machine, an ancient text bound in human flesh, or the mummified flesh of a saint. The last is a Doctrine. Every cult is defined by its rules and traditions.

In addition to standing, a Mystery Cult Initiation Merit offers benefits at each level of influence. Develop these as

well. The following are guidelines; use them to craft your own cults:

- A Skill Specialty or one-dot Merit pertaining to the lessons taught to initiates.
- A one-dot Merit.
- A Skill dot or a two-dot Merit (often a supernatural Merit).
- A three-dot Merit, often supernatural in origin.
- A three-dot Merit or a major advantage not reflected in game traits.

Resources (• to •••••)

Effect: This Merit reflects your character's disposable income. She might live in an upscale condo, but if her income is tied up in the mortgage and child support payments, she might have little money to throw around. Characters are assumed to have basic necessities without Resources.

The dot rating determines the relative amount of disposable funding the character has available, depending on your particular chronicle's setting. The same amount of money means completely different things in a game set in Silicon Valley compared to one set in the Detroit slums. One dot is a little spending money here and there. Two is a comfortable, middle class wage. Three is a nicer, upper middle class life. Four is moderately wealthy. Five is filthy rich.

Sample Cults

Sample Cult: The Chosen of Mammon

Mammon believes in the power of the almighty dollar and its inherent power. Followers of Mammon are expected to obtain temporal wealth and power, at any cost. Fortunately, their networks help initiates quickly claim promotions and transfers into more prominent areas of influence.

Cultists: Hedge fund manager, mailboy on a mission, outsourcer, personal assistant to the stars, talent scout, third-generation CEO

Initiation Benefits

- All initiates learn to cut through red tape to fulfill their later duties. They gain a Politics Specialty in Bureaucracy.
- Full members must learn to speak, read, and write in Aramaic. They gain the Language Merit (•, Aramaic) free of charge.
- As a cultist delves into the mysteries of Mammon, she gains access to greater cult resources. Spend two dots between Contacts, Allies, Resources, or Retainers to reflect this relationship.
- The self-centered and power-obsessed priests of Mammon gain the Thief of Fate (•••) Merit. For this reason, priests are prohibited from touching other cultists.
- The high priestess of Mammon benefits from the tithes of her already wealthy followers. She gains three dots of Resources. As well, she may make a Resources ••••• purchase once per month without limitation by drawing from the cult's coffers.

Sample Cult: Sisters of the Machine Gun, Brothers of the Bomb

The Brothers and Sisters band together with their rudimentary understanding of the God-Machine in order to prevent its ascendancy to whatever mysteri-

ous power it strives to obtain. They've repurposed artifacts and reverse-engineered their power into more technological weapons to fight back the darkness. The Brothers and Sisters tend toward universities and other places of learning, where a bit of esoteric knowledge can bleed through the mundane and open eyes to the truths of the universe.

Cultists: God-Machine survivor, librarian-turned-networker, militant defender (sister machine gun), second-generation mentor, tech expert (brother bomb)

Initiation Benefits

- New recruits, while not yet trusted, receive training to better spot the influence of the God-Machine. They gain an Occult Specialty in the God-Machine.
- Small cells of the Brothers and Sisters network through a handful of active initiates. For this reason, all initiates gain Contacts • (Brothers and Sisters) free of charge.
- Respected initiates who have proven they're likely to survive more than a few years are taught the secrets of repurposing Bygones (see p. 243) into weapons. By destroying a Bygone, they can give one weapon the ability to hurt spirits and ghosts.
- At higher ranking within the organization, members are assigned wards and students. Take three dots in Retainers, allocated as the player sees fit (that is, one three-dot Retainer, three one-dot Retainers, etc.).
- The highest ranking Brothers and Sisters are mostly first-contact survivors. They've seen more of the God-Machine's influence than most anyone still standing. They gain a modified version of the Encyclopedic Knowledge Merit relating directly to the God-Machine.

Every item has an Availability rating. Once per chapter, your character can procure an item at her Resources level or lower without issue. An item one Availability level above her Resources reduces her effective Resources by one dot for a full month, since she has to rapidly liquidate funds. She can procure items two Availability level below her Resources without limit (within reason). For example, a character with Resources •••• can procure as many Availability •• disposable cellphones as she needs.

Pusher ,(••)

Prerequisite: Persuasion ••

Effect: Your character tempts and bribes as second nature. Any time a mark in a Social interaction accepts her soft leverage (see p. 193), open a Door as if you'd satisfied his Vice as well as moving the impression up on the chart.

Retainer / (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has an assistant, sycophant, servant, or follower on whom she can rely. Establish who this companion is and how he was acquired. It may be as simple as a paycheck. He might owe your character his life. However it happened, your character has a hold on him.

A Retainer is more reliable than a Mentor and more loyal than an Ally. On the other hand, a Retainer is a lone person, less capable and influential than the broader Merits.

The Merit's dot rating determines the relative competency of the Retainer. A one-dot Retainer is barely able to do anything of use, such as a pet that knows one useful trick or a homeless old man that does minor errands for food. A three-dot Retainer is a professional in their field, someone capable in his line of work. A five-dot is one of the best in her class. If a Retainer needs to make a roll, if it's within her field, double the dot rating and use it as a dice pool. For anything else, use the dot rating as a dice pool.

This Merit can be purchased multiple times to represent multiple Retainers.

Safe Place / (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has somewhere she can go where she can feel secure. While she may have enemies that could attack her there, she's prepared and has the upper hand. The dot rating reflects the security of the place. The actual location, the luxury, and the size are represented by equipment (see *Housing*, p. 241.) A one-dot Safe Place might be equipped with basic security systems or a booby trap at the windows and door. A five-dot could have a security crew, infrared scanners at every entrance, or trained dogs. Each place could be an apartment, a mansion or a hidey-hole.

Unlike most Merits, multiple characters can contribute dots to a single Safe Place, combining their points into something greater. A Safe Place gives an Initiative bonus equal to the Merit dots. This only applies to a character with dots invested in the Safe Place.

Any efforts to breach the Safe Place suffer a penalty equal to the Merit dots invested. If the character desires, the Safe Place can include traps that cause intruders lethal damage equal to a maximum of the Merit rating (player's choice as to how much damage a given trap inflicts). This requires that the character has at least a dot in Crafts. The traps may be avoided with a Dexterity + Larceny roll, penalized by the Safe Place dots.

Small Unit Tactics / (• •)

Prerequisites: Presence •••

Effect: Your character is a proficient leader on the field. She can organize efforts and bark orders to remarkable effect. Once per scene, when making a coordinated action that was planned in advance, spend a point of Willpower and an instant action. A number of characters equal to your character's Presence can benefit from the +3 bonus from the Willpower expenditure.

Staff / (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has a crew of workers or assistants at her disposal. They may be housekeepers, designers, research assistants, animators, cheap thugs, or whatever else makes sense. For every dot in this Merit, choose one type of assistant, and one Skill. At any reasonable time, her staff can take actions using that Skill. These actions automatically garner a single success. While not useful in contested actions, this guarantees success on minor, mundane activities. Note that you may have employees without requiring the Staff Merit. Staff simply adds a mechanical advantage for those groups.

Status / (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has standing, membership, authority, control over, or respect from a group or organization. This may reflect official standing or informal respect. No matter the source, your character enjoys certain privileges within that structure.

Each instance of this Merit reflects standing in a different group or organization. Your character may have Status (The Luck Gang) •••, Status (Drag Racing Circuit) ••, and Status (Police) •. Each affords its own unique benefits. As you increase dot ratings, your character rises in prominence in the relevant group.

Status only allows advantages within the confines of the group reflected in the Merit. Status (Organized Crime) won't help if your character wants an official concealed carry firearms permit, for example.

Status provides a number of advantages.

First, your character can apply her Status to any Social roll with those over which she has authority or sway.

Second, she has access to group facilities, resources, and funding. Dependent on the group, this could be limited by red tape and requisitioning processes. It's also dependent on the resources the particular group has available.

Third, she has pull. If your character knows another character's Mentor, Resources, Retainer, Contacts, or Allies, she can block their usage. Once per chapter, she can stop a single Merit from being used if it's of a lower dot rating than her Status and if it makes sense for her organization to obstruct that type of person's behavior. In our Organized Crime example, if your character knows that the chief of police has Contacts (Criminal Informant), you may opt to block usage by threatening the informant into silence.

Drawback: Status requires upkeep and often regular duties. If these duties are not upheld, Status may be lost. The dots will not be accessible until the character re-establishes her standing. In our Organized Crime example, your character may be expected to pay protection money, offer tribute to a higher authority, or undertake felonious activities.

Striking Looks / (• or ••)

Effect: Your character is stunning, alarming, commanding, repulsing, threatening, charming, or otherwise worthy of attention. Determine how your character looks and how people react to that. For one dot, your character gets a +1

Example Status Merits

While Status can apply in a nigh infinite number of organizations, here is a list of some common Status Merits, and suggested dot ratings to give a jumping off point. These examples are still abstractions; a character may be a dot level lower or higher and still hold the suggested positions. For example, a police detective may have two, three, or four dots of Police Status: the dot rating just shows her relative influence and respect within the precinct.

Status: Police

- Paid informant
- Beat cop
- Detective
- Sergeant
- Chief of Police

Status: Gang

- New blood
- Rank and file
- Local gang leader
- Regional enforcer
- Cartel leader

Status: Medical

- Regular candy striper
- Nurse
- Resident doctor
- Chief physician
- Hospital president

Status: Hellfire Club

- Pledge
- Initiate
- Counselor
- Master
- Grandmaster

Status: Military

- Private
- Corporal
- Sergeant
- Colonel
- General

Status: Corporate

- Contractor, new hire
- Company man
- Middle manager
- Board member
- CEO

bonus on any Social rolls that would be influenced by her looks. For two dots, the benefit increases to +2. Depending on the particulars, this might influence Expression, Intimidation, Persuasion, Subterfuge, or other rolls.

Drawback: Attention is a double-edged sword. Any rolls to spot, notice, or remember your character gain the same die bonus. Sometimes, your character will draw unwanted attention in social situations. This could cause further complications.

Sympathetic (••)

Effect: Your character is very good at letting others get close. This gives him an edge in getting what he wants. At the beginning of a Social maneuvering attempt, you may choose to accept a Condition such as Leveraged, Swooning or Vulnerable in order to immediately eliminate two of the subject's Doors.

Taste (•)

Prerequisite: Crafts 2 and a Specialty in Crafts or Expression

Effect: Your character has refined tastes and can identify minor details in fashion, food, architecture, and other forms of artistry and craftsmanship. Not only does this give an eye for detail, it makes her a center of attention in critical circles. She can appraise items within her area of expertise. With a Wits + Skill roll, depending on the creation in question (Expression for poetry, Crafts for architecture, for example), your character can pick out obscure details about the item that other, less discerning minds would not. For each success, ask one of the following questions, or take a +1 bonus to any Social rolls pertaining to groups interested in the art assessed for the remainder of the scene.

- What is the hidden meaning in this?
- What was the creator feeling during its creation?
- What's its weakest point?
- What other witness is most moved by this piece?
- How should one best appreciate this piece?

True Friend (•••)

Effect: Your character has a true friend. While that friend may have specific functions covered by other Merits (Allies, Contacts, Retainer, Mentor, et cetera), True Friend represents a deeper, truly trusting relationship that cannot be breached. Unless your character does something egregious to cause it, her True Friend will not betray her. The Storyteller cannot kill a True Friend as part of a plot without your express permission. Any rolls to influence a True Friend against your character suffer a five-die penalty. In addition, once per story your character can regain one spent Willpower by having a meaningful interaction with her True Friend.

Supernatural Merits

These Merits require the character remain human (non-supernatural.) If the character becomes a vampire, ghoul, mage, or any supernatural character type, these Merits disappear. Per the Sanctity of Merits (see p. 158), these Merits can be reallocated.

These Merits each have a deeply mystical bent and may not be right for every chronicle. If you're allowing certain Supernatural Merits in your chronicle, discuss this with your players before they make their characters. Some chronicles (including the God-Machine Chronicles in this book) suggest certain Supernatural Merits as part of their hooks. If this is the case, mention them to your players and encourage them to consider these Merits.

Aura Reading (•••)

Effect: Your character has the psychic ability to perceive auras; the ephemeral halos of energy that surround all living things. This allows her to perceive a subject's emotional state, and potentially any supernatural nature. The colors of an aura show a person's general disposition, and the ebbs, flows, tone, and other oddities reveal other influences. Note that your character may not know what she's looking at when seeing something odd in an aura. For example, she may not know that a pale aura means she's seeing a vampire, unless she's confirmed other vampiric auras in the past.

To activate Aura Reading, spend a point of Willpower and roll Wits + Empathy – the subject's Composure. Perceiving an aura takes an uninterrupted moment of staring, which could look suspicious even to the unaware. For every success, ask the subject's player one of the following questions. Alternatively, take +1 on Social rolls against the character during the same scene, due to the understanding of their emotional state.

- What's your character's most prominent emotion?
- Is your character telling the truth?
- What is your character's attention most focused on right now?
- Is your character going to attack?
- What emotion is your character trying most to hide?
- Is your character supernatural or otherwise not human?

Determine how your character perceives auras. Maybe she sees different hues as different emotions. Perhaps she hears whispers in the back of her mind, reflecting subtle truths in her subject.

Drawback: Because of your character's sensitivity to the supernatural, she sometimes appears to know "a little too much." No more than once per chapter, when first meeting a supernatural creature the Storyteller can roll Wits + Occult for the creature, penalized by your character's Composure. If successful, they get a strange feeling that your character is aware of their nature. They're not forced to behave in any particular way, but it could cause complications.

Biokinesis (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has the ability to psychically alter her biological material. By spending a Willpower point and concentrating for a full minute, she can shift her Physical Attributes. She can shift one dot per dot in this Merit. This shift lasts for one hour. This cannot raise an Attribute higher than five dots.

In addition, the character heals quickly. Halve all healing times.

Clairvoyance (•••)

Effect: Your character can project her senses to another location. She sees, hears, smells, and otherwise experiences the other place as if she were there. This ability requires a point of Willpower to activate, successful meditation, and a Wits + Occult roll.

Suggested Modifiers: Has an object important to the place (+1), never been there (-3), scrying for a person and not a place (-3), scrying for non-specific location (-4), spent significant time there (+2), touching someone with a strong connection to the place (+1)

Drawback: When choosing this ability, determine how your character is able to scry. It may be through a crystal ball, through a drug-induced trance, with esoteric computer models, or any other method. She cannot scry without that tool or methodology.

Cursed (••)

Effect: Your character has run afoul of fate. Somewhere, somehow, she's been cursed. Most importantly, she's aware of the curse. When taking this Merit, define the limitations of the curse. Usually, it's expressed in the form of a single statement, such as, "On the eve of your twenty-seventh birthday, you will feast upon your doom." It's important to work out the details with the Storyteller. The curse must take effect within the scope of the planned chronicle.

While she knows how she'll die, this is actually a liberating experience. She's confident of the method of her death so nothing else fazes her. Gain a +2 on any Resolve + Composure roll to face fear or self-doubt. Any time she takes lethal damage in her last three health boxes, take an additional Beat.

Medium (••••)

Prerequisite: Empathy ••

Effect: Your character hears the words and moans of the dead. If she takes the time to parse their words, she can interact with them verbally.

Your character has more than just a knack for knowing when ephemeral beings are lurking nearby — she can reach out and make contact with them. By conducting a ritual, meditating, or otherwise preparing to commune with the unseen and succeeding at a Wits + Occult roll, she temporarily increases the relevant Condition one step along the progression from nothing to Anchor, Resonance or Infrastructure, to Open, and finally to Controlled (see p. 223 for more on Conditions as they relate to spirits). The effect lasts until she spends a Willpower point, but if an Influence has been used to progress the Condition further, doing so only reduces it by one step.

Drawback: Speaking with ghosts can be a blessing, but your character cannot turn the sense off, any more than she can turn off her hearing. The character hears the words of the dead any time they're present. Once per game session, usually in a time of extreme stress, the Storyteller may deliver a disturbing message to your character from the other side. You must succeed in a Resolve + Composure roll or gain the Shaken or Spooked Condition.

Mind of a Madman (•••)

Prerequisite: Empathy •••

Effect: Your character gets deep into the skin of problems. If she's investigating a crime or other phenomenon, she can put herself in the mind of the culprit. This often helps with the case. However, it takes her to a dark place internally.

Once she's made the choice to sink into the culprit's mindset (which usually involves intense meditation or perusal of the culprit's crimes), she gains 8-again on all rolls to investigate, pursue, and stop the culprit. But once per night, while she sleeps, she dreams about the culprit's crimes and theoretical future crimes. This is intensely traumatic and it drives her further on the hunt. If she spends the day without pursuing the culprit, make a breaking point roll as if she'd committed the crime herself. She can resist the dreams and the breaking points by avoiding sleep, but she's subject to normal deprivation effect. Until the culprit's captured, any of her own breaking point rolls from things she's done suffer a -1 penalty.

Omen Sensitivity (••••)

Effect: Your character sees signs and patterns in everything. From the way the leaves fall to the spray of antifreeze when her radiator pops, to the ratios of circumference on the shell she picked up on the sidewalk: everything has meaning. With some consideration, she can interpret these meanings. This would be far better if she could turn it off. Everything is important. Everything could mean the end of the world, the deaths of her friends, or other tragedies. If she misses an omen, it might be the wrong one.

Once per game session, you can make a Wits + Occult roll for your character to interpret an omen in her surroundings. For every success, ask the Storyteller a yes/no question about your character's life, her surroundings, a task at hand, or the world at large. The Storyteller must answer these questions truthfully.

Drawback: Her ability becomes an obsession. Each time she reads a portent, she gains the Obsession or Spooked Condition.

Psychokinesis (•••• or ••••••••)

Effect: Your character has a psychic ability to manipulate the forces of the universe. Every type of Psychokinetic is different. For example, your character might have Pyrokinesis, Cryokinesis, or Electrokinesis, the control of fire, cold, or electricity respectively. This is not an exhaustive list. She can intensify, shape, and douse her particular area of ability. With the three-dot version, some of the given force must be present for her to manipulate. With the five-dot version, she can manifest it from nothingness.

Spend a point of Willpower to activate Psychokinesis and roll Resolve + Occult. Each success allows a degree of manipulation: choose one of the following options below. If you intend to cause harm with the roll, subtract the victim's Resolve from the Resolve + Occult roll. If characters should be harmed without a direct attack — if they run through a patch of flame for example — the three-dot version of the Merit causes one lethal damage and the five-dot version causes two. The Storyteller may rule that larger manifestations cause more, if the situation calls for it.

- Increase or decrease the Size of the manifestation by one.
- Move the manifestation a number of yards equal to your character's Willpower dots times 2.
- Shape the force into a specific form. This may require an Intelligence + Crafts roll to form into a detailed or intricate shape.
- Attack a victim with the force. Allocate any number of the rolled successes to cause harm. With the three-dot Merit, Psychokinesis is a weapon causing 1L damage. Psychokinesis is considered a 2L weapon with the five-dot version.
- Use the force creatively. This is up to the situation and the force in question. For example, an Electrokinesis may use her ability to power an electronic device briefly or jumpstart a stalled automobile.
- Manifest her force. This only works with the five-dot version. It manifests a Size 1 patch of the force. It may spread or be enlarged with further successes.

Drawback: Whenever your character depletes her last Willpower point, the Storyteller can call on her abilities to manifest spontaneously. Resist this with a Resolve + Composure roll, with a -2 penalty if her chosen force is prominently featured nearby. For example, the penalty applies if a Pyro-

kinetic is locked in a factory with a hot forge. This tends to happen during wildly inconvenient moments and in ways that tend to cause more trouble than they solve. With these wild manifestations, use of Psychokinesis does not cost Willpower.

Psychometry (••••)

Effect: Psychometry is the psychic ability to read impressions left on physical objects. Your character can feel the emotional resonance left on an item or can perceive important events tied to a location with this ability. The ability automatically hones in on the most emotionally intense moment tied to the item.

Spend a Willpower point to activate Psychometry. The successes scored on a Wits + Occult roll determine the clarity of the visions. For each success, you may ask a single yes/no question of the Storyteller, or one of the following questions. For questions pertaining to specific characters, if your character hasn't met the persons in question, the Storyteller may simply describe them.

- What's the strongest emotion here?
- Who remembers this moment the most?
- Am I missing something in this scene?
- Where was this object during the event?
- What breaking point caused the event?

Suggested Modifiers: Character has read impressions from this item before (-2), important event happened more than one day ago (-1), more than one week ago (-2), more than one month ago (-3), more than one year ago (-5), item was used in a violent crime (+2), item is only vaguely tied to the event (-2), spirits pertaining to the event are nearby (+3)

Drawback: Once per chapter, the Storyteller can force a Psychometry vision any time an important place is visited or an important item is touched. This doesn't require a roll or Willpower point to activate. The Storyteller can give any information pertaining to the event in question. The Storyteller can also impose one Condition relevant to the event.

Telekinesis (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has a psychic ability to manipulate the physical world with her mind. This means lifting, pushing, and pulling objects. Fine manipulation is beyond the scope of Telekinesis. By spending a Willpower point, she can activate Telekinesis for the scene. Her dots in this Merit determine her mind's effective Strength for the purpose of lifting and otherwise influencing her environment.

A telekinetic can use her abilities to cause harm by lashing out at threats. Each "attack" costs a point of Willpower. The dice pool to attack is Telekinesis + Occult, penalized by the opponent's Stamina. The attack causes bashing damage. Alternatively, it can be used to grapple, with the Merit dots representing the Strength score of the psychic. Any overpowering maneuvers require additional Willpower points.



Drawback: Any time your character suffers injury or intense stimuli, the Storyteller may call for a Resolve + Composure roll to resist activating Telekinesis at an inopportune time. If the Storyteller calls for this roll and it fails, the character activates Telekinesis in a quick, impressive display of the power. That use of Telekinesis is free. The player can choose to automatically fail the Resolve + Composure roll and take a Beat.

Telepathy (••• or •••••)

Effect: Your character can hear surface thoughts and read minds. With the five-dot version of this Merit, she can broadcast simple messages to others' minds. She hears these thoughts as if they were spoken, which means they can sometimes be distracting. She could only hear thoughts at the range she could hear normal conversation, regardless of any ambient noise (so a telepath could hear the thoughts of someone next to her at a loud concert, even though she couldn't actually hear the subject talk, but could not hear the thoughts of someone a football field away under quiet conditions). Spend a point of Willpower to activate Telepathy and roll Wits + Empathy, minus the subject's Resolve if the subject is unwilling. If successful, the subject's player must tell you the foremost thought on the character's mind. Additional successes allow you to ask the subject's player additional questions from the following list. The questions can be asked any time within the same scene. With the five-dot version, every success offers a single phrase the subject hears as if your character said it. As before, these phrases can be communicated at any time during the same scene.

- What does your character want right now?
- What does your character fear most right now?
- What is your character hiding?
- What does your character want mine to do?
- What does your character know about [relevant topic at hand]?
- What turns your character on right now?
- What's something shameful or embarrassing about your character?

Drawback: Sometimes, your character hears things she probably shouldn't. Once per chapter, the Storyteller can give your character a message of terrible things to come. Perhaps she overhears the mad internal ramblings of a cultist in a crowd. Maybe she hears a plot to hijack a plane. Maybe, just maybe, she hears the incoherent thoughts of the God-Machine. These heard thoughts never just occur. They always happen when your character has something else, something important, something pressing going on. When this happens, the Storyteller gives you a Condition such as Spooked or Shaken.

Thief of Fate (••••)

Effect: Your character is a magnet for fortune and fate. When she's close to someone, she unintentionally steals their good fortune. If she touches someone, this Merit takes effect unless she spends a point of Willpower to curb the effect for a scene. In the same day, any failures the subject makes are considered dramatic failures. If she's used this Merit in a given day, she gains four dice any time she spends Willpower to increase a dice pool.

Drawback: Once a victim of this Merit suffers a dramatic failure, he hears your character's name in the back of his mind. This may inspire scrutiny.

Unseen Sense (••)

Effect: Your character has a "sixth sense" for a type of supernatural creature, chosen when you buy the Merit. For example, you may choose Unseen Sense: Vampires, or Unseen Sense: Fairies. The sense manifests differently for everyone. A character's hair stands on end, she becomes physically ill, or perhaps she has a cold chill. Regardless, she knows that *something isn't right* when she is in the immediate proximity of the appropriate supernatural being. Once per chapter, the player can accept the Spooked Condition (p. 183) in exchange for which the character can pinpoint where the feeling is coming from. If the target is using a power that specifically cloaks its supernatural nature, however, this does not work (though the Condition remains until resolved as usual).

Note: If the character takes "God-Machine" as the focus for this Merit, that character can also see through Concealment Infrastructure (seeing the gears when no one else can, for instance).

Fighting Merits

Some Merits in this section have other Merits as prerequisites. These are refinements of form and additional areas of expertise. For example, Iron Skin requires Martial Arts ••. This means you must have two dots in Martial Arts before buying dots in Iron Skin.

Many Fighting Style Merits require a character to sacrifice their Defense. Defense cannot be sacrificed multiple times in a turn; this prevents certain maneuvers from being used together.

Armed Defense (• to •••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Dexterity •••, Weaponry ••, Defensive Combat: Weaponry

You're able to use a weapon to stop people who are trying to kill you. Often deployed by police officers using riot shields or ASP batons, it's just as effective with a chair leg.

Cover the Angles (•): Whenever you take a Dodge action, reduce the Defense penalties for multiple attackers by 1. You can apply your full Defense against the first two attacks, suffer a -1 penalty against the third, and so on.

Weak Spot (••): You swing against your opponent's arm rather than his own weapon. Use this ability when defending

against an armed attacker. If your Defense reduces his attack pool to 0, he's disarmed. If you Dodge, you disarm your opponent if your Defense roll reduces his attack successes to 0.

Aggressive Defense (•••): Anyone dumb enough to come near you is liable to get hurt. When you take a Dodge action, if you score more successes than any attacker, you deal one point of lethal damage to the attacker per extra success. Your weapon bonus doesn't apply to this extra damage.

Drawback: You must spend a point of Willpower and declare that you are using Aggressive Defense at the start of the turn. You cannot combine this maneuver with Press the Advantage or Weak Spot.

Iron Guard (••••): You and your weapon are one. At the start of each turn, you can choose to reduce your weapon bonus (down to a minimum of 0) to increase your Defense by a like amount. If you take a Dodge action, add your full weapon bonus to your Defense after doubling your pool.

Press the Advantage (•••••): You create an opening with a block and lash out with a fist or foot. When you're taking a Dodge action, if your Defense roll reduces the attacker's successes to 0, you can make an unarmed attack against that opponent at a -2 penalty. Your opponent applies Defense as normal.

Drawback: Spend a point of Willpower to make the attack. You can only make one attack per turn in this way.

Cheap Shot (••)

Prerequisites: Street Fighting •••, Subterfuge ••

Effect: Your character is a master at the bait and switch. She can look off in an odd direction and prompt her opponent to do the same, or she might step on someone's toes to distract them. Either way, she fights dirty. Make a Dexterity + Subterfuge roll as a reflexive action. The opponent's player contests with Wits + Composure. If you score more successes, the opponent loses his Defense for the next turn. Each time a character uses this maneuver in a scene, it levies a cumulative -2 penalty to further uses since the opposition gets used to the tricks.

Choke Hold (••)

Prerequisites: Brawl ••

If you can get your hands on someone, it's over. When grappling, you can use the Choke move.

• **Choke:** If you rolled more successes than twice the victim's Stamina, he's unconscious for (six - Stamina) minutes. You must first have succeeded at a Hold move. If you don't score enough successes at first, you can Choke your opponent on future turns and total your successes.

Close Quarters Combat (• to •••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Wits •••, Athletics ••, Brawl •••

You know that hitting someone in the face is an easy way to break the little bones in your hand. To that end, you've perfected the art of using the environment to hurt people.

Firing Lines (•): In some situations, your best option is a tactical retreat — especially if you've inadvertently brought a knife to a gunfight. You can run for cover as a reaction to a ranged attack

instead of dropping prone (see "Going Prone," pp. 164-165 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). You give up your action for the turn but can get to any cover that's within twice your Speed.

Hard Surfaces (••): Bouncing someone's head off a urinal, computer monitor, or a brick wall is a handy way to increase the amount of hurt inflicted while not breaking the aforementioned hand bones. When you're grappling someone, you can bounce them off a hard surface with a Damage move. You deal lethal damage and immediately end the grapple.

Armored Coffin (•••): The problem with protection is simple: the very things that protect you can be turned against you. That holds true for body armor just as much as anything else. Sure, it blocks bullets and knives, but get in a clinch and you might as well be wearing a straightjacket. When you grapple an opponent, add their general armor rating to your dice pool. When you use a Damage move, ignore your opponent's armor. This technique can't be used in conjunction with Hard Surfaces.

Prep Work (••••): If you've got a second to look around, you could catch someone by surprise almost anywhere. When launching a surprise attack, your Dexterity + Stealth roll becomes a rote action.

Drawback: You can't use this Merit to set up sniper attacks — your ambush must use Brawl or Weaponry.

Turnabout (•••••): If you're caught short in a fight, your opponent's weapon suits you just fine. When you attempt to Disarm your opponent, step the results up one level — on a failure, your opponent drops the weapon. On a success, you take possession of your opponent's weapon. On an exceptional success, you've got the weapon and your opponent takes two points of bashing damage.

Defensive Combat (•)

Prerequisite: Brawl • or Weaponry •; choose one when this Merit is selected

Effect: You are training in avoiding damage in combat. Use your Brawl or Weaponry to calculate Defense rather than Athletics. You can learn both versions of this Merit, allowing you to use any of the three Skills to calculate Defense. However, you cannot use Weaponry to calculate Defense unless you actually have a weapon in hand.

Fighting Finesse (••)

Prerequisites: Dexterity •••, a Specialty in Weaponry or Brawl

Effect: Choose a Specialty in Weaponry or Brawl when you purchase this Merit. Your character's extensive training in that particular weapon or style has allowed them to benefit more from their alacrity and agility than their strength. You may substitute your character's Dexterity for her Strength when making rolls with that Specialty.

This Merit may be purchased multiple times to gain its benefit with multiple Specialties.

Firefight (Style. • to ••••)

Prerequisites: Composure •••, Dexterity •••, Athletics ••, Firearms ••

Effect: Your character is comfortable with a gun. She's been trained in stressful situations and knows how to keep herself from being shot while shooting at her opponents. This Style is about moving, strafing, and taking shots when you get them. It's not a series of precision techniques; it's using a gun practically in a real-world situation.

Shoot First (•): In a firefight, the person who gets shot first is usually the loser. Your character has trained herself to fire first in an altercation. If her gun is drawn, add her Firearms score to her Initiative. If she has Quick Draw, she can use Shoot First to draw and fire with increased Initiative in the first turn of combat.

Suppressive Fire (••): Sometimes, the purpose of a shot is to distract, not necessarily to hit. Your character is trained to fire off a handful of rounds with the intent to startle opponents and force impulse reactions. When using the Covering Fire maneuver (p. 200), her opponents cannot benefit from aiming against her. She can apply her Defense against incoming Firearms attacks in addition to any cover bonuses. As well, her training allows her to use Covering Fire with a semi-automatic weapon.

Secondary Target (•••): Sometimes shooting an opponent behind cover is all but impossible. A bullet can knock objects off balance, however, or cause ricochets. By using Secondary Target, your character opts to not hit her target but instead strike them with any collateral objects that might be nearby. She causes bashing damage instead of lethal, but ignores all cover penalties to the roll. The weapon's damage rating does not add to the damage in this case.

Grappling (Style • to •••••)

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

Effect: Your character has trained in wrestling or one of many grappling martial arts.

Sprawl (•): Your character can adjust her weight to defend herself in a grapple. Add two to her Strength for the purposes of resisting overpowering maneuvers.

Takedown (••): Your character can take an opponent to the ground rapidly. With a normal roll, you may choose to render an opponent prone instead of establishing a grapple. You may also choose to cause bashing damage equal to the successes rolled.

Joint Lock (•••): Once in a grapple, your character can administer joint locks and other immobilizing tactics. Any attempt to overpower your character causes the other character a point of bashing damage. In addition, any successful overpowering maneuvers your character uses cause 1L damage in addition to their normal effects.

Heavy Weapons (Style • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Stamina •••, Strength •••, Athletics ••, Weaponry ••

Effect: Your character is trained with heavy weapons that require strength, wide range, and follow-through more than direct speed and accuracy. This Style may be used with two-handed weapons such as a claymore, a chainsaw, a pike, or an uprooted street sign.

Sure Strike (•): Your character doesn't always hit the hardest or the most frequently, but you guarantee a deadly strike when you do hit. You can reflexively remove three dice from any attack dice pool (to a minimum of zero) to add one to your character's weapon damage rating for the turn. These dice must be removed after calculating any penalties from the environment or the opponent's Defense.

Threat Range (••): Your character's weapon is immense and keeps opponents at bay. If you opt not to move or Dodge during your turn, any character moving into your character's proximity suffers 1L damage and a penalty to their Defense equal to your character's weapon damage rating. This penalty only lasts for one turn. This cannot be used in a turn the character is Dodging.

Bring the Pain (•••): Your character's strikes stun and incapacitate as well as causing massive trauma to the body. Sacrifice your character's Defense to use Bring the Pain. Make a standard attack roll. Any damage you score with Bring the Pain counts as a penalty to all actions the victim takes during their next turn. So, if you cause 4L damage, the opponent is at -4 on their next attack.

Warding Stance (••••): Your character holds her weapon in such a way as to make attacks much harder. If her weapon's drawn, spend a point of Willpower reflexively to add her weapon's damage rating as armor for the turn. This will not protect against firearms.

Rending (•••••): Your character's cuts leave crippling, permanent wounds. By spending a Willpower point before making an attack roll, her successful attacks cause one point of aggravated damage in addition to her weapon's damage rating. This Willpower point does not add to the attack roll.

Improvised Weaponry (• to •••; Style)

Prerequisites: Wits •••, Weaponry •

Most people don't walk around armed. While someone pulling a knife or a gun can cool a hostile situation down, it can also cause things to boil over — an argument that wouldn't be more than harsh words suddenly ends up with three people in the morgue. If you're on the receiving end of someone pulling a knife, it helps to have something in your own hand.

You're good at making do with what you've got. Sometimes, you're lucky — if you're in a bar, you've got a lot of glass bottles, maybe a pool cue to play with. But you've got something almost like a sixth sense for weaponry and can find one almost anywhere.

Always Armed (•): You can always get your hands on something dangerous, and you've an instinctive understanding of how to put it to good — and deadly — use. At the start of your turn, make a reflexive Wits + Weaponry roll to grab an object suitable for use as a weapon in pretty much any environment. (The player is encouraged to work with the Storyteller to determine an appropriate item — a large, jagged rock in the wilderness, for example, or a heavy glass ashtray with one sharp, broken edge in a dive bar.) Regardless of what you pick up, the weapon has a +0 weapon modifier,

–1 initiative penalty, Size 1, Durability 2, and Structure 4. On an exceptional success, increase the weapon modifier and Size by 1, but the initiative penalty increases to –2. Whatever you grab doesn't suffer the normal –1 penalty for wielding an improvised weapon (see p. 205).

In Harm's Way (••): You've got a knack for putting your weapon in the way of an oncoming attack, no matter how small or inappropriate for blocking it might be. While wielding an improvised weapon acquired with Always Armed, you can treat the Structure of your weapon as general armor against a single Brawl or Weaponry attack. Any damage you take inflicts an equal amount of damage to the improvised weapon, bypassing Durability. You can use the weapon to attack later in the same turn, but can only use this ability when applying your Defense to an attack.

Breaking Point (•••): One sure way to win a fight is to hit the other guy so hard that he doesn't get back up, even if that means losing a weapon in the process. When making an all-out attack with an improvised weapon acquired with Always Armed, you can reduce the weapon's Structure by any amount down to zero. Every two points of Structure spent in this way adds +1 to the weapon modifier for that one single attack. Declare any Structure loss before making the attack; this Structure is reduced even if the attack does no damage. If the weapon is reduced to zero Structure, it is automatically destroyed after the attack.

You can use this technique in conjunction with In Harm's Way, allowing you to parry an attack made on a higher Initiative and then go on the offensive, provided that the weapon wasn't destroyed.

Iron Skin (•• or •••••)

Prerequisites: Martial Arts •• or Street Fighting ••, Stamina •••

Through rigorous conditioning or extensive scarring, your character has grown resistant to harm. She can shrug off shots that would topple bigger fighters. She knows how to take a strike and can even move into a hit from a weapon to minimize harm. She gains armor against bashing attacks; one point of armor with ••, and two points of armor with •••••. By spending a point of Willpower when hit, she can downgrade lethal damage from a successful attack into bashing. Downgrade one point of lethal damage at ••, two points of lethal with •••••.

Light Weapons (Style. • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Wits ••• or Fighting Finesse, Dexterity •••, Athletics ••, Weaponry ••

Effect: Your character is trained with small hand-to-hand weapons that favor finesse over raw power. These maneuvers may only be used with one-handed weapons that have a damage rating of 2 or less.

Rapidity (•): Your character moves with swiftness to find just the right spot to strike. You can sacrifice your character's weapon damage rating to add her Weaponry score to her Initiative for the turn. The weapon becomes a 0 damage weapon for the turn.

Thrust (••): Your character knows when to defend herself and when to move in for the kill. At any time, you can sacrifice points of Defense one-for-one to add to attack pools. This cannot happen if you've already used Defense in the same turn. If you use this maneuver, you may not sacrifice your full Defense for any other reason. For example, you cannot use Thrust with an all-out attack.

Feint (•••): With a flourish in one direction, your character can distract an opponent for a cleaner, more effective follow-up strike. For example, if you Feint with a 2 damage weapon with three successes, the attack causes no damage. However, your next attack ignores five points of Defense, and causes three extra points of damage.

Flurry (••••): Your character moves quickly enough to stab opponents with numerous pricks and swipes in the blink of an eye. As long as your character has her Defense available to her (it's not been sacrificed for another maneuver or denied from surprise, for example), any character coming into her immediate proximity takes one point of lethal damage. This damage continues once per turn as long as the enemy stays within range and occurs on the enemy's turn. This can affect multiple opponents but cannot be used in a turn where the character is Dodging.

Vital Shot (•••••): Your character can use her smaller weapon to get past an opponent's defenses and hit where it hurts most. Sacrifice your character's Defense for the turn to use this maneuver. If the attack roll succeeds, the attack causes one point of aggravated damage in addition to the damage rating of the weapon.

Marksmanship (Style. • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Composure •••, Resolve •••, Firearms ••

Effect: When prepared and aimed, a gun is an ideal killing machine. Your character has trained to take advantage of the greatest features of any gun. This Style is often used with rifles, but it can be used with any type of firearm. Because of the discipline and patience required for Marksmanship, your character cannot use her Defense in any turn in which she uses one of these maneuvers. These maneuvers may only be used after aiming for at least one turn.

Through the Crosshairs (•): Your character is a competent sniper, able to sit in position and steel her wits. Usually, the maximum bonus from aiming is three dice. With Through the Crosshairs, it's equal to her Composure + Firearms.

Precision Shot (••): With this level of training, your character knows how to effectively disable a victim instead of focusing on the kill. When attacking a specified target, you may reduce your weapon's damage rating one-for-one to ignore penalties for shooting a specified target (see p. 203).

For example, if you're using a sniper rifle (4 damage weapon), and attacking an arm (–2 to hit), you could choose to use 3 damage reduce that to –1, or 2 damage to eliminate the penalty entirely.

A Shot Rings Out (•••): A master sniper, your character has no worries or lack of confidence. She can fire into a crowd and strike a specific target without penalty. If she misses, it's because her shot goes wide. She will never hit an unintended target.

Ghost (•••••): Your character has trained to shoot unseen and vanish without a trace. Her Firearms score acts as a penalty on any roll to notice her vantage point, or any Investigation or Perception roll to investigate the area from which she shot.

Martial Arts (Style, • to •••••)

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

Effect: Your character is trained in one or more formal martial arts styles. This may have come from a personal mentor, a dojo, or a self-defense class. It may have been for exercise, protection, show, or tradition. These maneuvers may only be used unarmed, or with weapons capable of using the Brawl Skill, such as a punch dagger, or a weapon using the Shiv Merit.

Focused Attack (•): Your character has trained extensively in striking specific parts of an opponent's body. Reduce penalties for hitting specific targets by one. Additionally, you may ignore one point of armor on any opponent.

Defensive Strike (••): Your character excels in defending herself while finding the best time to strike. You can add one or two points to your character's Defense. For each Defense point you take, subtract a die from any attacks you make. This can only be used in a turn in which your character intends to attack. It cannot be used with a Dodge.

Whirlwind Strike (•••): When engaged, your character becomes a storm of threatening kicks and punches; nothing close is safe. As long as your character has her Defense available to her and is not Dodging, any character coming into arm's reach takes 1B damage. This damage continues once per turn as long as the enemy stays within range and occurs on the enemy's turn. If you spend a point of Willpower, this damage becomes 2B until your next turn.

The Hand as Weapon (•••••): With this degree of training, your character's limbs are hardened to cause massive trauma. Her unarmed strikes cause lethal damage.

The Touch of Death (•••••): Your character's mastery has brought with it the daunting power of causing lethal injury with a touch. If she chooses, her unarmed strikes count as weapons with 2 damage rating.

Police Tactics (Style, • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Brawl ••, Weaponry •

Effect: Your character is trained in restraint techniques often used by law enforcement officers. This may reflect formal training or lessons from a skilled practitioner.

Compliance Hold (•): Gain a +2 bonus to overpowering rolls to disarm or immobilize an opponent.

Weapon Retention (••): Opponents attempting to disarm your character or turn her weapon against her must exceed your character's Weaponry score in successes.

Speed Cuff (•••): Against an immobilized opponent, your character may apply handcuffs, cable ties, or similar restraints as a reflexive action.

Shiv (• or ••)

Prerequisites: Street Fighting ••, Weaponry •

Effect: Your character carries small, concealable weapons for use in a tussle. Rolls to detect the concealed weapon suffer your character's Weaponry score as a penalty. With the one-dot version, she can conceal a weapon with a 0 damage rating. The two-dot version can conceal a 1 damage rating weapon. Your character may use the Brawl Skill to use this weapon.

Street Fighting (Style, • to •••••)

Prerequisites: Stamina •••, Composure •••, Brawl ••, Streetwise ••

Effect: Your character learned to fight on the mean streets. She may have had some degree of formal training, but the methodology came from the real world in dangerous circumstances. Street Fighting isn't about form and grace. It's about staying alive. These maneuvers may only be used unarmed, with weapons capable of using the Brawl Skill (such as punch daggers), or weapons concealed with the Shiv Merit (above).

Duck and Weave (•): Your character has been beaten all to hell more than a few times. Now she dodges on instinct, not on skill. You can reflexively take a one-die penalty to any actions this turn in order to use the higher of her Wits and Dexterity to calculate Defense. If you've already made a roll without penalty this turn, you cannot use Duck and Weave.

Knocking the Wind Out (••): Shots to the center mass can shake an opponent, and your character knows this well. When your character makes a successful unarmed attack, the opponent suffers a -1 to his next roll.

Kick 'Em While They're Down (•••): The best enemy is one on the ground. Your character topples opponents and keeps them down. Any time your successes on an attack roll exceed an opponent's Stamina, you may choose to apply the Knocked Down Tilt (p. 211). Additionally, any time your character is close enough to strike when an opponent attempts to get up from a prone position, she can reflexively cause 2B damage.

One-Two Punch (•••••): Your character hits fast and follows through with every hit. Whenever she makes a successful attack, you can spend a point of Willpower to cause two extra points of bashing damage.

Last-Ditch Effort (•••••): In a street fight, every second could be the one that kills you. A proficient street fighter is a remarkable survivalist. She bites, headbutts, trips: whatever it takes to prevent that last hit. Any time a character with this level of Street Fighting is about to take a hit or an overpowering maneuver when she's already suffering wound penalties, she can reflexively spend a Willpower point and sacrifice her Defense for the turn to make an attack against her would-be assailant. This can occur even if she's already acted in a turn, so long as she's not already spent Willpower. Resolve this attack before the opponent's action.

Unarmed Defense

(• to •••••; Style)

Prerequisites: Dexterity •••, Brawl ••, Defensive Combat: Brawl

You're better at stopping people from hurting you than you are at hurting other people. Maybe you practice a martial art that redirects an opponent's blows, or else you're just very good at not being where your opponent wants you to be.

Like a Book (•): You can read your opponents and know where they're likely to strike. When facing an unarmed opponent and not Dodging, increase your Defense by half your Brawl (round down).

Studied Style (••): You focus on reading one opponent, avoiding his attacks, and frustrating him. Attacks from that opponent do not reduce your Defense. If your Defense reduces his attack pool to 0, his further attacks against you lose the 10-again quality.

Redirect (•••): When you're being attacked by multiple opponents, you can direct their blows against one another. When you Dodge, if your Defense roll reduces an attack's successes to 0, your attacker rolls the same attack against another attacker of your choice.

Drawback: You may only redirect one attack in a turn. You cannot redirect an attack against the same attacker.

Joint Strike (••••): You wait until the last possible second then lash out at your opponent's elbow or wrist as he attacks, hoping to cripple his limbs. Roll Strength + Brawl instead of Defense. If you score more successes than your attacker, you deal one point of bashing damage per extra success, and inflict either the Arm Wrack or Leg Wrack Tilt (your choice).

Drawback: Spend a point of Willpower to use this maneuver.

Like the Breeze (•••••): You step to one side as your opponent attacks and give her enough of a push to send her flying past you. When dodging, if your Defense roll reduces an opponent's attack successes to 0, you can inflict the Knocked Down Tilt.

Drawback: You must declare that you're using this maneuver at the start of the turn before taking any other attacks.

Conditions

Conditions add an additional layer of consequence and reward to certain actions in the World of Darkness. They're not traits a player can buy or choose for her character. They're conditional; the context and the gameplay apply them and they remain only until certain **resolution** criteria are met. These resolutions are determined by the effect that causes the Condition or the terms of the Condition itself. Whenever your character resolves a Condition, take a Beat.

Conditions and Tilts (see p. 206) work similarly, but Conditions primarily play roles outside of combat, whereas Tilts tip the tides of a battle.

A character cannot have multiple instances of a Condition unless they apply to two different and specific things. For example, you may have Connected (Mob) and Connected (Police.)

Conditions replace the Flaws rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Sources of Conditions

Various things within the course of a game can cause Conditions. The most common is exceptional successes. Any time a player rolls an exceptional success, the player may choose to bring a Condition into play. This Condition must be relevant to the situation. Some supernatural abilities can also offer Conditions. Ghostly Numina may offer Conditions, as well as vampiric Disciplines or werewolf Gifts.

A Storyteller may add a Condition to a character during any situation where she feels it would heighten the drama of the game.

Breaking points can cause Conditions (see Integrity, p. 184).

Lastly, complex behaviors may cause Conditions. For example, a well-planned heist may impose the Overwhelmed Condition on the chief of police, or a detailed bout of research and investigation may offer the Informed Condition.

Resolutions

While we've listed resolutions for each Condition, other things may end its effects. Use your better judgment when determining Condition resolution. The rule of thumb is that anything that would cause the Condition's effects to end can be counted as resolution.

Persistent Conditions

Some Conditions are marked as Persistent. These Conditions are tied inexorably to the character (replacing the Flaws in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). Persistent Conditions may offer one Beat per game session when they complicate the character's life. With Storyteller permission, players may take Persistent Conditions for their characters at character creation. Persistent Conditions may be resolved permanently only with a specific and impressive effort, along with Storyteller discretion.

Conditions on Storyteller Characters

Storyteller characters don't usually track Experiences the way the players' characters do. Any time a Storyteller character offered experience by a Condition, they simply regain a point of Willpower for use in the same scene.

Condition List

The list below includes common Conditions that can be applied to characters. For Skill-based rolls, an exceptional success allows the noted Condition (unless otherwise stated). It may go to your character or the subject of the roll, as noted.

While we've listed a handful of recommended Skills that afford a given Condition, this list is hardly exhaustive. Give whatever Conditions make sense within the scope of the story. If a Condition has no listed Skills, it's because

another circumstance within the rules can cause it and it's not something easily brought upon by regular Skill usage.

Addicted (Persistent)

Your character is addicted to something, whether drugs, gambling or other destructive behaviors. Some addictions are more dangerous than others, but the nature of addiction is that it slowly takes over your life, impeding functionality. If you are addicted, you need to indulge your addiction regularly to keep it under control. A specific addiction should be chosen upon taking this Condition; characters can take this Condition multiple times for different addictions. Being unable to feed your addiction can result in the Deprived Condition.

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: Your character chooses to get a fix rather than fulfill an obligation.

Amnesia (Persistent)

Your character is missing a portion of her memory. An entire period of her life is just gone. This causes massive difficulties with friends and loved ones.

Resolution: You regain your memory and learn the truth. Depending on the circumstances, this may constitute a breaking point.

Beat: Something problematic arises, such as a forgotten arrest warrant or old enemy.

Blind (Persistent)

Your character cannot see. Any rolls requiring sight may only use a chance die. If another sense can be reasonably substituted, make the roll at -3 instead. In a combat situation, she suffers the drawbacks of the Blinded Tilt (see p. 208). This Condition may be temporary, but that is usually the result of a combat effect, in which case the Blindness Tilt would apply.

Resolution: Your character regains her sight.

Beat: Your character encounters a limitation or difficulty that inconveniences her.

Broken (Persistent)

Whatever you did or saw, something inside you snapped. You can barely muster up the will to do your job anymore, and anything more emotionally intense than a raised voice makes you flinch and back down. Apply a -2 to all Social rolls and rolls involving Resolve and a -5 to all use of the Intimidation Skill.

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: You back down from a confrontation or fail a roll due to this Condition.

Bonded

Your character has established an extensive bond with a specific animal. She gains +2 on any rolls to influence or persuade her bonded animal. It may add your Animal Ken to any rolls to resist coercion or fear when in your character's presence. The animal may add your character's Animal Ken to any one die roll.

Resolution: The bonded animal dies or is otherwise parted from the character.

Beat: n/a

Connected (Persistent)

Your character has made inroads with a specified group. While she has this Condition, she gets a +2 to all rolls relating to that group. Alternately, she can shed this Condition to gain a one-time automatic exceptional success on the next roll to influence or otherwise take advantage of the group. Once Connected is resolved, the character is considered to have burned her bridges and is no longer an accepted member. The character may be able to regain Connected with the specified group per Storyteller approval.

Example Skills: Politics, Socialize

Resolution: The character loses her membership or otherwise loses her standing with the group.

Beat: The character is asked to perform a favor for the group that inconveniences her.

Disabled (Persistent)

Your character has limited or no ability to walk. Her Speed trait is effectively 1. She must rely on a wheelchair or other device to travel. A manual wheelchair's Speed is equal to your character's Strength and requires use of her hands. Electric wheelchairs have a Speed of 3, but allow the free use of the character's hands.

An injury can cause this Condition temporarily, in which case it is resolved when the injury heals and the character regains mobility.

Resolution: The character's disability is cured by mundane or supernatural means.

Beat: Your character's limited mobility inconveniences your character and makes her slow to respond.

Deprived

Your character suffers from an addiction. She is unable to get her fix, however, leaving her irritable, anxious, and unable to focus. Remove one from her Stamina, Resolve, and Composure dice pools. This does not influence derived traits; it only influences dice pools that use these Attributes.

Resolution: Your character indulges her addiction.

Beat: n/a

Embarrassing Secret

Your character has a secret from his past that could come back to haunt him. If this secret gets out, he could be ostracized or maybe even arrested. If it becomes known, this Condition is exchanged for Notoriety (p. 183).

Resolution: The character's secret is made public, or the character does whatever is necessary to make sure it never comes to light.

Beat: n/a

Fugue (Persistent)

Something terrible happened. Rather than deal with it or let it break you, your mind shuts it out. You are prone to blackouts and lost time. Whenever circumstances become too similar to the situation that led to your gaining this Condition, the player rolls Resolve + Composure. If you fail the roll, the Storyteller controls your character for the next scene; your character, left to his own devices, will seek to avoid the conflict and get away from the area.

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: You enter a fugue state as described above.

Guilty

Your character is experiencing deep-seated feelings of guilt and remorse. This Condition is commonly applied after a successful breaking point roll (p. 185). While the character is under the effects of this Condition, he receives a -2 to any Resolve or Composure rolls to defend against Subterfuge, Empathy or Intimidation rolls.

Resolution: The character confesses his crimes and makes restitution for whatever he did.

Beat: n/a

Informed

Your character has a breadth of research information based on the topic she investigated. When you make a roll relating to the topic, you may choose to resolve this Condition. If you resolve it and the roll failed, it is instead considered to have a single success. If it succeeded, the roll is considered an exceptional success.

The roll that benefits from the Informed Condition can be any relevant Skill roll. For example, a character with Informed (Werewolves) might gain its benefits when using researched information to build a silver bear trap with the Crafts Skill. Combat rolls cannot benefit from this Condition.

Example Skills: Academics, Investigation, Occult, Science

Resolution: Your character uses her research to gain information; the Condition is resolved as described above.

Beat: n/a

Inspired

Your character is deeply inspired. When your character takes an action pertaining to that inspiration, you may resolve this Condition. An exceptional success on that roll requires only three successes instead of five and you gain a point of Willpower.

Example Skills: Crafts, Expression

Resolution: You spend inspiration to spur yourself to greater success, resolving the Condition as described above.

Beat: n/a

Leveraged

Your character has been blackmailed, tricked, convinced, or otherwise leveraged into doing what another character wishes. You may have the Leveraged Condition multiple times for different characters. Any time the specified character requests something of you, you may resolve this Condition if your character does as requested without rolling to resist.

Example Skills: Empathy, Persuasion, Subterfuge

Resolution: Your character may either resolve the Condition by complying with a request as above, or if you apply the Leveraged condition to the specified character.

Beat: n/a

Lost

Your character has no idea where she is or how to reach her target. Characters with the Lost Condition remove one die from their Composure dice pools. This does not influence derived traits; it only influences dice pools that use these Attributes. A Lost character cannot make any headway toward her goal without first navigating and finding her place. This requires a successful Wits + Streetwise action (in the city) or Wits + Survival action (in the wilderness).

Resolution: Your character gives up on reaching her intended destination, or she successfully navigates as described above.

Beat: n/a

Madness (Persistent)

Your character saw or did something that jarred her loose from reality. This isn't a mental illness born of brain chemistry—that, at least, might be treatable. This madness is the product of supernatural tampering or witnessing something that humanity was never meant to comprehend. The Storyteller has a pool of dice equal to 10 - (character's Integrity). Once per chapter, the Storyteller can apply those dice as a negative modifier to any Mental or Social roll made for the character.

Resolution: Regain a dot of Integrity, lose *another* dot of Integrity, or achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: The character fails a roll because of this Condition.

Mute (Persistent)

Your character cannot speak. Any communication must be done through writing, gestures, or hand signs. Illness, injury, or supernatural powers can inflict this Condition on a temporary basis.

Resolution: The character regains her voice through mundane or supernatural means.

Beat: Your character suffers a limitation or communication difficulty that heightens immediate danger.

Notoriety

Whether or not your character actually did something heinous in the past, the wrong people think he did and now he's ostracized by the general public. Your character suffers a -2 on any Social rolls against those who know of his notoriety. If using Social maneuvering (p. 188), the character must open one extra Door if his target knows of his notoriety.

Example Skills: Subterfuge, Socialize

Resolution: The story is debunked or the character's name is cleared.

Beat: n/a

Obsession (Persistent)

Something's on your character's mind and she just can't shake it. She gains the 9-again quality on all rolls related to pursuing her obsession. On rolls that are unrelated to her obsession, she loses the 10-again quality. Obsession can be a temporary quality per Storyteller approval.

Resolution: The character sheds or purges her fixation.

Beat: Character fails to fulfill an obligation due to pursuing her obligation.

Shaken

Something has severely frightened your character. Any time your character is taking an action where that fear might hinder her, you may opt to fail the roll and resolve this Condition. This Condition can be imposed by undergoing a breaking point roll.

Example Skills: Brawl, Firearms, Intimidation, Weaponry

Resolution: The character gives into her fear and fails a roll as described above.

Beat: n/a

Spooked

Your character has seen something supernatural — not overt enough to terrify her, but unmistakably otherworldly. How your character responds to this is up to you, but it captivates her and dominates her focus.

Resolution: This Condition is resolved when your character's fear and fascination causes her to do something that hinders the group or complicates things (she goes off alone to investigate a strange noise, stays up all night researching, runs away instead of holding her ground, etc.).

Beat: n/a

Steadfast

Your character is confident and resolved. When you've failed a roll, you may choose resolve this Condition to instead treat the action as if you'd rolled a single success. If the roll is a chance die, you may choose to



resolve this Condition and roll a single regular die instead.

Resolution: Your character's confidence carries him through and the worst is avoided; the Condition is resolved as described above.

Beat: n/a

Swooning

Your character is attracted to someone and is vulnerable where they are concerned. He may have the proverbial "butterflies in his stomach" or just be constantly aware of the object of his affection. A character may have multiple instances of this Condition, reflecting affection for multiple characters. He suffers a -2 to any rolls that would adversely affect the specified character, who also gains +2 on any Social rolls against him. If the specified character is attempting Social maneuvering on the Swooning character, the impression level is considered one higher (maximum of perfect; see p. 193).

Example Skills: Persuasion, Subterfuge

Resolution: Your character does something for his love interest that puts him in danger, or he opts to fail a roll to resist a Social action by the specified character.

Beat: n/a

Creating New Conditions

This list of Conditions is by no means intended to be exhaustive. The players and the Storyteller can and should create new Conditions to apply to whatever situations arise in play. When creating a Condition, consider the following two points:

- What game mechanics does the Condition require?
- How can the Condition be resolved?

All Conditions should have some kind of game effect. They can add or subtract dice, restrict certain kinds of rolls, remove 10-again or add 9-again, and interact with sub-systems such as Social maneuvering. A Condition that affects a character's performance in combat is actually a Tilt (see p. 206).

For example, Agent Lundy is investigating a crime scene while a local policeman, Officer Mallory, looks on. Lundy's player rolls an exceptional success on his Investigation roll and finds an amazing amount of detail and information. The Storyteller asks the player if he would like to place a Condition on Mallory, if Mallory's player is amenable. Lundy suggests Awed, since Mallory is feeling pretty intimidated by Lundy's investigatory prowess.

Mallory's player agrees and grabs an index card. She writes "Awed – Lundy" on it. The players could model this on the Swooning or Leveraged Conditions, but Mallory's player decides she'd rather have this manifest as Mallory becoming flustered around Lundy. She asks if she can shed this Condition to fail an Investigation or Social roll while in Lundy's presence (thus resolving the Condition). The Storyteller agrees and Mallory's player holds the card until she wants to use it. When she does, she'll gain a Beat.

Integrity

The Morality system described in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** provides a workable system for measuring the effects of characters' behavior upon their psyches, but it has a few problems. Most of those problems stem from terminology. The system doesn't measure morality so much as behavior, and the consequences (increased willingness to transgress the "hierarchy of sins" and, potentially, derangements) are more akin to post-traumatic stress disorder than the actual effects of the crimes on the list.

The Morality system is designed to evoke the Gothic/Victorian ethos in which a person's sanity was thought to be a function of their morality. It was also designed to be mutable enough to change and provoke a moral or spiritual framework for the various supernatural beings. When a mortal becomes a vampire, therefore, "Morality" becomes "Humanity" and measures how much of the Man has fallen to the ravenous Beast. If a mortal undergoes the First Change and becomes a werewolf, the trait changes to "Harmony" and reflects whether the character is living with a lycanthrope's spiritual duty. A human being stolen by the Fae tracks Clarity, measuring how well he can trust his own senses and to what extent he has become like the Gentry, and so on. In this respect, the Morality system works quite well. Unfortunately, in emulating the Victorian ethos, we wind up implying that one can commit murder and become schizophrenic. This isn't the case. The system suffers from inconsistent and inappropriate terminology and from trying to signify too much within the game.

To revise it, though, we need to consider what a Morality system should mean to a World of Darkness game. The underlying thematic push here is that what a person does has an effect on their mental state, which is probably fair. However, better representations for that effect than derangements are possible, especially with the rules revisions in this book. And besides, Morality has never really measured Morality – it measures functionality within society. It measures how well a character copes with what she has seen or done.

With all of that in mind, the following rules replace the Morality and degeneration rules found in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Breaking Points

The notion of breaking points replaces the notion of "sins" and therefore removes the need for a "hierarchy of sins." If the action would cause a character psychological stress, it's worth considering whether the action constitutes a breaking point. Note, too, that the character may experience breaking points that do not stem from his own actions. Witnessing the gruesome realities of the World of Darkness, supernatural or otherwise, can do it.

The player should make some decisions about the character's breaking points during character creation. This is discussed in more detail on p. 155.

“My Character Kills People All the Time”

Is it possible for a character to reach a point where killing another human being is *not* a breaking point? Players might make the argument for soldiers, policemen, gang members or good-hearted serial killers to be exempt from suffering breaking points from taking a life, up to a point. For mortal, non-supernatural characters, our recommendation is that if a character kills a person, it's *always* a breaking point, even if the player gets a positive modifier to the roll.

Note that we said “mortal, non-supernatural” character. Vampires, werewolves and other shadow-folk aren't fully human and don't play by the same rules. Their rules, in fact, will be addressed in the appropriate books.

Determining a Breaking Point

If the player has completed the five questions (p. 156), the Storyteller should have at least a baseline for determining breaking points for the character. Even so, the player is welcome to decide that any event during a game is a breaking point and the Storyteller is likewise within her rights to make that choice for any character.

If a player feels that a given event should *not* count as a breaking point, he is free to argue the matter with the Storyteller. If it's important to the player, it's best to let the matter go — the player has a better sense of his character than anyone else. Obviously, the Storyteller shouldn't let this guideline allow for abuse, but that's where the player-guided definitions of breaking points come in.

Example: Ellie, Mike and Mallory (the characters from the examples on pp. 156–157) are part of The 300 Block Tale (p. 69). They eventually find the boiler room and discover the mechanisms, covered in fresh blood. Does this constitute a breaking point for any of them? The Storyteller suggests it does for all of them. Mallory has seen violence, true, but nothing on this scale. Mike has specific issues in his backstory with large amounts of blood, and Ellie has led a fairly sheltered life — this should definitely rattle her.

Matt and Charles both agree that this scene constitutes a breaking point. Matt suggests that he should take an additional –1 on the roll because of the machinery (Mike is familiar with machinery and he knows that this device has no human precedent). Jennifer, however, argues that Mallory's training might kick in; she'll have to cope with this later, but she's seen worse than this in crime scenes before.

The Storyteller offers that the supernatural aspect here adds a wrinkle she hasn't seen, but maybe she gets a +2 to the roll to represent her experiences? Jennifer agrees to this.

System

When a character experiences a breaking point, the player rolls Resolve + Composure with a modifier based on the character's Integrity rating:

Integrity	Modifier
8–10	+2
7–6	+1
5–4	0
3–2	–1
1	–2

The Storyteller can also impose modifiers based on how heinous the breaking point is, relative to the character's experience. The chart below gives some suggestions, but again, the Storyteller and the player are encouraged to develop the character's moral framework and life experience to the point that modifiers can be customized. Modifiers are cumulative, but the total modifier from circumstances should not exceed +/-5 dice.

Breaking Point	Modifier
Character is protecting himself	+1
Character is acting in accordance with his Virtue	+1
Character is protecting a loved one	+2
Character is acting in accordance with his Vice	–1
Witnessing the supernatural (non-violent)	–1
Witnessing the supernatural (violent)	–2
Witnessing an accidental death	–2
Witnessing a murder	–3
Committing premeditated murder	–5
Killing in self-defense	–4
Killing by accident (car wreck, e.g.)	–4
Causing visible serious injury to a person	–2
Torture	–3
Enduring physical torture	–2
Enduring mental/emotional supernatural attack	–2
Enduring physical supernatural attack	–2
Witnessing a supernatural occurrence	–1 to –5, depending on severity

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's world view has been damaged, perhaps beyond repair. The character suffers from traumatic stress. Lose a dot of Integrity and choose from the following Conditions (or create a new one with Storyteller approval): Broken, Fugue, or Madness. Also, take a Beat.

Failure: The character's world view has been shaken and he probably questions his sense of self, his ability to relate to people, his own moral worth, or his sanity. Lose a dot of Integrity and choose one of the following Conditions (or create a new one with Storyteller approval): Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked.

Success: The character has come through the breaking point intact. He might feel guilty or upset about what happened, but he can cope. Choose one of the following Conditions (or create a new one with Storyteller approval): Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked.

Exceptional Success: The character somehow manages not only to survive the breaking point, but to find meaning in it, to reaffirm his own self-worth, or to pass through fire and become tempered by it. The character takes a Beat and regains a point of Willpower.

Soul Loss

One supernatural trauma tears at the foundation of Integrity, reducing the strongest personalities to shuffling near-catatonia. Certain rare and powerful magic can strike at a victim's soul, removing or destroying it.

The human soul exists in Twilight (see p. 218) but is not made of ephemera, so is insubstantial even to ephemeral beings unless they have Numina or Influences allowing them to manipulate souls. In general, only very high-Rank ghosts, or angels specifically sent to meddle with souls, have such abilities. Some demons and mages also have the knowledge and power necessary to affect the higher self. The soul is so subtle, most people can't even tell that they have one – until it's gone.

At first, the victim feels fine – better than normal, even, energized and ready to take on the world. But it's a false sense of security, caused by her psyche overcompensating for the loss. She feels like she can achieve anything, but the void in her heart drives her to increasingly desperate acts of self-affirmation. A character who loses her soul immediately suffers the Soulless Condition, described below, which represents her Integrity crumbling in her soul's absence. Once she has reached Integrity 1, she gains the Enervated Condition as her attempts to reassure herself fail and her Willpower decays. Once her permanent Willpower is reduced to 0, she gains the Thrall Condition. Unless she gets her soul back somehow, she will live the rest of her life in a miserable, barely conscious half-state, unable to care for herself or muster any defense.

Soulless (Persistent)

The character is in the first stage of soul loss. Without a soul, she can't attempt abjuration, warding, or binding (see p. 231). She is also more susceptible to possession – any dice pools to resist being taken over or possessed by another entity are at a -2 dice penalty. The effects on Integrity and Willpower, though, are more severe. For as long as she has this Condition, she does not regain Willpower through surrender or rest, and her use of Virtue and Vice is reversed. She may regain one Willpower point per scene by fulfilling her Virtue without having to risk herself, and regains full Willpower once per chapter by fulfilling her Vice in a way that poses a threat to herself. Regaining Willpower through Vice, though, is now a breaking point with a -5 penalty unless the character has reached Integrity 1.

Resolution: Gain a beat whenever the character loses Integrity because she indulged her Vice. This Condition is only removed if the character regains her soul.

Enervated (Persistent)

The character is in the second stage of soul loss. Her instinctive efforts to shore up her Willpower by giving into her urges have failed, her Integrity has gone and her Willpower is now fading. In addition to the effects of Soulless, she can no longer regain Willpower through her Virtue, only her Vice. Indulging herself brings diminishing returns – whenever she does so, her permanent Willpower drops by one dot before she regains Willpower points to the new maximum.

Resolution: Gain a beat whenever the character loses a dot of Willpower. This Condition is only removed if the character regains her soul.

Thrall (Persistent)

The character has fully succumbed to the effects of soullessness. She may not spend Willpower points for any reason, may not use her Defense in combat, may not spend Experiences, and suffers all the effects of the Broken Condition (see p. 181) as well. The player should only continue playing a character with this Condition if she stands a chance of regaining the Soul.

Resolution: Gain a beat whenever the character is victimized as a result of her Condition. This Condition is only removed if the character regains her soul.

Regaining the Soul

What magic takes away, magic can return. If a character suffering from soul loss regains a soul (usually, but not necessarily, her own), the Conditions brought on by the soul's absence rapidly reverse themselves. She immediately sheds the Soulless, Enervated, and Thrall Conditions. If she'd dropped to Willpower 0 she immediately gains Willpower 1.

Willpower comes back first – every time she regains a point of Willpower through rest or fulfilling her

Virtue, her permanent Willpower increases by one until it returns to the rating she had before losing her soul. Once Willpower has returned to normal, one Integrity dot lost to the Soulless Condition returns every time she regains Willpower through rest. Conditions caused by the breaking points directly resulting from soullessness are removed when the Integrity dot they are associated with returns. Integrity dots lost to breaking points suffered while Integrity was decaying for other reasons don't come back. For example, if a soulless character is reduced to Integrity 3 and commits murder, losing another dot to a breaking point, she will stabilize with one less dot than she originally had if her soul is returned.

Extended Actions: Digging in Deeper

Extended actions represent efforts to complete complex tasks. There's a process, a progression, then the task is complete. These rules replace the extended action rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Each roll in an extended action reflects a step in the process. Something changes. Either your character progresses or she faces a setback.

Determine the Dice Pool

As with any action, first determine the dice pool as Attribute + Skill + Equipment. Situational modifiers apply and may change from roll to roll as the story unfolds. The unmodified Attribute + Skill + Specialty (if any) determines the maximum number of dice rolls allowed before the action fails. Players may roll the number of dice in their pool up to the number of dice rolls allowed as they attempt to succeed.

Example: Sammy's car has broken down out on a lonely road, but Sammy manages to get it to limp to a service station before it dies completely. No one is around, but the place seems to be pretty well maintained. Figuring the local mechanic is just out, Sammy waits ... but no one comes. As night begins to fall, Sammy figures he'd better just fix the damn thing himself so he can stay ahead of the things chasing him.

The Storyteller sets the repair roll as Wits + Crafts. Sammy has Wits 2, Crafts 4 and a Specialty in Auto Repair, which applies. Altogether, the player has seven dice in the unmodified pool, so she can roll seven times.

Determine Target Successes and Time

Next, the Storyteller determines the required successes and the time between rolls.

Most actions require between five and twenty successes for completion. Five successes reflects a reasonable action that most competent characters can complete given the right tools and knowledge (replacing the brakes on a car, for example). Ten represents a difficult action, but one realistic for a professional in the field (writing a robust and popular academic thesis). Twenty successes represents a very difficult action that requires a strong showing even for a very skilled character (preparing a violin solo worthy of a world-class performance). With creative endeavors, players may choose their own target successes, to reflect different degrees of effort and accomplishment.

When determining the time between rolls, a Storyteller should rely on common sense and logic. Would something take weeks? Consider one roll per week. Could a person realistically accomplish the task in a day? An hour per roll makes for a solid timeframe.

Characters must be dedicated to the task during this time. Unless there's a good reason (brain surgery, for example), characters may take breaks or handle other minor tasks in the meantime. With most tasks, it's possible to step aside and continue progress later. Any rolls requiring a day or more assume the character sleeps normally.

Example: The Storyteller decides that each roll requires a half hour; Sammy's player needs to accumulate seven successes. Normally this wouldn't be a big problem given Sammy's dice pool, but sunset is in two hours and Sammy wants to be gone by then. The player really only has four rolls.

Roll Results

Success

Each successful roll adds to the running total, bringing the task closer to completion. Consider what changes, and what steps the character has made toward the accomplishment. Make each roll palpable.

Example: Sammy's player makes the first roll and generates one success. That's better than nothing, but it does make the player a little nervous. The Storyteller describes Sammy digging around under the hood to diagnose the problem and then turning around to the unfamiliar garage, looking for the right parts as the shadows lengthen.

Failed Rolls

When you fail a roll, the Storyteller presents a choice: either take a Condition (of her choice) or abandon the action. The player can offer up a different suggestion as to what the Condition should be or how it should affect the character (see [Conditions](#), p. 180), but the choice after a failed roll in an extended action is always accept the Condition and continue, or refuse the Condition and lose all accumulated successes.

Example: Sammy's player rolls again and this time fails. The Storyteller suggests that Sammy is Frustrated by this outcome. The player can either agree that Sammy

is Frustrated (taking Frustrated as a Condition and working with the Storyteller to quickly determine what this Condition means in game terms), or refuse and start over. The player, wanting to get a Beat out of the Condition (see *Beats*, p. 157), agrees that Sammy is Frustrated and continues. The player has one success toward the required seven.

Exceptional Success

If you roll an exceptional success at any point during the process, you have three options: You can subtract the dots your character has in the relevant Skill from the total required (which might mean you accomplish the goal right then and there), you can reduce the time on each roll by one quarter, or you can apply the “exceptional success” result when your character does complete the goal (many of the “Roll Results” descriptions in various *World of Darkness* books describe an extra bonus for finishing an extended action with an exceptional success; this option allows the player to choose to apply it if appropriate).

Example: On the third roll, Sammy’s player rolls five successes. This is an exceptional success, so the player has three choices: She can subtract Sammy’s Crafts rating from the required total, she can reduce the time for each roll by 25%, or she can apply a special bonus to the action if she completes it in time.

The player considers her options. The time reduction isn’t really that helpful in this situation. It would reduce each roll from 30 minutes to 22.5 minutes, not really saving a great deal of time. If she chooses to reduce the total number of successes, it falls from 7 to 3 (7 – Crafts rating (4) = 3), which would mean that the work is done and Sammy can leave (as the player has accumulated six successes with the five successes from this turn). The Storyteller suggests that a bonus might be to apply the Souped Up Condition to the car, giving it a bonus on Speed that Sammy can activate when necessary. Given how the chronicle has gone so far, and that the player still has one more roll to make before the sun sets, she takes that option. Sammy still has a little more work to do (one more success).

Dramatic Failures

Dramatic failures go a step further than normal failures; your character fails the action and receives a Condition. As well, the first roll on a further attempt suffers a –2 penalty.

Example: Sammy’s player has one more roll until sunset (note: the player *could* actually make four more rolls, for a total of seven, equal to the dice pool, but this situation has extenuating circumstances). The player rolls...and fails. Since Sammy will be stuck here past sunset no matter what the player does, she opts to have this failure count as a dramatic failure (see p. 157), gain a Beat for her trouble, and hope that the other characters arrive before whatever is chasing Sammy does. If Sammy tries to fix this car again, the player will suffer a –2 on the first roll.

Near Misses

So what happens if a character accumulates *most* of the successes required for the extended action but has to stop due to running out of time or reaching the maximum number of rolls? All of the work the character did doesn’t just vanish, after all.

That’s true, insofar as it goes. Once the character has reached the maximum allowable rolls for a given extended action, however, he has exhausted the limits of his talent in the area. He can come back to it once his dice pool changes – if the player buys up the relevant Skill or Attribute or buys a new Specialty, the character can pick up where he left off (but he only gets one more roll unless the player changes the dice pool by more than one die).

If the character had to abandon the project before the maximum number of rolls was reached, however, he can come back to it and continue making the rolls until he reaches that limit, provided that it’s the kind of project that will “keep.” A character could continue working on a novel for years, but making a soufflé is probably a one-attempt project.

If the player has accumulated *less than 25% of the total required successes* (round down), the successes are lost. The character just didn’t get a good enough start on the project.

If the player accumulated *at least 50% of the total required successes* (round down), the player can add a +2 bonus to the first roll of the extended action if the character attempts it again within the same chapter.

If the player accumulated *75% or more of the total required successes* (round down), the player can add a +4 bonus to the first roll of the extended action, if the character attempts it again within the same story.

If the player rolled an exceptional success during the process and opted for the “end bonus” option, that option remains even if the character comes back to the action later.

Example: Sammy ultimately failed the action, but he did so with six out of seven successes. If he tries to fix that car again any time during this story, he’ll receive a net bonus of +2 on the first roll (+4 for the progress he made, –2 for the dramatic failure at the end). Also, if he completes it, he’ll keep the Souped Up Condition on the car. Since he only made four rolls on the initial project, he can make three more to finish this project. He only needs one more success – that should be plenty.

Social Maneuvering

These rules replace the standard rules for Social actions in the *World of Darkness Rulebook*. They assume your character making effort toward getting another character or a group of characters to do what she wants. Social actions within this system may be direct or subtle, complex or simple. For example, your character may shout at another and demand he gets out of the way, or your character may subtly offer clues suggesting someone needs to vote for her.

Tuesday, 25th January 1916

Skerries

Dear Alexander,

I wonder if even now you can hear me.

The events of the last forty-eight hours have by turns terrified and thrilled me, and while I could rave about what happened yesterday, the power of a pair of eyes opening, the transformation of skin into skin, I must write these things in some sort of order, if only to preserve my sanity.

It came as no surprise to me the following morning, nor, apparently, to de Selby, that Sergeant Fox, bicycle and all, had invited himself on the trip. The effect of flatness that the land had held for me the preceding night had not diminished in the light of morning; if anything, it had increased. The land looked more to me like a simulacrum of a real land than it had before. The Sergeant only added to the effect of falseness, as if his round face were a flat mask painted in pink oils with shillings for eyes, as if the gold buttons on his uniform were splotches of yellow paint and his bicycle an ersatz contraption of papier mâché and cardboard tubes. At least de Selby's grotesque house was real. Its stench hung on the man and gave him a peculiar look of decay.

De Selby had with him two of the maps that had been pinned on the laundry room walls, rolled up neatly in a cardboard tube. After about a mile of journey through the strange flat country, he stopped us, and using a conveniently flat rocky outcrop as a table, took out the maps and rolled them flat. One was an annotated small-scale map of the local country; the other the paper which had only lines and marks. De Selby told us that the two maps showed the same area, and that while the entry points to the God-Machine's workings were all of varying distances from one another here in the countryside, once one was within the machine, the exits were absolutely equidistant. I did not understand, and asked him to explain it again.

"Outside the God-Machine, these two entries, for example" — he indicated two points on his annotated map — "are six miles apart, and these two are three miles apart. Within the workings of the machine" — now he turned to the other sheet — "both pairs of exits are exactly the same distance, two and one quarter miles apart. Moreover, all of these exits, no matter what route one takes, are exactly the same distance from every other exit. Namely two and one quarter miles."

I was sceptical. How did he know this?

He said he had explored the network of exits before, and comprehensively, at least in this area. I asked why he needed a map.

"From time to time they change. It is as much a calendar as a map."

After some time we found ourselves fighting through heavy bushes to find a brick structure on which was set in an angle a riveted steel door with no apparent handle or bolt. It was overgrown and ancient. I ventured to suggest that the position of the door looked quite fixed to me. Fox, who had not spoken since greeting me on the road this morning, said, "Ah, yes. You might think that, but the entry to the machine is a thing of cunning and charm. It can be a sneaky little bugger when it wishes."

He leaned back, his jowls wobbling, and folded his fat arms, as if that explained everything. De Selby, meanwhile, only nodded.

We stood silently, staring at the door. I was still, after all this, unconvinced. A sewer entry left by the County Council? Some farmer's grain store or still? It seemed so solid. So normal, so real amidst the apparent falseness of the landscape. At length I asked how we planned to gain entry.

De Selby produced what looked like a screwdriver from his coat pocket. "I found this last time," he said. He advanced toward the door and inserted the screwdriver into the door, into a section of riveted panel that had appeared to be solid. The panel somehow folded in under the pressure of the tool, and then, as I watched, the door slowly swung back. Inside, I could see steps, lit with electric light. From the tunnel I could hear something like the sound of a hundred factories. I shuddered, thinking suddenly, powerfully, of the war machine that had ground up you and so many others.

The Sergeant said, "Fortune favours the brave," and walked in almost casually. De Selby put a spidery hand on my arm for a moment, and nodded to me. I followed Sergeant Fox and de Selby advanced behind me, closing the door behind us, blocking out the light of the sun.

And down we went.

I cannot wholly explain the wonders and horrors we saw in that place of brick and rusty iron. I saw a rail on which hung violated men and women, and blank-eyed workers who attended great grinding rooms of gears, and who did not blink or stop work or show signs of sorrow when one of their number fell in and was crushed to nothing in an instant, only waiting briefly for another to come and take his place. I saw insects being assembled from pieces of metal and glass and folded into living things. And all the while, the sounds of metallic grinding and screeching continued all around us, deafening us.

No one paid us notice as we walked through these scenes. De Selby led us at length into what must have been a workshop or storeroom, containing thousands of aisles of near-infinite shelves on which were stored inexplicable machines of every kind. De Selby and I wandered through aisles, absent-mindedly picking up items with blades or gears or hinges and wondering what they might create.

Sergeant Fox, meanwhile, watched us silently, never seeming to blink his blank round eyes.

De Selby stopped at a particular shelf, and began to rummage around with more purpose now, until, making a noise of triumph, lifted a small object, which was perhaps the size and rough shape of an apple and handed it to me. "You should want this, I think."

I looked at it. Its outer shell was like a spiderweb made of brass, through the holes of which I could see the briefest glimpses of the most intricate clockwork movement I had ever seen, its cogs and springs finer than human hair, some too small even to see, except only in surmise. I asked de Selby what it was.

He shrugged. "I think it might, under the correct circumstances, fold up into a soul."

I gasped. I handed it back to him.

"Theft is an offense punishable by the Law," said the Sergeant from behind me.

His tone was as jovial as ever, and I did not know for a moment if he was serious or not.

I turned. He appeared huge now, silhouetted by the strange yellow light. He loomed over us. He seemed to grow, blocking the whole aisle.

"What Law matters here?" said de Selby.

The Sergeant shrugged, a gesture that seemed to ripple across his fat frame in waves and extend beyond him into the air. "It is the Principle, so it is."

I didn't understand him. The Sergeant seemed to fold outwards from his middle, his round lines becoming angles; from inside his great soft black bulk climbed what looked like an angel made of levers and gears and glass, its wings bladed and hinged, its halo ticking, turning like a clock movement. The thing reached out with fingers made of surgeon's needles and reaching past

me with an arm that must have telescoped, thrust its hand *inside* de Selby's forehead. I heard over the machine noises around me a horrible sucking sound that became a clicking and then nothing. De Selby stood, mouth open, staring with glassy, empty eyes, as the thing withdrew its hand, leaving nothing more than an angry red mark on its forehead. He turned, put the object back on the shelf and began to walk away, his gait shambling, his feet dragging. He turned left into a gap in the aisle. Regaining my composure I dashed after him, calling his name. Around the corner were only deserted aisles, as far as I could see.

Hand to my head, I stopped, wondering what next, and how I could leave. I looked over my shoulder. The Sergeant stood behind me, as he was before. "It's best to pay him no mind. You won't be seeing him again," he said in the same conversational tone as ever. "Now. You'll be wanting to find your way homeward, will you not?"

I nodded, dumbly.

The policeman turned silently and led me through corridors and factory floors, past racks of twitching people suspended from some gibbet that enclosed their faces in rusty iron, past trees of metal and flesh and those same grim engines where, just for a moment, I could see de Selby's face among the lost souls at work. And then he was gone and I was walking up a brick stairway to a door. The Sergeant opened it and motioned for me to leave, before climbing out himself and shutting it silently behind him. The doorway was as ancient-looking as the one by which we had gained ingress, but was not as overgrown, standing in the middle of a grassy lawn. Looking around, I realised that I was standing in my back garden. "There was no door here before."

"I wouldn't be worrying your head about it," said the Sergeant. "It is bad for the constitution and creates pains in the head."

He put a finger to his lip. "I shall have to go and collect my bicycle before one of the local blatherskites and ne'er-do-wells makes off with it."

He turned for a moment and handed me something. I stared at him in astonishment and terror, and then, without looking at the thing he gave me, I took it. "Lost property," he said. "I suppose it truly belongs to Mr. de Selby, but he won't be needing it now, and that's as it should be. Put it all down to the Grand Design." He touched his policeman's helmet. "Top of the afternoon to you, Mr. Dear." He hopped over my back hedge with a nimbleness that defied his physique and strolled off down the lane in the direction of the open countryside, whistling a jig.

He had, I found, given me an object like, but not exactly the same as the thing that de Selby had tried to give to me. I almost ran inside, and, like a man possessed, went straight to my workshop without even taking off my coat.

I do not know why I behaved so. Perhaps some force compelled me and truly I did not really understand what I was doing. Perhaps the things I had seen had shocked me so that I was no longer capable of behaving like a rational man.

I whipped the tarpaulin from my creation. She looked so beautiful, like an anatomical model in brass and clockwork and pigs' leather. My virgin. My hands did not, to my surprise, shake as I gently unfastened the leather of the scalp and opened the hinged cavity that allowed access to her brass skull. The cavity therein was exactly the shape of the object, and having turned it I inserted it with ease, finding holes allowing it to be screwed neatly in place. I closed up her head and, inserting the key into the keyhole in her breast, wound her a good half-dozen times.

And she whirred, and her eyes opened, and her body folded in on itself in a way that it is hard to describe without resorting to the language of a mathematics I do not fully understand. But pig leather became soft breathing skin, and glass became the vitreous humour of the eye. And camelhair became eyelash. And she drew in breath, and only the brass-edged keyhole in her breast gave any sign that she had not always been an exquisite young woman. I took out the key and gave it to her. She held it in her hand and turned it this way and that.

I asked her if she could speak. She cocked her head to one side and opened her mouth, and made an odd, strangled noise.

Of course, she has no idea. She is new and unspoiled. The world is wholly unknown to her.

I have called her Mary. It seemed fitting.

Oh, Alexander, if you were only alive to see what I have done.

Your brother,

William

It is not always possible to get someone to do what you want. For instance, no amount of Social maneuvering is going to convince the chief of police in a large city to hold a press conference and admit to murder, even if the player has a dice pool impressive enough to make it happen. This system is designed to allow characters to manipulate or convince other characters to perform favors or undertake actions, but it does raise the question: Is one character dictating another's actions, and how much of that should be allowed in a role-playing game? Or, put a different way, can one character seduce another with this system?

Under a strict read of the rules, yes. The goal is "get that character to sleep with my character," the number of Doors is decided as explained below, and impressions and other factors play into the final result. This is not too different from how seduction and other, less carnal, forms of persuasion actually work — the persuader tries to make the offer as enticing as possible.

But because it's the persuader's player making the rolls, the target is left without a way to say "no." As such, it's our recommendation that this system be used by player-controlled characters on Storyteller characters rather than on other players' characters. If one player's character wants to seduce, persuade, convince, or intimidate another, leave it up to roleplaying and let players make their own decisions about what their characters do.

Goals

When using a Social action with this system, the first step is to declare your character's intended goal. This is as simple as stating what you want the subject to do and how your character is going about making it happen. You need only announce the initial stages, as the effort will likely occur over multiple rolls, reflecting different actions.

At this point, the Storyteller determines whether the goal is reasonable. A character might, with time and proper tactics, convince a rich person to give him a large sum of money. He probably isn't going to convince the wealthy individual to abandon *all* of his wealth to the character (though it might be possible to get him to name the character as heir, at which point the character can set about speeding up the inheritance process).

Doors

Once you've declared your character's goal, the next step is to determine the scope of the challenge. We represent this with "Doors," which reflect a character's resistance to coercion: her social walls, his skepticism, mistrust, or just a hesitance toward intimacy. It's abstract and means different things in every given case.

The base number of Doors is equal to the lower of the character's Resolve or Composure. If the goal would be a breaking point for the character, add two Doors. If accomplishing the goal would prevent a character from resolving an Aspiration, add a Door. Acting in opposition to a Virtue also adds a Door. Doors may increase as the effort continues and the circumstances change. For example, if the goal seems mundane at first but the situation makes it reprehensible, it may increase the number of Doors required. If your character gives up on the goal and shifts to another, any Doors currently open remain so, but assess Aspirations, Virtues, and Integrity in case of a potential increase.

Doors must be opened one by one. Each successful roll — *not* each success — opens one. Exceptional successes open two. Also, Doors are specifically a one-way relationship between two characters. They may each have Doors to one another or Doors to other characters.

First Impressions

First (and later) impressions determine the time required between rolls. The Storyteller sets the first impression based on any past history between the characters, the circumstances of their meeting, the nature of the favor being asked (if the acting character is asking right up front — sometimes it's a better idea not to lead off with what you want!) and any other relevant factors.

"Average impressions" call for weekly rolls, which makes the process very slow. Through play, your character may influence the interaction for a "good impression." This may mean meeting in a pleasant environment, wearing appealing clothing, playing appropriate music, or otherwise making the situation more comfortable. This should not require a roll during a first impression but requires one if attempted later. An excellent impression requires a roll to influence the situation.

For example, you may use a Wits + Socialize to find the right people to invite to a party. Perfect impressions require further factors. It may involve leverage or playing to a character's Vice (see below).



Hostile impressions come from tense first impressions or threatening pitches. These interactions require you manipulate the impression or to force the Doors (see below).

Vices

If your character knows her subject's Vice, she can use it to influence the interaction. With an offer that tempts that Vice, move the interaction one step up on the chart. As a rule of thumb, if by agreeing to the temptation the target were to gain Willpower, it's a valid temptation.

Soft Leverage (Gifts and Bribes)

Soft Leverage represents offers of services or payments in order to lubricate social interaction. Make the offer. If the recipient agrees, move the impression up once on the chart.

Mechanically, this can be represented in certain Merit dots. For example, a bribe may be represented by a Resources 3 offer, or an offer for service may be reflected by Retainer 3. By default, these bribes give the recipient use of the Merit for a designated amount of time.

Impression	Time per Roll
Perfect	1 Turn
Excellent	1 Hour
Good	1 Day
Average	1 Week
Hostile	Cannot roll

Opening Doors

At each interval, you may make a roll to open Doors and move closer to your character's goal. The roll might be different each time, depending on the character's tactics. Some of the rolls might not even be Social. For example, if your character is trying to win someone's favor, fixing his computer with an Intelligence + Computer roll could open a Door.

As Storyteller, be creative in selecting dice pools. Change them up with each step to keep the interactions dynamic. Similarly, consider contested and resisted rolls. Most resisted actions or contested rolls use either Resolve or Composure or a combination of the two. But don't let that stand as a limit. Contested rolls don't require a resistance trait. For example, Wits might be used to notice a lie, Strength to help a character stand up to threats, or Presence to protect and maintain one's reputation at a soiree.

Failed rolls impose a cumulative -1 on further rolls. These penalties do not go away with successful rolls. When the player fails a roll, the Storyteller may choose to worsen the impression level by one. If she does so, the player takes a Beat. If this takes the impression level to hostile, the attempt cannot move forward until it improves.

Aspirations

Aspirations are quick routes to influence. Find a character's goals, wants, and needs, and they can help move

interactions forward. If your character presents a clear path and reasoning for how they'll help a character achieve an Aspiration, remove a Door.

This doesn't require follow-through but it does require a certain amount of assurance. If the opportunity presents itself and your character pulls out of an offer, two Doors close.

Failure

A Social maneuvering attempt can fail utterly under the following circumstances:

- The player rolls a dramatic failure on an attempt to open a Door (the player takes a Beat as usual).
- The target realizes that he is being lied to or manipulated. This does not apply if the target is aware that the character is trying to talk him into something, only if the target feels betrayed or conned.
- The impression level reaches "hostile" and remains so for a week of game time. The character can try again during the next story.

Resolution

Once your character opens the final Door, the subject must act. Storyteller characters abide by the intended goal and follow through as stated.

If you allow players' characters to be the targets of Social maneuvering, resolve this stage as a negotiation with two possible outcomes. The subject chooses to abide by the desired goal or offer a beneficial alternative.

Go With the Flow

If the character does as requested and abides by the intended goal, his player takes a Beat (see p. 157).

Offer an Alternative

If the subject's player chooses, he may offer a beneficial alternative and the initiator's player can impose a Condition (see p. 180) on his character. This offer exists between players; it does not need to occur within the fiction of the game (though it can). The alternative must be beneficial and not a twist of intent. The Storyteller adjudicates.

The initiator's player chooses a Condition to impose on the subject. It must make sense within the context of the scenario.

Example of Social Maneuvering

Stacy wants Professor Erickson to loan her a book from his private library (she intends to use the book's contents to summon a demon, but Erickson doesn't know that). Erickson is protective of his books but he'd be willing to loan one out under the right circumstances. Erickson has Resolve 3, Composure 4, so the base number of Doors Stacy needs to open is 3 (the lower of the two). Loaning out a book wouldn't be a breaking point,

nor does it prevent him from achieving an Aspiration, but it does work against his Virtue (Cautious), so the total number of Doors Stacy needs to open to get the book is 4.

The Storyteller decides that the first impression is average; the two know one another (Stacy is a former student of Erickson's), but they aren't close. Stacy arranges to find Erickson at a conference and impresses him with her knowledge of esoteric funerary rites (this requires an Intelligence + Occult roll, plus whatever effort Stacy had to put forth to get into the conference), and this changes the impression level to "good." Now, Stacy can make one attempt to open Doors per day. At the conference, Stacy's player rolls Manipulation + Persuasion and succeeds; one Door opens. Stacy mentions the book to Erickson and lets him know she'd like to borrow it. He's not immediately receptive to that idea, but Stacy's in a good place to continue.

The next day, Stacy emails the professor about a related work (Manipulation + Academics), but fails. Future rolls will have a -1 penalty. The Storyteller decides that the impression level slips to average.

Stacy still has to overcome three Doors. She spends the next week doing research into Erickson and discovers that he wants to *become a respected academic*. She tells Erickson that she has a colleague who can help break the cipher in which the book is written. This removes one Door without a roll. Now she must overcome two more before he'll agree. (Note that even if Stacy has no intention of helping Erickson in his quest toward academic glory, as long as he reasonably believes that lending her the book will help him achieve his Aspiration, it opens the Door.)

During her research into the professor's personality, she also learns that his Vice is Vanity; he likes to see himself as the hero. Stacy goes to his office in tears, saying that she is in danger of being accused of plagiarism for copying a paper, and asks if he can help authenticate her work. Doing this allows him to come to her rescue, which in turn lets him soak up some praise; this would allow him to regain Willpower through his Vice and as such is enough of a temptation to raise the impression level back to good. Stacy's player rolls Manipulation + Expression for Stacy to compose a letter of thanks to him and achieves an exceptional success. The last two Doors open, and Erickson offers to let Stacy borrow the book for a weekend. He probably even thinks it was his idea.

On the other hand, if Erickson is a player-controlled character, his player might decide he really doesn't want to let that book out of his sight. He might offer an alternative — he'll bring the book to Stacy and let her use it for an afternoon. That, of course, might complicate her intended demon summoning, but she does get to put the Flattered Condition on Erickson.

Forcing Doors

Sometimes, waiting and subtlety just aren't warranted, desired, or possible. In these cases, your character can attempt to force a character's Doors. This method is high-risk, high-reward. Forcing Doors often leads to burnt bridges and missed opportunities.

When forcing Doors, state your character's goal and her approach and then roll immediately. The current number of Doors applies as a penalty to the dice roll. If successful, proceed to resolution as normal. If the roll fails, the subject is immune to further efforts at Social maneuvering from your character.

Hard Leverage

Hard Leverage represents threats, drugging, intimidation, blackmail, kidnapping, or other heavy-handed forms of coercion. It drives home the urgency required to force open a character's Doors.

Hard Leverage that requires the character to suffer a breaking point removes one Door (if the modifier to the roll — not considering the character's breaking points — is greater than -2) or two Doors (if the modifier is -3 or less).

Example

In the example above, assume Stacy really needs that book *now*. She goes to Erickson and threatens him at gunpoint to give up the book. Doing this is definitely a breaking point for Stacy (see p. 155 for more on breaking points). She applies a modifier for her Integrity and then a modifier based on the severity of the action and the harm it does to her self-image and psyche. She's not in the habit of committing violent acts and Erickson is obviously terrified, so the Storyteller assigns a -2 modifier to the breaking point roll. This being the case, one Door is removed. If she'd shot him the leg to let him know she was serious, the breaking point modifier would have been at least -3, which would have removed two Doors. In either case, her player rolls Presence + Intimidation plus any bonus for the gun, minus the appropriate penalty.

Influencing Groups

Influencing a group works in the same way using the same system. This generally means that influencing a group requires at least an excellent level impression or forcing his Doors, unless the group meets regularly. The Storyteller determines Doors using the highest Resolve and Composure scores in the group. She also determines three Aspirations, a Virtue, a Vice, and a relative Integrity score for the group. When resolving the influence, most members will abide by the stated goal. Individual members may depart and do as they will, but a clear majority does as your player suggests.

Successive Efforts

After opening all Doors and resolving the action's goal, your character may wish to influence the same person or group again. If successful, subsequent influence attempts begin with one fewer Door. If the attempt failed or if Hard Leverage was employed, successive influence attempts begin with two more Doors. These modifiers are cumulative. No matter what, a character will always have at least one Door at the outset.

Combat

These rules supersede some of the combat rules presented in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, providing a lethal focus to fighting along with a unified system of conditions and reasons for characters to stop fighting before the other guy's only fit for the morgue.

Down and Dirty Combat

The combat system in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and expanded in this section provides a reasonably comprehensive system to use when two or more people attempt to kill one another. Some fights don't deserve that much focus. When a fight has as much impact on the story as climbing a fence or breaking down a door, this simple system abstracts a fight to a single roll.

This system works particularly well when violence is a means to an end. To begin, the attacker declares his intent. As long as that intent is something that the Storyteller is comfortable with the character accomplishing in one roll, go ahead and apply this system. Since the nature of this combat reduces what would otherwise be a brutal act of violence to a single roll, the Storyteller may reserve it for characters who happen to be particularly capable combatants — or for facing enemies who are little more than chaff. If your arms deal has gone south and you have to get out of the country, the two mooks waiting for you in the hotel bathroom aren't a serious threat. The guys outside with a sedan and a range of fully-automatic weapons? They're a different story.

A player can call for a Down and Dirty Combat if he feels it's appropriate. If the Storyteller is fine with the character dispatching his opposition with a single roll, then it happens. As a rough guide, if a character has a combat pool of at least five dice, she's internalized the mechanics of violence to a degree that it is second nature and can use this system.

Note that Storyteller characters cannot use this option. Rather, it's possible for a character to suffer some damage during this kind of combat, but Storyteller-controlled characters cannot initiate.

Action: Instant and contested

Dice Pool: Combat pool (Dexterity + Firearms, Strength + Brawl, or Strength + Weaponry) versus either the opponent's combat pool (as above) or an attempt to escape (Strength or Dexterity + Athletics). Ignore Defense on this roll.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's opponent gets the upper hand. This usually includes the opposite of the character's intent — if she wanted to disable the guards so she could escape, she is stunned instead.

Failure: The opponent wins the contest. If the opponent used a combat pool, deal damage equal to the difference in successes plus weapon modifier. Also, the opponent escapes unless he wants to press the combat.

Success: The character wins the contest. She deals damage equal to the difference in successes plus her weapon

modifier and achieves her intent—if her intent includes killing her opponents, then she does so.

Exceptional Success: As a success, and the character also gains a point of Willpower from the rush of inflicting violence on an inferior opponent.

Going For Blood

A lot of the time, violence is an end to itself. Vinnie's run out on your sister, so you hammer some nails into a baseball bat and go teach him a lesson. Doc's going to set fire to your house with your family inside and dedicate their deaths to some forgotten god if you don't put a bullet in his brainpan. That *thing* has been slithering out of the barn at the edge of town for a month now, and if no one else is going to put it on a spike, it's up to you.

Other times — most times — violence is a means to an end. You don't want to punch this guy in the face, but you do need the book he's holding and he won't give it up. Donnie's holding the coke in one hand and a pistol in the other, talking himself up like a big man. Unless they're sociopaths or have a serious blood feud going on, nobody wants to get into a situation where they're going to kill someone. When this is the case, the Storyteller should make sure that the players know that the fight's about more than people trying to kill other people.

Optional Rule: Beaten Down & Surrender

As an optional rule, any character that takes more than his Stamina in bashing damage or any amount of lethal damage has had the fight knocked out of him. He has the Beaten Down Tilt (see p. 206; a Tilt, remember, is just a Condition that primarily affects combat). He must spend a point of Willpower every time he wants to take a violent action until the end of the fight. He can still apply Defense against incoming attacks, can Dodge, and can run like hell, but it takes a point of Willpower to swing or shoot back.

On the other hand, he can give in. Give the lunatic with the butcher's knife what she wants, whether that's a bus ticket, an apology, a bag of crack, or a promise to stay out of the New Town after midnight. If you give in, you gain a point of Willpower and take a Beat, but you take no more part in the fight. If the other side wants to attack you, they've got to spend a point of Willpower to do so and probably suffer a breaking point. If some gangbangers want your truck and your two buddies have surrendered for that sweet combination of Willpower and not getting hurt, that does mean that they're all coming for you. You could fight them off, but it's three against one. Or you could do the sensible thing and remember that you get a lot of trucks in this life but only one pine box. Once everyone on one side has surrendered, the fight's over.

These rules only apply to humans and human-like creatures — anything that would incur a breaking point for committing (or attempting) "murder." Creatures that don't have a problem killing people in general can ignore surrender without penalty and don't have the fight beaten out of them like normal folks.

Intent

It's important to know what people want out of a violent encounter. Before any violent encounter, the Storyteller should pause the action long enough to get a statement of intent from both sides. This intent describes what the *character* wants to see as the outcome of a violent encounter. It also can't involve outcomes that fall outside the current scene: "I want to become President of the United States" isn't a valid intent for a man with a gun, even one on the White House lawn, and the Secret Service will soon disabuse him of that notion. Some examples include:

- I want to throw Amado out of the window to get him away from me.
- I want Sheena to give me the statue.
- I want to get away from this gun-toting psycho.
- I want to steal Larry's wallet in the fray.
- I want to get to my truck to get the fuck out of Dodge.

Every statement of intent starts with the words "I want." That's the clearest way to phrase it. Once you've got the Intent sorted out for both sides, you know what it means for a character to surrender: Her opponent gets what he wants, and in exchange, she gets a point of Willpower and isn't the target of any more violence.

The basic rule of intent is that it's something that the character is willing to hurt — or kill — other people to get. Sometimes you don't know that you're willing to kill for what you want until you actually kill someone. If your intent has nothing to do with hurting people and you end up killing someone (not just beating them into unconsciousness), you lose a point of Willpower.

Sometimes, a character's intent puts limits on the combat. "I want to kill Tran for sleeping with my daughter" is fine as a statement of intent, but it does mean that the character's opponent isn't about to surrender: sure, Tran would gain a point of Willpower, but he'd have to die first. Even "I want to hurt Danny to teach him a lesson" is problematic: what can Danny gain from surrendering?

If one party's intent is violence for its own sake, their intended victims don't acquire the Beaten Down Tilt no matter how much damage they take, and (obviously) gain no benefit from surrendering. When someone actually wants to kill you, the only thing you can do is to stop her by any means necessary, whether that's running or shooting back.

Storyteller Characters

Most conflict happens between characters under the players' control and Storyteller characters. The difference between the two is negligible in most combats — one character with a gun or a knife is much like any other, regardless of who is in control of the character. That said, Storyteller characters do have easier access to one resource: Willpower.

A player has to monitor her character's Willpower throughout the whole story, deciding when and where to spend points and when to hold back, balancing those concerns against the chance of regaining points through indulging her Vice in a scene — or going all-out and hoping to trigger her Virtue for the chapter.

A Storyteller character has none of those concerns. He's not going to be present in most of the scenes, so it doesn't matter if he blows more Willpower — he can regain it when off-screen, and even if he doesn't, it's not like he's going to spend it. This is especially noticeable in combat, when Storyteller characters can spend Willpower to hurt characters who have surrendered, enhance their attacks, and defend with greater ability than the players' characters.

If a Storyteller character spends a lot of time around the other characters and has enough spotlight time to both spend and recover Willpower over a similar timespan to the other characters, that's fine. Otherwise, Storyteller characters should reduce their available Willpower to reflect their "one shot" nature. Gangbangers, thugs, and similar characters who don't have a name don't have any Willpower available to spend. Minor named characters — the kind who recur but aren't the main antagonists of a story — have one point of Willpower available. Recurring antagonists and major Storyteller characters who don't spend a lot of time around the characters can spend up to half their total Willpower in a scene.

Storyteller characters with reduced Willpower totals can still regain spent points through the normal means for regaining Willpower, but can't go above their modified Willpower total for a scene. Note, though, that their Resolve + Composure values are unaffected (in case the Storyteller needs to have them roll this dice pool), and supernatural powers that drain Willpower work normally.

Initiative

Determine Initiative at the start of a combat as normal. Many weapons now include an Initiative modifier. When your character is using that weapon, her Initiative is penalized by that amount — even if she's kicking out at a close attacker, she's got to account for the shotgun in her hands.

The only way to avoid an Initiative penalty from a weapon you're using is to stop wielding it — either sling it or drop it. You can drop a weapon as a reflexive action in order to return to your unarmed Initiative. Slinging or holstering a weapon is an instant action. When you change what weapon you're using, you act on your new Initiative at the start of the next turn. If a character is wielding two weapons — showing off with a pair of pistols, or carrying a baton and a riot shield — take the highest Initiative penalty and increase it by one. An Initiative penalty can never reduce a character's Initiative below 0.

Example: Riots sweep through the city streets and Cass joins her comrades on the police lines. She's got a baton in one hand, and a large riot shield in the other. The baton has a -2 initiative modifier; the riot shield has a -4 modifier. Her total Initiative modifier is -5.

Combat Summary Chart

This chart supersedes the one on p.154 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Stage One: Intent

- The players and the Storyteller describe what their characters want out of the fight.
- Decide whether characters can surrender and can become Beaten Down.

Stage Two: Initiative

- If the attacker springs an ambush or otherwise strikes when the defender isn't able to counter, the defender rolls Wits + Composure contested by the attacker's Dexterity + Stealth. If the defender fails, she doesn't act on the first turn of combat and cannot apply Defense against attacks.
- Everyone rolls Initiative: the result of a die roll + Dexterity + Composure. If the character has a weapon readied, apply its Initiative Modifier.

Stage Three: Attack

- **Unarmed Combat:** Strength + Brawl vs. Defense
- **Melee Combat:** Strength + Weaponry vs. Defense
- **Ranged Combat:** Dexterity + Firearms
- **Thrown Weapons:** Dexterity + Athletics vs. Defense

A character's Defense is normally subtracted from any attack dice pools where it applies. If she chooses to Dodge, the defender rolls her Defense as a dice pool against each attack. Each success reduces the attacker's successes by one. If the attacker is reduced to zero successes, the attack does nothing. If the attacker has successes remaining, add any weapon modifier to the number of successes to determine how many points of Health the target loses. All weapons deal lethal damage.

Stage Four: The Storyteller describes the attack and wound in narrative terms.

Possible Modifiers

- Aiming: +1 per turn to a +3 maximum
- All-Out Attack: +2 with Brawl or Weaponry attack; lose Defense
- Armor Piercing: Ignores amount of target's armor equal to item's rating
- Autofire Long Burst: 20 or so bullets, no target limit pending Storyteller approval. A +3 bonus is applied to each attack roll; -1 per roll for each target after the first
- Autofire Medium Burst: 10 or so bullets at one to three targets, with a +2 bonus to each attack roll; -1 per roll for each target after the first
- Autofire Short Burst: Three bullets at a single target with a +1 bonus to the roll
- Concealment: Barely -1; partially -2; substantially -3; fully, see "Cover"
- Cover: Subtract Durability from damage; if Durability is greater than weapon modifier, attack has no effect
- Dodge: Double Defense, roll as a dice pool with each success subtracting one from the attacker's successes
- Drawing a Weapon: Requires instant action without a Merit and could negate Defense
- Firing from Concealment: Shooter's own concealment quality (-1, -2 or -3) reduced by one as a penalty to fire back (so, no modifier, -1 or -2)
- Offhand Attack: -2 penalty
- Prone Target: -2 penalty to hit in ranged combat; +2 bonus to hit when attacker is within close-combat distance
- Range: -2 at medium range, -4 at long range
- Shooting into Close Combat: -2 per combatant avoided in a single shot (not applicable to autofire); -4 if grappling
- Specified Target: Torso -1, leg or arm -2, head -3, hand -4, eye -5
- Surprised or Immobilized Target: Defense doesn't apply
- Touching a Target: Dexterity + Brawl or Dexterity + Weaponry; armor may or may not apply, but Defense does apply
- Willpower: Add three dice or +2 to a Resistance trait (Stamina, Resolve, or Composure) in one roll or instance

Surprise

When your character runs into an ambush or is otherwise the victim of a surprise attack, she has a chance of reacting in time to defend herself. Roll Wits + Composure, contested by the ambusher's Dexterity + Stealth. If you lose, you cannot take an action in the first turn of combat and do not get to apply Defense against incoming attacks. Roll Initiative in the second turn as normal.

Attack

The following changes apply to the rules to attack in combat.

Attack Dice Pools

Characters do not add a weapon's rating to their attack dice pool. Calculate dice pools for attacks as follows:

Unarmed Combat: Strength + Brawl; Defense applies

Melee Combat: Strength + Weaponry; Defense applies

Ranged Combat: Dexterity + Firearms

Thrown Weapons: Dexterity + Athletics; Defense applies

If your character has a scope or similar that affects how likely he is to hit his target, add the equipment bonus of the scope to the attack pool. These modifiers are listed separately to the weapon's base damage. Weapons that use system permutations — such as 9-again, 8-again, or similar — apply those effects to the attack roll.

Damage

The harm inflicted by an attack is determined by the number of successes on the attack roll, plus any weapon bonus. If you get no successes on your attack roll after applying Defense, you deal no damage — your victim doesn't have to defend against your weapon's bonus successes.

Attacks with fists and feet deal bashing damage. If you use a weapon, the damage is always lethal. Cricket bats and brass knuckles can shatter bones and crush skulls with far less effort than kicking someone to death. Some weapons have modifiers of +0. They don't add any bonus successes, but the attack still deals lethal damage. If you don't want to kill someone by accident, drop your weapon.

Close Combat

The following changes apply to the close-combat rules in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**

Defense

A character's Defense is equal to the lower of her Dexterity or Wits, plus her Athletics Skill. Some Merits can allow a character to use a Skill other than Athletics. Defense is subtracted from all unarmed, thrown, or weaponry attacks that the character is aware of. Spending Willpower on Defense increases it by two, but this bonus only lasts for one attack. Every time your character applies his Defense against an attack, reduce his Defense by one until the start of the next turn.



You can choose not to apply your character's Defense against incoming attacks. Sometimes a character might be attacked by weaker foes who act ahead of a stronger enemy, and thus you'd want to save the bulk of your Defense. On other occasions, you have to give up your Defense for an entire turn to use a combat maneuver, such as an all-out attack.

Dodge

If your character is in over his head, he can forsake his action to Dodge. When Dodging, double your character's Defense pool but do not subtract it from attack rolls. Instead, the defender's player rolls the character's Defense as a dice pool and subtracts any successes from the attacker's successes. This is an exception to the normal rules for contested actions. If the defender rolls at least as many successes as the attacker, the attack misses. Subtract successes for Defense *before* adding the weapon bonus.

As Dodging is a roll like any other, the player can spend Willpower to enhance it (getting +3 dice as normal). Merits and supernatural powers may allow additional dice pool effects such as allowing the Defense roll to be 8-again, or even a rote action.

Reduce Defense by one for each attack as normal when Dodging, *before* doubling the pool. If this reduces his Defense to 0, the defender is reduced to a chance die. On a dramatic failure, the character is left off-balance and out of position; reduce his Defense by 1 for his next turn.

Example

Julia has Dexterity •• and Athletics • for a Defense of three. When she Dodges, she has a pool of six dice to roll. She is attacked by a man with what looks like a radio antenna coming out of his neck and tries to Dodge his wild swing.

The Storyteller rolls seven dice for the man's attack (Strength + Brawl); Julia's player doubles her Defense and rolls six dice to Dodge. If the Storyteller rolls three successes and Julia's player rolls two, the man gets in with 1 success and inflicts 1 point of bashing damage. If the man had been using a knife doing 1L damage, he would have inflicted two points of damage: one for the success and one from the weapon.

On the other hand, assume Julia is accosted by a whole group of these radial-men. If four of them attack and Julia applies her Defense against each one, she has Defense 3 against the first attacker, 2 against the second, 1 against the third and 0 against the last one. If she chooses to Dodge the third attacker, she would roll two dice, because she applies the reduction to Defense *before* doubling it for Dodge. Likewise, if she were to Dodge the final attacker, she'd be rolling a chance die since her Defense was reduced to zero.

Putting Blows

Sometimes you want to beat the fight out of someone without killing him. To that end you can choose to pull your blow, not putting full force behind an attack. You nominate a maximum amount of damage for the blow that can't be

greater than the higher trait in your attack pool — for example, if you've got Strength •• and Brawl ••••, you can deal between 1 and 4 points as your maximum damage. If you would ordinarily do more damage, any extra is ignored. Because you're holding back, it's easier for your opponent to ward off your blows: the defender gains a +1 bonus to Defense.

At the Storyteller's discretion, you can reflexively spend a point of Willpower when pulling your blow with a weapon to deal bashing damage. Otherwise, the only way to avoid dealing lethal damage is to stop using a lump of metal or wood to inflict trauma.

Unarmed Combat

In addition to punching and kicking people, characters can use the following options when brawling.

Bite

Mostly used by animals, bites damage depends on the size and lethality of the creature's jaws. A human's teeth do -1 damage; like other unarmed attacks, the damage is bashing. Animals have a weapon bonus depending on the kind of creature: a large dog would get +0, a wolf applies +1, and a great white shark gets +4.

Humans and similar creatures that do not have protruding jaws can only bite when using a Damage move as part of a grapple.

Disarm

You attempt to snatch an opponent's weapon away. Roll Strength + Brawl contested by your opponent's Strength + Athletics. If you succeed, your opponent drops his weapon. If you get an exceptional success, you take possession of your opponent's weapon. On a dramatic failure, you take damage equal to the weapon's bonus — if you're struggling over a gun, you take damage equal to its damage rating (the gun goes off).

Grapple

To grab your opponent, roll Strength + Brawl - Defense. On a success, both of you are grappling. If you've got a length of rope, a chain, or a whip, you can add its weapon bonus to your Strength when grappling. If you score an exceptional success on this first roll, pick a move from the list below.

When grappling, each party makes a contested Strength + Brawl versus Strength + Brawl action on the higher of the two characters' Initiative. The winner picks a move from the list below, or two moves on an exceptional success.

- **Break Free** from the grapple. You throw off your opponent; you're both no longer grappling. Succeeding at this move is a reflexive action, you can take another action immediately afterwards.
- **Control Weapon**, either by drawing a weapon that you have holstered or turning your opponent's weapon against him. You keep control until your opponent makes a Control Weapon move.

- **Damage** your opponent by dealing bashing damage equal to your rolled successes. If you previously succeeded at a Control Weapon action, add the weapon bonus to your successes.
- **Disarm** your opponent, removing a weapon from the grapple entirely. You must first have succeeded at a Control Weapon move.
- **Drop Prone**, throwing both of you to the ground (see “Going Prone”). You must Break Free before rising.
- **Hold** your opponent in place. Neither of you can apply Defense against incoming attacks.
- **Restrain** your opponent with duct tape, zip ties, or a painful joint lock. Your opponent suffers the Immobilized Tilt. You can only use this move if you’ve already succeeded in a Hold move. If you use equipment to Restrain your opponent, you can leave the grapple.
- **Take Cover** using your opponent’s body. Any ranged attacks made until the end of the turn automatically hit him (see “Human Shields,” below).

If more than one person tries to grapple the same victim, count the attempt as a teamwork action (*World of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 134). On the team side, both primary and secondary actors roll Strength + Brawl – Defense to engage, but the victim’s Defense is unaffected by how many people are involved – even if five people try to grab him, he treats it as one attack. In the grapple, both primary and secondary actors roll Strength + Brawl in a contested action with the victim. If the defender wins, any chosen moves only affect the primary actor.

Ranged Combat

The following changes apply to the ranged combat rules in the *World of Darkness Rulebook*.

Autofire

The extra dice gained for using automatic fire (and penalties for shooting at multiple people) apply to the gunman’s dice pool. Any successful hits deal successes + weapon modifier damage. This is one of the few instances where wielding a weapon grants dice bonuses to attack as well as bonus damage.

Example: Weston’s packing a submachine gun when the gang boss’s three henchmen draw pistols. He pulls the trigger for a medium burst and sprays bullets at all three punks. Weston’s Dexterity is 2, his Firearms is 4, and he gains a +2 bonus for a medium burst, giving him a total of eight dice. As he’s shooting at three people, he suffers a –3 penalty. Weston’s player rolls five dice three times, once for each henchman. As he’s using a large SMG, he adds two successes to any successful roll to determine damage.

Covering Fire

Characters can use automatic weapons to provide covering fire – firing on full-auto to dissuade the character’s

enemies from coming out into the open. Covering fire is only possible with a weapon capable of fully automatic fire.

Roll Dexterity + Firearms. If successful, opponents within range must make a choice on their next turns; they can seek cover or drop prone (accepting normal penalties to any attacks made) or, if they take aggressive actions without seeking cover or going prone, they suffer a shot as if the successes on Covering Fire were scored against them.

The character states the general area he’s firing at, and rolls Dexterity + Firearms. If the roll succeeds, characters in the affected area must make a choice on their next turns. They can avoid the attack, either running to any cover that’s within their Speed or dropping prone (see “Going Prone,” pp. 164–165 of the *World of Darkness Rulebook*). Or, they can take an action as normal but suffer damage based on the covering fire successes + weapon modifier. Covering fire takes 10 bullets, the same as firing a medium burst.

Example: The Santos Militia has military-spec hardware and they’re on to Danny. One of the militia opens up with an assault rifle and the Storyteller informs Danny’s player that he’s using covering fire. The Storyteller rolls the militiaman’s Dexterity + Firearms and gets two successes. Danny can either get out of the way by going prone or ducking behind one of the Santos’ Hummers, or take a shot at the guy with the gun and take five points of lethal damage.

Firearms and Close Combat

Any firearm larger than Size 1 is too big to use to accurately shoot someone when fists and crowbars are the order of the day. In close combat, the target’s Defense against firearms attacks is increased by the gun’s (Size – 1). If using a gun larger than a pistol to bludgeon your opponent, treat it as an improvised crowbar (see below for weapon traits).

Cover

When shooting at a target in cover, subtract the cover’s Durability from the damage dealt. Any remaining damage affects both the object providing cover and anyone hiding behind it equally. If the object’s Durability is higher than the attacker’s weapon modifier, the bullets cannot penetrate cover. Durability for a range of objects is provided on p. 136 of the *World of Darkness Rulebook*. Remember that cover only applies when the intended victim is entirely hidden – a chain-link fence or steel lamppost isn’t large enough for a person to hide behind.

If you can see your target through cover – glass, for example – subtract *half* the cover’s Durability from incoming attacks (round down). This does not apply if the object’s Durability is higher than your weapon modifier.

Example: Cross hides completely behind a wooden door. Drake shoots at the door in the hopes of hitting Cross beyond. The door’s Durability is 1. Drake’s attack roll nets three successes and he’s using a heavy revolver, for a total of five damage. The shot passes through the door, dealing four damage to the door’s Structure and to Cross. Today’s lesson: in the roshambo of life, bullets beat a cheap wooden door.

Ranged Weapons Chart

Type	Dmg	Ranges	Clip	Initiative	Str	Size	Availability	Example
Revolver, lt	1	20/40/80	6	0	2	1	••	SW M640 (.38 Special)
Revolver, hvy	2	35/70/140	6	-2	3	1	••	SW M29 (.44 Magnum)
Pistol, lt	1	20/40/80	17+1	0	2	1	•••	Glock 17 (9mm)
Pistol, hvy	2	30/60/120	7+1	-2	3	1	•••	Colt M1911A1 (.45 ACP)
SMG, small*	1	25/50/100	30+1	-2	2	1	•••	Ingram Mac-10 (9mm)
SMG, large*	2	50/100/200	30+1	-3	3	2	•••	HK MP-5 (9mm)
Rifle	4	200/400/800	5+1	-5	2	3	••	Remington M-700 (30.06)
Assault Rifle*	3	150/300/600	42+1	-3	3	3	•••	Sterry-Aug (5.56mm)
Shotgun**	3	20/40/80	5+1	-4	3	2	••	Remington M870 (12-gauge)
Crossbow***	2	40/80/160	1	-5	3	3	•••	

Damage: Indicates the number of bonus successes added to a successful attack. Firearms deal lethal damage against ordinary people. The type of damage may vary against supernatural opponents.

Ranges: The listed numbers a short/medium/long ranges in yards. Attacks at medium range suffer a -1 penalty. Attacks at long range suffer a -2 penalty.

Clip: The number of rounds a gun can hold. A "+1" indicates that a bullet can be held in the chamber, ready to fire.

Initiative: The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the gun.

Strength: The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls.

Size: 1 = Can be fired one-handed; 2 = Must be fired two-handed and can be hidden in a coat; 3 = Can be fired two-handed but not hidden on one's person

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

* The weapon is capable of autofire, including short bursts, medium bursts, and long bursts.

** Attack rolls gain the 9-again quality

*** Crossbows take three turns to reload between shots. A crossbow can be used to deliver a stake through the heart (-3 penalty to attack rolls; must deal at least 5 damage in one attack)

Human Shields

When the shit hits the fan and the SWAT team hits the botched bank job, the only available cover may be a terrified member of the public. Unfortunately, the human body is nowhere as effective at blocking bullets as television and movies would have us believe.

If your character is in the morally dubious position of using another human being as cover, any shots directed his way do damage to his victim first. Reduce the damage dealt by the victim's Stamina and any armor. Any remaining damage blows right through to your character. If the person you want to use to save your ass is already part of the fight, you need to use the Take Cover grapple move.

Using a human shield is almost certainly a breaking point with a pretty severe modifier (-3 or more) if the victim dies. Someone else might have pulled the trigger, but you forced your victim to take the bullet.

Example: Drake only wanted to jack the pale lady's car. Now, he's facing down three dudes with hand cannons. In desperation, he grabs a guy off the sidewalk who's about to learn the meaning of "wrong place, wrong time." One of the lady's minions pulls the trigger. He's a practiced marksman (Dexterity 2, Firearms 2) so the Storyteller rolls four dice. He gets two successes and adds the gun's weapon modifier of 2. The human shield takes four points of lethal dam-

Melee Weapons Chart

Type	Damage	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Special
Sap	0	-1	1	1	•	Stun
Brass Knuckles	0	0	1	1	•	Uses Brawl to attack
Baton	1	-1	2	2	n/a	
Crowbar	2	-2	2	2	•	
Tire Iron	1	-3	2	2	••	+1 Defense
Chain	1	-3	2	2	•	Grapple
Shield (small)	0	-2	2	2	••	Concealed
Shield (large)	2	-4	3	3	••	Concealed
Knife	0	-1	1	1	•	
Rapier	1	-2	1	2	••	Armor piercing 1
Machete	2	-2	2	2	••	
Hatchet	1	-2	1	1	•	
Fire Ax	3	-4	3	3	••	9-again, two-handed
Chainsaw	5	-6	4	3	•••	9-again, two-handed
Stake*	0	-4	1	1	n/a	
Spear**	2	-2	2	4	•	+1 Defense, two-handed

Type: A weapon's type is a general classification that can apply to anything your character picks up. A metal club might be an antique mace, a metal baseball bat, or a hammer, while a hatchet might be a meat cleaver or an antique hand-ax.

Damage: Indicates the number of bonus successes added to a successful attack. Weapons always deal lethal damage.

Initiative: The penalty taken to Initiative when wielding the weapon. If using more than one weapon, take the higher penalty and increase by 1.

Strength: The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a -1 penalty on attack rolls.

Size: 1 = Can be hidden in a hand; 2 = Can be hidden in a coat; 3+ = Cannot be hidden.

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

Concealed: A character who wields a shield but doesn't use it to attack can add its Size to his Defense, and uses its Size as a concealment modifier against ranged attacks.

Grapple: Add the chain's weapon bonus to your dice pool when grappling.

Stun: Double the weapon bonus for purposes of the Stun Tilt (p. 212).

Two-handed: This weapon requires two hands. It can be used one-handed, but doing so increases the Strength requirement by 1.

* A stake must target the heart (-3 penalty to attack rolls) and must deal at least 5 damage in one attack.

** The reach of a spear gives a +1 Defense bonus against opponents who are unarmed or wield weapons of Size 1.

Armor Chart

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Availability	Coverage
Modern						
Reinforced clothing*	1/0	1	0	0	•	Torso, arms, legs
Kevlar vest*	1/3	1	0	0	•	Torso
Flak Jacket	2/4	1	-1	0	••	Torso, arms
Full Riot Gear	3/5	2	-2	-1	•••	Torso, arms, legs
Archaic						
Leather (hard)	2/0	2	-1	0	•	Torso, arms
Chainmail	3/1	3	-2	-2	••	Torso, arms
Plate	4/2	3	-2	-3	••••	Torso, arms, legs

Rating: Armor provides protection against normal attacks and Firearms attacks. The number before the slash is for general armor, while the number after the slash is for ballistic armor.

Strength: If your character's Strength is lower than that required for her armor, reduce her Brawl and Weaponry dice pools by 1.

Defense: The penalty imposed on your character's Defense when wearing the armor.

Speed: The penalty to your character's Speed for the armor worn.

Availability: The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the armor.

Coverage: The areas of a character protected by the armor. Unless an attacker targets a specific unarmored location ("Specified Targets", above), the armor's protection applies. Wearing a helmet increases the armor's coverage to include a character's head.

* This armor is concealed, either as normal clothing (e.g. biker leathers) or being worn under a jacket or baggy shirt. Attackers have no idea the target is wearing armor until after they land a successful hit.

age. Drake's player subtracts his human shield's Stamina of 2 from the damage and marks off two points of lethal damage himself.

General Combat Factors

The following changes apply to the general combat rules in the *World of Darkness Rulebook*.

Specified Targets

Attacking specific body parts has its benefits. In addition to ignoring armor (see "Armor," p. 205), strikes to limbs and the head can have added effects.

- **Arm (-2):** A damaging hit can inflict the Arm Wrack Tilt if it deals more damage than the target's Stamina
- **Leg (-2):** A damaging hit can inflict the Leg Wrack Tilt if it deals more damage than the target's Stamina

- **Head (-3):** A damaging attack can stun the victim (see the Stun Tilt, p. 212)

- **Heart (-3):** If the attacker does at least five points of damage, the weapon pierces the opponent's heart, with special effects for some monstrous targets

- **Hand (-4):** On a damaging hit, the victim suffers the Arm Wrack Tilt

- **Eye (-5):** On a damaging hit, the victim is blinded (see the Blinded Tilt, p. 208)

Killing Blow

When performing a killing blow, you deal damage equal to your full dice pool plus your weapon modifier. You've time enough to line up your attack so it avoids your victim's armor.

While people who kill in combat can justify their actions based on the heat of the moment, performing a killing

blow is a premeditated attempt to end a human life without the target having a chance to do anything about it. Going through with a killing blow is breaking point whether the victim survives or not.

Weapons and Armor

Weapons are one of the fastest ways to turn a fight into a murder. Sometimes, that's a good thing: pulling a gun can cool down a knife fight before it starts. To that end, this section updates the weapons presented in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** to work with the altered combat system presented here.

A weapon's damage rating doesn't add to an attacker's dice pool. Instead, it adds bonus successes to a successful attack roll. When using weapons from other books, subtract one from the listed damage rating — every successful attack does at least one point of damage.

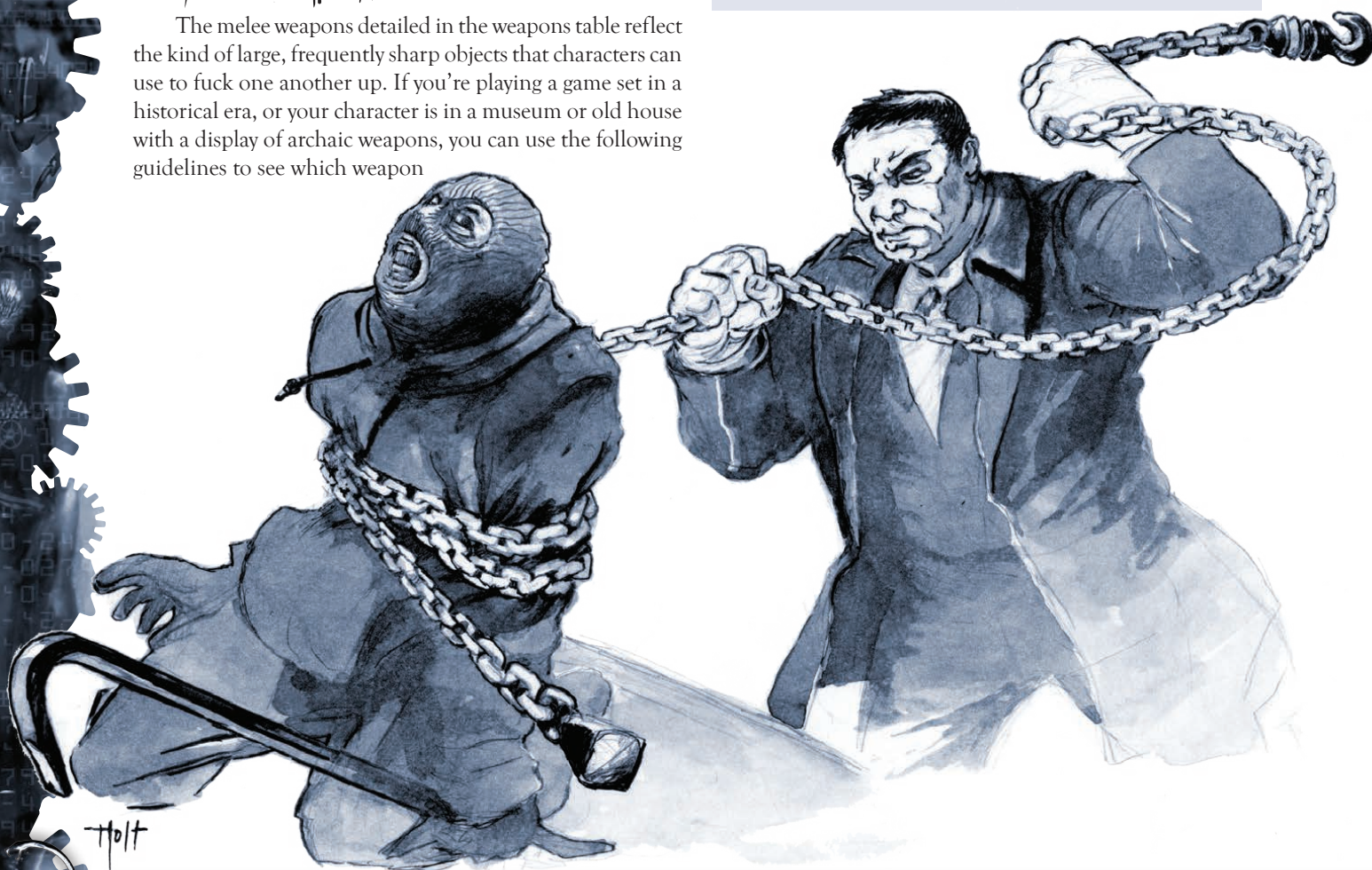
Also, every weapon deals lethal damage. A baseball bat, club, or mace does just as much serious trauma to the human body as an edged weapon or a bullet — though some supernatural creatures don't take lethal damage from weapons. Melee weapons also have a Strength requirement divorced from their Size. This works exactly the same as the Strength requirement for firearms.

Melee Weapons

The melee weapons detailed in the weapons table reflect the kind of large, frequently sharp objects that characters can use to fuck one another up. If you're playing a game set in a historical era, or your character is in a museum or old house with a display of archaic weapons, you can use the following guidelines to see which weapon

profile is most appropriate. The night you fought off a mugger with your combat knife is one thing; the night you fought off a shadowy monster by grabbing a mace from a museum display is quite another.

- **Sap:** One of a number of weapons (including the blackjack and cosh) used by law enforcement and criminals alike in an attempt to knock victims out rather than kill them. Unfortunately for users, it turns out that hitting people in the head with a heavy object is more lethal than most law enforcement agencies are comfortable with. This can also represent any small fast weapon that inflicts blunt trauma, including a sock full of billiard balls.
- **Brass Knuckles:** Brass knuckles slip over the wearer's fingers to give more force to a punch. This weapon uses Brawl for the attack roll but deals lethal damage. The profile can represent a range of fist-loads, including the ever-popular roll of quarters; without a metal guard for the knuckles, however, the user takes one point of bashing damage on a successful hit. It can also apply to steel-toed boots.
- **Baton:** Covering a wide range of lightweight blunt instruments, the baton includes the collapsible (asp) baton, police truncheon, and side-handled baton in use by various police forces. This category of weapon includes the 2x4 and other lengths of wood used to hurt people.



- **Crowbar:** In addition to crowbars and wrecking bars, this category includes metal pipes, lengths of scaffold, and bigger and heavier sporting implements such as baseball and cricket bats. This category can also include archaic clubs and maces.

- **Tire Iron:** An X-shaped piece of metal used to loosen car wheels. The cross shape makes it harder to maneuver than a crowbar but it also makes it easier to catch an attacker's arm or weapon. Using a tire iron or a similar weapon (such as a metal tonfa) gives an attacker +1 Defense.

- **Chain:** A length of chain or knotted rope isn't just a handy way to beat the shit out of someone. It's also the weapon of choice for grapplers looking for an edge to hold their opponent.

- **Shield:** A modern riot shield made of transparent polycarbonate or light metal with a viewing slit. A character carrying a shield can use it to strike and bludgeon opponents or ward off blows. If you don't use the shield to attack, add its Size to Defense against Brawl and Melee attacks. Against ranged attacks, the shield provides a concealment modifier equal to its Size. Small shields are roughly two feet in diameter and could represent a metal trash can lid, or an archaic buckler or target shield. A large shield is at least three feet tall and can represent archaic kite or tower shields.

- **Knife:** One of a range of weapons designed for stabbing and slashing, usually with a blade less than a foot long. Some characters may wield combat knives, while others grab a large kitchen knife or butcher's knife.

- **Rapier:** A long, thin sword normally found in fencing clubs, rapiers are used to stab rather than slash. This weapon's profile can also apply to sword-canes. A rapier can punch through light armor.

- **Machete:** A long weapon used to cut through plants. This weapon's profile can apply to any number of one-handed bladed weapons, including katana and other swords from around the world.

- **Hatchet:** A small, one-handed ax, hatchets can cut through bone just as easily as wood. This weapon's statistics can also cover large cleavers and heavy-bladed butcher's knives, as well as one-handed axes throughout history.

- **Fire Ax:** One of the most common axes for characters to encounter, fire axes are designed to cut through wooden doors. This weapon's profile can include larger two-handed axes used for chopping wood and archaic battle-axes.

- **Chainsaw:** This weapon profile reflects the chainsaw as it appears in modern media rather than trying to model reality. It can also apply to any two-handed weapon that's large, sharp, and very heavy, such as an executioner's ax.

- **Stake:** Using a stake in combat is usually a bad idea since it's a roughly sharpened wooden spike that doesn't penetrate skin very well, but sometimes it's the only weapon that can do anything to a supernatural opponent.

- **Spear:** Most people don't ever see a spear or staff used in anger — or at all. The long reach of such a weapon gives a user +1 Defense against opponents who are unarmed or wielding weapons of Size 1. This weapon profile can also apply to long (more than five and a half feet) lengths of scaffold or pipe, sometimes with a sharpened metal end.

Improvised Weapons

The examples of weapons above can only go so far. What about an old-fashioned corded telephone, a thrown brick, or a shard of sharp metal? Characters who grab an improvised weapon still stand a chance of doing serious damage, but it's not as likely compared to someone who's brought a tool specifically for killing.

If you can make an argument (and the Storyteller accepts it) that your improvised weapon is close enough to one of the weapons above, use the associated weapon profile. Otherwise, an improvised weapon does (Durability — 1) damage, with an initiative penalty and Strength requirement equal to the weapon's Size.

Using an improvised weapon reduces your attack dice pool by 1. On a successful attack, the weapon takes the same amount of damage as it inflicts; though Durability reduces this damage as normal. Once the weapon's Structure is reduced to 0, the object is too wrecked to inflict any real damage.

Armor

With the changes to Defense and weapon damage, a character wearing armor no longer adds its rating to his Defense. The two armor ratings work differently to compensate.

- Ballistic armor applies to incoming firearms attacks. Each point of ballistic armor downgrades one point of damage from lethal to bashing.

- General armor applies to all attacks. Each point of general armor reduces the total damage taken by one point, starting with the most severe type of damage.

If armor has both ballistic and general ratings, apply the ballistic armor first.

When applying armor to an attack dealing lethal damage, you're always going to feel some pain. Even if your armor would reduce the attack to 0 damage, you still take one point of bashing damage.

Characters can only benefit from one source of armor at once — wearing a Kevlar vest under full riot gear is hot and uncomfortable and offers no appreciable extra protection. If a character insists on "layering" armor, it's up to the player to decide which single source applies to all incoming attacks. That decision's final, until the character chills out and remembers that most people don't walk down the street in full riot gear just to buy a quart of milk.

Characters with supernatural armor, such as a mage's warding spells or a werewolf's tough hide can benefit from such protection in addition to mundane armor; add the ratings together to determine a character's final protection.

Example: Detective Black knew something was off, but he didn't know what until he heard the crack of a handgun. The shooter got two successes, plus two for a heavy pistol, for four points of lethal damage. Black's wearing a Kevlar vest (armor 1/3) which converts three of the four points of damage to bashing, then subtracts one point of lethal damage. He takes three points of bashing damage and runs for cover.

Armor Piercing

A weapon that's listed as having the armor piercing quality has a rating between 1 and 3. When attacking someone wearing armor, subtract the piercing quality from the target's ballistic armor first, then general armor.

If you're shooting at an object or a person in cover, subtract the piercing quality from the cover's Durability. Once the shot's passed through cover, any armor-piercing quality is lost.

Example: The gunman shooting at Detective Black sees the cop stagger but keep moving and switches to his backup piece: a light revolver packing armor-piercing rounds. The Storyteller rolls three successes and adds one for the pistol. The rounds are armor piercing 2, which reduces the vest's ballistic armor to 1. Detective Black's vest converts one point of damage to bashing and reduces the lethal damage by one, so he takes a further two points of lethal and one point of bashing damage.

Tilts

Tilts were introduced in **The Danse Macabre** for **Vampire: The Requiem** as a unified way of applying circumstances to both characters and scenes. Tilts are mechanically similar to Conditions, but they affect characters and scenes in combat. Out of combat, use Conditions instead.

Tilts replace the existing combat rules for Fighting Blind, Immobilized, Knockdown, Knockout, and Stun effects. They also provide a new way of handling drugs, poisons, sickness, and environmental and weather effects, but *only as they apply to combat*. Out of combat, use the normal rules for these effects.

Tilts do not give characters Beats when they end, but the effects of a Tilt can very easily cause a Condition. For instance, a character in a fight gets a handful of road salt flung in his eyes and receives the Blinded Tilt. When combat ends, this shifts to the Blind Condition. Resolving this Condition will give the character a Beat. If the character enters combat again before the Condition is resolved, the Blinded Tilt applies again.

Tilts come in two forms: Personal and Environmental. Personal Tilts only apply to one character and include ways in which that character can overcome the effect. Environmental Tilts affect the whole scene, and offer ways for individual characters to mitigate their effects.

Arm Whack

Your arm burns with pain and then goes numb. It could be dislocated, sprained, or broken: whatever's wrong with it, you can't move your limb.

Effect: If your arm's broken or otherwise busted, you drop whatever you're holding in that arm and can't use it to attack opponents — unless you've got the Ambidextrous Merit, you suffer off-hand penalties for any rolls that require manual dexterity. If this effect spreads to both limbs, you're down to a chance die on any rolls that require manual dexterity, and -3 to all other Physical actions.

Causing the Tilt: Some supernatural powers can cripple a victim's limbs or break bones with a touch. A character can have his arm knocked out by a targeted blow to the arm (-2 penalty) that deals more damage than the character's Stamina. A targeted blow to the hand inflicts this Tilt if it does any damage.

Ending the Tilt: If the Tilt is inflicted as a result of an attack, mark an 'x' under the leftmost Health box inflicted in that attack; the Tilt ends when the damage that caused it has healed. If aggravated damage inflicts this Tilt, the character loses the use of his arm (or straight up loses his arm) permanently.

Beaten Down

The character has had the fight knocked out of him.

Effect: The character cannot take active part in the fight without extra effort. The player must spend a point of Willpower *each time* he wants the character to take a violent action in the fight. He can still run, Dodge, and apply Defense. If he wishes to take another action, the Storyteller should judge whether the action is aggressive enough to require the expenditure.

Causing the Tilt: The character suffers bashing damage in excess of his Stamina or any amount of lethal damage.

Ending the Tilt: The character surrenders and gives the aggressor what he wants. At this point, the character regains a point of Willpower and takes a Beat, but can take no further action in the fight. If the aggressor's intent is to kill or injure the character, obviously surrender isn't a good option.

Tracking Tilts

A quick-reference chart of Tilts is available at the end of this chapter, which summarizes the effects of each one. To keep track of who is affected by what Tilt, sticky notes or index cards come in very helpful. Environmental Tilts should sit somewhere that everyone can see them, while Personal Tilts should be close to hand for the player of the affected character. When a Storyteller character is hit with a Tilt, jot the character's name down on the card as well.

Tilt Reference

This quick-reference can help players and Storytellers alike remember the effects of each Tilt detailed in the previous pages.

Personal Tilts

Tilt	Effects
Arm Wrack	One arm: Drop anything held, suffer off-hand penalties for most rolls. Both arms: Chance die on rolls requiring manual dexterity, -3 to other Physical actions.
Beaten Down	Cannot take violent action in combat without spending Willpower.
Blinded	One eye: -3 to vision-related rolls. Both eyes: -5 to vision-related rolls, lose all Defense.
Deafened	One ear: -3 Perception rolls. Both ears: Chance die on Perception rolls, -2 to combat rolls.
Drugged	-2 Speed, -3 to combat rolls (including Defense and Perception). Ignore wound penalties.
Immobilized	No combat actions. Can't move or apply Defense.
Insane	+1 to combat rolls, act after everyone else, -3 to Social rolls, can't spend Willpower.
Insensate	No combat actions. Can move and apply Defense. Taking damage ends the Tilt.
Knocked Down	Lose action this turn (if still to take), knocked prone. Can apply Defense, attack from ground at -2.
Leg Wrack	One leg: half Speed, -2 penalty on Physical rolls for movement. Both legs: Knocked Down, give up action to move at Speed 1, movement-based Physical rolls reduced to chance die.
Poisoned	Moderate: 1 point of bashing damage per turn. Grave: 1 point of lethal damage per turn.
Sick	Moderate: -1 to all actions. Penalty increases by 1 for every two turns. Grave: As moderate, but also inflicts 1 point of bashing damage per turn.
Stunned	Lose next action. Half Defense until you next act.

Environmental Tilts

Tilt	Effects
Blizzard	-1 penalty to visual Perception and ranged attack rolls, increased by 1 per 10 yards. -1 penalty to Physical rolls per 4 inches of snow.
Earthquake	Penalty to Dexterity rolls depending on severity. Take 1 to 3 lethal damage per turn, Stamina + Athletics downgrades to bashing.
Extreme Cold	Bashing damage doesn't heal. -1 penalty to all rolls, increasing by 1 per hour. At -5, further hours deal one point of lethal damage.
Extreme Heat	Bashing damage doesn't heal. -1 penalty to all rolls, increasing by 1 per hour. At -5, further hours deal one point of lethal damage.
Flooded	-2 to Physical dice pools per foot of flooding. Once water is over head, character must swim or hold breath.
Heavy Rain	-3 to aural and visual Perception rolls.
Heavy Winds	-3 modifier to aural Perception rolls. Winds rated between 1 and 5, severity acts as penalty to Physical rolls and deals that much bashing damage per turn, Dexterity + Athletics to avoid.
Ice	-2 Speed, -2 to Physical actions. Can move at normal speed but -4 Physical actions. Dramatic Failure causes Knocked Down; Drive rolls are at -5 and half Acceleration.

Blinded

The character's eyes are damaged or removed, or the character is placed in a situation where eyesight is eliminated (a pitch-black room or a supernatural effect).

Effect: The character suffers a -3 penalty to any rolls that rely on vision — including attack rolls — and halves his Defense if one eye is blinded. That penalty increases to -5 and losing all Defense if both eyes are affected.

Causing the Tilt: The most common means of inflicting the tilt is to severely impair the target's eyesight (using a blindfold, etc). An attacker can inflict temporary blindness by slashing at her opponent's brow, throwing sand into his eyes, or kicking up dirt. This requires an attack roll of Dexterity + Athletics with a -3 penalty; the victim's Defense applies to this attack. If it succeeds, the target is Blinded for the next turn.

Blindness can also be inflicted by dealing damage to the target's eyes — a specified attack with a -5 penalty (see Specified Targets, above). A successful attack normally damages one eye. It takes an exceptional success to totally blind an attacker.

Ending the Tilt: If an attack against the character's eye does any points of damage, mark an 'x' under the leftmost Health box inflicted in that attack. If the damage inflicted is aggravated the character loses vision in that eye permanently. Otherwise, the condition ends when the damage that caused the Tilt is healed.

Blizzard (Environmental)

Heavy snowfall carpets the ground and just keeps falling, whipped up by howling winds into a barrage of whirling white.

Effect: Blizzards make it very hard to see for any real distance. Rolls to see things close to the character's person, out to arm's length away, suffer a -1 penalty. Each additional ten yards inflicts an additional -1 penalty (cumulative) on all visual Perception rolls. This penalty also applies to ranged attack rolls. Moving through snow is difficult. Every four inches of snow applies a -1 penalty to appropriate Physical rolls, including combat rolls, Athletics, and so forth. The Blizzard Tilt rarely applies by itself — the Storyteller may also inflict any or all of the Extreme Cold, Heavy Winds, or Ice Tilts (all found below).

Causing the Tilt: For the most part, the weather is out of the characters' control — the Storyteller should telegraph an incoming blizzard before it hits, but it's ultimately up to her. Some supernatural powers might grant a character the power to create a blizzard.

Ending the Tilt: Without supernatural powers, characters can't "end" a blizzard. The best they can manage is to escape the weather or wait for it to stop. Proper equipment (such as goggles and snow boots) can add $+1$ to $+3$ to a roll, offsetting some of the penalties. If someone is causing this Tilt through a supernatural power, it's possible that the characters could disrupt his concentration.

Deafened

The character can't hear. Maybe he's suffering intense tinnitus or can only hear the roaring of blood in his ears, or he just plain can't hear.

Effect: If the character is deaf in one ear, he suffers a -3 penalty to hearing-based Perception rolls. A character who is struck deaf in both ears only gets a chance die on hearing-based Perception rolls, and suffers a -2 penalty to all combat-related dice rolls — suddenly losing the ability to hear the people around you is tremendously disorienting.

Causing the Tilt: A particularly loud noise within 10 feet of the character may cause temporary hearing loss as though the character were deaf in both ears. Alternatively, a targeted attack on the ear — at a -4 penalty — can deafen a character. Supernatural creatures with heightened senses can be deafened by loud noises at greater distances.

Ending the Tilt: Deafness from loud noises fades after $10 - (\text{victim's Stamina} + \text{Resolve})$ turns. If an attack against the character's ear does any points of damage, mark an 'x' under the leftmost Health box inflicted in that attack. If the damage inflicted is aggravated, the character loses hearing in the ear permanently. Otherwise, the condition ends when the damage that caused the Tilt is healed.

Drugged

The character's mind is addled by mind-altering substances, such as drink or drugs.

Effect: The effects of specific drugs are detailed in the on p.177 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. A generic narcotic can be represented with one set of modifiers: the character suffers a -2 modifier to Speed (and static Defense, if used) and a -3 penalty to all rolls in combat, including Defense and Perception. The character also ignores wound penalties.

Causing the Tilt: If the character has chosen to take drugs, then he suffers the effects. To administer drugs to another character is a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, suffering a -1 modifier for the improvised weapon. If the drug has to go in to a specific body part (such as an arm or mouth), it requires an attack against a specified target.

Ending the Tilt: Each drug in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** explains how long a high lasts. A generic narcotic lasts for $10 - (\text{victim's Stamina} + \text{Resolve})$ hours. This time is halved by medical help, such as pumping the victim's stomach or flushing his system.

Earthquake (Environmental)

Everything shudders and shakes; huge rents and holes tear the ground wide open.

Effect: Earthquakes don't last long, but they don't have to. When the quake's actually occurring, all Dexterity-based dice pools (and Defense) suffer a -1 to -5 penalty depending on the quake's severity. Characters take between one and three points of lethal damage per turn of the quake's duration, though a reflexive Stamina + Athletics roll can downgrade that damage to bashing — or cancel it entirely on an exceptional success.

Causing the Tilt: Without tremendous supernatural power, it's almost impossible to cause an earthquake. A character who detonates a powerful explosive underground might simulate the effects over a city-block for a few seconds.

Ending the Tilt: Earthquakes are fortunately very quick events. It's very rare for one to last more than a minute (20 turns), so waiting them out is the best course of action.

Extreme Cold (Environmental)

Bone-chilling winds bite through the character, or trudging through knee-deep snow takes all of the sensation from his limbs. Any time the temperature gets down below zero degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit), a character can suffer from the cold's effects. This Tilt can sometimes be personal, either as a result of a medical condition such as hypothermia or a supernatural power.

Effect: When the temperature is below freezing, characters can't heal bashing damage — the extreme temperature deals damage at the same rate normal characters heal it (a cut might turn to frostbite, for instance). Supernatural beings and characters who heal faster than normal instead halve their normal healing rate. For every hour that a character is continuously affected by this Tilt, he accrues a -1 penalty to all rolls. When that penalty hits -5 dice, he instead suffers 1 point of lethal damage per hour.

Causing the Tilt: A character can suffer this Tilt from being in a frozen environment — whether he's outside in the Arctic tundra or in a walk-in freezer. Inflicting the Tilt is reasonably straightforward: throw the victim into a freezing lake or lock him in a freezer for long enough and he'll develop hypothermia.

Ending the Tilt: The best way to escape the freezing cold is to find a source of warmth — either a building with working heating, or warm bundled clothing. A character who has hypothermia requires medical attention.

Extreme Heat (Environmental)

The character might be stumbling through the desert with the sun beating down on him, or running through the steam-tunnels surrounding an old boiler room. This Tilt can also be personal, the result of a debilitating fever that spikes his temperature far above the norm. Extreme heat is normally anything above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) — this includes both environmental temperature and internal body temperature due to fever.

Effect: When the temperature is far above normal, characters can't heal bashing damage — the extreme temperature deals damage at the same rate normal characters heal it (a cut might heal, but it's replaced by sunburn or sunstroke). Supernatural beings and characters who heal faster than normal instead halve their normal healing rate. For every hour that a character is continuously affected by this Tilt, he accrues a -1 penalty to all rolls. When that penalty hits -5 dice, he instead suffers a point of lethal damage per hour.

Causing the Tilt: This Tilt is usually caused by environmental factors — being out at noon in the desert or spending too long in a sauna or forge. Even a fever is the result of an infection, rather than something that an opponent can force on a character. It's possible to create this Tilt on a given character: securing someone to a chair right next to an old, inefficient boiler, or stranding them in the desert far from any shade.

Ending the Tilt: The key to ending this Tilt is simple: get out of the heat. In a desert or similar environment, finding

shade is paramount. Elsewhere, the character needs to escape whatever is causing the abnormal temperatures.

Flooded (Environmental)

Some liquid — brackish water, mud, gore, or raw sewage — is high enough to impede the character's progress.

Effect: Each foot of liquid inflicts a -2 penalty to all Physical dice pools. If the water goes up over her head, a character has to swim (Dexterity + Athletics) with a penalty appropriate for the speed of flooding. Alternatively, she can try to hold her breath ("Holding Breath," p. 49 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**) if she cannot get her head above the rising waters.

Causing the Tilt: Normally, this Tilt is the result of heavy rain, sudden snowmelt, or a broken water main. Characters can cause this Tilt by smashing up a water heater or blowing up a small dam. Some supernatural creatures may be able to call floods down onto a region.

Ending the Tilt: Characters can escape flooding by getting to high ground, which is enough to mitigate this Tilt. A long-term fix would require draining the floodwaters, but each flood requires its own solution.

Heavy Rain (Environmental)

Torrential rain lashes down in knives, bouncing high off the sidewalk. The sound of rain on the ground is a constant hammering rumble that goes on without end, like dropping ball bearings on a tin roof. Thick gray curtains of water obscure vision.

Effect: Heavy rains — approaching tropical storm levels or worse — cause a Perception penalty of -3 dice to both vision and hearing. Rain's hard to see through, but it's also *loud*. If the rains carry on for an hour or more, the Flooded Tilt will soon follow. This Tilt is often accompanied by Heavy Winds; a character trapped out in Heavy Rains might come under the effects of Extreme Cold.

Causing the Tilt: Short of supernatural power or a fleet of cloud-seeding aircraft, Heavy Rain is the result of natural weather patterns.

Ending the Tilt: The best way out of the rain is to get indoors. Unless it's the start of some sodden apocalypse, the characters can wait for the weather to ease.

Heavy Winds (Environmental)

Howling winds buffet at the characters, whipping street furniture into the air, tearing the roofs from buildings. Powerful winds can toss cars around like toys. Anyone out in the winds feels like they're taking a beating just for walking down the street.

Effect: Heavy winds are loud, so characters suffer a -3 modifier to aural Perception rolls. Also the wind inflicts a penalty to all Physical rolls when out in the winds — including Drive rolls. Grade the wind from one to five — one is tropical storm level (around 40 MPH), three is hurricane level (around 80 MPH), and five is tornado level (150+ MPH). This is the penalty applied to Physical dice rolls. Characters outside in the maelstrom take damage from flying debris, taking bashing damage each turn equal to the wind's rating. Characters can make a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll to avoid damage.



Causing the Tilt: Heavy winds are a fact of life, from siroccos in the desert to tornados in the Midwest to wind shears everywhere.

Ending the Tilt: Getting out of the wind is the best way to end this Tilt. Sometimes that's as easy as sheltering in an automobile — as long as nobody tries to drive. Buildings provide more permanent shelter.

Ice (Environmental)

The ground's covered in a mirror-smooth layer of ice that sends wheels spinning and people's feet flying out from under them. The ice could be so thin as to be nearly invisible or a thick layer that's the only thing keeping the characters from sinking into a frozen lake.

Effect: When a character can't trust her footing, divide her Speed in half and all Physical rolls (and Defense) suffer a -2 penalty. Attempting to move at full Speed increases the Physical penalty to -4 . Any dramatic failure on a Physical roll inflicts the Knocked Down Tilt. Driving on ice is a real pain — halve Acceleration and characters suffer a -5 penalty to Drive rolls.

Causing the Tilt: This Tilt doesn't just apply to icy conditions, but to any surface that's slick and slippery, including a spill of industrial lubricant or just a really well polished wooden or linoleum floor. Characters can use a Dexterity + Crafts roll to cover an area in industrial cleaner or mix up cleaning chemicals into a lubricant. If the Extreme Cold Tilt is in effect, even covering the area with water would do the trick.

Ending the Tilt: "Get off the ice" is good advice, but that can take work. Characters can use heat or fire to melt ice, or throw down copious quantities of salt or grit to increase traction.

Immobilized

Something holds the character fast, preventing him from moving. This could be a grappling opponent, a straightjacket wrapped with heavy chains, or a coffin secured on the outside with a padlock.

Effect: The character can't do anything but wriggle helplessly. He can't apply Defense against incoming attacks and can't take combat-related actions. If someone's holding him down, he can spend a point of Willpower to deliver a head-butt or similar attack, but even that might not free him.

Causing the Tilt: The usual way to inflict this Tilt is through the Restrain grappling move. This often uses material means to prevent the victim from moving, such as binding limbs with duct tape or zip-ties, tossing the victim into a car trunk or similar tight space, or applying painful holds and joint locks.

Ending the Tilt: An Immobilized target can break free by escaping from a grapple or snapping whatever binds her. If grappled, the character can struggle as normal but can only select the Break Free move on a success. If held by an item, the character must make a Strength + Athletics roll penalized by the item's Durability. If a character's arms and legs are both bound, he suffers a -2 penalty; this increases to -4 if he's hog-tied. On a success, he snaps the bindings or breaks free. Each roll, successful or not, deals a point of bashing damage.

Insane

The character suffers from a panic attack, sudden imbalance, or a full-on psychotic break. Her pulse races and her mind cannot focus. The world's an unstable place, and she's unable to keep her balance.

Effect: Someone suffering a psychotic break isn't the sort of person to go down without a fight. Her stated intent might be irrational or just plain impossible, and she might have fewer ethical problems with using extreme violence to get what she wants. The character gains a +1 bonus to all combat rolls, but takes actions after everyone else (if two characters suffer from the Insane Tilt, both act after everyone else but compare Initiative as normal). A character suffering from this Tilt may spend Willpower, but the cost is 2 dots instead of 1 for the same effect.

Causing the Tilt: Faced with extraordinary circumstances, any character with an appropriate Condition may gain the Insane Tilt. The Storyteller can call for a Resolve + Composure roll to resist a general anxiety that gnaws at the character's mind; if the character fails, he gains the Tilt. If the character witnesses something truly horrific — a daughter watches her father walk to the end of the garden and shoot himself in the head, smiling all the while; a man stumbles into the wrong office at work and sees his co-workers feasting on the intern's organs; a soldier sees her unit gunned down by a sniper while she can do nothing — the Storyteller can rule that the Tilt is unavoidable.

The Insane Tilt can also be triggered by a breaking point. If a character fails a breaking point role during combat, the Storyteller may apply the Insane Tilt then as well.

A character can work to *inspire* another character's madness in order to cause this Tilt. She could orchestrate events that she hopes will provoke a psychotic break, but that's amateur hour. A professional swaps out her victim's meds, giving stimulants just as his bipolar cycle ticks into mania, or dosing a paranoid or schizophrenic with hallucinogenic drugs.

Some supernatural creatures possess mind-affecting powers that can apply this Tilt, even to characters who do not have an appropriate Condition.

Ending the Tilt: The specific effects of this Tilt don't normally last beyond the end of the scene. A character can try to force her mind to a state of balance, but it's not easy. She must sit and focus on blocking out the craziness. She rolls Resolve + Composure as an instant action contested by a dice pool of (10 - her Willpower). She can't take any other actions that turn and doesn't apply Defense against any attacks.

Insensate

The character shuts down, either due to extreme fear or sudden pleasure. He may huddle in a corner, cringe away from sudden noises, or stare into space as waves of pleasure lap over him.

Effect: The character can't take any actions until the Tilt is resolved. He can apply Defense to incoming attacks, and if he takes any damage from an attack, he's knocked free of whatever fogged his brain.

Causing the Tilt: Several supernatural powers can leave their victim in a trance-like state of heightened emotion, whether it's a vampire's mind-affecting tricks or the pants-shitting terror of

witnessing a werewolf take on an inhuman form. A truly heroic amount of alcohol or a hallucinogenic drug might have similar effects; administering such a drug is a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, suffering a -1 modifier for the improvised weapon.

Ending the Tilt: The Tilt wears off at the end of the scene. The victim can spend a point of Willpower before then to act normally for one turn. A successful attack will also end the Tilt. If a character has been knocked insensible by drugs, this Tilt is replaced with the Drugged Tilt when it ends.

Knocked Down

Something knocks the character to the floor, either toppling her with a powerful blow to the chest or taking one of her legs out from under her.

Effect: The character is knocked off her feet. If she hasn't already acted this turn, she loses her action. Once she's on the ground, a character is considered prone (see "Going Prone," pp. 164-165 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). The character can still apply Defense against incoming attacks, and can attempt to attack from the ground at a -2 penalty.

Causing the Tilt: Some weapons list "Knockdown" as a special effect of a damaging hit. Otherwise, a melee weapon with a damage modifier of +2 or greater, or a firearm with a damage modifier of +3 or more can be used to knock a character down with the force of the blow. Alternatively, a melee weapon or unarmed attack can knock an opponent down with a targeted attack against the legs (-2 modifier). The attacker declares that he wants to knock his opponent down and halves the total damage done (rounding down). On a successful attack, the target is knocked down.

Ending the Tilt: The easiest way to end this Tilt is to stand up, which takes an action. A character affected by this Tilt who hasn't yet acted can make a Dexterity + Athletics roll, minus any weapon modifier, instead of her normal action. If successful, she avoids the effects of this Tilt altogether. On a failure, she falls over and the Tilt applies as normal.

Leg Wrack

Your leg feels like it's going to snap clean off whenever you move; when you stop moving, you feel a burning numbness that encourages you to avoid moving.

Effect: If your leg is broken, sprained, or dislocated, halve your Speed and suffer a -2 penalty on Physical rolls that require movement (and Defense). If both of your legs are wracked, you fall over — taking the Knocked Down Tilt — and cannot get up. Your Speed is reduced to 1; if you want to move at all, you cannot take any other action. Physical rolls that require movement are reduced to a chance die.

Causing the Tilt: Some supernatural powers can cripple a victim's limbs or break bone with a touch. A character can have his leg knocked out by a targeted blow to the leg (-2 penalty) that deals more damage than the character's Stamina.

Ending the Tilt: If the Tilt is inflicted as a result of an attack, mark an 'x' under the leftmost Health box inflicted in that attack. The Tilt ends when that damage that caused it has healed. If the damage that inflicts this Tilt is aggravated, the character loses use of his leg permanently.

Poisoned

You've got poison inside you. It's tearing you apart from the inside; burning like acid in your gut and making your head swim.

Effect: This Tilt applies a general sense of being poisoned to a character without worrying about Toxicity during combat. For the purposes of this Tilt, a poison is either "moderate" or "grave" — a moderate poison causes 1 point of bashing damage per turn of combat, while a grave poison ups that to 1 point of lethal damage per turn. If the Storyteller cares to continue the effects of the poison outside of combat, he can apply the standard rules for handling poisons and toxins when combat is complete.

Causing the Tilt: It's possible for a character to not know that he's been poisoned. It could be as innocuous as switching drinks with a pretty girl who is the target of a mob hit, or as simple as walking into a house with a carbon monoxide leak. That said, the main time poison comes up in combat is when one combatant inflicts it on another. Injecting your opponent with a syringe full of drain cleaner or snake venom is a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, suffering a -1 modifier for the improvised weapon.

Ending the Tilt: Short of immediate medical attention — and how many fights take place in an emergency room? — all a victim can do is struggle on. Roll Stamina + Resolve as a reflexive action each turn that your character is poisoned. If your character intends to act (meaning, takes a non-reflexive action), the roll suffers a -3 penalty. Success counteracts the damage for one turn only.

Sick

Your stomach churns. You retch and heave but only succeed in bringing up bile. Sweat beads on your brow as you spike a fever. Your muscles ache with every movement. You're wracked with hot and cold flushes as a sickness gnaws away at your insides.

Effect: This Tilt applies a general sickness to a character without worrying about the specific illness. For the purposes of this Tilt, a sickness is either "moderate" or "grave." A moderate sickness, such as a cold, asthma, the flu, or just a bad hangover, causes a -1 penalty to all actions during combat. That penalty increases by one every two turns (the first two turns, the character suffers a -1 penalty, the next two turns the penalty is -2, and so on up to a maximum of -5 dice on turn 9). A grave sickness, such as pneumonia, heavy metal poisoning, or aggressive cancer, inflicts the same dice pool penalties as a mild sickness. In addition, however, the physical stress of fighting or even defending oneself from an attacker while gravely ill inflicts 1 point of bashing damage per turn of combat.

Causing the Tilt: It's not easy to deliberately make someone sick. Sure, if you can get your hands on a vial of smallpox or deliberately use a disease you've got to make someone sick (a breaking point, especially in the case of grave diseases like AIDS), then you've got a reasonable chance. Some supernatural creatures have abilities that can inflict diseases on others. Aside from that, you've just got to expose your opponent to the sickness long before you fight and hope for the best.

Ending the Tilt: This Tilt reflects the effects of sickness as it specifically applies to combat. Outside of combat, use the existing system for diseases (*World of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 176). The penalties inflicted by this Tilt fade at a rate of one point per turn once the character has a chance to rest, but any damage inflicted remains until the character can heal.

Stunned

Your character is dazed and unable to think straight. Maybe her vision blurs. If she's stunned as a result of a blow to the head, she's probably got a concussion.

Effect: A character with the Stunned Tilt loses her next action, and halves her Defense until she can next act.

Causing the Tilt: A character can be stunned by any attack that does at least as much damage as her Size in a single hit. Some weapons have a "stun" special ability. These double the weapon modifier only for the purposes of determining whether the attacker inflicts the Stunned Tilt. Attacks against the target's head (see "Specified Targets," p. 203) count the character's Size as one lower for the purposes of this Tilt. The Storyteller might determine that additional effects cause this Tilt, like being caught in the blast area of an explosion (*World of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 178).

Ending the Tilt: The effects of this Tilt normally only last for a single turn. The character can end the Tilt during her own action by reflexively spending a point of Willpower to gather her wits, though she suffers a -3 modifier to any actions she takes that turn.

Sources of Harm

Some of the sources of harm in the *World of Darkness Rulebook* have updated rules, presented here.

Car Wrecks

The new systems for combat and weapons make lethal damage the standard for being hit with a heavy object, and cars are no different. If you hit someone — or something — when driving a car, the roll is still Dexterity + Drive + Handling and an aware opponent can apply Defense.

Roll the vehicle's Size to determine damage and add one additional success per 20 miles per hour (28 yards per turn) — the vehicle's speed acts as a weapon modifier. A moving car always deals lethal damage. If a car rams a human-sized creature, the victim suffers the Knocked Down Tilt.

This change of rolling Size and adding one point of damage per 20 miles per hour extends to ramming other cars as well; victims inside cars take lethal damage from car crashes unless wearing a seat-belt, which reduces the damage to bashing.

Disease

Outside of combat, a character who suffers from a disease suffers damage over a period of time. Resisting the damage inflicted by a disease requires a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll. This roll is not contested but it is modified by the severity of the disease. Only one success is necessary to avoid damage each time.

Some diseases are the kind that people don't heal from. A character's cancer could go into remission, or he can hold his HIV back with medication, but time alone won't cure them. The Storyteller should set a benchmark of how many rolls the character has to succeed at in a row for the disease to go into remission. Medical treatment can offset any penalties to the Stamina + Resolve roll applied by the disease — but might inflict penalties on other rolls, as sometimes the cure is almost as bad as the disease.

Drugs

A character who has taken drugs, willingly or not, must fight off the effects of the drug. Resisting the effects requires a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll. This roll is not contested but it is modified by the potency of the drug ingested. Only one success is necessary for a character to regain her senses. In the case of some drugs, this roll must be made once per hour, once per scene — or even once per turn, in the case of strong hallucinogens or narcotics.

Overdose

Characters who overdose on drugs treat the drug like a poison, with a Toxicity somewhere between 3 and 7. The overdose deals damage once per hour until the drug has run its course — if a character's spent 8 hours drinking, then the poison takes another 8 hours to fade, with Toxicity between 3 (beer or wine) to 5 (rubbing alcohol). A character who injects stronger heroin than expected takes damage for (8 - Stamina) hours, with Toxicity 7.

Extreme Environments

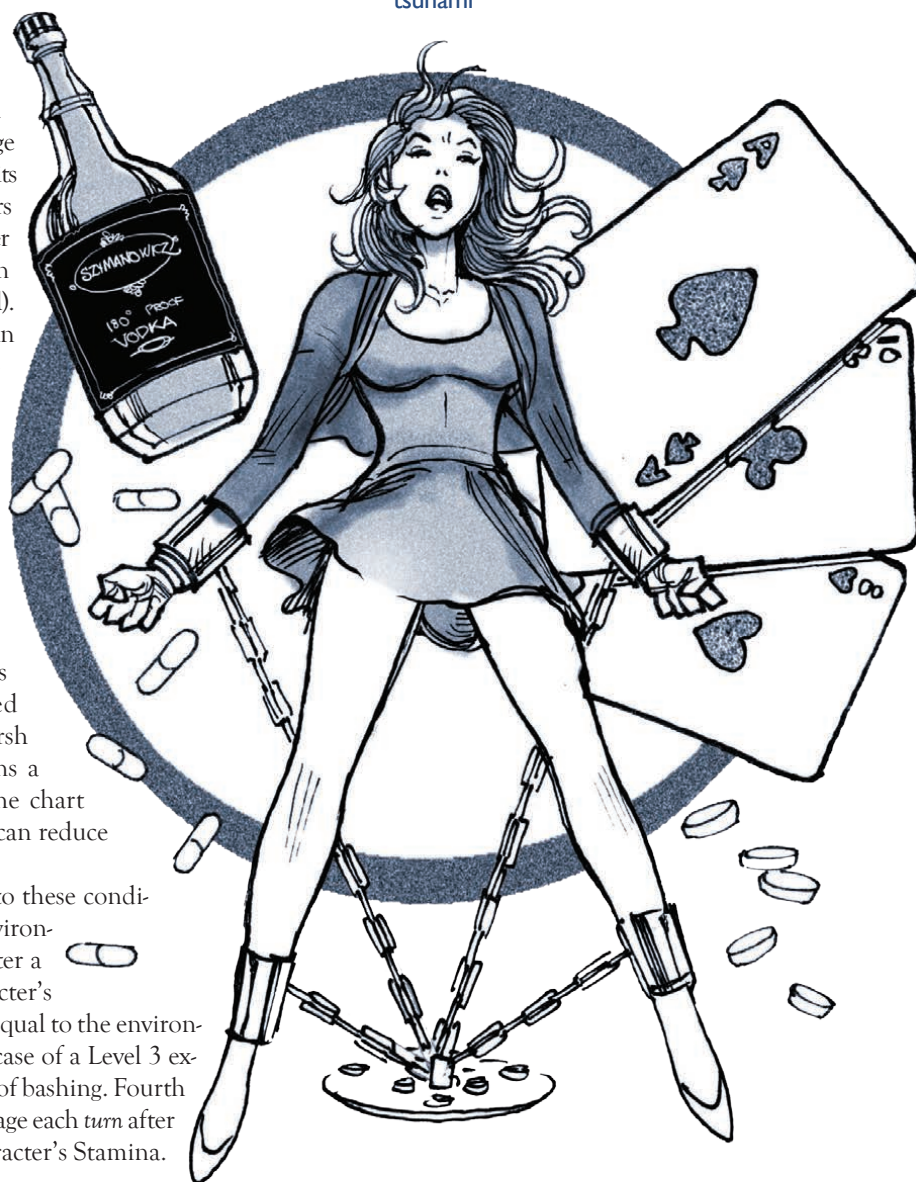
The human body is not conditioned to withstand extreme heat, cold, air pressure, and other weather. These harsh conditions hinder and endanger unprepared characters. When exposed to a harsh environment, the Storyteller assigns a level to the environment, using the chart below as a guideline. Survival gear can reduce the effective environment level.

While characters are exposed to these conditions, they suffer the level of the environment as a penalty to all actions. After a number of hours equal to the character's Stamina, he takes bashing damage equal to the environment's level once per hour. In the case of a Level 3 exposure, the damage is lethal instead of bashing. Fourth level environments cause lethal damage each turn after a number of turns equal to the character's Stamina.

Any damage caused by levels 2-4 exposure leaves lasting marks, scars, and tissue damage. Damage caused by extreme environments cannot be healed until the character is back in a safe environment.

Environment Levels

Level	Example Environs
0	Safe environment
1	Light snow, heavy storms; too cold to sleep safely; air pressure causes shortness of breath; sweltering sun can cause first-degree burns
2	Heavy snow; cold causes physical pain and potential hypothermia; sun quickly causes first degree burns, can cause second degree burns with time; minor radiation poisoning
3	Desert exposure; heat rapidly causing second-degree burns; moderate radiation exposure
4	Desert sandstorm, severe hurricane, tornado, tsunami



Poison

Outside of combat, a character who is the victim of a poison or toxin suffers lethal damage over a period of time equal to the poison's Toxicity. Some substances deal this damage only once. Others deal this damage once per turn

or once per hour until purged — or until the poison has run its course. To resist the damage, make a reflexive Stamina + Resolve — Toxicity roll. Each success reduces the damage taken by 1. This roll must be made every time the poison deals damage unless the character stops fighting and gives in.

10th August 2012

Dearest William,

I wound my heart today and I thought of you and that first time you gave me my key, and the wonders you imparted to me over those few happy months we spent together. You fed me and clothed me then. You taught me to speak and sing, and I learnt so quickly. Do you still have the scarf I made for you? I worked so hard on it and you were delighted when I gave it to you.

What went wrong, William? Why did you stop visiting me in your room, and taking me outside? It seemed that one day you were still in the first flush of love for me, and then you were cold and did not care for me anymore. I remember how sorry I was when I wound a clock too hard and broke it so that it went round and round and round without regard to the time and how you shouted at me when you found out, and how I got so cross and hit you again and again. Perhaps that was it. After that you looked at me like you were afraid. You shouldn't have been afraid. You had nothing to fear from me.

I remember too how sad I was that morning when I woke and found that you had gone and had left me behind. I confess that I quite lost my composure, and that I smashed to pieces every watch and clock I could find and every pane of glass in your home until none was left and my anger was spent and then I cried and tried so hard to put things back together. But I couldn't.

What is broken cannot ever be mended.

I later heard, long after the fact, from a friendly fat policeman that you had gone away to London and had married and had a son in your evening years. I could not imagine you as an old man, William. But I traveled across the sea, after a while, and walked across Wales and England and found my way to London and the place frightened me and when I arrived the bombs were falling and I was in a house that collapsed on my head and I thought I would die, but it turns out that I only slept for a while and when I woke I promised that I would keep looking for you as you were because I knew that you would be as I remembered you and no other way.

And I was right. Here you are.

And you will be mine forever, William. I might have to make you to start with. But you will be mine.

Wait for me, darling.

Your darling dear Mary.

Ephemeral Beings: Ghosts, Spirits, and Angels

Humanity isn't alone. It shares the World of Darkness with innumerable entities, lurking invisible and intangible in a Twilight state, waiting for the right conditions to arise. When an area becomes tainted by the touch of death; when the wall between the world and the terrible, hungry Shadow of animist spirits grows thin; when people begin to see the gears of the God-Machine: these are the times when the ghosts, spirits and angels around us can manifest, interact, and further their alien goals. All of them want something from humanity — memories, obedience, emotion ... even their bodies. Sometimes, humanity fights back.

This section replaces and updates the rules for ghosts in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, and the rules for spirits found in the **Book of Spirits** and other World of Darkness games. It unifies the two systems into one that uses Conditions for Manifestation and Influence and is also used for angels of the God-Machine.

Invisible Incursions

The physical World of Darkness borders on multiple realms, each with its own peculiar laws. The inhabitants of those realms aren't material beings and although many are intelligent and self-aware, their thoughts are alien to humans. Mortal investigators almost never see the worlds these beings come from with their own eyes, for which they should be grateful. Everything occultists have been able to learn about the animistic Shadow World and the chthonian deep of the Underworld paints both realms as deadly and teeming with "natives." The enigmatic servant-angels of the God-Machine might come from such a realm, or might be created within the world by the processes and Infrastructure they serve. No one knows for sure.

Whether the beings are fleeing the dangers of their home realm, avoiding banishment to it, summoned from their home by mortal occultists, sent as agents by more powerful members of their own kind, or forced to cross over to complete a mission by the God-Machine, most encounters between characters and ephemeral beings in a God-Machine chronicle take place in the physical world where characters have the home ground advantage.

Manifestation and Possession

Instead of bodies formed of flesh and bone, ephemeral beings are made up of spiritual matter called ephemera, which comes in several varieties. These substances are both invisible and intangible to anything not comprised of the same sort of ephemera — ghosts can see and touch one another, but are invisible to most living people and don't interact with solid objects or even other ephemeral beings that aren't ghosts. Spirits happily float through walls and pass through ghosts

without even noticing them, but are incapable of interacting with people without help.

Almost every ephemeral being has the ability to *Manifest* — to make its presence known and to affect the physical world, ranging from remaining invisible but using powers, appearing as insubstantial but visible images, or even possessing a victim, sending his soul into hibernation and warping the commandeered body to suit their own uses. Some are more skilled at it than others (those so weak they can't Manifest at all are essentially impotent in the physical world and don't interact with humans), but all require certain appropriate conditions before they can use these powers.

An ephemeral being that wants to shift into physical form or to inhabit an object, animal or person requires the specified area, item or character to be prepared for it to successfully Manifest. Ghosts require Anchors — places, objects and people that are linked to their living days and reinforce their failing identities. Angels can only appear in the world when enough Infrastructure has been laid out by the God-Machine. Spirits need the emotional resonance of the area or victim-host to match their own.

The more powerful the Manifestation, the stronger the Condition needed is. The most powerful physical forms and tightly-held victims are the result of careful husbandry by the Manifesting being, slowly building up the necessary Condition by leveraging whatever Manifestation they can produce at first. Unless Conditions are very strong or the possessing entity extremely powerful, a human being falling victim to a possession is first urged to follow the entity's wishes instead of his own, then later forced to do it's bidding, and only then physically mutated into a bizarre amalgamation of nature and supernatural power.

Summoning or exorcising entities from locations or Possession, then, is a matter of creating or destroying the appropriate setting for the creature, preferably near to a place it can cross over from or to its native realm. Most entities waste away as though starving outside of the needed Conditions, so breaking those Conditions is a sure-fire way of forcing the being to abandon its attempt at Manifestation and send it fleeing toward either a way "home" or another appropriate vessel. Cultists wanting to summon entities attempt to ritually create appropriate Conditions near to a crossing-point, or offer up a suitable vessel in the hope that the right sort of ephemeral being will accept the gift. In the case of angels, most participants in a "summoning" never realize the significance of their actions — Infrastructure is gradually built as the God-Machine moves pawns and machinery around like game pieces until an angel is brought forth.

Ghosts

Echoes of the Dead

When human beings die, especially in a sudden or traumatic fashion, they sometimes leave parts of themselves behind. Ranging from broken, animated after-images unable to do anything but re-enact their death to intelligent, malevolent once-human spirits with power over whatever kind of calamity



killed them, the World of Darkness teems with vast numbers of the restless dead. More ghosts exist than any other supernatural creature, but the truly powerful independent specters of legend are rare.

The majority of ghosts are poor at influencing the world, trapped in their insubstantial state and unable to even Manifest; they are noticed only as a strange chill or eerie vibe, if the living sense them at all. Ghosts are drawn to places and people that they had emotional connections to in life — these things anchor the ghost in the world and allow those with enough power to Manifest, whereupon they carry out whatever mad urges they still feel and attempt to further the goals they left undone in life.

Ghosts feed on Essence, a spiritual energy created by memory and emotion that builds up in their Anchors and is fed directly to them when they are remembered by the living. Ghosts that lose their Anchors and can't transfer their attachment fade from the world, passing over to a dread realm filled with all the orphaned Ghosts that have gone before. This realm has many names in occult writings; Tartarus, the Great Below, the Land of the Dead, the Dominions, or simply the Underworld.

The living seldom visit the Underworld, though mediums and death-obsessed mystery cults all over the world teach that gateways leading there are more common than supposed. Its doors exist in the same Twilight state as ghosts themselves, invisible and unnoticed by the living. Tales of living occultists who learned the right places and the proper ceremonies to open the gates of death describe the Underworld as a chthonian hell of passageways, tunnels and caverns, filled with desperate ghosts that lost their grip on the world.

The Underworld sustains the dead, allowing them more freedom to move and act than the living world, but also imprisons them. Once there, ghosts may increase in power and influence, evolving beyond the image of the person they were into twisted rulers of dead kingdoms or sponsors and advocates of particular forms of death. If summoned back to the physical world or allowed to escape the Underworld by chance conditions, a ghost that has spent centuries growing stronger can wreak havoc until exorcised.

Spirits

Warped Reflections

Animist religions describe the world as being full of spirits, every object, animal and place hiding a spirit within it. They're partly right; everything in the world apart from humans *does* cast a spiritual reflection, even transitory events and strong emotions, but all spirits apart from the cunning or a powerful few are confined to a world of their own. Spirits war on each other for survival everywhere. Separated from the physical world by a barrier known to knowledgeable occultists as the Gauntlet, the spirit — or *Shadow* — world is a murky reflection of the physical. Its geography is (mostly) the same as the World of Darkness, but places appear twisted to reflect their inner truth rather than looking exactly the same.

Spirits come into being alongside the thing they're a reflection of, but are dormant, barely-living, tiny lumps of ephemera at first. As well as creating new spirits, actions in the physical world and any emotions associated with them create Essence in the physical world, some of which crosses over into the Shadow. If enough Essence is created around an embryonic spirit, it becomes roused into activity. By absorbing Essence, the spirit remains active. By consuming other spirits, it merges those spirits into itself and grows larger and more powerful.

As spirits become more powerful, they become less pure as reflections of their origins and more thematic in nature. For example, the spirit of a single owl grows by consuming other owl-spirits. As it consumes spirits of night, hunting, the prey its owl eats, and other owl-spirits, the spirit subtly changes. By the time it becomes an independent, thinking being that no longer follows around the physical creature that created it, it has warped into an exaggerated spirit of silent nocturnal hunting. The Essence it consumes also has an effect — an owl-spirit evolving in an urban area feeds on different Essence to one in the countryside, and its appearance is colored by its diet.

When mortal characters encounter spirits, something has gone wrong. Some spirits are capable of using their powers through the Gauntlet and, as their self-awareness grows with power, decide to create food sources for themselves by influencing what sort of spirits and Essence will be created around them. The true culprit behind an unusual pattern of domestic murders, for example, might be a murder-spirit using its abilities to heighten arguments to homicide.

The spirits that mortal investigators encounter in the physical world are refugees and escapees: those that cross the Gauntlet to flee the constant risk of being killed and absorbed by larger spirits. They constantly strive to maintain their Essence, desperate to avoid returning to their own world. Without an easy source of Essence, spirits must anchor themselves like ghosts by finding an object or person that reflects their nature and tying their ephemeral bodies to them. The spirit remains intangible — and is often actually “inside” the host — but is safe from starvation as long as the host generates enough Essence to feed it. By influencing the host, or humans interacting with a material host, to more closely reflect its nature, the spirit gets a ready supply of Essence and may move on to more permanent forms of possession. Many items thought of as having “wills of their own” or as being cursed actually house spirits.

Angels

Functions of the God-Machine

Unlike ghosts, who feed from being remembered and struggle to maintain their grip on the world, and spirits who flee their own Darwinian hell to carve a foothold in material reality, angels are both temporary visitors to the mortal realm and its only true “natives” among ephemeral beings. The God-Machine isn't some far-off thing lurking in a distant dimension; it's here, in the material world, built from mechanisms hidden from sight by guile and magic. When cultists summon a spirit, it journeys from the Shadow. When an angel is needed,

Other Entities

The ghosts, spirits, and angels presented here aren't the only ephemeral entities to exist. The various World of Darkness games have used the spirit rules this section updates to represent many different beings, from the inhabitants of an astral world visited by mages to demonic owls made of smoke with a strange connection to vampires.

Just as ghosts, spirits, and angels are slightly different, adapting these beings to use the rules here involves setting out both where they follow these rules and where they don't. Future chronicle books may detail ephemeral entities particular to those chronicles.

the God-Machine is as likely to build the angel right there as to direct an existing one to journey to the site. When angels are reused, they spend the downtime “resting,” dormant, in storage facilities hidden by the very deepest Infrastructure. Sometimes, cultists and prying outsiders who witness the gears catch glimpses of these facilities — cavernous chambers folded neatly into impossible spaces, filled with hydraulics, gears, and the hissing of machines surrounding the angels while keeping them fed with Essence. They're always guarded.

Being essentially tools designed by an intelligent if unknowable creator to fulfill specific functions, angels are far more specialized than spirits or ghosts. They're also usually more subtle and able to go unnoticed even when Manifested, but are extremely single-minded, aiming to complete the task they've been sent for and then vanish. The God-Machine sends angels to make adjustments to Infrastructure and its plans when something has gone wrong and the gears can't self-correct. Angels hunt down individuals who have failed to die at the proper time, acquire replacements for lynchpins that have unexpectedly failed and make corrections to the flow of causality, carefully setting up minor events (the closing of a door, the drop of a pen, a sudden distracting sound at *just* the right time) that have increasingly large repercussions. The Conditions needed to bring an angel into the world, though, are much more complicated than a ghost's anchors or a spirit's essence, requiring layers of Infrastructure, precise timing and occult maneuvers that are barely understood. Occult literature is filled with angel-summoning rites, but they're mostly useless — if mortal cultists participate in calling an angel to a mission, it will be because they are themselves part of the Infrastructure it needs.

Game Systems

Ghosts, spirits and angels share a broad set of rules with minor variations to cover situations such as spirits reaching across the Gauntlet.

Rank*	Trait Limits **	Attribute Dots	Maximum Essence	Numina
•	5 dots	5–8	10	1–3
••	7 dots	9–14	15	3–5
•••	9 dots	15–25	20	5–7
••••	12 dots	26–35	25	7–9
•••••	15 dots	36–45	50	9–11

* Each Rank levies a –1 modifier on attempts to forcibly bind that entity and acts as a Supernatural Tolerance trait.

** These represent permanent dots, not temporarily boosted ones.

Ghosts can't increase Rank outside of the Underworld and come into existence as either Rank 1 or 2 depending on how much self-awareness they have. Nonsapient “recording” type ghosts are Rank 1, while those that retain most of their living memories are Rank 2. Ghosts summoned back from the Underworld, however, may be of any Rank.

Spirits and **Angels** run the full range of Ranks, depending on how old and successful a spirit is or how much importance the God-Machine places upon an angel.

The State of Twilight

Unless they Manifest or use a power to appear, ephemeral beings remain in their insubstantial state when in the material world. This state is described as “Twilight.” To beings in Twilight, physical objects appear pale and semi-transparent, light sources are dimmed and sounds are distorted as though underwater. Twilight isn't a place, though; it's more of a description of how ephemera interacts — or fails to interact — with material reality.

When in Twilight, only items, creatures, and phenomena that are also in Twilight and comprised of the same kind of ephemera can touch an ephemeral being. Attacks simply pass through the Twilight being; solid concrete and steel are no more hindrance than fog.

The exception to this rule is ghost structures. Destroyed objects — everything from a pen to a building — appear as after-images in Twilight, formed of the same ephemera as ghosts. These spiritual structures and items fade away on a timescale depending on how strongly they're remembered. Famous structures, or even obscure ones that are loved and thought about frequently after they're destroyed, can last decades, solid and substantial only to ghosts.

If no ghostly structures get in the way, ephemeral beings in Twilight can move at walking pace in any direction. Gravity has no sway, though Twilight beings can only truly “fly” if it's appropriate for their form — most hug the material terrain. A ghost could walk up the side of a tower block, for example, but couldn't then float through mid-air to the next tower.

Some occultists and supernatural creatures practice Astral Projection, which allows a character to leave her body behind and explore the world in invisible form. These projected selves are technically in Twilight, but lack ephemeral bodies and so aren't solid even to one another.

Ephemeral Traits

Ephemeral beings aren't alive the way humans are alive. They aren't biological creatures and don't have the divides between body, soul, and mind that mortals and once-mortal supernatural beings possess. In game terms, ephemeral beings are represented by simplified game traits.

Rank

All ephemeral beings have dots in an Advantage called Rank, which notes how self-aware and powerful the entity is. Rank technically ranges from 1 to 10 dots, but entities with more than Rank ••••• are so alien they can't support themselves in the Conditions lesser beings use. They can only be brought into the world by story- and chronicle-defining maneuvers, conjunctions, and events. The Lords of the Dead, Gods of Shadow, and the mighty arch-angels are out of the scope of the Storytelling system. If they appear at all, they do so as plot devices.

Rank is used to determine the maximum ratings in other game traits an ephemeral being can have, as described in a table below, along with how many dots of Attributes the entity can have. All ephemeral beings have the ability to sense the relative Rank of other entities, and may attempt to conceal their own Rank by succeeding in a contested Finesse roll. Success means that the entity appears to be the same Rank as the being sensing the relative Rank.

Essence

Combination food, oxygen, and wealth, Essence fuels ephemeral entities' powers, sustains their insubstantial bodies, and allows them to continue existing. As a game trait, Essence resembles Willpower in that each entity has a permanent

maximum Essence rating and an equal number of Essence points it can spend to achieve effects. Maximum Essence is determined by Rank.

Entities can use Essence in the following ways:

- Ephemeral beings must spend a point of Essence per day to remain active. If they have run out of Essence, they fall into hibernation until something happens to let them regain at least one point, which can then be spent on returning to activity. Such dormancy is dangerous – the entity remains in Twilight and can be destroyed if it loses all Corpus and Essence at the same time (see p. 222). When spirits enter hibernation, they are pushed back across the Gauntlet into the Shadow. Ghosts that don't have any anchors remaining are similarly forced into the Underworld. Angels remain dormant wherever they were.
- Ephemeral beings outside of a suitable Condition bleed one point of Essence per *hour*. The Influence and Manifestation Conditions starting on p. 223 state whether they protect from Essence bleed for different types of ephemeral being. Entities that run out of Essence due to bleed suffer a single point of lethal damage and enter hibernation.
- Ephemeral beings can spend Essence to boost their traits for a single scene on a point per dot basis. They can't boost a single trait by more than Rank + 2 dots; boosting takes a turn and they can only boost a single Attribute in a turn.

Entities can sense sources of Essence appropriate for their needs from up to a mile away. Spirits can use this sense through the Gauntlet. The "Seek" Numen (p.230) increases this range.

- Ephemeral beings regain one point of Essence per day they are in proximity to any Condition relating to them – ghosts are sustained by staying near their anchors, spirits in the Shadow eke out an existence by feeding across the Gauntlet, and angels are fed by Infrastructure.
- Ephemeral beings can attempt to steal Essence from beings of the same type – ghosts from ghosts, spirits from spirits and so on. The attacking entity rolls Power + Finesse, contested by the victim's Power + Resistance. If the attacker succeeds, it steals up to the successes in Essence, as long as the victimized entity has Essence remaining to lose.
- Ghosts regain a point of Essence whenever someone remembers the living person they once were. Visiting their grave, simply sitting and remembering them, or recognizing their Manifested form as the person they used to be all qualify.
- Spirits may attempt to gorge themselves on a source of appropriate Essence. Once per day, when in proximity (even if it's on the other side of the Gauntlet) to a suitable Condition, a spirit can roll Power + Finesse,

Supernatural Tolerance

Just as ephemeral beings possess Rank, many supernatural creatures in the World of Darkness have "power level" traits of their own, ranging from one to ten dots. They all have slightly different rules, described in the appropriate rulebooks, but all share one quality; they are added to Resistance Attributes when levying Resistance-based penalties to the dice pools of many supernatural powers. The various supernatural traits, including Rank, are interchangeable for this purpose. When a Numen in this chapter calls for "Supernatural Tolerance" to be added to resistance, that's what it means.

Example: A vampire attempting to quell an angry Manifest Angel attempts to use a hypnotic gaze. The power's description in **Vampire: The Requiem** calls for the activation dice pool to be penalized by "Resolve + Blood Potency," Blood Potency being the vampiric Supernatural Tolerance trait. The vampire's dice pool is penalized by the Spirit's Resistance + Rank instead.

Example: A ghost attempts to use the Awe Numen (p. 228) on the first of two interlopers in the now-abandoned house it owned in life. The Numen is contested by Presence + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance, but the intruder is a mortal and doesn't have a Supernatural Tolerance trait, so just rolls the two Attributes. When the ghost attempts to use the power on the second intruder the next turn, though, it discovers that she is actually a mage; she adds Gnosis (the mage Tolerance trait) to her contesting dice pool.

regaining successes in Essence. If the spirit is still in the Shadow, the dice pool is penalized according to Gauntlet strength.

- Angels are mechanisms in the God-Machine, and like any machine they are sustained by fuel. God-Machine cultists sacrificing precious resources (metaphorical or literal), animals, or even humans to the angel in its presence allow it to regain the Resources value of the item or animal, or the current Integrity of a human sacrifice, as Essence.

Attributes and Skills

Ephemeral beings don't have the nine Attributes familiar in material characters, but use a simplified set of the Power, Finesse, and Resistance categories mortal Attributes fall into. When creating an ephemeral being, look at the Rank chart earlier in this section to determine how many dots are avail-

able and what the trait maximum is. Ghosts usually use the average rating in each category from when they were alive – for example, a man with Strength 3, Intelligence 2, and Presence 2 would become a ghost with Power 2.

Power describes the raw ability of the entity to impose itself on other ephemeral beings and the world at large. It is used in all rolls that call for Strength, Intelligence, or Presence.

Finesse describes how deft the entity is at imposing its desires with fine control. It is used for all rolls that call for Dexterity, Wits, or Manipulation.

Resistance describes how well the entity can avoid imposition from its peers and how easily it is damaged. It is used for all rolls that call for Stamina, Resolve, or Composure.

Ephemeral beings don't possess skills, but don't suffer unskilled penalties as long as the action they're attempting is appropriate to their former self, nature, or mission. They roll the appropriate Attribute + Rank for actions relating directly to their concept, or Attribute + Attribute for actions like surprise and perception.

Gauntlet Strength

The strength of the wall between the World of Darkness and its Shadow depends mostly on how many people are present in the area. The paradox of why human activity pushes the Shadow away when it also creates vast quantities of emotionally-resonant Essence is a mystery. If the spirits know, they aren't telling, but the Gauntlet breaks away more easily from civilization.

Whenever a spirit attempts to cross between the material world and the Shadow, uses Influence or Manifestation to reach across, feeds from the material world's Essence while still being in the Shadow, or uses a Reaching Manifestation (see p. 226), the dice pool is penalized by a number of dice according to the following chart.

Location	Modifier
Dense urban areas	-3
City suburbs, towns	-2
Small towns, villages	-1
Wilderness, countryside	0
Locus	+2

A Locus is a location in which the Shadow world is especially close. Spirits don't need the Reaching Manifestation Effect to use their powers across the Gauntlet at a locus, attempts to cross over are at +2 dice, and spirits whose nature matches the Locus' Resonant Condition heal at twice the normal rate.

Advantages

Ephemeral beings differ in how they treat Integrity, Virtue, Vice, and Fate. When they possess these traits, the descriptions used are often unusual and the specifics change according to the entity's origin.

Ghosts retain their Virtue and Vice from life, but they are reversed in effect – ghosts regain all spent Willpower by fulfilling their Vice, but can only do so once per chapter, and regain up to one Willpower point a scene by fulfilling their Virtue. Alone among ephemeral beings, ghosts also possess Integrity, set at the level they had before death. Their Integrity scores don't change, however, as ghosts do not suffer breaking points. Their self-image is fixed unless something happens to push them back to the level of cognizance and self-awareness they had in life. If this should happen somehow, they can suffer breaking points the same way living people can.

Spirits don't have an Integrity trait or a Virtue or Vice. Instead, they regain one point of spent Willpower per three points of Essence they consume by gorging or stealing as described above.

Angels lack Integrity – they simply obey the God-Machine in all things – and likewise don't have Fates. They do have Virtues and Vices, though, built into them as operating guidelines and preset responses. Angelic Virtues and Vices don't have to be anything a human would describe as virtuous or wicked. Examples include "Silent," "Hidden," "Obedient," "Curious," "Punctual," "Wrathful," and "Precise," all as either Virtue or Vice depending on the angel in question.

Other Traits

Because they have simplified traits, ephemeral entities calculate derived traits a little differently to mortal characters.

Corpus: Ephemeral beings don't have Health, but measure how intact their Twilight form is using Corpus. Permanent Corpus is equal to Resistance + Size and grants Corpus boxes that act like Health boxes, filling when the entity suffers injury. Corpus boxes don't have wound penalties associated with them.

Willpower: Entities have Willpower dots equal to Resistance + Finesse, with a maximum of 10 dots for entities with the Ranks presented in this book. As well as the Willpower gaining methods described above, all ephemeral beings regain one spent Willpower per day.

Initiative: Initiative is equal to Finesse + Resistance.

Defense: Defense is equal to Power or Finesse, whichever is lower, except for Rank 1 spirits which use the higher of the two Attributes. The more an entity is driven by raw instinct, the more animal defense it displays in combat.

Speed: Speed is equal to Power + Finesse + a "species" factor. Spirits of inanimate objects usually have a species factor of 0.

Size: Ephemeral beings can be of any size. Ghosts are usually Size 5, while spirits often use Rank as Size, growing larger as they become more powerful. Angels designed to blend in are sized as humans or animals, but some angelic entities are very large, up to Size 10 or more.

Language: Rank 1 ghosts can't communicate verbally; they don't have enough of their sense of self left to employ language. Rank 2 and higher ghosts know whatever languages they knew in life. Spirits all speak the native tongue of the shadow-world, a strange, sibilant language that resembles Ancient Sumerian, but often learn the human languages common around their Essence-feeding grounds. Angels speak all human languages simultaneously, and more — they sometimes “speak” in strange glossalia or sounds more like electronic noise than a language and appear to understand each other when doing so. When an angel wishes to be understood, everyone present hears it speak fluently in their native languages.

Bans

All ephemeral beings suffer from a mystical compulsion known as the ban, a behavior that the entity must or must not perform under certain conditions. They can be as simplistic as “the angel cannot cross railway lines,” moderately complex like “the ghost must come if you call her name into a mirror three times within her anchor,” or as difficult as, “the angel must receive a tribute of a printing press that has used blood as ink once a month or lose a Rank.”

Bans increase in both complexity and consequences with Rank.

Rank 1 entities have mild bans that are easily triggered but don't endanger the entity. A spirit of bliss can't resist an offering of opiates. The ghost of a nun has to immediately use an offered rosary. A weak angel must stop still and parrot hexadecimal numbers when they're spoken to.

Rank 2 and 3 entities have moderate bans that curtail the creature's activities in a more serious way than mere distraction. A ghost must immediately dematerialize when it hears the sound of a cat. The murderous spirit of a car that has run down multiple people loses all Willpower if it doesn't kill one person a month. The angel of the records answers any question about the family, background or true identity of a subject if the questioner accurately tells the angel her time (to the minute) and place of birth.

Rank 4 and 5 entities have complicated bans that put an end to whatever the creature is trying to do — often in an explosive fashion. They have consequences in game traits or long-term actions, but esoteric requirements. The Smiling Corpse, a ghost summoned back from the Underworld by a mystery cult, is immediately banished back to the Great Below if anyone should sing a particular nursery rhyme in his presence. The spirit of Mount Iliamna, a volcano in Alaska, will use its Numina to kill a victim named by anyone who makes it an offering of platinum that was mined from its foothills. The angel Uriminel, four-faced enforcer of destiny, has Defense 0 against individuals who have suffered lethal or aggravated damage within the last lunar month.

Banes

Ephemeral entities are not of the material world and react strangely to some elements of it. The interaction between their ephemeral Twilight form and physical substance

always contains a flaw — a *bane* — that damages the entity's Corpus through symbolic or mystical interference. The bane is a physical substance or energy that the entity can't abide.

- Ephemeral beings voluntarily attempting to come into contact with the bane must spend a Willpower point and succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll with a dice penalty equal to their Rank.
- Banes are solid to entities, even when they are in Twilight. They do not, however, affect spirits on the other side of the Gauntlet.
- Simply touching the bane — even voluntarily — causes 1 level of aggravated damage per turn if the entity is Materialized, and causes the relevant Condition to end unless the entity succeeds in a roll of Rank in dice. The roll must be repeated every turn if contact holds.
- If the item or person to which a Fettered entity is linked comes into contact with the bane, the entity suffers 1 level of Lethal damage per turn as long as contact holds. The entity must use the Unfetter Manifestation Effect to escape.
- Touching the bane while in Twilight causes 1 point of lethal damage per turn to non-Manifest entities.
- If the bane has been used as a weapon against the entity, the wounds suffered are aggravated for Manifest entities and lethal for entities still in Twilight.

Banes are increasingly esoteric and obscure for entities of increasing Rank.

Rank 1 entities have common substances and phenomena as banes. Ghosts burn at the touch of salt. The spirit of a forest is poisoned by the fumes of burning plastic. A low-ranking angel can't touch gold.

Rank 2 and 3 entities have difficult to obtain but still “natural” banes. Powerful ghosts are repelled by holy water.

Honorary Rank

Some supernatural creatures that are closely related to a form of ephemeral being have “honorary” Rank in the appropriate otherworldly hierarchy; Sin-Eaters are all Bound to a ghost, for example, and werewolves are treated with respect by spirits according to their Renown.

Technicalities count, in this case, but only *against* the ephemeral entity. A werewolf who “outranks” a minor spirit will deal devastating wounds to it with his claws, but a high-Rank spirit can't burn that werewolf by touching him. There are other ways to assert dominance; high-Rank entities are quite capable of showing the half-fleshed who's boss.

A spirit must be killed by a sharpened stake made of pine. A mid-rank angel can be killed by a weapon dusted with the ground-up remains of a meteorite.

Rank 4 and 5 entities have highly-specific banes that require great effort to acquire. The lord of an Underworld realm now walking the Earth and served by a cult of worshippers can be killed by an obsidian blade marked with the names of thirteen Gods of Death. The spirit of the US Treasury (the building) can be killed by a silver bullet made from a melted-down original dollar. A high Rank angel can't willingly touch the sigils of a certain incantation in Sumerian and dies if the signs are carved into the flesh of its host.

The hierarchical nature of ephemeral beings also plays a part — Rank isn't a social convention for them but a fundamental part of their nature. Ephemeral entities of 2 Ranks or more higher than an opponent of the same type (a Rank 5 spirit attacking a Rank 3 spirit, for example) count as their opponent's bane when using unarmed attacks, claws, or teeth.

Combat

As noted earlier, ephemeral beings use the lower of Finesse or Resistance for Defense unless they are Rank 1, in which case they use the higher. They apply Defense against *all* attacks, even firearms.

Ephemeral beings roll Power + Finesse to attack. Their attacks inflict bashing damage unless the nature of the entity (a spirit with metal fists, for example) indicates that it should inflict lethal wounds instead. Some entities use weapons, in which case roll Power + Finesse and then apply weapon damage on a successful attack.

Entities in Twilight can only attack or be attacked by other ephemeral beings of the same type, unless the attack utilizes the entity's bane.

Physical attacks on a manifest entity that normally cause lethal damage only cause bashing damage unless the attack utilizes the entity's bane. Despite appearing to the naked eye and being solid, a manifest spirit, ghost, or angel doesn't have any internal organs to injure.

Ephemeral beings record and heal from wounds the same way as material characters, but in addition lose one point of Essence for every aggravated wound they suffer.

Ephemeral entities that lose all Corpus from lethal or aggravated wounds explode into a burst of ephemera stylized to their nature. A forest-spirit dies in a hail of rapidly-vanishing pine needles, while ghosts crumble, screaming, into the ground. The entity isn't actually dead, though, unless it has also run out of Essence. If it has even a single Essence point remaining, it reforms in a safe place (a Conditioned location, usually), hibernating. Once it has regained Essence points equal to Corpus dots, it spends an Essence point and reawakens. As the entity can't act while hibernating, this means waiting for the one Essence a day for being in a suitable area to slowly build up to Corpus, and that more powerful entities take longer to recover from being "killed."

Influence

All ephemeral beings have a degree of Influence over the world that they can leverage to control and shape the basis of

Influence Effects

Level	Effect
• Strengthen	The entity can enhance its sphere of influence; it can add to the Defense of a loved one, make an emotion stronger, an animal or plant healthier, or an object more robust, gaining the entity's Rank in Health or Structure. This Influence can shift the Anchor, Resonant or Infrastructure Condition to Open for its duration. The cost is one Essence.
•• Manipulate	The entity can make minor changes within its sphere of influence, such as slightly changing the nature or target of an emotion, or making minor changes to an animal's actions, a plant's growth or an object's functioning. The cost is two Essence.
••• Control	The entity can make dramatic changes within its sphere of influence, twisting emotions entirely or dictating an animal's actions, a plant's growth or an object's functioning. This Influence can shift the Open Condition to Controlled for its duration. The cost is three Essence.
•••• Create	The entity can create a new example of its sphere of influence; creating a new anchor, instilling an emotion, creating a new sapling or young plant, creating a young animal or brand new object. The entity can cause a temporary Anchor, Infrastructure, or Resonant Condition in a subject for the duration of the Influence. The cost is four Essence.
••••• Mass Create	The entity can create multiple examples of its sphere of influence; triggering emotions in multiple people; creating new copses of trees, small groups of animals, or multiple identical items. The cost is five Essence. The number of examples of the Influence created is equal to Rank. Alternatively, the entity may create one instance of its sphere of influence — including creating the base Condition for its type — permanently, although an ephemeral entity can't permanently alter the mind of a sentient being.

Influence Durations

Level	Duration	Cost
0	One minute per success	No additional Essence cost
•	Ten minutes per success	No additional Essence cost
••	One hour per success	1 additional Essence
•••	One day per success	2 additional Essence
••••	Permanent	2 additional Essence

their existence. Ghosts have power over their own anchors, spirits can control and encourage the phenomena they were born from, and the God-Machine grants angels broad authority over things relating to their mission.

Entities begin with dots in Influence equal to their Rank. Although a being's Rank is also the maximum rating for an Influence, ephemeral beings can split their dots to have more than one Influence. A Rank 4 spirit of dogs, for example, might have Influence: Dogs ••• and Influence: Loyalty •.

Entities may reduce their number of Numina granted by Rank to increase Influence dots at a cost of one Numen per dot.

Spirits and angels have Influences that relate to their natures, but that may be used in multiple circumstances – the dog spirit, for example, has Influence: Dogs, not Influence over a *particular* dog. Ghosts always have Influence: Anchors, though may have other Influences as well as they increase in Rank.

Influence is measured in both scale and duration. To use an Influence, compare the entity's Influence rating to the total dots of the intended effect and how long it is to last. The total must be equal to or less than the entity's Influence rating in order for the Influence to be attempted.

The entity pays the listed cost in Essence and rolls Power + Finesse, with success creating the desired effect. If the Influence is altering the thoughts or emotions of a sentient being, the roll is contested by Resolve or Composure (whichever is higher) + Supernatural Tolerance.

Manifestation

Ephemeral beings can interact with the mortal world in many different ways, from lurking in Shadow and reaching across the Gauntlet to physically Manifesting or merging into a human soul. Just as Influence traits determine what level of control the creature has over their environment, Manifestation traits note which forms of Manifestation are possible for a particular entity.

Entities begin with the Twilight Form Manifestation and a number of Manifestation Effects from the list below equal to Rank. Some effects are only available to certain kinds of

entity. Entities may increase their capabilities by reducing the number of Numina they are granted by Rank, at the cost of one Numen per Manifestation Effect.

Most Manifestation Effects have prerequisite Influence or Manifestation Conditions – a spirit can only Fetter to something with an Open Condition, for example.

All Manifestation Effects require a Power + Finesse roll to use. Most have an associated cost in Essence, and some are contested or resisted.

Ephemeral Influence and Manifestation Conditions

If something falls into an ephemeral being's sphere of influence, this is handled mechanically by declaring an Influence Condition. Influence Conditions resemble Tilts and character Conditions.

The different forms of Manifestation Effect are also Conditions applied to the location, object, or character the entity is Manifesting into or, in cases like Reaching, to the entity itself.

Unlike many Conditions, Influence and Manifestation Conditions are tiered and interrelated; Manifestation Conditions have Influence Conditions as prerequisites and vice-versa. The lower tiers are naturally occurring, while the later ones must be created by entities using Influences and Manifestations.

In the most advanced forms of Influence and Manifestation, entities may attempt to create a long-lasting Condition that has a prerequisite of a very temporary one. When one Condition is advanced into another, the remaining duration of the prerequisite Conditions is "frozen."

If a prerequisite Condition is removed from a character (for example, a Possessed character's Open Condition is removed by exorcism) any Conditions relying on it, any relying on them, and so on are immediately removed. The most advanced remaining Condition then resumes its duration.

Anchor

The subject of this Condition – usually a location or object, though it can be a person in rare cases – is within the sphere of influence of a ghost. Ghosts in or within Rank x3 yards of their Anchors do not suffer Essence bleed.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is immediately created when a new ghost is formed, based on whatever subject anchors the ghost's identity. Summoning rituals intended to release ghosts from the Underworld or call them from elsewhere temporarily create this Condition in their target. Finally, a high-Rank ghost can use a Create Influence to mark a target as an Anchor.

Ending the Condition: The easiest way to end an Anchor condition is to destroy the subject. Some ghosts cling to Anchors that represent unfinished business, in which case resolving those issues can remove the Condition. Abjuration temporarily suppresses the Condition as described on p. 232, forcing the ghost to retreat to another Anchor if it has one.

Manifestation Effects

Manifestation	Effect
Twilight Form	If the entity enters the material world, it does so in Twilight (see p. 218). The Effect has no cost.
Discorporate	In emergencies, the entity can voluntarily Discorporate as though it had lost all Corpus to lethal injury — a painful way to escape a greater entity threatening to permanently kill it. The Effect has no cost.
Reaching	(Spirit only) By spending one Essence, the spirit applies the Reaching Condition to itself. The activation roll is penalized by the local Gauntlet Strength.
Gauntlet Breach	(Spirit only — requires Resonant Condition) By spending three Essence, the spirit forces itself through the Gauntlet — returning to Shadow from the World of Darkness, or appearing in Twilight Form by entering the material world. The activation roll is penalized by the local Gauntlet Strength.
Avernian Gateway	(Ghost, angel or death-related spirit only — Requires Open Condition) By spending three Essence, the entity opens a nearby gateway to the Underworld, and applies the Underworld Gate Condition to the location.
Shadow Gateway	(Rank 3+ spirit or angel only — Requires Open Condition) By spending Essence equal to Gauntlet Strength, the entity opens a portal to the Shadow that it and other entities may use, applying the Shadow Gate Condition to the location. The activation roll is penalized by the local Gauntlet Strength.
Image	(Requires Anchor, Resonant or Infrastructure Condition) By spending one Essence, the entity may make its Twilight form visible to material beings for a scene.
Materialize	(Requires Open Condition) By spending three Essence, the entity may shift from Twilight form into the Materialized Condition.
Fetter	(Requires Open Condition) By spending two Essence, the entity adds the Fettered Condition to itself. Living beings targeted by this Effect contest the roll with Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance. If the Effect is successful, living targets gain the Urged Condition.
Unfetter	(Requires Fettered Condition) By spending one point of Essence, the entity temporarily suppresses the Fetter Condition for a Scene, allowing it to use other Manifestation Effects or roam in Twilight. When the Scene ends, any Manifestation Effects used during it immediately end. If the entity isn't back within range of its Fetter (see p. 227) when Unfetter ends, it immediately goes dormant.
Possess	(Requires Open Condition) By spending three Essence, the entity gains temporary control over an object, corpse, or creature, applying the Possessed Condition to the subject. Living subjects contest the roll with Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance.
Claim	(Requires Controlled Condition) By spending five Essence, the entity gains permanent control over an object, creature or corpse, applying the Claimed Condition to the subject. Living subjects contest the roll with Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance. An entity must be capable of both the Fetter and Possess Manifestations to buy Claim.

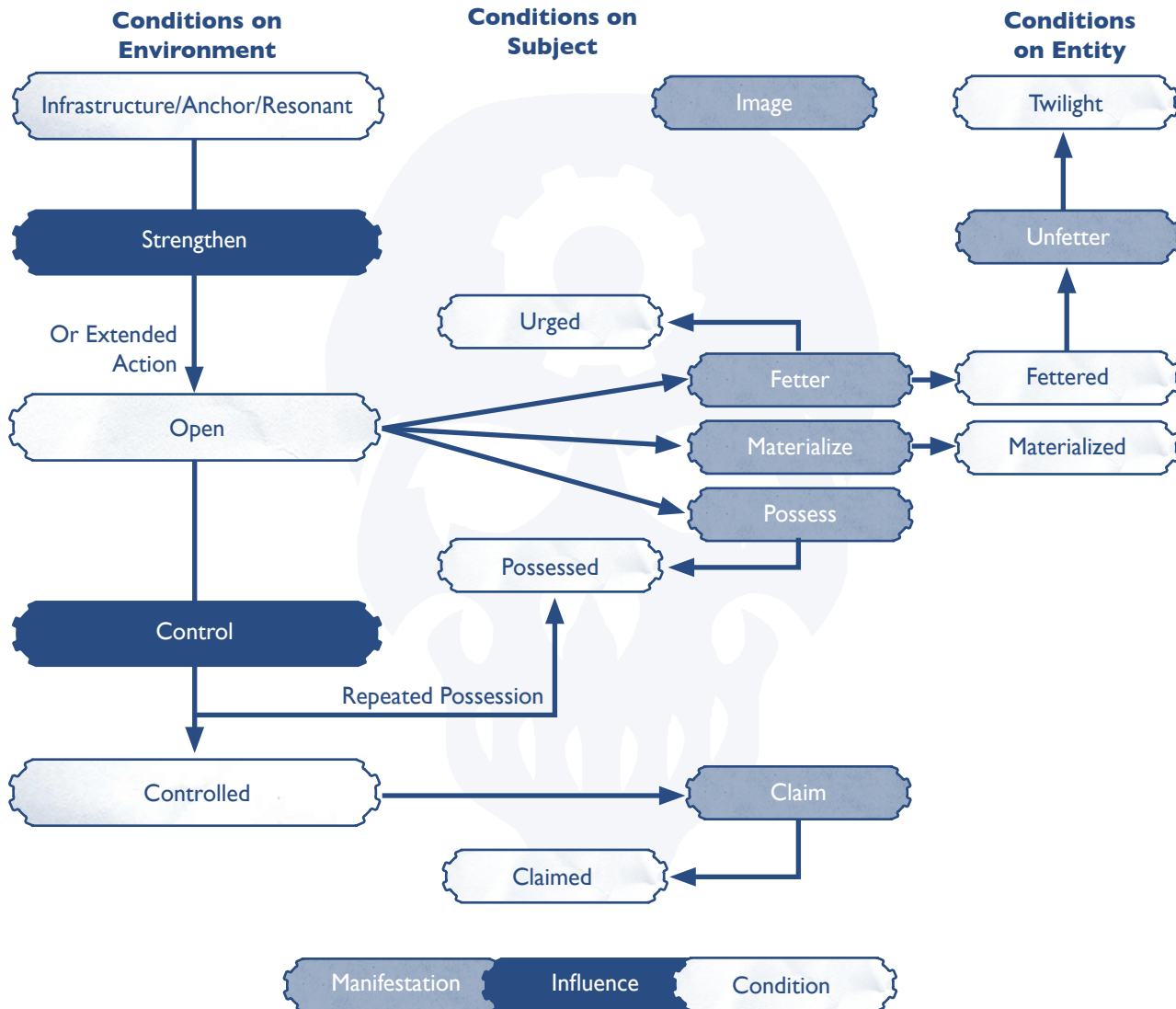
Ghosts without Anchors bleed Essence until they fall into dormancy, at which point the Underworld Gate Condition is created and the ghost is banished to the Great Below.

Resonant

The subject of this Condition is within the sphere of influence of a spirit.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is common and naturally-occurring — if an object, phenomenon, person, or place matches the spirit's purview in some way, it has this Condition. Anything matching the description of one of a spirit's Influences counts as having this Condition tagged to the spirit. Summoning rituals intended to entice a particular spirit to a location work by instilling the qualities that result

Spirit Flowchart



in this Condition. Finally, a high-Rank spirit can use a Create Influence to cause the prerequisites for the Condition itself.

Ending the Condition: The Condition ends if the phenomenon creating it ends. A forest stops being Resonant for a tree spirit when all the trees are logged, a grief spirit can't Influence someone who has healed and let go of his pain, and a fire spirit must move on when the fire is extinguished. Abjuration and Exorcism may temporarily suppress the Condition or be the cause of it "naturally" ending if the ritualists remove the causal phenomenon as part of the ritual.

Infrastructure

The subject of this Condition is within the sphere of influence of an angel.

Causing the Condition: The Infrastructure Condition, unlike Anchor and Resonant Conditions, is never naturally-

occurring. The God-Machine requires effort to prepare the way for its angels: extended actions by cultists, unwitting pawns, or even other angels to create Infrastructure. High-Rank angels can use the Create Influence to instill this Condition on behalf of themselves or a subordinate angel. In addition, characters with the Destiny Merit are always subject to this Condition.

Ending the Condition: Infrastructure's intricate nature makes it much more difficult to remove. Multiple extended actions taking place over whole stories are necessary to dismantle the Condition, opposed by the Angel itself.

Open

The place, object, animal, or person covered by a previous Condition has now been conditioned to accept the entity.

That entity can now attempt to Fetter itself to the subject of the Condition, or, if the Condition is on a location, Manifest.

Prerequisites: The Anchor, Resonant, or Infrastructure Condition for the same phenomenon to which this Condition is tagged.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is usually the result of fine-tuning the prerequisite Condition as part of an extended action, involving the subject and entity acting in concert for a number of scenes equal to Rank or a living subject's Resolve, whichever is higher. Using a Control Influence allows an entity to temporarily create the Open Condition as an instant action.

Ending the Condition: The Condition ends if the prerequisite Condition is removed. Exorcism rituals work by removing this Condition, reverting it to the prerequisite.

Controlled

The object, creature, or person covered by an Open Condition has now been so conditioned that the entity may attempt to Claim it, permanently merging with it.

Prerequisites: The intended subject of this Condition must have the Open Condition, tagged to the entity attempting to cause it.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is the result of repeated use of the Possess Manifestation effect by the causing entity. It must have succeeded in possessing the subject on a number of separate occasions equal to the Willpower of entity or subject (whichever is higher). If any Possessed Condition is removed before its duration ends, progress is lost on building to the required number of possessions.

Ending the Condition: Successfully ending the Claimed Condition against the entity's will, whether by Exorcism or by forcing the Claimed subject into contact with the entity's bane, removes this Condition and reverts the subject to Open.

Reaching

The spirit has opened a conduit through the Gauntlet, allowing it to use Influences and Numina to affect the other side. Numina with [R] after their name can be used with this Condition. Characters capable of perceiving spirits in Twilight can sense the conduit's presence with a successful Wits + Composure roll.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is the result of the Reaching Manifestation Effect and lasts for one Scene.

Ending the Condition: At the end of the scene, the Condition fades. Mortals may attempt an Abjuration with a 3 dice penalty to close the conduit and end the Condition early.

Underworld Gate

The location has an open gateway to the Underworld. All ghosts regain one Essence per scene that they are in the gateway's presence. Ghosts without anchors may use it to reenter the world.

Causing the Condition: This Condition can be created by using the Avernian Gateway Manifestation Effect on an Open Condition. Some supernatural beings with ties to death are

also able to open Avernian Gateways. Even mortals can open a gate if one is present and they know the proper means. Mortals who conduct rituals to first Open a Death-Resonant location that houses a gate can unlock it, causing this Condition, but require the key to do so. Every Gateway has a key — an item or action that will open it. Keys can be physical objects, but are also sometimes actions or emotions or are tied to times and events: a Gate might open for a murder at midnight, when touched with a certain doll, or when a woman betrayed in love turns her back on it three times. Researching a proper key is a difficult Intelligence + Occult roll, with a -3 to -5 dice modifier.

Ending the Condition: At the end of the scene, the Condition fades. An Exorcism directed at the gate can end the Condition early.

Shadow Gate

The location has a hole punched through the Gauntlet. Spirits — and even incautious people — can cross through it without the use of any powers. The Shadow Gate is visible even to material beings, as the Shadow world and material worlds mix.

Causing the Condition: This Condition can be created by using the Shadow Gateway Manifestation Effect on an Open Condition. Very rare summoning rituals can also create this Condition, allowing the spirit being called to access the material world.

Ending the Condition: At the end of the scene, the Condition fades. An exorcism directed at the gate can end the Condition early.

Materialized

The entity has shifted from ephemeral to material substance, manifesting in physical form. All the rules for ephemeral entity's traits still apply except for the effects of being in Twilight. This Condition protects the entity from Essence Bleed for its duration.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by an entity using the Materialize Manifestation Effect on an Open Condition. If the Open Condition used is on an object or person, the entity must materialize within its Rank in yards.

Avernian Gateways

Doorways to the Underworld, also called *Avernian gates*, exist all over the world but are invisible to all but a handful of psychics. The gateways are in Twilight, made of ghostly ephemera, and appear in places with the Resonant Condition tagged as "Death" — anywhere that people die in large numbers or that has a feel of Death about it can house a gate. They remain closed unless they are the nearest gate to a ghost who loses his last Anchor, in which case they open for a turn as his Corpus passes on.

Ending the Condition: Materialization lasts for one hour per success on the activating roll. When the duration ends, the entity fades back into Twilight. Physical contact with a Bane or removal of a prerequisite condition can cause the Condition to end early.

Fettered

The entity has secured itself to an object or creature. As long as it remains Fettered, the entity is safe from Essence Bleed. The entity remains in Twilight and must stay within five yards of the Fetter. Most entities Fettering themselves literally hide inside their Fetters if they are small enough.

The entity pays one less Essence for using Influences on the Fetter, but may not use them or Numina on another target as long as the Fetter lasts.

Prerequisites: The intended subject of this Condition must have the Open Condition, tagged to the entity attempting to cause it.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by an entity using the Fetter Manifestation Effect.

Ending the Condition: Fetters are permanent unless the prerequisite Conditions are ended, or if the subject of the Fetter is destroyed or killed (if a living being). The entity can voluntarily end the Condition by using the Unfetter Manifestation Effect. A successful Exorcism removes this Condition.

Urged

This animal or human host has been used as a Fetter by an ephemeral being. The entity may read the subject's thoughts with a successful Power + Finesse roll, contested by Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance. Success reveals surface thoughts. The entity may urge the host to take a specified action with a successful Power + Finesse roll contested by Resolve + Composure with an extra die. If the entity wins, the urge is created. Following it rewards the host with a Beat.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by an entity using the Fetter Manifestation Effect.

Ending the Condition: The Urged Condition ends whenever the linked Fetter ends.

Possessed

This object, corpse, or living being is temporarily controlled by an ephemeral entity. Living hosts are put into a coma-like state while being possessed — they experience the possession as missing time, except for flashbacks that might come out in dreams or times of stress such as losing Integrity. The entity may not use Numina or Influences while controlling the host, but is safe from Essence Bleed as long as the possession lasts.

The entity may pay one Essence per turn to heal one lethal or bashing wound or a point of structure lost to damage. Corpses that died through damage begin Possession incapacitated and must be "healed" with Essence



Entities possessing inanimate objects or corpses have a great deal of control over their host. An entity controlling an object can't make it do anything it couldn't do while being operated, but it can turn switches on and off, operate machinery, use keyboards, and turn dials. Use the entity's Finesse if dice rolls are necessary.

Corpses and other articulated hosts capable of movement, such as shop mannequins or industrial robots, use their own Physical Attributes but the entity's Attributes in Social or Mental rolls. By spending a point of Essence, the entity can use its own Attributes instead of the host's for Physical tasks for a turn, but doing so causes one point of lethal damage or structure loss to the host.

Living hosts require more time for the entity to gain full control and always use their own Attributes. The entity may read the host's mind with a Finesse Roll at a -4 die penalty, use the host's Physical Skills at a -3 penalty, and the host's Social and Mental Skills at -4. These penalties are all reduced by one die per day that the entity has been Fettered to the host. Most possessing entities Fetter themselves to their intended hosts and use the Possess Manifestation Effect to take full control only in emergencies.

To possess a host, the entity must remain in Twilight, superimposed over the host. This means that if the host touches the entity's bane or is injured by a weapon made of the bane, the entity will suffer wounds to its Corpus.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by an entity using the Possess Manifestation Effect. The object or victim must be under the Open Condition, tagged to the entity.

Ending the Condition: The possession lasts for a single scene, unless the entity abandons it early or the host is killed or destroyed. Abjurations, Exorcisms and forced contact with banes and bans can all motivate an entity to release a host.

Claimed

A Claimed object, corpse, creature, or person has been permanently possessed and merges with the entity involved. Unlike Possess, living Claimed aren't put into a fugue state, but remain mentally active while their soul and the Claiming entity merge together over the course of several days. During the period of fusion, the subject is under all the effects of the Urged Condition, described above. Once per day, starting with the moment the Claimed Condition is created, add one dot of the entity's Attributes to the host's, permanently raising them. Power may be assigned to Strength, Intelligence, or Presence, Finesse to Wits, Dexterity, or Manipulation, and Resistance to Stamina, Composure, or Resolve. The host's physical form begins to mutate, taking on an appearance influenced by the original host and the entity.

Claimed corpses add points to Attributes as above, but start with all Mental and Social Attributes at 0. Inanimate objects use the statistics appropriate for their type (Adding Resistance to Structure and Durability, Power to Acceleration and Finesse to Handling) instead of Physical Attributes, and also start the claiming process with all Mental and Social Attributes at 0. Corpses and inanimate hosts don't spend the claiming period under the Urged Condition, having no minds of their own to warp.

Claimed may use the entity's Influences, but not Numina or Manifestation Effects. They may develop supernatural powers as Merits. From the moment the Claimed Condition is laid, the entity is safe from Essence Bleed. The hybrid being that results has the entity's Essence trait, Virtue, Vice, Fate, Ban, and Bane, but is a material being. Claimed that were once spirits may cross the Gauntlet at a Locus with a successful Intelligence + Presence roll. Claimed that were inanimate objects are fully animate, fusions of spiritual power, metal and plastic.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by an entity using the Claim Manifestation Effect.

Ending the Condition: Claim is permanent in living hosts unless the entity decides to detach itself, rolling its original Power + Finesse penalized by Rank in dice and contested by the Claimed hybrid's Resolve + Composure, including any dots gained from being Claimed. If the entity succeeds, the entity and host are separated. Former hosts are physically and mentally scarred – the physical appearance changes back at the same rate it mutated and the extra Attribute dots fade at a rate of two per day. The Essence trait and any supernatural powers the Claimed developed immediately vanish. Former Claimed, however, retain the Virtue and Vice of the entity that took them over.

In nonliving hosts, Claim is only temporary – once the Claim has fully formed, the host loses one dot of a Physical Attribute (or equivalent for formerly inanimate objects) per three days. When any of these Attributes reaches 0, the host disintegrates and the entity is released into Twilight.

Numina

In addition to Influence and Manifestation, all ephemeral entities have a number of discrete magical powers called Numina. Each Numen is a single ability linked to the entity's nature – activated by a successful Power + Finesse roll unless stated otherwise.

The Numina described here are deliberately generic. Individual ephemeral beings display their Numen in ways reflecting their type, theme and biases – a ghost's Blast is a empty, freezing cold in the bones of its victim, while an angel's Awe manifests as a terrible holy aura.

Numina with **R** next to their name are usable in conjunction with the Reaching Condition.

Aggressive Meme

The entity speaks to a person (it must be in a Condition capable of doing so) and plants an idea in their mind. When that person tells someone else the idea, it takes hold in their mind, too. And whoever they tell, and so on. The Numen costs seven Essence to activate and is contested by Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance.

Awe

The entity causes terror in anyone who can see it. The Numen costs three Essence and activation is contested individually with Presence + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance by anyone

looking at the entity. Anyone gaining fewer successes than the entity is unable to move or speak for a turn. If the entity gains an exceptional success, the effect lasts three turns.

Blast

The entity may wound opponents at a distance. Range is equal to 10 yards per dot of Power and the entity does not suffer range penalties. If the activation roll succeeds, the Blast wounds as a +0L weapon. The entity may increase the lethality of its Blast by paying Essence — every two Essence spent increases the “weapon” by +1L. The maximum weapon bonus is equal to the entity’s Rank.

Dement

The entity may torture its victims mind via psychic assault. This Numen costs one Essence. The activation roll is contested by the victim’s Intelligence + Supernatural Tolerance. If the entity succeeds, the victim suffers the Insane Tilt (p. 211) for the rest of the Scene.

Drain

The entity can steal Essence or Willpower (chosen at activation) from a material being. The activation roll is contested by Stamina + Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance. Whichever character — entity or target — gains the most successes receives points of Willpower or Essence equal to the number of successes, while the other party loses the same number.

Emotional Aura

The entity sends out a wave of powerful — and distracting — emotion. This Numen costs one Essence and lasts for a scene or until the entity uses another Numina. The activation roll is made once but anyone coming within 5 yards of the entity must make a Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance roll. If the activation roll has more successes, the victim suffers a -2 dice penalty to all actions as long as the aura remains. If the victim gains more successes, he is immune to the aura unless the entity uses the Numen again.

Essence Thief

The entity may consume and steal Essence from ephemeral beings other than its own type — for example, spirits with this Numen may consume ghosts and angels. The Numen costs one Essence to activate.

Firestarter

The entity causes flammable materials to combust. This Numen costs one Essence and causes one small fire to break out per activation success within the entity’s Power in yards.

Hallucination

The entity may create an illusion experienced by a single target: it can be anything from a sight or sound to an imaginary person who holds a conversation. The Numen costs one Essence and is contested by the victim’s Wits + Composure

+ Supernatural Tolerance. Each success over the contesting roll alters one of the victim’s senses.

Host Jump

The entity may leap from host to host when using the Possess or Claim Manifestations. The current host must touch the intended host while the entity spends 3 Essence; the new host must be under all necessary prerequisite Conditions. If both prerequisites are met, the entity immediately transfers the Possessed or Claimed Condition to the new host, although Claimed hosts must begin the process of Claiming again. The entity does not need to re-spend Essence on the Manifestation Effect when jumping hosts with this Numen. Living Claim victims who are vacated with the use of this Numen still suffer the aftereffects listed under the Claimed Condition.

Implant Mission

This Numen grants a mortal a vision of a task the entity wishes him to accomplish as well as a magical determination to see it through. The entity pays 2 Essence and rolls Power + Finesse. On a success, the subject receives a short vision of whatever the entity wishes him to do and is under the Obsessed Condition regarding carrying that mission out.

Innocuous

The entity is very good at being overlooked. Perception rolls to notice the entity are penalized by 2 dice. This Numen does not require a roll to activate and has no cost.

Left-Handed Spanner

The entity disables a device, paying one Essence and touching the object if Manifest, or moving its Twilight form to superimpose with it if not. The device must be a human-manufactured object with at least three moving parts. If the activation roll succeeds, the device malfunctions for a number of turns equal to the successes rolled. Using this Numen in combat requires the entity to Grapple and gain control of the object, and so can’t be used this way in Twilight unless the target is in Twilight as well.

Mortal Mask

This Numen disguises a Materialized entity as a human and can be used at the same time as the Materialize Manifestation Effect. Using the Numen costs 1 Essence and the human seeming lasts for activation successes in hours. The human “costume” is flawed — witnesses may make a Wits + Composure roll penalized by the entity’s Finesse to realize that something is wrong. Characters able to sense the entity in Twilight do not suffer a penalty to the roll.

Omen Trance

Once every 24 hours, the entity may enter a trance in order to gain a glimpse of the future. The Numen costs one Essence if the entity is trancing on its own behalf or 3 Essence if it is searching for omens for another. The activation roll is an extended action, lasting at least one scene. If successful,

the entity sees a vision of an event sometime in the next week. The visions are predisposed to be warnings of danger.

Pathfinder **R**

This Numen allows an entity to know the quickest route to a destination. The fastest route isn't always the safest, of course; the Numen doesn't reveal any dangers on the way, only a set of directions to the target. If the destination is the subject of the Safe Place Merit, the activation roll is contested by the lowest Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance among any owners. The Numen costs 1 Essence and lasts for a scene. If the destination is too far away to reach that quickly, the entity must use the Numen again.

Rapture **R**

The entity forces a response from the pleasure centers of a living being's brain, granting ecstatic visions, a feeling of communion with the universe, and sensations of bliss. The Numen costs 2 Essence to activate. If successful, the victim suffers the Insensate Tilt (p. 211). If the victim fails a Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance roll, she gains a temporary derangement for the entity's Power in days, in a form that binds her closer to the entity's wishes.

Regenerate

The entity can use Essence to heal bashing and lethal wounds on its Corpus. This Numen does not require a roll to activate, but costs 1 Essence and heals one level of damage — the entity must reactivate the Numen each turn to heal more severe wounds. Bashing damage is healed first, then lethal.

Resurrection

This Numen — only available to Rank 4+ angels and spirits of healing — raises the dead. The Numen costs 10 Essence to use and the activation roll is penalized by one die per day that the subject has been dead. Supernatural beings that have already died as part of their transformation — vampires, mummies and Sin-Eaters — can't be resurrected, nor can anyone who died of natural causes. Other supernatural beings lose their powers when resurrected. Mages become Sleepwalkers and werewolves, wolf-blooded.

Seek **R**

The entity can sense the presence of suitable Conditions from a distance. The base range is two miles per Rank; entities may spend an Essence to multiply this by 10. If successful on a Finesse roll, the entity becomes aware of the direction and distance to the nearest suitable Anchor, Infrastructure or Resonant Condition.

Speed

The entity accelerates into a blur of movement. The entity chooses whether to spend 2 or 4 Essence when activating this Numen. Spending 2 Essence doubles its Speed for the remainder of the scene, while spending 4 Essence triples it.

Sign

The entity creates messages or images in any media they would be able to access to be used by a mortal — it can write in the

condensation on cold glass, produce images on computer screens, and send audible messages via phone lines. The Numen costs one Essence to activate, and if successful creates a single message.

Stalwart

The entity appears armored in Twilight form and uses Resistance as its Defense score instead of the lower of Power or Finesse.

Telekinesis **R**

The entity can manipulate objects without using a Manifestation Effect. This Numen costs one Essence. Successes on the activation roll become the entity's "Strength" when attempting to lift or throw an item. Fine motor control is impossible using this Numen.

Mortal Interaction

Mortals can interact with ephemeral entities in many more ways than as simple victims to Urge, Possess, or Claim, both for and against an entity's interests. Characters with an Unseen Sense for ghosts, spirits and angels can sense those beings' presence, even if the entity is in Twilight. Mystery Cults dedicated to serving particular entities attempt to assist their master in creating the necessary Conditions — often unwittingly. An angel doesn't need to explain to the mortals it forces to carry out strange actions that it is building Infrastructure, let alone explain why the God-Machine needs it to.

Of course, faced with humanity's fate as a resource for alien intruders, some mortals fight back.

Research

Most deliberate interactions with entities — summoning, exorcising and abjuration — rely on as much knowledge of the entity in question as the mortal can get. Research rolls to determine bans and banes are handled as extended Intelligence + Occult rolls for the most part, but many entities in the World of Darkness are protected by deliberate secrecy, obscurity, or don't often take interest in human affairs and so haven't had their details recorded. The target number of successes for a research roll is determined by the entity's type and Rank, as follows:

Rank	Successes
1	5
2	7
3	10
4	14
5	20

Researching a ghost reduces the target number of successes by 2, while researching an angel increases it by 4. Reaching the target number reveals the entity's ban or bane, while an exceptional success reveals both. Partial successes should reveal increasing information about the entity, as the character learns more about their nature, habits, and history.

Esoteric Armory (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character is the go-to guy when one needs a knife carved from the bone of a martyred saint, a hawthorn stake, rock salt shotgun shells, the powdered remains of cremated suicides or any number of other things. No matter how strange the need, you've got it covered. After successfully researching an ephemeral entity's Bane, compare your dots in this Merit to the entity's Rank. If the merit is equal to or greater than Rank, you've got what you need in your Armory. You should decide along with your Storyteller where the Armory is, though; a one-dot Esoteric Armory can fit in a large bag, but a four- or five-dot one will fill a house.

Resourceful investigators find other ways to learn the weaknesses of an ephemeral foe — many entities are willing to sell out their fellows' secrets in exchange for something. Many bans are also rather obvious, especially for low-Rank entities; a mortal might simply try to use the right thing by chance.

Contact

Faced with a haunting, or what appears to be a haunting, many occult investigators' first course of action is to attempt to make contact with the entity involved. Unless the entity actually has the Image or Materialize Manifestations or the Signs Numen, this is a slow process of trial, error and research that takes up several actions, each roll relating to one tested attempt to understand what the entity wants. Supernatural equipment (p. 241) can help the character in his endeavor.

Some mortals, however, are true mediums, able to make it easier for an entity to contact them. Doing so opens them up to the risk of being used for the entity's own ends; see the Medium Merit on p. 173.

Summoning and Exorcism

For a solitary occultist attempting to force a ghost to appear, or a shaman inviting a spirit to Influence an area, occult libraries are filled with summoning rites. None of them, strictly speaking, actually *work*, in that without supernatural power it's impossible to compel an ephemeral entity to appear, but the rituals and practices of a summoning can often, by accident or design, create the Conditions an entity would need to appear if it were so inclined.

A summoning is made up of several research actions (Intelligence + Occult rolls, with bonuses and penalties for access to proper literature) that narrow down the requirements for the rest of the rites. The remaining actions serve as alternate ways to cause the Influence Conditions in the desired location.

By acquiring a ghost's bones, or researching his Anchor and using it in the rite, the summoner sets up the Anchor

Condition. By burning rare materials, the area is made Resonant with a fire-spirit. By gathering people who can see the gears and following the God-Machine's instructions, Infrastructure begins to build. Using the fruits of their researches, the Cultists customize Conditions for their intended guest, advancing the Condition to Open... and allowing it to Manifest. Summoning rituals involving bringing an entity forth from another world must include a step where the gateway is opened — summonings for spirits must be performed in locii, and those for ghosts near a gate to the Underworld. These are even more difficult to pull off and apt to be interrupted by meddling investigators, but are the only way to allow truly powerful entities access to the world.

Occult literature is full of proposed ways to control summoned entities. These usually consist of banes and bans, which the summoner can use as leverage. Some spirits really are bound via their bans to serve mortals that raise them in the correct manner, while others will Blast anyone presumptuous enough to try.

Exorcism is the opposite of summoning, but works in exactly the same way — a series of actions that interact with the Conditions an entity is relying on to Manifest or feed. The classic image of an exorcism, priests sealing themselves into a room with a possessed victim who drive the entity out with prayer, confrontation, and willpower, is a combination of exorcism to chip away at the entity's conditions, bindings and wardings to keep it from escaping or summoning aid, abjurations to provide a spiritual kick, and the use of as many banes and bans as the exorcist has been able to research.

Abjuration

While exorcism is an attempt to tackle the Conditions underpinning an entity's presence by mundane means or the use of banes and bans, abjuration fights the supernatural with the supernatural, pitting the users' soul and Resolve against the entity he is attempting to force away.

Although many exorcists (and therefore many people knowledgeable enough about the ephemeral to attempt abjuration) are religious, abjuration does not require religious faith to work. It's a consequence of the human soul; by stilling and focusing the mind, concentrating on the higher self, a skilled abjurist can cause his soul to affect Twilight, forcing ephemeral beings away and clearing an area of Influence.

The abjuration effect must be performed as a meditative exercise that helps the user stay calm even in the face of a rampaging Materialized spirit. Religious abjurists use repeated prayer, while more secular occultists rely on incantations learned from their researches. Anything that instills the proper calm and reverence will work, though — a soldier might attempt to abjure a ghost by reciting the patriotic oath of his country.

The abjuration itself is a Resolve + Composure roll contested by the entity's Power + Resistance. As Abjuration channels the higher self, working the ritual by a means that matches the abjurist's Virtue provides a +2 die bonus to the dice pool. A strong psyche is also useful — characters with Integrity 10 receive a +3 bonus, Integrity 9 characters gain +2 dice and Integrity 8 +1 die. Conversely, if the abjuration calls

on the abjurist's Vice, the dice pool is penalized by 2 dice. Low Integrity characters suffer a -1 dice penalty per Integrity dot below 6 — -1 for Integrity 5, -3 for Integrity 3, and so on.

If the abjuration is successful, all Conditions tagged by the entity in the abjurist's Willpower in yards are suppressed for one day. On an exceptional success, the abjurist also becomes an extra bane for the entity until its Conditions return.

Warding and Binding

Occult lore is full of references to sealing locations from spirits and ghosts, either to bind them inside or keep them from entering. Chalk circles, protective charms in windows — even a simple horseshoe above a threshold. Most of these tales have nothing substantial to them. Some are half-remembered references to bans or banes, or the weaknesses of supernatural — but still physical — creatures. A few, though, describe true warding or binding rituals.

Warding and binding are a combination of abjuration and an entity's bane, empowered to create a temporary ban that prevents the entity from crossing into or out of an area defined by the ritualist.

Instead of confronting the entity directly as in abjuration, the ritualist marks the boundary she intends to protect with the entity's bane. She doesn't have to mark a complete boundary — her concept of the area she's protecting is what's important. Marking doors and windows with lamb's blood to keep out a spirit that can't touch it will prevent that spirit from simply floating through the wall while in Twilight, and carefully drawing a sigil on the floor will serve to trap the angel whose name it is.

If the ritualist doesn't have the proper bane for her ritual's subject, it fails automatically, so the most important part of warding is getting that detail right. Once that's done and the area has been marked, the ritualist performs whatever abjuration method she knows, focusing on suffusing the area with the essence of the entity's bane. The ritual is a Presence + Occult roll, modified by the ritualist's Integrity as per an abjuration and further penalized by the entity's Rank. A further modifier depends on the size of the area being warded.

Area	Modifier
Small area within a location, up to a six-foot area	+1
Single room or vehicle	0
Two-story, suburban building	-1

Larger structures levy increasing penalties; an additional -1 for every equivalent of a family home. Most superstructures, like skyscrapers, trains, government buildings, and hospitals are too large to be effectively warded.

If successful, the entity described in the ritual treats attempting to move into or out of the warded area as though it were against its ban. The effect lasts for successes in days or is broken if the marking of the boundary is disturbed — a determined entity can suffer the injury from touching the bane material marker in order to break the ward.

Equipment

Equipment, tools, and technology help to solve problems. Having the right tool for the job can mean the difference between life and death — or in the World of Darkness, the difference between life and a fate worse than death. This list is not all-inclusive, but features many of the tools characters in the World of Darkness might have at their disposal.

Equipment is divided up by the Skills they typically assist with. Mental Equipment typically assists with Mental Skills, for example. As well, Supernatural Equipment deals with the paranormal, and may not be suitable for every chronicle. Lastly, Bygones are items that characters cannot procure easily or recreate. They're unique items that deal with the otherworldly.

Availability and Procurement

The dot cost of a piece of equipment reflects directly on the Resources cost if your character wishes to purchase it (or the components, for some things). It also reflects the level of Allies or other Social Merit required in order to find the item and the Skill level required to procure it with a single dice roll. For example, if a Party Invitation has Cost •••, a character with Larceny •• should not be able to find and steal the item without a roll, but a character with Politics •••• might be able to get one by virtue of saying the right words to the right organization. If your character wishes to obtain higher Availability items with their Skills, it requires a deeper effort.

Size, Durability, and Structure

These are guidelines that represent common, standard examples of the items in question. For most items, characters could procure better examples at a higher Availability rating.

Dice Bonuses

Most equipment offers a bonus to dice rolls pertaining to its use. Multiple items can influence a given roll, but a roll should not receive more than a +5 bonus.

Game Effect

A character with the item can use these Effects. Any restrictions, costs, or parameters are listed individually.

Mental Equipment

Mental equipment is all but essential for many character types. Mental Skills without the proper tools are almost useless in most cases. A doctor without medicine is hardly capable of healing, and an auto mechanic without a toolbox couldn't change some minor belts on a car.

Automotive Tools

Basic (Kit): Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability •

Advanced (Garage): Die Bonus +2, Availability •

Effect: Automotive tools are a necessity for all but the simplest automobile repairs. Even then, a fully stocked garage with heavy equipment is required for more involved tasks such as engine or transmission replacement. If time is not a factor, any trained character with a Crafts Automotive Specialty can repair a vehicle's mundane issues without rolls. Complex modifications and enhancements or massive damage always requires a greater effort (an extended Intelligence + Crafts roll) to work out.

Cache

Die Bonus +1 to +3, Durability 2, Size 1-5, Structure 5, Availability • to •••

Effect: A cache is a hidden and defensible place for items, usually weapons. It keeps important items from prying eyes. A cache can never be more than half the Size of its parent object. For example, a Size 6 car can support no larger than a Size 3 cache. A given cache can hold two items of its Size and any reasonable number of smaller-sized items. Its Availability determines its die bonus, which both adds to concealment rolls and subtracts from rolls to find the items within.

Communications Headset

Die Bonus +2, Durability 0, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability ••

Effect: Communications headsets keep characters in constant contact. Different varieties work over different distances, but most commercial models work over about 200 feet. A common alternative is a conference call between cellular phones and Bluetooth headsets. If the users have practiced using their headsets together, they gain the die bonus on any coordinated efforts. In the case of a teamwork action, the die bonus only applies to the final roll. If the users are unpracticed, the bonus falls to +1 and actors must make reflexive Wits + Composure rolls to participate successfully.

Any heavy objects can obstruct a headset's signal. Anything obstructing with Durability higher than 3 requires listeners to make a Wits + Composure roll to understand shared messages. Levy a -1 penalty for each point of Durability over 4.

Crime Scene Kit

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A crime scene (or CSI) kit is a toolbox full of investigative aids such as magnifiers, fingerprinting dust, cameras, tape,



test-
ing chemicals,
and sample bags. While the kits

offer a die bonus to Investigation rolls, the more important benefit of the CSI kit is that it allows evidence to be moved and digested elsewhere. Properly applied, it allows investigators to do the bulk of their work off-site and at their own pace.

Code Kit

Die Bonus +5, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: A code kit is a series of tools created for the purpose of making and interpreting a code for a specific audience. A common example is a book code, where a page, paragraph, and word from a certain book are used as the foundation for a cypher. This keeps any uninformed eyes off the intended message. In the case of a book code, a book is often chosen that all message recipients can access easily. This guarantees that the code never has to travel with the code key.

A successfully designed cypher is difficult to break. The die bonus acts as a penalty to any rolls to crack the code without the necessary reference key.

Cracking Software

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size N/A, Structure N/A, Availability •••

Effect: Crappy software's a dime a dozen. Good, reliable cracking software is hard to come by. With solid software, a hacker can force passwords, breach firewalls, and otherwise make a nuisance of herself in computer systems. Beyond the dice pool modification, the benefit such software offers is a sort of buffer between the hacker and security. Any efforts to track the hacker takes two steps; one to identify the software, then one to trace it back to the source. Functionally this means two rolls on behalf of the security personnel, with an opportunity for the hacker to withdraw before detection.

Services

In addition to the fully-fleshed equipment in this chapter, characters may look for services from other characters. Below is a list of some things characters may pursue. Each has an Availability rating that works identically to other equipment. This can act as a foundation for what certain levels of Allies, Status, and other Social Merits might accomplish. Most are sorted by Skills to reflect their general uses. Most include a die bonus as well. Assume most services take a week to procure at the listed Availability levels. Raise Availability by one to make that a day instead.

Note that some services listed could be highly illegal and should be limited in access to appropriate Merits. In many cases, illegal services only offer negligible die bonuses. Their real advantage comes from a layer of separation from legal authorities.

Service	Availability	Die Bonus
<i>Academics</i>		
Historical specialist consulting	...	+3
Research assistance from grad students	..	+2
Translation of a dead language	...	+2
<i>Computer</i>		
Custom phone application	...	+2
Digital image enhancement	..	+3
Graphic design/forgery	..	+2
<i>Crafts</i>		
Antiquities restoration	...	+2
Auto repair	..	+3
Custom equipment modifications	...	+2
<i>Investigation</i>		
Consultation on evidence	...	+3
Investigative photography	...	+2
Private investigation/background check	..	+2
<i>Medicine</i>		
Black market surgeon	+3
Expert medical witness	+2
Rush plastic surgery	+2
<i>Occult</i>		
Esoteric consultant/sage	+3
Exorcist	...	+2
Protective amulets or wards	+1
<i>Politics</i>		
Campaign assistant	...	+3
Cutting red tape (read: bribe)	...	+2

Service	Availability	Die Bonus
Spin doctor	...	+2
<i>Science</i>		
Fact-checking	..	+3
Falsifying research/coverup	...	+2
Lab access	..	+2
<i>Athletics</i>		
Meditative assistance	...	+2
Personal trainer	...	+3
Throwing an athletic competition	+4
<i>Brawl</i>		
Arrange underground boxing ring	...	+2
Bodyguard service	...	+3
Self-defense classes	.	+1
<i>Drive</i>		
Chauffer	..	+2
Stunt performance/mock crash	...	+3
Tour bus rental	+2
<i>Firearms</i>		
Antique gun repair	...	+2
Cover fire from gangs	...	+3
Procuring smuggled military arms	+2
<i>Larceny</i>		
Breaking and entering	...	+2
Security consulting	...	+2
Stealing a protected relic	+3
<i>Stealth</i>		
Strategic distraction	...	+3
Tailing a suspect	...	+2
Targeted vandalism	..	+2

Services (continued)

Service	Availability	Die Bonus	Service	Availability	Die Bonus
<i>Survival</i>			<i>Intimidation</i>		
Field dress and preserve an animal	***	+1	Anti-interrogation training	***	+3
Trail guide	**	+3	“Bad cop” interrogator	**	+2
Weatherproof a shelter	**	+2	Deprogramming therapy	**	+2
<i>Weaponry</i>			<i>Persuasion</i>		
Properly forged sword	***	+2	Defense attorney	**	+3
Identify wound from obscure weapon	***	+2	Hostage negotiator	***	+3
Training in archaic warfare	***	+2	Pickup artist	**	+2
<i>Animal Ken</i>			<i>Socialize</i>		
Buy a trained animal	***	+2	Catering	*** or ****	+1 or +2
Identify animal droppings	**	+1	Elocution consulting	**	+1
Rule out natural causes of death	***	+2	Escort	**	+2
<i>Empathy</i>			<i>Streetwise</i>		
“Good cop” interrogator	***	+2	Arrange a rave or block party	**	+2
Neutral arbitrator	**	+2	Black market access	**	+2
Therapy session	**	+1	Find crash space	**	+1
<i>Expression</i>			Smuggling contraband	**	+1
Document forgery	***	+3	<i>Subterfuge</i>		
Ghostwriting	**	+2	Amateur Actor/Actress	**	+2
Motivational speech	***	+1	Con artistry	**	+2
			Gambling ringer	**	+2

Digital Recorder

Die Bonus +1 or +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability • or ••

Effect: In the last decade, digital audio recorders have gotten smaller, more effective, and more affordable. Now, any student can carry a coin-sized device that would have put intelligence agencies of the 1980s to shame. The cheaper model of recorder gives its +1 bonus to any rolls to catch words or sounds. The bonus also applies to concealment rolls. The more expensive model gives +2. With an Intelligence + Computer (with die bonus), a character can contest any rolls to obscure discussion or mask noises.

Duct Tape

Die Bonus +1, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: Duct tape has as many uses as one can think of, and just as many you never would. It can reinforce barricades, stabilize weapon handles, bind prisoners, repair broken pipes, and so much more. In most cases, duct tape can offer a +1 bonus to

Crafts-related rolls. Alternatively, it can add a point of Durability to almost anything. If used as a restraint, rolls to break free suffer a –3 penalty, and must overcome the duct tape’s Structure.

First Aid Kit

Die Bonus 0 or +1, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability • or ••

Effect: A first aid kit contains all the necessary supplies to stabilize an injury and stop wounds from getting worse until the victim can find proper treatment. The one-dot version of the first aid kit does not offer a die bonus, it simply allows for treatment. The two-dot version offers a +1 to treatment rolls due to superior supplies.

Flashlight

Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3, Availability •

Effect: In a world of darkness, a flashlight can be a person’s best friend. It generally does what it’s supposed to; it

helps cut a path through the unknown. Its die bonus subtracts from any penalties due to darkness, and adds to any rolls to search in the dark. A good flashlight can serve as a club in a pinch. As well, it can blind an unfortunate subject. A Dexterity + Athletics roll, subtracting an informed opponent's Defense, will put the beam where it needs to be. The victim's player may make a contested Stamina roll. If your character scores more successes than the subject, they're blinded for one turn. Victims with especially acute senses are blinded for two turns.

Glowstick

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Glowsticks use a chemical mixture to summon forth enough light to see in a small area. Most commercial glowsticks last a couple of hours; police and other professional varieties can last twelve. Because they're small, airtight containers, they serve the added benefit of being useful underwater or in the rain. Functionally, they work the same as a flashlight. However, they cannot be used to blind a target, since their soft glow is far less obtrusive than a flashlight's beam. They're also very conveniently worn, which can serve strategic purposes for a group operating in low-light conditions. A member will not go missing without being noticed so long as they have a glowing neon bar on their belt.

GPS Tracker

Die Bonus +3, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: With the advent of the modern cellular phone, most modern people have a GPS-enabled device on their person at any given time. With a bit of know-how, and access to someone's phone, your character can track their every move (provided those moves are not in caves, tunnels, or sewer systems). Some characters will trade GPS data in case one of the group becomes lost or if they have to follow someone without notice. Planting a phone on an unwitting subject can serve as a highly effective tracking device.

Keylogging Software

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size N/A, Structure N/A, Availability ••

Effect: Keylogging software does exactly one thing: It logs keystrokes on a computer. This is usually done to record



incriminating data or passwords. Usually, keylogging software is coupled with software to transmit the data once captured. The challenge for the would-be intruder is installing the software. Email scams are an unreliable way to get onto a specific computer, but could fool one member of a large organization. A thumb drive is very effective, but requires direct, physical access to the recipient computer. The software's die bonus offers an advantage to breach a network or to find important data.

Luminol

Die Bonus +2, Durability 0, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Luminol is a chemical that reacts to certain metals in human blood and other bodily fluids. The reaction causes a faint neon glow for about thirty seconds, visible in the dark. It comes in an aerosol can and will seek out faint traces, even after a thorough cleaning. In addition to showing the exact locations of violent crimes, luminol can assist in tracking wounded people and animals. Luminol's die bonus applies to any roll to track by the fluid traces, or to piece together the details of a crime scene.

Multi-Tool

Die Bonus +1, Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: Sometimes, the need for mobility doesn't allow for your character to carry around a full tool kit. In these cases, a multi-tool can be a lifesaver. From sawing to stripping wires, to opening bottles, to filing off serial numbers, a multi-tool can do the job in a pinch. The multi-tool offers a negligible die bonus on numerous Crafts and other assorted tasks, and most importantly, allows for rolls when sometimes they couldn't be made for lack of proper equipment. While not made for use as a weapon, it can serve as one causing 0 lethal, but suffering a -1 penalty to hit.

Personal Computer

Die Bonus +1 to +4, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability • to ••••

Effect: In the developed world, almost every household has access to a personal computer. They vary in size, functionality, and price, from decade-old models that can barely surf the web to high-end machines that can process gigabytes of data per second. In today's world, many lives revolve around computers. For some people, their entire careers and personal lives exist within digital space. The Availability of the computer determines its die bonus.

Smartphones

Die Bonus +1 to +2, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability • to •••

Effect: By themselves, smartphones can make calls, send text messages and emails, take pictures, maintain an agenda, and search the web. With a bit of software, the Smartphone becomes the multi-tool of the electronic age. While it cannot accomplish the raw computing power of a full-sized personal computer, higher-end smartphones can manage almost all the same tasks with ease.

Most major gadgets have been successfully replicated with smartphone applications. GPS scanning and tracking are staples of the amateur investigator. Facial recognition software finds a face in a crowd with relative accuracy. They can photograph and transcribe text, then translate ancient tomes. They can store a library's worth of text and allow for automated searches. They offer directions with photographic assistance. The value of a mindless video game on a stakeout is often underestimated.

Special Effects

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 5, Structure 3, Availability •••

Effect: Special effects is a catch-all term for the tricks and chicanery used by amusement parks and stage magicians to fool witnesses. A character may use these as a distraction or a defense. For example, the Pepper's Ghost illusion is relatively easy to set up with the right tools. It uses a large mirror and a sheet of glass, along with a model and a light source. It projects an illusion of the model's reflection, and makes witnesses see a "ghost."

In addition to the die bonus, special effects generally fool their audience at first. A witness will fall for the trick, unless given good reason to be suspicious. This can waste valuable time or lead the witness into a trap.

Surveillance Equipment

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability •••

Effect: Standard surveillance equipment usually consists of motion detectors, cameras, and monitors. High-end versions may include infrared heat sensors, barometric scanners, or even more complex gear. Either way, the point of surveillance equipment is to survey, detect, and otherwise track who enters or leaves a location. Often, this also means locking down breached zones. Unless someone knows surveillance equipment exists and actively avoids it, his presence is noticed and recorded. If he tries to avoid it, contest his Dexterity + Stealth against the installing technician's Intelligence + Computer or Intelligence + Crafts (for digital and analog systems, respectively). The technician may add the equipment's die bonus. If the intruder scores more successes, he remains unnoticed. Otherwise, he goes on record.

Survival Gear

Die Bonus +1 or +2, Durability 2, Size 2 or 3, Structure 3, Availability • or •••

Effect: Survival gear is the catch-all term for the various kits of equipment needed to survive in harsh environments. This could encompass tents, canned foodstuff, raingear, sleeping bags, sterile water, or any of the various things a person can use to survive the world outside their cushy homes. They come in two levels: a basic level and an advanced level. The basic level offers +1 and subtracts one from the effective level of environment, (see [Extreme Environments](#), p. 213), while the advanced offers +2 and subtracts two from the effective environment level. This does not help with a level 4 environment. A resourceful character can jury rig or scavenge the necessary supplies for a basic survival gear, but an advanced set of gear requires very specialized equipment. Basic survival gear can assist with most any environment, but advanced survival gear must be catered to one particular type of environment.

Talcum Powder

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size 1, Structure N/A, Availability •

Effect: Talcum powder can keep a baby's bottom from getting diaper rash, but it can also show the presence of the unseen, and show evidence of intrusion if placed at a portal of entry. If dusted with talcum powder, a character must achieve five successes on a Dexterity + Stealth roll to enter without a trace. Fewer successes will only obscure the specifics of their feet and hands. Some paranormal investigators use talcum powder as a way to give ghosts and other invisible entities a method for communication.

Ultraviolet Ink

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: Ultraviolet Ink, or invisible ink as it's commonly called, is an outstanding way to relay messages in plain sight.

Since the naked eye cannot perceive the ink without an ultraviolet light, a character can scrawl messages for other recipients in-the-know. It also allows for secretive information to be passed around through mundane channels. If someone's being surveyed by nefarious forces, an ultraviolet message scribbled on a throwaway magazine is much easier to get into their home unmolested than, say, a suspicious letter slid through their doorframe. If you need to mark a path to a secret hiding place, what better way to conceal the guiding marks?

Physical Equipment

Physical equipment enhances the use of Physical Skills. This often means the use of simple and complex machines to make things easier, or simple tricks to heighten the effectiveness of a character's inherent talents.

Battering Ram

Die Bonus +4, Durability 3, Size 4, Structure 8, Availability ••

Effect: The purpose of the battering ram is to bring down doors and other barricades with direct, focused force. A battering ram uses a Teamwork action (see the World of Darkness Rulebook, p. 134), allowing up to four participants. The primary actor adds the ram's die bonus to her roll. A ram ignores two points of Durability.

Bear Trap

Die Bonus +2, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 5, Availability ••

Effect: A bear trap is a large metal contraption that looks something like a set of deadly jaws. For this reason, they're also commonly called jaw traps. When a human or large animal steps into the bear trap, it snaps shut on their leg. Due to the serrated edges on the trap, this can cause massive bleeding or even broken bones.

The jaw trap causes 3L damage and ignores two points of armor or Durability. A character trapped in the jaws can attempt to escape as an instant action. Doing so requires a Strength + Stamina roll, with the trap's die bonus as a penalty due to the distracting pain and the strength of the jaws. Failure on this roll causes another point of lethal damage as the jaw digs in further. Creatures without opposable thumbs cannot escape this way and must rip themselves free.

Any rolls to hide a bear trap suffer its die bonus as a penalty. They're difficult to hide due to their awkward shape and weight.

Caltrops

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Effect: Caltrops are small, pointed pieces of metal, arranged in such a way that one point is always facing upward. This makes walking (or driving) through a patch of caltrops inconvenient and painful. These traits assume enough caltrops to fill a doorway or other narrow corridor.

Moving through caltrops causes one point of lethal damage. Caltrops ignore a point of armor or Durability. To move through safely, a Dexterity + Athletics roll is required with the caltrops' die bonus applied as a penalty to the roll. A character may only move half Speed (rounded down) while moving safely through caltrops.

A character may hide caltrops, although it is difficult. A Wits + Larceny -3 roll is required, the caltrops' die bonus does not apply to this roll.

Camouflage Clothing

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Effect: Camouflage clothing allows its wearer to blend in with her surroundings enough for the untrained eye to pass over. Effective camouflage must be catered to the environment; greens and browns in the woodlands, shades of grey in an urban area. Proper camouflage adds its bonus to rolls to remain unnoticed.

Climbing Gear

Die Bonus +2, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: Climbing gear includes ropes, pulleys, handles, carabiners, hooks, and other assorted tools for scaling things. They serve a twofold purpose. First, they add their die bonus to the normal Strength + Athletics rolls for climbing. Second, if properly applied (with a Wits + Athletics roll), they prevent a character from falling more than ten feet at a time.

Crowbar

Die Bonus +2, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: A crowbar is a curved piece of steel used to pry open shipping pallets, jammed doors, and other things a normal person would be incapable of doing by hand. It adds to any dice rolls used to establish leverage. When prying things open, it also allows your character to ignore two points of Durability on the lock or barricade. Additionally, a crowbar can be used as a weapon (see p. 202).

Firearm Suppressor

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A firearm suppressor is popularly and misleadingly referred to as a silencer in cinema and other media. It's a cylinder placed on the end of a gun barrel that changes and lightens the sound of a shot. A suppressor delivers many minor benefits, but two noteworthy advantages: short-range accuracy and concealment.

Increased Accuracy: A suppressed firearm travels through a longer barrel and the muzzle crown evens the expulsion of hot gasses that can slightly affect trajectory. In game terms, reduce a suppressed gun's damage rating by 1 due to the bullet's subsonic flight, but increase the attack dice pool by 2 when firing at short range.

Position Concealer: The sound changes dramatically, to the point where many people do not recognize the sound as that of a gunshot and are often unable to place where the lower tone came from. The muzzle flash is also reduced dramatically with a suppressor, helping to conceal a shooter's position. A character trying to identify a suppressed shot must roll Wits + Firearms - 2. Any character searching for the shooter using the gun's tells suffers a -2 penalty.

Gas Mask

Die Bonus +5, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Effect: A gas mask is a filtration device placed over the face that defends against noxious chemicals in the air. With a working gas mask, a character can stand minor toxins for as long as he needs, whereas other characters might take damage over time or require rolls to remain conscious. Powerful toxins may still require rolls. A gas mask adds five dice to these rolls.

Handcuffs

Die Bonus +2, Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: A solid pair of steel handcuffs is made to restrain even a remarkably strong person. Applying handcuffs to an unwilling combatant is an additional option in a grapple. Roll Strength + Brawl - the opponent's Strength. Success means the handcuffs are where they need to be.

Breaking out of successfully applied handcuffs requires a Strength + Stamina - 4 roll. Each success on the roll reduces the Structure of the cuffs by 1. Cuffs reduced to 0 Structure snap open. Each attempt to escape causes 1 point of bashing damage.

A character may also try to finagle their hands out of the cuffs. This requires a Dexterity + Athletics - 4 roll. Success allows for an escape, and causes one point of bashing damage. Failure on this roll causes one point of lethal damage, as the thumb jerks out of socket.

Attempting to do anything requiring manual dexterity while cuffed incurs a -4 penalty, or -2 if the hands are cuffed in front. Witnesses are unlikely to behave favorably around a cuffed character, Social rolls against strangers incur a -3 penalty.

Many police forces and security companies now prefer heavy duty plastic zip ties in place of handcuffs. While they're slightly less durable (Durability 3), they incur a -5 penalty from behind or -3 from the front, because they can be far tighter on the wrists. They can also be cut free.

Lockpicking Kit

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A lockpicking kit consists of picks, tools, and rods for manipulating tumblers and opening locks. A good kit contains a wide array of tools to all but guarantee intrusion of an analog lock. With such a kit and at least a dot of Larceny, a character can pick a lock without a roll if time is

not an issue. If time is an issue, the die bonus applies to the Dexterity + Larceny rolls. At Availability •, a character may procure a portable lockpick. It has Size 1, Structure 1, and is far more concealable. However, it only offers a +1 bonus and doesn't allow for picking without rolls since the kit realistically may not have the right tools for a given job.

A lockpicking kit only works on mechanical locks. Digital locks require more specific hacking and code prediction. A character may procure a digital lockpick at Availability •••, but typically only works on one type of lock, such as the keycard locks used in hotels. Digital lockpicks can be Size 2, or Size 1 if crafted as an extension of a laptop computer or smartphone.

Mace (Pepper Spray)

Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Pepper spray, or "mace" as it's commonly called, is a blend of chemicals (mostly capsaicin, the "hot" part of a chili) in a small spray can, designed to debilitate threats. Civilians use these devices in self-defense; police use them to subdue unruly criminals. Use of pepper spray requires a Dexterity + Athletics, or Dexterity + Firearms roll. Each yard is a range category, so one yard is short range, two yards is medium, three yards is long range. An opponent's Defense applies, but in normal wind conditions, the die bonus applies to the roll.

Upon the first attack, the victim suffers the Stun Tilt (see p. 212). An opponent struck suffers a -5 penalty to all actions. This penalty can be reduced by one for every turn spent rinsing the eyes with water. Commercial chemicals designed to clean the eyes will fully remove the penalty after a turn.

Night Vision Goggles

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability ••

Effect: Night vision goggles amplify low-light conditions, allowing characters to see when they otherwise could not. A character with night vision goggles does not suffer penalties for acting blind. Bright lights can render the wearer temporarily blinded, as if he had a flashlight shone in his eyes.

Rope

Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: Rope is one of the oldest tools known to humankind. It's never left prominent use because of its simple and efficient utility. A good rope adds its die bonus to relevant Crafts rolls and anywhere else it would assist. As a binding agent, it resists breaking with a Durability (or effective Strength) equal to its user's Crafts score, due to the multiplicative effect of solid knots. An applicable Specialty adds one to the user's Crafts score for this purpose. Some interrogators, shibari fetishists, and boy scouts alike specialize in remarkable knot-tying, potentially rendering subjects completely and hopelessly immobile.



Stick

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size N/A, Structure N/A, Availability ••

Effect: Slick is a catch-all for mixtures of chemicals designed to cover an area and make it difficult to pass due to slippery and sticky conditions. Most slick lasts about an hour at effective slipperiness. Anyone walking in a covered area must succeed in a Dexterity + Athletics - 3 roll each turn to maintain footing. Failure results in the Knocked Down Tilt (see p. 211). Similarly, an object coated requires a Dexterity + Athletics - 3 to grasp it successfully. Because it dries rapidly, every fifteen minutes after application, all rolls to resist the slick gain a cumulative +1.

Stun Gun

Die Bonus 0, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •, ••, or •••

Effect: A stun gun is designed to deliver an overwhelming amount of electricity to an assailant in order to shut down her muscles and send her to the ground. As a defensive item, this gives the would-be victim time to run or get help. As an offensive item, it leaves the victim ready for restraint or worse.

These devices come in two varieties (hand-held and ranged) and three intensities (1-3, corresponding to their Availabilities). The hand-held model has live leads on the edge of a handle and can be used as many as fifty times on one battery charge. The ranged model fires small wired darts up to fifteen feet away. While the ranged model has similar battery life, it uses a compressed air cartridge that requires replacement after each shot.

Use of a handheld stun gun requires a Dexterity + Weaponry roll, penalized by the victim's Defense. The ranged model uses Dexterity + Firearms, also penalized by the victim's Defense. On a successful hit with either, the victim takes one point of lethal damage. The successes subtract from the victim's next dice pool. With the ranged version, the darts remain in the victim's body, adding three successes automatically each turn. They can be removed with a Strength + Stamina roll, with the initial successes penalizing the action. With the hand-held version, the attacker can attempt to maintain the shock, which takes a Strength + Weaponry, penalized by the greater of the opponent's Strength or Defense. Once the accumulated successes exceed the victim's Size, the victim collapses in neuro-muscular incapacitation. Once the shock ends, this lasts for (10 - victim's Stamina) in turns.

Social Equipment

Social actions deal with people. Social Equipment offers tools for leverage, influence, and manipulation.

Cash

Die Bonus +1 to +5, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability • to •••••

Effect: This represents a wad of cash, a briefcase of money, an offshore bank account number, or some other lump sum.

It can't be reflected in the Resources Merit since it's not a regular income. However, it can be expended to offer a bonus equivalent to its Availability on any social roll where a bribe could benefit. As well, it can be expended to purchase one item of equal Availability. For more complex uses, consider it a single month's allotment of the same Resources.

Contraband

Die Bonus +1 to +5, Durability 1, Size 2-4, Structure 1, Availability • to •••••

Effect: Similar to cash (above), contraband reflects a lump sum of valuable materials. In this case, it's not monetary, it's illegal. This might mean guns, drugs, or even smuggled truffles. Contraband can be used identically to cash, except only within certain circles. Not everyone will take stolen goods for payment. However, with a group that has a high demand for the item, the contraband is worth one dot rating higher (maximum 5).

Disguise

Die Bonus +1 to +3, Durability 1, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability • to •••

Effect: A good disguise goes a long way to help fit in with a strange group or go unnoticed in a crowd where one doesn't belong. Properly costumed for a situation, no rolls are required to blend into the crowd. Any rolls to actively detect the outsider suffer a penalty equal to the die bonus of the disguise; the disguised character also gains the bonus to remain hidden.

With a disguise, a character can emulate the first dot of a single Social Merit that would make sense within the scope of the scene. For example, it doesn't make money appear from thin air, but it would allow a character to get their drinks on a nonexistent tab, reflecting Resources •. This requires a Composure + Subterfuge to maintain in the face of anyone in the know, contested by the witness's Wits + Subterfuge. The die bonus of the disguise applies to the liar, but does not affect the witness.

Fashion

Die Bonus +1 to +3, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability • to •••••

Effect: Never underestimate the value of high fashion. Like a disguise, fashionable clothing allows a character to fit in. However, the point of fashion is to draw attention, not to fade into the crowd. As opposed to anonymity, fashion means being noticed. Note that the clothing chosen must be appropriate to the setting. Punk chic will not work at a Senator's fundraiser, for example. When improperly dressed, the die bonus applies as a penalty to all Social Skill rolls.

The die bonus for Fashion is equal to half the Availability, rounded up.

Housing

Die Bonus +1 to +5, Durability 4+, Size 12+, Structure 8+, Availability • to •••••

Housing reflects a place to lay one's head. The Availability score determines the size, location, and relative luxury of the building. One dot may reflect a tiny apartment in a terrible part of town, three dots a three-bedroom home in a suburb, while five could mean a penthouse condo downtown or a sprawling mansion.

Makeup Kit

Die Bonus +1, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability •••

Effect: A good makeup kit can not only disguise a character in a pinch, but can help to sell a story. With ten minutes of preparation, a makeup kit's die bonus applies to any applicable Social rolls.

A makeup kit can also help to build a narrative. Want to convince someone that you've been beaten? It's not hard to fake a black eye. Want to walk through the vampire club without drawing attention and undue fangs? A little pancake makeup and rouge goes a long way. With makeup applied, subtract the die bonus from any dice rolls to detect her true identity.

Polygraph Machine

Die Bonus +3, Durability 1, Size 3, Structure 4, Availability •••

Effect: Polygraph machines detect heart rates, sweat, and breath using electrodes and stethoscopes. For many people, this can guide a skilled user in determining honest and deceptive behaviors. Both digital and analog models exist and they work similarly. A digital model is often smaller (Size 2), but gives the same bonus. When used by a trained practitioner (requiring Medicine • or greater), a polygraph machine offers its die bonus to any rolls to detect lies.

Supernatural Equipment

Supernatural Equipment covers various tricks and tools for dealing with Things That Should Not Be. None of these tools use exact (or even actual) sciences; most are just modern interpretations of older traditions. While an Intelligence + Occult roll can tell a potential solution to a supernatural issue, it takes an extended roll and extensive research to verify if the solution is in any way valid or safe. Often, these tools have unexpected side effect and consequences. The listed tools are simply suggestions. Feel free to change them up or brew your own. Look into legends, folklore, and even tabloids for inspiration.

Once characters have researched and tested a device or tool successfully, it should generally work as intended. Exceptions and loopholes can occur rarely.

Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Detector

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: An electromagnetic field detector is a small, handheld device that detects trace electromagnetic fields

in appliances and home wiring. They're common tools for electricians and are easily available at hardware and electronics supply stores. In the supernatural world, though, they're popular ghost hunting tools, as some ghosts emit soft electromagnetic fields, particularly when using their Numina.

Add the EMF detector's die bonus to any roll to search for ghosts or their traces. If your character is actively watching an EMF detector when a ghost uses its Numina, the device spikes with strong results. No roll is required for this effect.

Energy Meter

Die Bonus +1, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability •••

Effect: An energy meter is a device, technological or mystical, that supposedly detects the emanations of the supernatural. Some energy meters are radios tuned to a dead channel, with the variations in white noise the gauge. Some are crystals on pendulums, moving in the face of the otherworldly. Dowsing rods are another common tool used as an energy meter.

Unlike an EMF detector, an energy meter detects locations that are haunted or otherwise mystically charged. It works without fail when in the right places. An EMF detector picks up the traces and trails of actual entities, albeit unreliably. When in a place of supernatural influence, an energy meter activates without a die roll. Its die bonus applies to rolls to convince witnesses that a place is either influenced by the supernatural or absent of the supernatural.

When procuring an energy meter, choose a type of creature. Functionally, it acts as the Unseen Sense Merit (see p. 175). For example, an energy meter to detect werewolves may be a holly wand dipped in silver, or a vampire-detecting meter may be a bowl of holy water that ripples when the undead approach.

Flash Cotton/Paper

Die Bonus +2, Durability 0, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Flash paper and flash cotton are chemically treated bits of paper or cotton that burn very quickly and flash into nothingness in under a second. The nitrocellulose burns so fast that it's not dangerous for the user. Flash paper is a common part of a magician's arsenal of tricks and was traditionally used as a flash for photography. It also serves as a highly effective ward against things intimidated by fire. Vampires, some ghosts, and many types of zombie are afraid of fire and will flee on sight. This serves the dual function of identifying such monsters in a crowd, as they'll often flinch or hiss as they resist their impulses to run or kill.

When a creature weak against fire sees flash paper, it must succeed in a Resolve + Composure roll to resist recoiling. If the character knows what she is looking for (that is, she lit the flash paper near the creature deliberately to check its reaction), the player can apply a Condition such as Exposed or Shaken to the creature.

Grave Dirt

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability •••

Effect: For reasons unknown, ghosts and other unseen entities find Manifestation easier in the presence of grave dirt. Those trying to interact with such a being can use a bag of such dirt to help those interactions along. Grave dirt is easy to find but difficult to procure. Anyone digging a grave without permission is likely to draw a lot of unwanted scrutiny. This reflects a twenty pound bag, which will cover about five square feet of space.

Any ghost or spirit attempting to Manifest or use other Numina on the dusted site may add the dirt's die bonus. They are not forced or even compelled to Manifest, they just find it easier.

Incense

Die Bonus +1, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability ••

Effect: Incense has long been a common feature of magical practices in most cultures. It's no coincidence that incense is so very ubiquitous in mysticism; it does offer limited advantages in supernatural situations. Every type of incense has symbolic meaning and use. For example, anise is good for meditation, bergamot for prosperity, myrrh for healing, and sage to ward off evil. So long as the incense burned symbolically matches the action, its die bonus can be used in rolls for any Supernatural Merit. With Storyteller permission, it can be used with alternative mystical powers from other World of Darkness game lines.

Kirlian Camera

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability •••

Effect: A Kirlian camera uses a series of photographic techniques and high voltage exposure to capture "auras." These odd photos have been the center of many pseudoscientific studies. While the "auras" say little factually about a given person, they can reveal a creature's nature as something not natural. As well, they can show traces of the supernatural on-scene. Vampires have no Kirlian aura. Other monsters of the World of Darkness have a warped, strange aura that looks nothing like a human aura. Each type of supernatural aura is different, but the process is hardly exact.

A Kirlian camera's die bonus applies to rolls to identify the supernatural in a situation. It doesn't assist in identifying the specifics. It only assists in placing something as natural or unnatural.

Protective Amulet

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •••

Effect: Any chain bookstore has books full of instructions for crafting amulets and baubles to defend against evil. These franchise fetishes do nothing more than breed undue confidence in their wearers. True protective amulets are few and far between, but they can save lives. They take many forms, from a shell containing cat's eye, to an abraxas amulet, to a lucky horse shoe.

Any time the wearer of a true protective amulet is subject to harmful magic, the amulet adds its die bonus to any rolls to resist. However, any time a harmful spell achieves an exceptional success, the amulet shatters, causing one point of lethal damage to its wearer and often alerting the sorcerer.

Salt

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Salt represents purity in many cultures. This purity holds the unnatural at bay. Ethereal creatures such as ghosts and demons cannot pass through an unbroken line of salt. If all portals into a building are lined with salt, ethereal creatures cannot even force their way through walls or ceilings.

If actively used in an Abjuration (see p. 231), salt adds its die bonus. If a spirit tries to use Numina to break a salt line, it must spend Willpower to make the attempt and suffers the die bonus as a penalty to the activation. The Willpower does not add to the roll.

If salt is integrated into a weapon, for example in buckshot, the weapon becomes able to harm ghosts. Any successful hit causes the ghost to lose Corpus equal to the successes rolled (the damage rating of the weapon does not add to this) and forces the ghost to Discorporate for that many turns. Note, however, that the weapon or ammunition doesn't stop at the ghost. A character who shoots a shotgun loaded with rock salt at a Manifested phantom might damage it, but will also damage whatever is behind it.

Making Custom Tools

While the list provided will cover many needs that arise in a World of Darkness game, characters will always come up with more. For the simplest items, just assign Availability and a die bonus that seems appropriate. Most equipment has a bonus between +1 and +3. Anything higher than that is usually rare and very specialized in function.

For very specific items, particularly those that help to define a character, you might use a permutation of the dice system (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 134–135). The most common permutations are 8- and 9-again, modified resistance, and extra talent. Rote action, advanced actions, and extra successes are rarer and heavily impact a game. These particular permutations should be reserved for plot-shifting items, things expected to change the course of the narrative by their inclusion. If you add a dice permutation, consider reducing the die bonus, or removing it entirely.

Bygones

Bygones are items that inexplicably have mystical power imbued within them. They're relics of a time long lost or things that just happened to be exposed to the right combination of strange circumstances to become otherworldly.

Bygones are each unique. While similar items may exist, each is its own item, each tells its own story. Certain phe-

nomena occur with some frequency. So while characters can research a desired relic or effect, the examples they find might not line up congruently with the relics they read or heard about. Most bygones are very dangerous and require special treatment to eliminate. This special requirement could also be part of the research or as part of another story entirely.

Bygones cannot be intentionally created. Many bygones vanish after they've done their damage to their owners and turn up in similarly strange places soon after.

Game Traits

Since bygones cannot typically be purchased and cannot be created, they have no Availability scores. They also offer few direct dice advantages. They have Durability, Size, and Structure scores. Often, their Durabilities and Structures will be particularly high, as bygones are very difficult to destroy. The Description field explains what the bygone appears as, and the Effect field describes what the bygone is capable of. Descriptions give hints as to where the bygone may be found. Usually, these Effects are outside the owner's control. Exceptions are noted.

Abella's Mirror

Durability 4, Size 4, Structure 1

Description: Abella's Mirror is an old French vanity mirror that made its way to New Orleans right after the city's settlement. The gold trim is flaking off the intricate flower patterns of the wooden frame; it could use a solid restoration. The mirror finish has faded, and brushing one's hair in it could be a chore. Now, it rests in an antique shop with a fire sale price tag.

Effect: Abella's Mirror has trapped the soul of its original owner as well those of past victims. Abella cannot be seen when looking at the mirror directly. When the lights are low, however, Abella appears, pounding on the glass from the inside, begging for help. Her faded image appears in analog photography sometimes as well.

For those who have seen the image, their luck only gets worse. The next time they spend Willpower, the Storyteller should introduce a life-threatening risk to the situation. This should be totally unexpected, like a rampant car driven by a drunk. The character should be able to avoid the threat with a Wits + Composure roll. Otherwise, she may be severely injured. This will happen again the next time the character is able to see Abella's spirit. The third time, the stakes raise and the threat becomes deadly. Someone who dies as result of Abella's curse vanishes the first time their body is out of sight. Sometimes, a past victim can be seen in the mirror in Abella's place.

The stories say that if someone helps Abella, finds her killer, and brings them to justice, he can avoid the curse of her mirror and release the trapped souls. But so far, nobody in the long trail of bodies has managed to do so.

If broken, Abella's Mirror reforms when left alone. It introduces itself back into the antiques market within a month's time.

Breton's Screaming Skull

Durability 6, Size 2, Structure 4

Description: Breton's Skull is an old, brown and battered skull. It's turned up in many homes and churches, always plastered behind walls or tucked deep in the recesses of forgotten closets. It has a couple hundred years of abuse and neglect showing on its bones and bad dental hygiene to boot. For those looking into it, Breton's Skull belonged to a beheaded pirate whose body was thrown into sea. The conquistadors kept the skull as a trophy.

Effect: Breton's Screaming Skull has one strange and inexplicable behavior: it screams. At night, around 2:30AM local time, if it's out on display but nobody is watching it, it screams. The chilling scream wakes and rattles anyone nearby. Witnesses lose a point of Willpower immediately and find themselves unable to sleep. The first night, they cannot sleep at all. The next night, they can sleep if they succeed in a Resolve + Composure - 5 roll. Each night following, the penalty decreases by one until the roll is just a straight Resolve + Composure. Afterwards, they can sleep normally. Any night they fail to sleep due to the curse, they lose a point of Willpower. Also, one witness out of the group, chosen seemingly random, has an intense feeling that the skull wishes to be hidden away from human eyes. It wants to be locked away or buried. A character who fulfills the skull's wish finds all his Willpower restored.

The Devil's Washbasin

Durability 4, Size 6, Structure 6

Description: The Devil's Washbasin is a large, brass bathtub. It is nondescript, with only minor tarnish on the brass and simple decorative flourishes carved into the sides and legs. It's lighter than one might expect, but otherwise, it's just an old-fashioned bathtub. These types of tubs are prized by collectors and antique dealers but the brass is thin and in no condition to be repurposed.

Effect: To use the washbasin, one must first fill it with water. This makes perfect sense. What doesn't make sense is why, after emerging from the tub, the user looks a year younger. At first, it appears the washbasin is something of a fountain of youth. However, a second bath does nothing spectacular aside from washing the user. Once the disappointment sets in, the user hears a voice in her head that tells her to fill the basin with fresh blood in order to receive its blessing. In particular, she must fill it with warm, fresh blood.

It doesn't take much blood to use the Basin. About eight pints (eight points of lethal damage) will do the trick. Unfortunately, people cannot survive the loss of that much blood without immediate medical attention. It's very difficult to arrange multiple people giving smaller amounts of fresh blood at the same time. If the user bathes in the blood, she immediately becomes one year younger, and the blood evaporates into nothingness.

Knife without a Penny

Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 4

Description: The tradition goes that it's bad luck to gift someone a knife. The stories say it'll sever the friendship. Instead, you should give them a penny with the gift, so they can pay you a penny for the knife. This small, ivory-handled shaving razor may very well be the source of the superstition. As with most stories in the World of Darkness, the truth is darker than the fiction.

Effect: To take its heinous effect, the knife must change hands between friends without payment. Once it's done so, the new owner becomes the conduit for its curse. First, the owner is never without the knife. No matter where she leaves it, it's always somehow in a pocket, or at least within arm's reach. More importantly, it thirsts for blood. It whispers to her mind. It tempts her. It pleads with her — and if she kills, it praises her.

The origin of the folktale comes from a severed friendship. The story omits the reason the friendship frayed: the knife's owner murdered his friend's wife. Add "Commit Murder" as a fourth Aspiration for the owner.

In addition, any time she faces a victim denied their Defense (due to restraints, sleeping, surprise, or certain combat maneuvers), the wielder may apply the killing blow rule (see p 203). However, this requires a successful attack roll. A single success allows for the killing blow.

While a character owns the knife, she may not regain Willpower through fulfilling her Virtue. As well, she loses one point of Willpower per day. Once her Willpower points are depleted, she takes one point of lethal damage per day and is rendered incapable of healing until she's killed.

Getting rid of the knife requires gifting it to another (potentially with a penny to break the cycle) on a day the knife has tasted blood. Otherwise, it will come back. This blood need not be from a murder; in some cases, the owner has stabbed herself for this purpose.

Mike's Smokes

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Description: Mike's Smokes is an old, beaten-up pack of cigarettes that passes through the homeless community. They're an off-brand. The pack is always about half full. Legend has it, Mike was a greaser back in the 1950s. Mike was a total asshole. He caused problems for everyone simply for the sake of causing problems. He killed a convenience store clerk one time because the guy looked at him funny. Mike died in a car crash. What'd you expect, emphysema? His signature cigarettes lived on, to continue his legacy of ruining lives for no particular reason.

Effect: Smoking kills. Smoking Mike's Smokes kills quicker. When somebody smokes one of the cigarettes from Mike's pack, they're cursed. Every day, upon waking, they suffer one point of lethal damage as they cough up blood and phlegm. They become incapable of healing. The only way they can stop the damage, the coughing, the pain, is by smoking again. They only know this from the cravings. Eventually,



victims either hold to the pack viciously or they die painful and disgusting deaths within a week or two.

Ending the effect means setting Mike to rest. Mike's not the kind of ghost that wants to rest, though, and since nobody's ever succeeded at putting him down, nobody's sure how to do it. One guess is as good as any, though, and a victim's lungs will only hold out for so long.

The Sacred Monkey and Cock

Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3

Description: The Sacred Monkey and Cock is a hand-sized, carved plaster statue of the two animals. While there are many of these statues, each one looks different. They're a common New Orleans tourist curio, but some carry a powerful magic. These enchanted statues are older and typically in ill-repair. Their details are all but gone and they carry a light dusting of plaster on their surfaces. They're also atypically warm to the touch.

Effect: The common story is that the Sacred Monkey and Cock is a blessing, made to grant three wishes to its owner. The truth of the matter is much more sinister. The Sacred Monkey and Cock is more of a weapon against the foolhardy and the story is just so much propaganda. The statue grants three wishes made while rubbing the animals. However, the wishes are distorted in the worst possible ways. Often, the first wish is enough to maim or kill a wisher. When it's not, the temptation of a "properly worded wish" is enough to convince them to make further wishes, even just in an attempt to fix the damage caused by the first.

These wishes are not always just distortions of the literal wordings; they're complete butcheries of the initial intent. At least one facet of the fulfilled wish will match the initial wish, but this stands more as a mockery and insult — salt in a proverbial wound — than as a technicality of the magic. For example, if a character wishes a social worker will love him, he may be stricken disabled and destitute, since the social worker loves the underprivileged. Or if a character wishes for an enemy's death, an assassin may kill the enemy and frame the character.

Tabitha, the Haunted Doll

Durability 4, Size 2, Structure 8

Description: Tabitha is an old rag doll, the kind one might find in a thrift store, at a garage sale, or in an old box in the attic. She's very plain, with hints of charring at the ends of her red yarn hair. Her dress has a soft, brown nicotine-stained hue and the smell of moth balls and old mold. She has marbles for eyes, with little green cat's-eye slits running down the centers. When left alone, she's always found sitting up. This occurs even if she was under something.

Effect: Tabitha is a tortured soul of an arson victim trapped in a doll. She wants to be left alone and she wants to be comfortably buried under a pile of ash, where she belongs. If somebody sleeps in a room with Tabitha, he must make a Resolve + Composure roll or he'll sleepwalk and attempt to light their dwelling on fire. Once the fire's successfully lit, he awakens. He can be woken before that, but screams out for at least a full minute.

The Viral Video

Durability N/A, Size N/A, Structure N/A

Description: When most people get an email from an unknown source with a jumbled subject line and body text that simply says, "Click this," they delete the message and mark it as spam. Some click the link, which brings up a video. Usually, it results in a browser crash due to an archaic format and a missing codec. In those rare instances where it doesn't, a 17-second black and white video plays. The video shows the floor of an empty bedroom. The image crackles and fades, but remains motionless. At the thirteen second mark, a pair of young women's shoes fall into view, the audio offers up a thud, and the feet dangle a few inches from the ground, swinging slowly left and right for four seconds until the video stops.

Effect: The video causes suicide. Not for the viewer, mind, but for those close to her. It starts off in her periphery; a casual acquaintance or someone that shares a class. But every week, the deaths get a bit closer to home. Nothing immediately suggests the suicides are tied to the video. But after the second, the victim grows to suspect something, as the second death is always a hanging. Every seven days, another person turns up dead.

Shedding the curse requires the victim forward the email to at least two others. Those people must view the video, thus incurring the curse. A victim can find this solution after a bit of digging on the internet. Of course, the story is presented as an urban legend. The alternate solution is suicide on the part of the victim.

13th August 2012

Dear Gina,

I think I'm better now.

I might not send you this letter. I don't think I need you to read it, but I think I might write it. You should know that I love you very much. I've seen a lot of the police in the last few days and the chances are that they might call you, but you're not to worry. I think I can answer the questions, no matter how hard they are.

I'll have to lie like a rug. But hey, I'm a bloke. I'm supposed to be good at that.

So the day I wrote to you started with Stephen Fucking Escher calling me into his office, which I did not need, even before I found out. He's never been normal, this guy, you know that. But this particular morning, right from the opening of the door, he somehow managed to make any wrongness he might have evidenced look like the height of normality. The smell was the first thing, like a wave that smashed into my face when I opened the door. The room absolutely stank, smelled ripe, like he hadn't washed for days. Weeks, maybe. He was unshaven and his hair was sticking up. You could see these brown stains on his suit, like he'd poured something down himself. And his eyes. His eyes were the main thing, all red and round. He motioned for me to sit down. His fingernails were long, I noticed, and had heavy black grime under them.

He held up the last few spreadsheets I'd printed out for him and handed them across the table, without a single word. I thought, oh, no. The patterns. The picture. They came out like that and he's going to think I was arsing about. I started babbling.

I swore blind that was how they came out of the printer, and no, I wasn't trying to have a laugh at his expense. He looked at me with this confused expression and said, in this voice that went up and down like it was breaking all over again, "Do you know her?"

I looked down at Mary's number-portrait. No, I said.

He asked me if I was sure. I faltered. "Do you know who she is?" he said in that same cracked voice.

I realised with a sort of jolt that he wasn't simply repeating the question. I told him that she'd been following me around. That I had called the police and they had done nothing.

He nodded. "What does the name William Dear mean to you?"

I was baffled. I said I didn't know. A relative, maybe? He babbled something I didn't catch, a name, Selby or something. He had lost me.

He wasn't looking at me. I don't think he was even really talking to me. He trailed off. I sat, embarrassed, in the smell. Did I mention he smelled bad? He smelled bad.

I started to ask if that was all he wanted. He cut me off. He said we were going to a meeting. I said he'd asked me to do some stuff. Did he still want that done? He said, forget it.

I said, OK. Get anything you need, he said, we're off now. He stood up, and I was greeted with an overwhelming smell of piss, and it occurred to me that maybe he hadn't moved from that spot for a very long time. We walked to Edgware Road, by a route that took us the better part of an hour. And then we got on the Circle Line, to Kings Cross St. Pancras. The wrong way. Anticlockwise. And then between Victoria and St. James's Park, the thing stopped completely and we were plunged into darkness. Me, all these people, and his smell. I don't know what was up with it. I mean, it's normally terrible, you know that, but it took us three hours to do. And each stop, Stephen was looking straight at everyone who got on and off, even peering through the window at the end to see who was on the next carriage.

I think we'd got to Aldgate before I saw that Mary was in the next carriage along. She was staring right at me, without blinking. I tried not to let on that I had seen her. Stephen leaned over close — his breath was like rotten bacon — and whispered to me, "Don't worry."

I didn't know what he meant.

At King's Cross St Pancras we changed for the Piccadilly Line. Stephen refused to walk as quickly as the crowds around us, making the change a distinctly unpleasant experience as vile-tempered Londoners jostled and shoved us. It was as if he were making sure that Mary was following us. She was only five steps behind us on the escalators and got on the other end of the same carriage, although she did not try to approach me. We ended up back at South Kensington, which of course we'd passed about two hours ago, where again we changed and went in the other direction to Cockfosters, passing again through Kings Cross St Pancras. Which again took forever. Each time we changed it seemed apparent that Stephen wanted Mary to follow us.

I finally said to him as we sat on the rickety District train, "Why are we going in such a roundabout route?" He smiled broadly, giving me another blast of his breath, and said, "We're unlocking the Machine. You can't just go there in a straight line, you know."

As if that explained it all.

We got off at Southgate. Leaving the station, we took what must have been the most indirect route possible, finally arriving at three blocks, just off a main road. He stopped in the path, and turned back. And then he called for Mary. She ran to catch us up and walked in step with us as we advanced for the third, furthest block. I started to ask what we were doing here; Stephen hushed me with a hissing noise.

Mary tried to take my hand. I pulled it away and put it in my pocket.

The glass doors hung open and the foyer had a strange smell of deadness, to it, that's the only word I can think of for it. Next to the lifts, someone had propped a very old-fashioned bicycle. Stephen walked up to it and stared at it for a short time. And then he nodded, and said, "About time, really." Over his shoulder, he said, "Lift's not working. Stairs." It was an order.

We climbed in silence to the ninth floor, and then along the corridor to room 913, where Stephen stopped. "This is an odd place to have a meeting," I said.

Stephen told me to shut up and walk in.

The main room was absolutely silent. There were about twenty shop window mannequins standing there, old ones, some without arms or hands or heads. Mary seemed fascinated by them, looking straight in the painted eyes of each one in turn. She stopped by one and looked at it this way and that, saying to Stephen, "This one looks like you."

Stephen told me to go on through, motioning to the door at the other side of the room. I did, walking into a back room containing a busted bedframe and a standard lamp with no bulb.

I called back, now what? Stephen came rushing in now. "This isn't right. This isn't right," he was saying. He lifted up the bed frame, as if to see under it, and then suddenly tipped it right over. It disintegrated into wood, metal, broken springs with a crash that shattered the silence and seemed to echo through the hall outside. Mary followed us in, looking around like a child, as if she was seeing a vista of wonder and strangeness, not an abandoned room.

"It's not here," said Stephen. He seemed close to tears.

What wasn't here? I tried to calm him down, but he started to rave about his Purpose, about the Principle, about this Selby again. A voice cut him short.

"Are you wanting to be going somewhere?" It was the policeman. The comedy Irishman.

"I don't understand," said Stephen.

"**You** don't understand?" I said.

"I wouldn't be worrying yourself. It's all according to plan. A plan of great intricacy and charm." The policeman advanced on Stephen, as if to embrace him. The room was flooded with light from outside, but even so as the policeman came forward he seemed to expand and in some strange way fold — yes, that's it, no other word, fold — outwards. He was between me and Stephen. I couldn't see through the blackness, just heard a whirring and a clicking and then silence again. The policeman stepped back. A mannequin, an old chipped one, stood in Stephen's clothes. It had something like his face. Mary jumped up and down and clapped her hands. "That was so clever," she said.

"Can I be having your key, young lady?" said the policeman. She reached inside her shirt and pulled out what looked like a clock key on a tarnished silver chain.

"I'm terribly sorry, but it's time to throw in the towel, as it were."

She nodded. I suddenly felt a great deal of pity for her. Sergeant Fox reached forward and again, obscuring her from my view grasped her head and twisted it hard. I jumped forward, crying out in horror only for the policeman's fat arm to shoot out and stop me dead in my traps. "Calm yourself down, wee man" he said.

Mary sank to the ground, and as I watched, I saw her skin turn inside out. Real skin turned to what looked like very old leather, stretched over a frame of brass, behind which I could see hints of cogs and levers. A doll, legs wide apart, arms limp, head cocked to one side.

I sank to the floor, head in hands, elbows on knees. "I'm going mental," I said.

Sergeant Fox ignored me. He pulled what looked like a Swiss Army knife from his pocket and set to work undoing fastenings on the back of the Mary-doll's head. After a minute or two, he pulled something out and handed it to me.

"This is yours, I think," he said. "You can do what you want with it."

I put my hand out and took it. I still have the thing. I don't think I can describe it, but I might show it to you when you get back. Or I might not. I don't know.

"Get yourself up, now," said the policeman. "I'll walk you back to the station."

He would answer none of my questions on the way back to Southgate, he wheeling the ancient bicycle.

I called in sick and went home.

I keep looking at the thing he gave me. Trying to work out what I can do with it. It keeps giving me ideas.

I don't know though.

I miss you.

I need you to keep me sane.

Come back to me, Gina. I'm counting down the days until you get home. When you do, I'm going to ask you to marry me.

I'm going to burn this letter now.

All my love

Jon

