The Widening Gyre: VSS Creation Guide

This document is intended to support your domain's development of a local Venue Style Sheet (VSS) for Canada at Midnight's Vampire: the Masquerade chronicle. It provides a roadmap to guide you through the VSS creation process. Where this document is primarily a tool for Storytellers, players should also be involved in developing their VSS.

References to draw from include *Laws of the Night*, *Enemies of the Night*, the Camarilla Sect Guide, and the Antagonist Toolkit. We highly recommend Storytellers review Chapter 10 of *Laws of the Night* from page 331 - 341 for additional information on how to organize their game.

The Venue Style Sheet ("VSS")

The Venue Style Sheet is a living document that lets your players know what your game is about. In this document, you will discuss mood, central themes, the overall aims of your game, your local Domain's history, what your local expectations are as a Storyteller, and any optional rules that you will or will not be using. This VSS should be posted publicly and be readily accessible to your players.

Your VSS requires approval from the Chronicle Lead. You should expect to update your history section every few months with brief updates of what has happened in your game so that new players have an easy reference. It will smooth out onboarding new players. Your updated VSS will be reviewed annually by the Chronicle Lead, if any changes have been made.

The VSS Template

Your VSS should provide the following information. Details of these items are discussed on the next page.

Game Name:
Domain Name and Number:
Storyteller Name:
Storyteller E-mail:

Concept:
Primary Themes:
Minimized Themes:
Mood:

Chronicle Tenets:
Domain Information:
Local Laws:
Primary Antagonist(s):
City Timeline:

Optional Rules:
Any Restricted Clans:
Infiltrators Permitted or Not?
Miscellaneous Storyteller Notes:

Description of Non-Biographical VSS Components

- Concept: Provide a description of what your game is about that a new player could read and understand what you are looking to do with your game.

- Primary Themes: Are there any central ideas or threads that will run through your game? For example: *intense politics and intrigue; war is hell; power detests a vacuum; humanity lost; the desperation of a populace supporting its soldiers; love and loss.*

- Minimized Themes: Are there any themes that you are actively avoiding?

- Mood: How do you want players in your game to conduct themselves in terms of the way they approach the game? Tell them outright: if the game is meant to be funny and full of jokes, that is very different from a game where the mood is meant to be sombre, respectful and ceremonial, or a game which is meant to be high-octane, desperate and violent. **Do not hesitate to be direct. Having a good description of your game's expected mood goes a long way to tell players and visitors what kind of vibe you are trying to get, and you have every right to require this to be respected.**

- Chronicle Tenets: What are your game's chronicle tenets? See below for more information about these.

- Domain Information: What do outsiders know about your domain? Are there any customs or local courtesies? What is known about the venue's history? What has been happening recently? Are there any sacred spaces or places of particular import?

- Local Laws: Has your Prince made any local laws or courtesies? Put these here.

- Primary Antagonists: Are there any known primary antagonists in your local game? Examples: Anarch invaders; a raiding Sabbat pack; rival factions within the Camarilla; hostile cults. **Note that you are not required to have your game be about fighting the Anarchs locally (see the Antagonists Document for more discussion of this).**

- City Timeline: A timeline of key events in your Domain. You do not need to make this lengthy, but it should include key points in history that will be plot-relevant.

- Optional Rules: Certain systems are optional in the Widening Gyre Chronicle (see the Rules and Character Creation Document). Please indicate here which optional rules are being used and which are not:

    - Dyscrasias and related Advantages (Flavor Station, Viscosity, Bloodhound);
    - Player character ghouls (described in Chapter 3);
    - Coterie Territory mechanics (page 306-307, pocket guide);
    - Mass PvP Resolution (page 90-91; pocket guide);
    - City Status (page 309-313, pocket guide).

    If you want to go fully ‘rules as written’ and have all of these optional rules active, simply write ‘All Optional Rules Active’. If you want to have none of these optional rules available, please indicate ‘All Optional Rules Off’

- Any Restricted Clans: Some games may not permit all possible Clans to be available. Please indicate here if you have any Clans that you will not allow to be made locally.

    For example, some games may choose to be Pillar and Rising Clans only; others may choose to only allow some or one of the Tolerated Clans; other may choose to bar Caitiffs and Thin-Bloods. These could be for mechanical reasons or story reasons.

- Infiltrators Permitted or Not: Please indicate if you are allowing Infiltrator Clans in your game at all or not. You have absolute freedom to choose if these are appropriate for your game, noting that infiltrators by definition are high risk concepts for player-versus-player conflict and death.

- Miscellaneous Storyteller Notes: Put anything else players should know before arriving at your game here.

Chronicle Tenets

The Chronicle Tenets for the Widening Gyre Chronicle are chiefly up to the local Domain, with only one tenet set chronicle-wide. Two tenets are left open for the local Storyteller to determine based on what their game is intended to focus on.

The only required Chronicle Tenet is “Do not kill, except in defense of your life.”

This Chronicle Tenet highlights the soul-grinding spiritual agony that Kindred suffer when they go to war. Destruction feeds the Beast, bringing vampires closer and closer to Wassail as the chains that bind it are loosened by each and every kill. Warriors who finish off torpid vampires face this challenge often, as a torpid vampire is not a threat to one’s life.

The other Chronicle Tenets are open for local use. They should highlight and support local game themes. For examples, see page 52-53 of *Laws of the Night* (pocket book). Other suggestions include:

- Follow the Traditions.
- The good of the city, right or wrong.
- Deny your beast.
- Respect your elders.

Common Steps for New Storytellers

In practice, new Storytellers for the beginning of the Chronicle tend to go through the following steps:

- Conceptual development, in which they and their potential assistants come up with a game concept and what they want their local world to look like.
- Communication with their Domain, in which they put their concept with a draft VSS out to their Domain members before they are elected and let their local players know they are interested in running the game. Revisions of the VSS may happen here based on player feedback. It may be that there is more than one potential Storyteller or Storytelling team wanting to run the game.
- Election of the Storyteller (see the Membership Handbook for process details).
- Continued preparation of the game setting, with player contact and feedback about characters.
- Character creation workshops with the players to get characters created and integrated.

- Formal approval of proposed VSS by the Chronicle Lead.
- Preparation for initial games.

Potential Storytellers are encouraged to speak with their local Domain members and officers about any of these steps. If any questions arise, they can also speak to the Chronicle Team.