

# Vampire: The Masquerade in Cortex Prime

## Character Creation

Before you start assigning traits, choose Concept, Clan (or lack thereof), Nature, and Demeanor, just as described in *Vampire: the Masquerade*. If you have the 5th Edition text available, you should also identify your Ambition and Predator type.

Clan options include Brujah, Gangrel, Malkavian, Nosferatu, Toreador, Tremere, Ventruue, and Caitiff. Options for games set in the modern nights might expand to include one or more of the following: Banu Haqim (sometimes called the Assamites), Hecata (a category including necromantic bloodlines such as the Giovanni, Cappadocians, Nagaraja, Samedi, and Harbingers of Skulls), Lasombra, The Ministry (aka the Followers of Set), Ravnos, Salubri, Tzimisce, and Thin-Blood.

## STEP 1: ASSIGN PRIME TRAITS

### Distinctions

Combine your Concept, Nature, Demeanor, ambitions, and any factions you consider part of your identity and distill the most striking elements into three distinctions, all rated at D8. Each of your distinctions benefits from the Hinder SFX:

- **SFX: Hinder.** Roll a D4 instead of a D8 for a distinction to earn 1 PP.

### Attributes

PHYSICAL, MENTAL, and SOCIAL.

Assign D10, D8, and D6.

**Attribute SFX:** Choose one of the following. The SFX you choose cannot be one that steps up the attribute to which you assigned a D10. If you wish, you can lower one of your attributes by one step, then choose a second attribute SFX as well.

- **SFX: Appearance.** When making a roll related to sheer physical beauty or distinctive unattractiveness, step up SOCIAL.
- **SFX: Charisma.** When making a roll related to presence, appeal, bearing, or social graces, step up SOCIAL.

- **SFX: Composure.** When making a roll related to keeping your cool, remaining calm, or putting others at ease despite anxiety, step up SOCIAL.
- **SFX: Dexterity.** When making a roll related to agility, coordination, physical reflexes, or graceful movement, step up PHYSICAL.
- **SFX: Intelligence.** When making a roll related to recollection, study, processing complex information, or envisioning concepts or possibilities, step up MENTAL.
- **SFX: Manipulation.** When making a roll related to social cunning, psychological insight, or playing someone, step up SOCIAL.
- **SFX: Perception.** When making a roll related to attention to detail, spatial awareness, sensory acuity, or noticing things by instinct, step up MENTAL.
- **SFX: Stamina.** When making a roll related to toughness or endurance, step up PHYSICAL.
- **SFX: Strength.** When making a roll related to sheer physical might, step up PHYSICAL.
- **SFX: Wits.** When making a roll related to mental reflexes, quick-thinking, reacting to sudden peril, or untangling twisted logic, step up MENTAL.

### Virtues

CONSCIENCE, CONVICTION, COURAGE, INSTINCT, SECURITY, and SELF-CONTROL.

*Virtues work as values in Cortex Prime—you write a statement for each one, and you can challenge those statements. Each virtue has one other opposed virtue that works against it. Whenever one of your virtues steps up, its opposed virtue must step down, and vice-versa. The opposed virtues are matched in the following pairs:*

- CONSCIENCE vs. CONVICTION
- COURAGE vs. SECURITY
- INSTINCT vs. SELF-CONTROL

*Choose one pair and assign D10 and D4 as you wish to the two opposed virtues. For the other two pairs, choose one virtue to assign at D8, then assign the other*

as D6. (Whether your character seeks to retain their Humanity or pursues a Path of Enlightenment should be a big influence on your virtues, in terms of both ratings and statements.)

## STEP 2: ASSIGN OTHER TRAITS

### Disciplines

Gain two disciplines at D6, or one discipline at D8, chosen from your clan disciplines. If you're a Caitiff, you can only choose two at D6, but you can choose any two disciplines you want; if you are a Thin-Blood, you just gain a D8 in THIN-BLOOD ALCHEMY. Other discipline options might include ANIMALISM, AUSPEX, BLOOD SORCERY, CELERITY, CHIMERSTRY, DEMENTATION, DOMINATE, FORTITUDE, OBEAH, OBFUSCATE, OBLIVION, POTENCE, PRESENCE, PROTEAN, SERPENTIS, VALEREN, or VICISSITUDE.

Disciplines are separated into four levels: the D6 level (equivalent to 1 or 2 dots in *Vampire: the Masquerade*), D8 (equivalent to 3 and 4 dots in *V:tM*), D10 (equivalent to 5 dots in *V:tM*), and D12 (equivalent to 6 or more dots in *V:tM*). Each rating unlocks fictional permission to use the equivalent and lower dots in that Discipline.

### Specialties

Each specialty is your choice of one of the Talents, Skills, or Knowledges from *V:tM*. Gain three, four, or five specialties. Assign dice ratings based on how many you choose:

Three Specialties: D8, D8, D6

Four Specialties: D8, D6, D6, D6

Five Specialties: D6, D6, D6, D6, D6

### Signature Assets

These are items, people, places, vehicles, or privileges that make you more effective. Gain two or three signature assets. Assign dice ratings based on how many you choose:

Two Signature Assets: D8, D6

Three Signature Assets: D6, D6, D6

Draw inspiration from Merits and Backgrounds from *V:tM*. For example, you may want to define a mortal ally or group of allies who help and support you, a contact or network who provide certain kinds of information in exchange for favors, a position or accomplishment that gives you fame or

influence in certain circles, a haven where you can rest safely during the day, a group of vessels you can feed from without concern, an assumed identity that covers you in mortal society, a group of Kindred who look out for you, wealth or possessions, a faction with which you have connections or status, etc. Vampires and mortals to whom you have deeper bonds or fraught emotional connections with may be better represented as relationship assets, as described in the next step.

## STEP 3: RELATIONSHIP ASSETS (OPTIONAL)

This special rule represents the focus that *Vampire: the Masquerade* has always placed on status, hierarchy, coterie, alliances, rivalries, and the like. You and your GM should decide whether you and other players in your game will use this added step.

Relationship assets are a special kind of signature asset, and you begin play with at least four of them, in addition to your normal signature assets. Start out by defining relationship assets to the following three vampires:

- An authority figure whose wields power over you or your community (such as your sire or the prince, baron, or archbishop)
- One rival you yearn to triumph over
- The member of your coterie or pack whom you consider your closest ally

Then, define a relationship with one mortal human who is not bound to serve you in any way. (If you are drawing on *V:tM 5th Edition*, this human should fit the definition of a Touchstone for you.)

A character you have a relationship asset with might be a GMC you invent, a GMC created by another player (such as the GM), or another player character. Write out a statement describing your relationship with each. The best relationship statements are written like goals or drives, describing a personal need or motivation that can never quite be fulfilled. Once your statements are done, assign your relationship assets die ratings: D10, D8, D6, and D4 (that's your most complicated relationship).

Once that is done, write a statement describing your relationship with your coterie (or pack) as a group. This becomes a new relationship asset with

a die rating of D6 (or D8 if it is a Sabbat pack, due to the Vinculum).

All of your relationship statements can be challenged, just like your virtues. This may cause your die ratings to fluctuate, but you can never have more than one relationship asset rated at d4 or more than two rated at d10. Also, you can never have a d12 relationship asset unless you are Blood Bound to the subject of that relationship.

## STEP 4: FINISHING TOUCHES

Finish your character up with some last additions.

### Clan Weakness Limit

You gain the weakness Limit appropriate for your clan (or lack thereof), as listed here:

**Limit: Brujah Weaknesses.** Earn 1 PP by indulging in an act of rebellion detrimental to your goals, or by taking a D6 ENRAGED complication when you fail a roll including COMPOSURE.

**Limit: Gangrel Weaknesses.** When you take WILLPOWER stress or fail a roll including COMPOSURE, earn 1 PP by taking a D6 ANIMALISTIC FEATURES or FERAL IMPULSES complication. If you choose the latter, you can only speak in one-word sentences until the complication ends.

**Limit: Malkavian Weaknesses.** When you take WILLPOWER stress or fail a roll including COMPOSURE, earn 1 PP by taking a D6 SKEWED PERCEPTIONS or DISTRACTING VISIONS complication.

**Limit: Nosferatu Weaknesses.** Earn 1 PP by keeping a secret when doing so is detrimental to your goals, or by taking a D6 REVELED FOR MY APPEARANCE complication when in the presence of those who don't accept you.

**Limit: Toreador Weaknesses.** When you take WILLPOWER stress or fail a roll including COMPOSURE, earn 1 PP by taking a D6 ENTHRALLED or DISGUSTED complication related to something around you.

**Limit: Tremere Weaknesses.** When your action fails to achieve a heroic success, earn 1 PP by taking a D6 PERFECTIONIST SELF-LOATHING complication. When your roll relates to a creating or resisting a Blood Bond, remove your highest die before rolling to earn 1 PP.

**Limit: Ventrue Weaknesses.** Earn 1 PP by taking a D6 ANGERED BY DISOBEDIENCE complication. When

you inflict a DRAINED complication on a mortal of a type outside your rarefied tastes, make a Vitae Reaction to earn 1 PP.

**Limit: Caitiff Stigma.** Earn 1 PP by taking D6 PRESTIGE stress or a D6 SUSPECT complication.

**Limit: Thin-Blood Vulnerability.** When you roll to create a KINDRED VITAE asset, remove your highest die before rolling to earn 1 PP. When you take HEALTH stress from piercing or slashing weapons, shut down the **Vampiric Healing** SFX and gain 1 PP. After the scene ends, recover by taking D6 BLOOD stress.

Use the weakness limits described here as examples to adapt the weakness (or bane and compulsion) of a **V:tM** clan or bloodline not listed here.

### Discipline SFX

Choose a discipline you feel your character uses most often or with particular flair, and work with your GM to create an SFX that reflects this use. Your character gains the SFX you create. A good format to work with is this:

**SFX: [SFX Name.]** When you use [Discipline Name] to create a [certain kind of asset or complication], add D6 and step up your effect die.

Examples include:

- **SFX: Cloud Memories.** When you use DOMINATE to create a FORGOTTEN MOMENTS complication, add D6 and step up your effect die.
- **SFX: Feral Weapons.** When you use PROTEAN to create an EXTENDED TALONS asset, add D6 and step up your effect die.
- **SFX: Envelop.** When you use THIN-BLOOD ALCHEMY to create a CHOKING MIST complication, add D6 and step up your effect die.

### Expertise SFX

Choose a specialty your character feels particularly capable with or proud of your character uses most often or with particular flair. It should be something they feel so comfortable doing that they can succeed where most would feel, but because they are such experts with it, they suffer particular frustration or embarrassment when they fail. Gain this SFX,

filling in the name of the chosen specialty:  
**SFX:** [*Specialty Name*] **Expertise.** Double [*Specialty Name*] for one roll. If the roll fails, take PRESTIGE or WILLPOWER stress equal to your effect die.

## Freebie

Once you have everything else set up, as a final bonus, you can make just one of the following added customizations to your character:

- Add a new D6 signature asset
- Add a new D6 specialty
- Raise a D6 discipline to D8
- Raise a D6 signature asset to D8
- Raise a D6 specialty to D8
- Add one new SFX

## Final Details

At this point, you have a complete and playable character in terms of the rules, though you may have some roleplaying details to figure out. What does your character look like? How do they dress? Where do they live? What are their prized possessions? What is their name?

## USING STRESS

This game uses five types of stress: BLOOD, HEALTH, HUMANITY, PRESTIGE, and WILLPOWER.

Being taken out by HEALTH stress usually leaves you incapacitated or even torpid. Being taken out by PRESTIGE stress means you no longer have any interpersonal or political sway, and must leave the scene before you become a complete social pariah or get into legal trouble. Being taken out by other forms of stress causes you to Frenzy, becoming a mindless monster ruled by fight or flight instincts until that stress steps down below D12.

Stepping up HUMANITY stress above D12 not only causes you to Frenzy, but makes your character a GMC until you and your GM figure out a way back (which won't happen until after the session ends). HUMANITY stress corresponds to HUMANITY ratings in **V:tM**. D6 HUMANITY stress is equivalent to HUMANITY 6, D8 is equivalent to HUMANITY 4 or 5, D10 is equivalent to HUMANITY 2 or 3, and D12 is equivalent to HUMANITY 1.

**Recovering Stress.** Vampires can only step down HEALTH stress and BLOOD stress with SFX. (Mortals

step down HEALTH stress by 1 at the end of each scene, as per the normal *Cortex Prime* rules.) HUMANITY stress can only be stepped down by spending XP.

**Hunger.** The desperate thirst represented by your BLOOD stress is a constant distraction. Whenever you roll to do anything but awaken or sate your hunger, your opposition can always include BLOOD stress in their roll against you.

**Trauma.** When stress of any type steps up past D12, you are taken out and you take trauma of the same type. Blood trauma and Willpower both likely represent the long-term effects of a brutal Frenzy that will haunt you until your Final Death. Health trauma represents potentially fatal harm that will be difficult to recover from. Humanity trauma recalls a heinous act that left a stain on your soul, such as Embracing or Blood Bonding a mortal, or causing harm to a mortal you deeply cared about. Prestige trauma is an infamous blot on your reputation or standing that isn't going away any time soon. Trauma is gained and recovered as described in the *Cortex Prime Game Handbook*.

**Sunlight.** As a vampire, when you enter direct sunlight or start your turn exposed to it, you take D10 HEALTH stress. Thin-Blood vampires take D6 HEALTH stress instead of D10.

## VITAE REACTIONS

Often, when you use the blood within you to accomplish a specific physical effect, you risk taking BLOOD stress. The GM rolls the doom pool to inflict BLOOD stress on you, and your roll to avoid it is called a **Vitae Reaction**.

It is important to note that the only consequence of a failed Vitae Reaction is taking BLOOD stress. It has no effect on how successful you are in doing whatever it was that required the reaction in the first place.

**Awakening.** You roll a Vitae Reaction when you awaken from your daily slumber. When you do so, any BLOOD stress you take from failing that reaction steps down.

**Blood Surge.** Using your **Blood Pool** SFX, you can step up PHYSICAL until the end of the scene, then roll a Vitae Reaction.

**Blush of Life.** Using your **Blood Pool** SFX, you can send blood into your withered vascular system to simulate being alive, then roll a Vitae Reaction. This is represented by a BLUSH OF LIFE asset. It gives color and



warmth to your pale or ashy skin, restores your heartbeat, and causes you to breathe autonomically like a mortal. In this way, you can not only hide your undead nature from witnesses, but pass a cursory medical exam and use devices with touch-screens.

If your BLUSH OF LIFE asset is D8 or higher, you can even participate in physical intimacy, and keep food or drink down for up to an hour. However, if your HUMANITY stress is D10 or higher (or if you follow a Path of Enlightenment), your BLUSH OF LIFE asset can never be higher than D6. Unless you are a Thin-Blood, your BLUSH OF LIFE asset can never be higher than D8.

Upon awakening each night, a Thin-Blood gains a D10 BLUSH OF LIFE asset automatically that lasts until dawn, allowing them to easily pass as mortal. A D10 or higher BLUSH OF LIFE asset grants all the benefits of the D8 version, and also allows the Thin-Blood to eat and drink food normally, to enjoy physical intimacy, and to choose to leave a scene instead of going into Frenzy.

**Discipline Use.** Whenever a discipline level in **V:tM** calls for an expenditure of blood points (or a Rouse Check in 5th Edition), using it requires a Vitae Reaction. If it requires more than one blood point, when the GM makes the doom pool roll to inflict BLOOD stress, they step up the lowest die in that roll by 1 for each blood point required beyond the first.

**Taste of Blood.** You can roll an action to feed someone your blood and create a KINDRED VITAE asset for that character. This asset lasts for a day if the character gaining the asset is a vampire or if you are a Thin-Blood, otherwise it lasts for a month. While a character has this asset, they can add it to all rolls that include PHYSICAL, and they temporarily gain both a D6 rating in your highest discipline and a D8 I'M LOYAL TO MY VITAE DONOR relationship asset focused on you. A mortal with such an asset is a ghoul, and they stop aging until they no longer have a KINDRED VITAE asset.

**Blood Bond.** If you grant a KINDED VITAE asset to the same character (vampire or mortal) on three separate nights with no more than a year between drinks, that person becomes Blood Bound to you. Such a character gains a D12 I'M LOYAL TO MY MASTER AND STRIVE TO PLEASE THEM relationship asset focused on you. They cannot challenge or step down the statement for that relationship. If you are a Thin-Blood (or a Tremere in games set after 2004), you cannot Blood Bond other vampires (though they can Blood Bond you).

## SFX AND LIMITS

All vampires have the following SFX and Limits.

**SFX: Claw and Fang.** Step down the highest rated die from your action to add D6. Step up any HEALTH stress your roll inflicts.

**SFX: Feeding.** When you inflict HEALTH stress on a living creature with **Claws and Fangs**, you can keep an extra effect die as a DRAINED complication on the target. Reduce your BLOOD stress to D6 if it is not greater than the DRAINED complication, otherwise step down your BLOOD stress. A DRAINED complication that steps up to D12 or higher instantly turns into HEALTH stress. When you inflict a complication that turns into HEALTH stress, recover all BLOOD stress.

**SFX: Spend Willpower.** Take D6 WILLPOWER stress to gain 1 PP or add a third die to your total on a roll.

**SFX: Vampiric Healing.** Step down your HEALTH stress and/or HEALTH trauma, then roll a Vitae Reaction.

**Limit: Aggravated Damage.** When you take HEALTH stress from sunlight, fire, true faith, or other aggravated sources, shut down **Vampiric Healing** and gain 1 PP. After the scene ends, recover by taking D6 BLOOD stress.

**Limit: Degeneration.** When you do something that violates your moral code, earn 2 PP and have the GM roll the doom pool, attempting to inflict HUMANITY (or PATH) stress on you. Your reaction roll must include CONSCIENCE (or CONVICTION if against PATH stress).

## TORPOR AND STAKING

Torpor is the sleep of ages, a state of hibernation inherent to a vampire's undead nature. While in torpor, you are taken out, becoming a shriveled, senseless corpse, somewhere between vampiric unlife and Final Death. Torpor has a base duration that grows longer for those with HUMANITY stress. You enter torpor when one or more of the following things happen:

- Your Vitae Reaction when awakening from daily slumber fails and causes your BLOOD stress to step up to D12 or higher.
- Your HEALTH stress steps up to D12 or higher while your Vampiric Healing SFX is shut down.
- You are taken out by a STAKED complication.

The base torpor duration for a vampire with no HUMANITY stress is a week. The base torpor duration increases to a month for a vampire with D6 humanity stress, a year for D8 stress, a decade for D10, and a century for D12.

Each night at sunset while you are in torpor, your BLOOD stress steps up, to a maximum of D12. Once half your base torpor duration has passed, you step down your HEALTH stress and HEALTH trauma. Once your entire base torpor duration has passed, you recover all HEALTH stress and HEALTH trauma, but remain asleep.

**Awakening.** Once your base torpor duration has passed, you can attempt to awaken at the next sunset by rolling against the Doom Pool. The GM doesn't add your BLOOD stress to your opposition for this roll. If your roll fails, you can try again the following sunset, and again the sunset after that. However, if you fail to awaken three nights in a row, you can't try again until after your entire base torpor duration passes once more.

If you are still in torpor at any time after your base torpor duration has passed, whether or not you have already failed a roll to awaken, you can also roll to awaken whenever a suitable victim enters your vicinity. When this happens, you add your BLOOD stress to your roll to awaken. However, when you awaken in this way, if your BLOOD stress is still D10 or higher at the end of the scene, you immediately fall back into torpor as if you had never awakened.

You can also roll to awaken whenever someone feeds your dormant corpse fresh blood. If the amount they feed you is enough to reduce your BLOOD stress to D8 or lower, you automatically succeed.

**Staking.** Whenever someone inflicts HEALTH stress on a vampire using a wooden stake, they also inflict a STAKED complication on that vampire. The complication's rating is one step higher than the HEALTH stress inflicted. A vampire taken out by a STAKED complication immediately falls into torpor. The end of a scene never causes a STAKED complication to end or step down. Only completely removing the stake ends the complication. However, once the STAKED complication ends, the vampire immediately awakens from torpor.

## OTHER MODS

- **Action Order** and **Action-Based Resolution** system for conflict (*Cortex Prime Handbook* page 98).
- **Doom Pool** (*Cortex Prime Handbook* page 32).
- **Crisis Pools** (*Cortex Prime Handbook* page 33).

- **Contests** (as described in the *Tales of Xadia* rules) are used to resolve social conflict.
- **Stress and Trauma** (*Cortex Prime Handbook* page 39-41). These are in addition to complications.
- **No D4 Complications.** Complications (including stress or trauma) of D4 or lower do not exist in this game. When you take a new complication, if it would be D4 or lower, it becomes a D6. When an existing complication would step down to less than D6, it just goes away.
- **Modified XP.** This game uses XP, but not Milestones. Instead, it has its own system for XP, as explained under **Experience Dice** later in this document.

## HUMANITY AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Whenever you roll to conceal your undead nature, to awaken from Torpor, or to avoid HUMANITY stress, your opposition adds your current HUMANITY stress to the roll against you. HUMANITY stress can only be recovered by spending XP, and only after selflessly involving yourself in human life and human concerns.

A vampire character can start play with a Path of Enlightenment rather than trying to retain their human nature, or they can switch from one to the other (with the aid of a mentor) by spending 5 XP. When a character is on a Path of Enlightenment, they have abandoned petty mortal concerns and the moral tenets of human beings, adopting a new and alien code of behavior to anchor themselves against the Beast.

A character on a Path of Enlightenment no longer takes HUMANITY stress. Instead, they take PATH stress, representing their struggle to live their inhuman ethics. Stepping up PATH stress above D12 makes your character a GMC until you and your GM figure out a way back.

While on a Path of Enlightenment, when you roll to avoid PATH stress, your opposition adds your PATH stress when rolling against you. However, when you roll to conceal your undead nature or to awaken from Torpor, your opposition adds a D12 to their pool instead. This is the price of forsaking your humanity.

## NEW MOD: EXPERIENCE DICE

At the end of every session, you have the opportunity to enact a *tag scene* (as described in the *Cortex Prime Game Handbook*) where you can try to improve your character's traits. It is almost like a

montage in a movie, with each player narrating a few sentences about what their character is doing, focused on activities or thought processes that can lead to growth. Tag scenes shouldn't be very long—just enough description for everyone to get an idea of how you want your PC to change. After that, you build a pool of **experience dice**, as follows:

- Add one experience die equal to the highest die of stress you recovered from this session (if any);
- If you challenged one or more of your virtues this session, add one experience die equal to the original size of the largest virtue die you challenged;
- If you challenged one or more of your relationship assets this session, add one experience die equal to the original size of the largest relationship asset you challenged.

After building your experience pool, you roll it, gaining XP (experience points) equal to the highest number rolled on any one of the dice. If that number is less than 3, you gain 3 XP instead.

**Out of Clan Disciplines.** If a discipline is not your clan discipline, gaining or raising it costs an extra 10 XP.

**Caitiff Costs.** For Caitiff characters, gaining or raising a discipline always costs an extra 5 XP, but you don't pay Out of Clan Discipline costs.

**XP for Plot Points.** At any time during a session, you have the option of spending 1 XP to add a Plot Point to your current pool of PP. This obviously provides a more temporary gain than other uses of XP, but doing so also increases the minimum PP you start the next session with by 1, to a maximum of 5 PP (with 4 XP spent).

## Spending XP

*Spend 5 XP to...*

- Rewrite a distinction.
- Gain a new Limit.
- Raise an existing virtue by one step (lowering its opposed virtue by one step).
- Raise an existing relationship asset by one step, and lower another relationship asset by one step (neither asset can be temporary).
- Switch from pursuing HUMANITY to following a Path of Enlightenment.

*Spend 10 XP to...*

- Add a new D6 signature asset or specialty.
- Remove D6 HUMANITY stress or PATH stress and step down HUMANITY or PATH trauma by 1.

*Spend 15 XP to...*

- Raise a D6 signature asset or specialty to D8.
- Raise a D4 discipline to D6.
- Step down D8 HUMANITY stress or PATH stress to D6 and step down HUMANITY or PATH trauma by 1.
- Gain a new SFX of your choice.

*Spend 20 XP to...*

- Raise a D6 attribute or discipline to D8.
- Raise a D8 signature asset or specialty to D10.
- Step down D10 HUMANITY stress or PATH stress to D8 and step down HUMANITY or PATH trauma by 1.

*Spend 25 XP to...*

- Raise a D8 attribute or discipline to D10.
- Raise a D10 signature asset or specialty to D12.
- Step down D12 HUMANITY stress or PATH stress to D10 and step down HUMANITY or PATH trauma by 1.

*Spend 30 XP to...*

- Raise a D10 attribute or discipline to D12.