

For All Character Levels

RR3
Accessory

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons
2nd Edition

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Ravenloft

Official Game Accessory

Van Richten's Guide to Vampires



Van Richten's Guide to Vampires

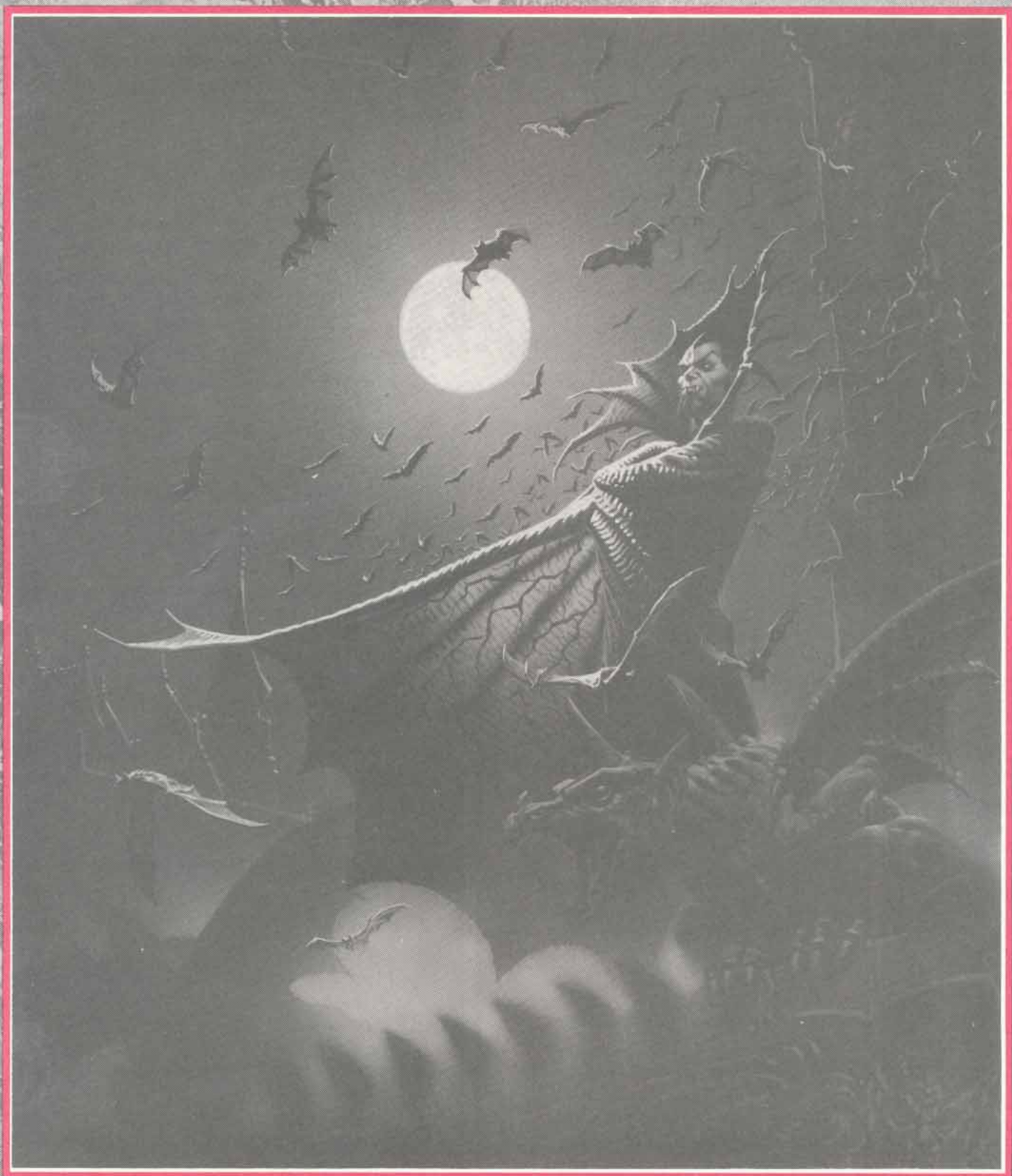


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INTRODUCTION

*ut first on Earth as vampyr sent,
Thy corpse shall from its tomb be
rent,
Then ghastly haunt thy native place,
And suck the blood of all thy race.*

—Lord Byron

My name is Dr. Rudolph Van Richten. By my background I am a scholar and a doctor. As I was growing up in Darkon, I believed it was my destiny to heal people, to treat sicknesses of the body with the herbal cures I learned from my grandmother.

Yet Fate flaunted my beliefs. I suffered a personal loss of such gravity, and was forced into an act of such trauma, that my entire direction in life was forever changed. Even though it still pains me to remember, it is important for the sake of what will follow to recount those unhappy events here.

My life in Darkon was placid, enjoyable. I was married to my childhood sweetheart, a goldentressed girl named Ingrid, and I thought my joy was complete when I learned that my young wife would soon bear a child. I still remember the birth of my son, whom I named Erasmus, meaning “beloved” in a little-known tongue, as one of the happiest days of my life. He possessed the radiant fair looks of his mother, and from me he inherited a quickness of mind and a sense of honor that set him apart from other children.

For fourteen summers Erasmus was my pride and joy. And then, tragically, he was taken from me—not by the arms of death, but by purely unnatural agents. While I was treating a woman in a nearby village, my son was set upon by *vistani*, the gypsies who wander the lands and travel the strange Mists, and swept away. When I returned home and found him gone, my panic-stricken wife bewailed the circumstances of the dangerous people who had stolen our child.

I swore an oath to myself that I would never rest until Erasmus was freed from whatever unholy fate possessed him. Leaving my affairs in the capable hands of my understanding Ingrid and committing my future to the search, I set off in pursuit.

The details of my journey are immaterial here. The trail was cold and difficult to find. Suffice it to say that I finally tracked the *vistani* caravan to Richemulot. Erasmus was not with them, but I *extracted* his whereabouts from the gypsy leader. They sold my son, I learned, sold him into servitude, to a local landowner who styled himself “Baron Metus.” I hurried to the home of the Baron and demanded that he return my son immediately.

I can still, to this day, recall my first glimpse of Metus. He was a tall man, slender and graceful in his movements. His pale face was fine of feature, and his eyes were as black as pools of ink. As he heard my demand, his thin, expressive lips curled in a smile that could only be described as exceedingly cruel. He laughed coldly and turned his back on me. I was escorted from his property by his minions.

I camped that night just outside the walls surrounding Metus’ land, and darkness and despair enfolded me. But then, around midnight, Erasmus came to me! He had evaded the Baron’s soldiers and climbed the wall. He had something horrible to tell me.

I think that I knew the truth even before he spoke the words, as soon as I saw the ivory pallor of his face under the moonlight, as soon as I glimpsed the dark pits that were his eyes. The words he uttered only confirmed what I already knew.

My son was dead.

Yet still he walked! Life in death, death in life—such was his destiny. The Baron was a vampire, and he had passed on that dark gift to my only son! I wept there in the night, cried the inconsolable tears of a terrified child.

But the worst was yet to come. My son had something to ask of me. The dark gift had only recently been given and his thoughts still ran in

INTRODUCTION

the patterns of a mortal mind. He felt more kinship with me, with the living, than he did with the Baron and others of his kind. But, he told me, he could feel those old patterns of thought slipping away. Soon, he believed, the horror he felt for his condition would fade, and he would forget what it was like to be a mortal. He would become a monster like the Baron!

And so Erasmus begged me to save him from this fate. He begged me to destroy him, right then, that very night. He had even brought with him a sharpened wooden stake and a mallet with which to pound it through his chest!

I doubt that anyone can ever truly understand the torment I suffered. My son was dead; in my mind I knew that to be true. But here he was still, standing before me, talking to me. How could I find the capacity in my heart to kill him? And how could I not? How could I damn him to an eternity of torment?

For several hours, as the moon sank toward the distant horizon, we talked. We relived together the joyous times we had shared, the poignant memories. We cried together. And then, as the harbinger of dawn tinted pink the sky, Erasmus Van Richten lay himself down upon the bosom of the meadow and wordlessly handed me the stake and the mallet. Our gazes met for one last time, then he closed his eyes and composed himself as if for sleep.

I positioned the point of the stake over my son's heart . . . and brought down the mallet. With each blow, the agony in my heart could have been no greater if the stake had been sinking into my own breast. When it was done, I lay beside the body of my son and wept again. I wept until the first rays of the sun touched his young body and reduced it to ash.

It took all the effort of my will to not lie down beside the dust that had been my precious son and slip into the darkness of death. Only the thought of Ingrid, waiting anxiously at home, prevented me from taking my own life. I turned my back on the horror and bent my steps to the weeks-long journey home.

But I found that horror followed me—in fact,

preceded me. When I reached my home, I found my beloved Ingrid dead! There was a note from Metus, stating that matters were now in balance. I had taken something from him that he valued—I can only presume he meant Erasmus—and so he had taken from me something that *I* valued.

It was at that moment, as I knelt weeping beside the cold, white body of my beloved Ingrid, that my destiny was turned. I had always prided myself on my ability to rid the body of disease or poison. Now I knew that this was as nothing compared to the importance of ridding *society* of a most evil “disease and poison.” On that terrible day, I swore myself to a new career: the pursuit and destruction of those creatures such as the one that had taken my son and wife from me, that feed on the body of society as a cancer feeds on the body of man. And I swore that my first quarry would be Baron Metus!

It has been almost three decades since that fateful day. Over the intervening years, I have learned much about my quarry, about the enemies that threaten us all.

Today, I feel my advancing age and I can sense the chill wind of mortality blowing through my soul. It is time to pass on what I have learned, so future generations may pick up the stake and mallet when I am forced to lay them down. Thus, I am setting pen to paper in the hope that this tome will preserve what I have learned at such great cost.

Remember: The fight against creatures of darkness is a difficult, and often painful one! But it is a *good* fight, and one that *must* be fought. If this work inspires but one person to follow in my footsteps, then I have succeeded and my life's work has not been for naught.

Editor's Note: Game applications of Dr. Van Richten's guide appear at the end of each chapter, in gray-screened text. For example, Van Richten discusses the inhuman speed of vampires in Chapter III, “Vampiric Powers,” so vampire movement rates appear at the end of that chapter.

THE BACKGROUND OF VAMPIRISM

In almost every culture, on almost every world, tales of vampirism exist to strike fear in both small children and grown adults. These tales are generally considered folklore by sensible people, and indeed it seems that the existence of the living dead is both implausible and impossible. Why then, do cultures so separated by distance and time that they have not even the smallest commonality, share nearly identical tales of supernatural creatures that drink the blood of the living?

I have recorded tales of a place called Krynn, and a race of sea elves who claim that if one of their race is buried on land, it will rise from the dead to seek vengeance on its brothers by drinking their blood. A native of another world, called Toril, tells a tale of a great undead beast that used to be a man. This beast roams the plains

and searches for lone people to attack; the tale relates that it eats the internal organs of its prey. From still another place, called Oerth, a man has told me of a family curse that causes the first-born male in every twelfth generation to rise after death to drink the blood of the family unless the body is burned at burial.

These three worlds, so far from the lands of mist that I know them only by story and rumor, share many tales speaking of once-living men walking the land and slaying the living. Can this be coincidence? Rather, it would indicate that these tales can only be the truth, speaking as they do of undead lords who tread upon the domain of the living.

The Question of Origins

How did vampirism get its start? If new vampires are spawned by other vampires, as virtually all tales would have us believe, how then was the first vampire created? These questions have plagued sages as long as the undead monsters themselves have plagued mankind. Perhaps the answer lies in Barovia.

The gift—or curse—of immortality was not thrust upon Strahd Von Zarovich, Lord of Barovia, by another vampire; rather, he stole it from the lips of death. I quote the following text from the diary of the Bard Gregorri Kolyan, who supposedly was captured by Strahd only to be released sometime later with the complete story of the creature. I do not know why Strahd allowed Gregorri to leave with this vital information. Perhaps the vampire felt a need to have his story told after years of exile and secrecy.

September 8, 453: Barovia is a stranger place now, although I cannot exactly put my finger on any changes. There is a physical nature to this change: colors are not as vibrant, sounds not as immediate; but the major change is in the people, in the life-blood of the land.

As near as I can tell, the change began about two years ago. I can remember a day when I



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used to play my songs in the local taverns and people would dance and sing. Now they seem satisfied just to sit and drink and to talk in hushed whispers. There is a dampness over their souls, like a dreary autumn day.

November 2, 453: I am on to something. It seems that my feelings about the people of Barovia have not simply been my imagination. There is a source, a spiritual suppression if you will, behind the changes. I have no means of verifying this, no magical detection devices that will lead me to it; I have only my heart and my love for the land and its people.

March 29, 454: For nearly five months I have searched for the answer to the puzzle. Barovia is in danger and no one else seems aware of it; I would swear to it. But it is not a danger to which people respond, not a physical enemy at the gates of a city or the border of a land. The enemy is within, within the hearts and minds of the Barovian people. Just last week I purchased some supplies from the market. The merchant packaged the items, handed them to me, and then turned away before I could pay him. It was as if he cared not about being paid. Very odd, almost self-destructive behavior pervades Barovia.

I have many suspicions. Many would call them paranoid, would say that my mind has become unbalanced. On certain days, when the sun warms the land and the birds sing in the trees, I myself doubt my certitude. But then I find my eyes drawn up, up to the castle on the hill, Castle Ravenloft. What mysteries do its walls hold within them—walls that are tall and unyielding like the secrets of an old man's heart? Strahd Von Zarovich has ruled Barovia for over a century and has not been seen in half that amount of time. Each day, the knowledge comes upon me with more certainty: I must learn more about this dark enigma of a man. And I fear I must do the unthinkable: go to the castle itself and investigate its enigma first-hand.

April 8, 454: Fear—cold and dripping, like blood from a hanging corpse—has been my constant companion for several weeks. The closer I get to that accursed Castle Ravenloft, the stronger I feel the grip of terror's icy hand. There can be no doubt now as to the source of Barovia's plight.

April 10, 454: I need search no longer. The object of my quest has not only appeared to me, but sequestered me away within his foul domicile! Late last night, he appeared in my room like some silent apparition from the grave. Ordering me to take up my quills, inks, and parchment, he seized me and leaped out my window to his waiting coach. This confirmed my suspicions that Strahd Von Zarovich is other than a natural man, you see, for my window is four stories from the ground!

April 15, 454: For five days and nights I have literally been Strahd's prisoner in Castle Ravenloft. Strange how the castle seems so warm and cozy inside—not the lurking horror its external visage portrays. I have discovered many things about Strahd and may scribe them later in a tome dedicated to such an endeavor. I feel, however, that this task will never be accomplished, for how can this man allow me to live when I know such dark secrets about him. He has shared himself, all his intimate secrets, with me as if I were his dearest friend.

Not a man, Strahd walks the land as a vampire—a once-living creature that now feeds on the blood of the living! Although there are endless details about his actions, mannerisms, and appearance that I wish to portray, in this journal I will pen only one aspect of him: his transformation from living to undead. And I will do so immediately, lest I forget the smallest detail.

It is a great testament to the sleepy, lethargic nature of Barovia that no one has questioned the rule of Strahd Von Zarovich. He rarely, if ever, shows himself publicly. Hence, it has been puzzling that he has ruled Barovia unchallenged

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for more than a century. I now know the answer to this riddle, but I am no more comforted.

In life, Strahd was tossed upon a sea of emotion and jealousy. His greatest jealousy was toward his brother, Sergei, who was young and handsome. To add to this, Sergei had the love of a beautiful girl named Tatyana. Envy swept over Strahd like a breaking sea, for he, too, loved Tatyana. As time passed, these natural emotions twisted into grotesque forms. His love became an overwhelming need to possess the object of that love, and envy grew into spite, and eventually into hatred.

At first, Strahd merely intended to frustrate Sergei's plans to marry Tatyana. But then Strahd's mind, apparently already twisted, broke, and he decided that only the death of his younger brother would give him what he wanted: sole possession of Tatyana. He planned this assassination, this fratricide, in private and—so he thought—in silence. But in his overwrought state, Strahd was given to speaking aloud as he strode his chambers alone. An officer of the guard, who was a personal friend to Sergei, walked the battlements just beyond Strahd's window and overheard the elder Von Zarovich's plans. Stricken with horror, he knew he had to warn Sergei at once. He turned to leave his post at the battlements, but as he did, the scabbard of his sword struck the stonework.

Strahd heard the faint sound! Immediately, he snatched up his own weapon and hurled himself out the window, onto the battlement. With a curse, he aimed a whistling cut at the guard's head. That officer was a veteran swordsman, however, and parried the cut. Although he had no desire to harm Strahd, his master, the officer was now forced to defend himself.

By Strahd's account, the battle was fierce and will make for a great song, should I live to compose it. Both men were excellent swordsmen—Strahd from his years as a general and the officer from his constant training. Yet Strahd's madness gave him the edge, and he finally struck down the officer . . . but not before he himself had taken a wound that would have

slain a lesser man instantly.

Strahd Von Zarovich was as good as dead. In his mind he knew that, but his hatred and rage would not allow his failing body peace. As the lifeblood poured from his body, Strahd made a pact with Death. He reached over, grabbed the dead guardsman, and drank the blood from the corpse.

Strahd would now live free from Death forever, cheating that dark and shadowy figure! But the pact required another act to be complete. He would have to kill his brother Sergei on his wedding day to finally seal the wicked contract.

Strahd hid the guard's body and continued with his day-to-day affairs, awaiting Sergei's wedding day. As the time passed, Strahd found his charade more and more difficult to maintain. The daylight hours were becoming increasingly uncomfortable and the naked rays of the sun physically painful to his skin. He also found it difficult to eat food, which hardly satisfied his hunger. The transformation to whatever creature Death had in mind for him was beginning.

On the day of the wedding Strahd sought out Sergei and instigated a fight, intending in this way to give himself some justification for killing the young man. Strahd expected his young and fit brother to be a challenge to defeat, but quickly found that his physical strength had increased far beyond its previous limit. With but a single, cruel blow Strahd felled his brother and his pact with Death was complete. Strahd Von Zarovich had become a vampire!

No doubt perceptive readers will have noticed the same gaps in this narrative that I spotted when it first came to my attention. For instance, how exactly did Strahd Von Zarovich strike a "pact with Death?" As "Death" is merely a cessation of life, what possible manifestation of this natural condition could propose or accept such a pact?

It is questions such as these that force me to doubt the complete veracity of Gregorri's tale. Perhaps this famous bard could not resist the urge to embellish upon the tale told to him by

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Von Zarovich (although the diary entry shows little of the internal consistency and stylistic brilliance characteristic of tales known to have been written by Gregorri Kolyan). More likely is the possibility that Von Zarovich lied to the bard for his own reasons. This might explain Kolyan's eventual escape or release: the vampire wished to use him to spread misinformation. Or, in the perhaps most likely interpretation, Von Zarovich lied, but not *only* to Kolyan. Aging humans often color or alter their memories of events that were less than flattering to them. In humans this tendency appears in just a few years. How great may the tendency to embellish be in a creature that has lived for centuries and can expect to live forever? This interpretation raises a major question: how much trust can we put in *anything* spoken by Strahd Von Zarovich . . . or by any of his unholy kind?

The “Necrology” of Vampires

It should come as no surprise that a vampire's metabolism is not like that of a mortal; in fact, strictly speaking, a vampire has no metabolism whatsoever. Although all of the biological systems present in a living mortal are also present in a vampire, most of these systems are changed in function. For example, most vampires do not need to breathe, and can function equally well in an airless crypt or in the vacuum of a void. Provided that immersion in water is not deadly to them, they can function unimpaired on the ocean floor. Vampires do retain the use of their lungs, but only for speech.

Because vampires have no metabolism in the normal sense, metabolic toxins and poisons—ingested, inhaled, or insinuated—have absolutely no effect on the creatures. This is not to say there are not certain substances which, when insinuated into the body of a vampire, cause it serious or even lethal damage. These substances, although they may seem to function like poisons, are

more like allergens and are usually specific to individual creatures. For example, I myself have dispatched a vampire that was sensitive to holly, and I have heard that the ash of burned alder wood is lethal to another certain vampire.

Some examples of vampiric allergens are yew leaves, rose petals, salt, rice, silver, mistletoe, and lilies.

The digestive tract of a vampire is greatly modified from that of a living mortal. The stomach is frequently reduced in size, often to the size of a man's clenched fist, simply because no vampire needs to ingest large volumes of solid food.

There is wide variation among vampires with regard to the ability to eat solid food. Some vampires are unable to eat normal food at all, and any attempt to do so results in immediate regurgitation. Others can eat solid food with no ill effects, although they extract no nourishment from the food, and pass the material through their bodies over a course of hours, as mortals do. In the middle ground, there are some vampires that can eat solid food, but must regurgitate it within a period ranging from minutes to hours. This issue may seem incidental, but it obviously has significant effects on a vampire's behavior, should the creature try to masquerade as a living creature.

The circulatory system of a vampire is little changed. The heart still pumps blood throughout the vessels of the monster's body. There are some differences, however. Because vampires have no need to extract oxygen from the air, their blood absorbs nothing from the lungs. This renders them completely immune to noxious gases that must be breathed to be effective. A vampire might inhale the gas—that is, draw it into its lungs—but the toxic chemicals in the gas would not cross from the lungs to the blood.

The blood of a vampire is also somewhat different from the blood of a mortal. When viewed normally, it has the same rich, red color as a mortal's blood. When it is viewed by *transmitted* light, such as when a vial of vampire

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blood is held up to a light source, it has a distinctive golden color. Blood drawn from an undestroyed vampire can manifest a wide variety of powers. In some cases, the blood is highly caustic, causing severe acid-like damage to anyone who touches it. In other cases, the blood bursts explosively into flame when exposed to sunlight. In still other cases, anyone who touches so much as one drop of the blood with bare skin instantly falls under the mental sway of the vampire. It is impossible to predict beforehand what effects the blood of a particular vampire might have, if any. There is one common factor: at the instant a vampire is destroyed, any samples of his blood immediately become completely inert, and frequently become corrupted and rancid within seconds.

The sensory organs of vampires become much more sensitive than those of their living analogues. If they did not already possess the power in life, vampires gain the ability to see in total darkness (i.e., infravision), typically with a range of some 90 feet. Their hearing also

becomes much more acute, as does their sense of touch and smell; a vampire is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to surprise.

Because a vampire does not require oxygen and, as is usually the case, must feed only once per day, where does it draw the energy required for the prodigious feats of which the creature is capable? Many sages disagree, but my own belief is that the creature has an innate link with the Negative Material Plane.

Whatever the reason, vampires are much more resilient and robust than living creatures. They seem generally immune to exhaustion and to the debilitating effects of pain and exposure, and seem able to shrug off the negative consequences of many magical effects. They are totally immune to the effects of *sleep*, *charm*, and *hold* spells, and to other magical or psionic effects which mimic these spells. They are also totally immune to any magical effect which *specifically* causes paralysis. It is important to stress the word "specifically." While a vampire would be immune to the paralyzing touch of a ghoul or



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the dweomer of a *wand of paralyzation*, it could be affected by a potent enchantment, such as *alter reality* or *wish*, that emulated the effect. (Any mage capable of casting such powerful magic would almost certainly choose an effect more significant than paralyzation, of course.) Like many other types of undead creatures, vampires sustain little damage from any effect based on cold or electricity, whether caused by spell, item, breath weapon, or even the elements.

Vampires are totally resistant to several beneficial spells as well. The creatures are completely immune to the effects of priestly curative or healing magic, such as *cure light wounds*, *heal*, etc. Because the failure of such spells might well give away the monster's true nature, a vampire masquerading as a mortal will often go to great lengths to avoid exposure to such magic.

A vampire's hair will never turn gray, nor will the creature show any other physical signs of aging unless it already had before death. In general, as long as the creature is well fed and functions according to whatever other restrictions are relevant to its existence, it will never appear any different from the way it did on the day of its mortal death. This does not mean that vampires will flaunt their unchanging appearance, because doing so will certainly attract too much unwanted attention. A vampire that chooses to live within or on the outskirts of the society of men will, in most cases, go to great lengths to masquerade as a normal human or demihuman, pretending to age and even to "die" to remove suspicion. This deception is discussed at length in Chapter XIII, "The Facade."

Vampires of Different Racial Stock

Most of this guide's discussions about "typical" vampires generally refer to vampires that were (demi)humans when alive. There are some differences between these once-human vampires and those that

arise from different racial stock.

Again, as with discussions of human vampires, these paragraphs refer to "typical" cases. A dwarven vampire (for instance) may exhibit specifically dwarven characteristics, may more closely resemble the human vampires, or may show attributes totally different from both. Perceptive readers will observe that a certain symbolism plays an integral role with most of these vampires. Their weaknesses and strengths are generally highly symbolic of the creatures' natures while alive. For example, some dwarven vampires may be highly reactive to weapons made of mithril, especially if they coveted the metal in life. This kind of symbolic significance is a common feature with vampires of all races and natures.

Vampire Blood

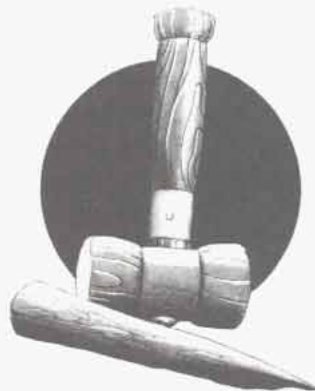
Caustic vampire blood causes 1d6 hit points of damage if it contacts bare skin.

Explosive vampire blood (in a vial), when exposed to sunlight, inflicts 1d3 hit points of damage on anyone within 3 feet.


Vampire blood possessing a *charm person* effect has a saving throw penalty ranging from -1 to -5, depending on the age category of the vampire, beginning with Old.

Surprising a Vampire

In most situations, the chance of surprising a vampire is one-half the chance for a normal creature of the race and character class of the vampire while it was alive.



VAMPIRIC POWERS



fiend we knew him to be, but we believed him to be a fiend of mortal aspect. Imagine our horror when the first blow, wielded by our stout dwarven companion with his razor-sharp axe, merely glanced off our foe's scalp with little effect, as though the weapon had struck a mountain boulder. . . .

—From the journal of Aldyn
Silvershield

Caveat: It is important to recall that the following discussions refer to what might be called the “typical” vampire. Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a “typical vampire.” Vampires are perhaps the most individualistic of undead. What is true for one is an outright—and dangerously misleading—falsehood for another. The differences between individual vampires typically become more pronounced as the creatures advance in age and power: while most fledgling vampires typically show at least some similarities with each other, the differences between the aged Patriarchs are often so great as to make one suspect that they are completely different types of creatures. The following discussions deal with the most common powers and weaknesses of vampires. Many vampire hunters have died—or worse—through over-generalizing such discussions, however. An assumption that any individual vampire has any particular power or weakness is a dangerous assumption, indeed!

Great is the power of the vampire. These undisputed masters of the undead have an abundance of powers from which to choose, giving them an advantage in nearly every combat and noncombat situation. These monsters enjoy significant benefits in nearly every aspect of their being. Their senses, strength, reasoning, and intelligence are all far beyond human norms. In fact, if not for their

special vulnerabilities (which I will discuss later), vampires would be nearly unstoppable.

Although all vampires are extremely powerful, there is a moderating effect on the abilities of vampires, and this is *time*. A newly-created vampire (in the vast majority of cases) is relatively weak when compared to those that have been in existence for decades or centuries. On the other end of the scale, a vampire who has existed for a millennium or more is unimaginably more powerful than a newly-created fledgling.

No one knows exactly why this is so. Some scholars believe this progression to be “an innate characteristic of vampiric nature,” which of course is no answer at all. My personal belief is that all vampires are created with the potential to use all the powers available to a 1,000-year-old individual, but that actually *using* those powers is something that must be learned. Presumably, the more “advanced” powers require more subtlety to control, or are more taxing on the vampire, or perhaps both. To use these greater powers the vampire must practice the precision required and must build the willpower and mental fortitude needed to wield them.

Personally, I hope that my belief is wrong because of the following logical consequence: if all vampires, no matter how “young,” have the potential to use the greater powers, might it not be possible for an exceptional individual to come into being with a natural aptitude for some of the greater powers? The image of a one-day-old vampire able to use any of the powers of a millennium-old Patriarch is horrifying to think about. It discomforts me to learn that tales of such “precocious” creatures exist, and apparently they do, although they are, thankfully, extremely rare. It is best to keep this in mind and to realize that the age progression discussed later (page 13) is merely a rule of thumb and not a law of nature. The well-prepared vampire hunter should expect exceptions.

Such exceptions aside, the age-related

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progression of powers is perhaps the vampire hunter's greatest ally. A Fledgling vampire is less adept at covering its tracks, less experienced at playing on the weaknesses of those who would pursue it.

Age Categories

Like dragons, vampires are divided into age categories. Essentially, as a vampire grows older, its power also grows. The creature gains new abilities that it did not previously have and becomes increasingly less susceptible to past weaknesses. In short, the older the vampire is, the more formidable a foe it becomes.

Happily, I know of only two Patriarch Vampires in existence. Patriarchs are extremely rare, for seldom do vampires survive this long. As will be discussed later, the strain of immortality is frequently too great for them. I see the hand of Providence in this, because to encounter a Patriarch is almost certain to become totally subject to its will.

Each vampire age category has a title associated with it. The titles and related ages are:

- Fledgling:** 0-99 years
- Mature:** 100-199 years
- Old:** 200-299 years
- Very Old:** 300-399 years
- Ancient:** 400-499 years
- Eminent:** 500-999 years
- Patriarch:** 1000+ years

These titles are more of academic interest than of practical value; one would not normally refer to a vampire by its title. If someone were addressing Strahd, for instance, who falls in the 400-499 category, they would still call him "Lord Strahd," rather than "Ancient Strahd."

It seems that vampires make use of similar terms when talking to each other. In such cases, however, they are much more concerned about relative age, and their uses of titles are almost exclusively symbolic and valued only for their psychological effect. For instance, a vampire addressing a vampire that is its senior in age

might address it as "Old One," "Ancient One," or even "Eminence," regardless of the senior vampire's actual age category. In this case, the form of address would reflect respect (or, more accurately, fear) for the senior vampire. In the converse situation, an older vampire might address a younger creature as "Fledgling" regardless of the younger creature's actual age, to signify contempt for the junior vampire's weakness.

In most cases, of course, vampires meeting for the first time will not know each other's age. The use of titles in such a situation would depend on the intentions of the creatures involved. They might refrain from using titles to avoid giving offense, or might use them extensively in a game of "one-upmanship."

Spell-and Nonspell-like Powers

Jarmin had asked me to take a walk with him, for he said he had something very important he wished to discuss with me. I have to admit I suspected what his topic would be. After all, we had been spending considerable amounts of time together, and it was only logical that marriage would be on his mind.

We were within the cathedral when the earthquake struck. The ancient stone structure shuddered, and there was a terrible crashing noise from above. With hideous strength, Jarmin flung me aside, just in time to prevent me from being struck by the massive stone blocks that had fallen from the roof of the apse. Jarmin was not so lucky. The first boulder struck him solidly on the back and smashed him to the ground.

I buried my face in my hands, weeping inconsolably over the loss of my one and only love. And then I screamed in shock as a familiar hand rested on my shoulder, and a familiar voice whispered in my ear! "There will never again be need for tears," Jarmin told me as his lips brushed my neck. "Nothing, not even time, will keep us apart."

—From the journal of Maria Castries

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All vampires enjoy certain abilities which, were they possessed by a mortal, would certainly be ascribed to the realm of magic. To a vampire, however, such faculties are quite innate. Some of the powers, indeed, appear to be the result of casting spells, yet others render the creature "superhuman," so to speak. At this point I shall divide these capacities into "nospell-like" and "spell-like" powers and expound upon each, but I hasten to add that, to the vampire, they are one and the same, and altogether inherent.

Nospell-like Powers

All vampires are extremely powerful in the physical sense. The reasons for this are unclear. Perhaps the transformation from life to undeath somehow tempers the body physically, making muscles stronger and flesh, bones, and sinew more resistant to damage.

From the moment of their creation, vampires are hideously strong. Unlike mortals, who weaken as they grow older and their muscles atrophy, vampires actually gain strength as the years pass. Patriarch vampires, for example, develop a strength rivalling that of some lesser gods. Vampires gain great benefits from their monstrous strength, including both the ability break through an opponent's guard and to deliver massive damage when a blow strikes home. Although these creatures are very intelligent and will seldom enter physical combat, they certainly have the tools to dominate such bouts.

Vampires also possess great speed. Fledgling vampires are as fast as a normal human. As vampires grow older, they become faster and faster until they reach Patriarch age, when they can move as quickly as an unencumbered light riding horse! These dark creatures will typically use this power to their advantage when facing a priest or someone presenting blessed accoutrements. If the vampire can close and attack before the mortal can attempt the turning or presentment, it can negate the

danger to itself.

In addition to an advantage in their speed of movement, vampires enjoy an increase in their dexterity and speed of reaction as well. The process of becoming a vampire seems to imbue them with significantly increased coordination, and this benefit only grows as the years pass. Older vampires can react to events with a speed that is, quite literally, inhuman.

As a vampire grows older its intelligence, too, is enhanced. These creatures are extremely cunning, their actions calculated. Vampires have a keen power of reason and they will frequently achieve their goals through cunning alone, never having to rely on crude force. Do not draw the wrong conclusion from this: these creatures do *not* fear, loathe, or otherwise shun the direct use of force. They simply view force as one possible tool with which to achieve their aims, and will usually select the tool best suited to the situation. After all, why should a creature put its own "life" at risk when, through guile, it can get everything it wants at no potential risk?

When hunting a vampire, be especially careful to remember the creature's intelligence. Vampires may, for example, have their lairs ingeniously hidden and laden with many traps and snares to protect it. They can also blend into mortal society, dominating and manipulating the people around them, even going so far as to win unsuspecting allies and even friends. Cunning vampires may have the support, if not the love, of those around them. In short, do not assume that a vampire is a "two-dimensional" monster, interested only in drinking blood and draining life energy. The creature's intelligence is often a more effective weapon than its other innate powers.

If these advantages were not enough, with time most vampires develop an incredible force of personality with which they delude and sway the gullible. This seems to spring from the immense self-confidence that vampires develop over centuries of existence, and from the fact that they have had sometimes more than a millennium to learn the nuances of human

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behavior. Even taking the monster's seemingly magical hypnotic gaze into account, conversing with a vampire is incredibly risky because the creature is persuasive enough to convince virtually anyone of anything. This same powerful magnetism makes most vampires incredibly charming characters—"charm" is used here in its nonmagical sense. Vampires are almost always exceedingly adept at gaining the favor of the opposite sex.

The above does not apply to all vampires, of course. While most vampires learn more about how the human mind works, and thus how to pervert its thought processes, there are some who become less attuned to human interests and desires with the passage of time. For these creatures, passing time leaves them more alien and less capable of understanding the motivations of mortals—and vice versa.

Spell-like Powers

If one were to consider only the innate abilities discussed above, vampires would appear to be lethal enough foes. Unfortunately for those of us who hunt the creatures, they have at their command a formidable array of spell-like abilities as well. These powers seem to be common to most, if not all vampires, and are independent of the spellcasting tradition that a vampire may have followed in life.

Some vampires that were spellcasters while alive do indeed retain their arcane abilities. This occurrence is generally limited to those who were wizards in life. Only very rarely do priests retain their powers, and then only if they served the most vile and evil gods during their lives. This particular section, however, deals exclusively with the innate *spell-like* powers of vampires. Spellcasting vampires will be dealt with later.

Perhaps the most fearsome and wholly destructive power of the vampire is its ability to drain life energy by touch. These monsters can, by making physical contact with their opponents, drain away the very living essence

experience levels of those opponents. Contrary to several tales, a vampire need not make actual flesh-to-flesh contact with its opponent to drain life energy. Even if the creature lands a solid blow on clothing or armor, it is capable of draining life force through such obstacles. Some theorists explain this fact through concepts of symbolism and symmetry: if a vampire strikes a blow hard enough to inflict *physical damage*, then it is also sufficient to drain away the *life* of its victim. As with many facets of magic, this theory holds that the symbolic force of the attack is more important than the superficial boundaries of armor or clothing. These same theorists are silent when it comes to explaining an additional fact, however: a vampire can drain life force only when it strikes unarmed. If the vampire uses a weapon, it is incapable of draining energy. For this discussion, metal gauntlets, and "brass knuckles" are considered weapons. Perhaps the open-handed attack symbolizes an action of seizing as much as one of inflicting.

All vampires have the power to charm a mortal at will. This is equal in effect to the wizard spell *charm person*, except that there is no casting time involved and the victim must be looking directly into the vampire's eyes. The range of this power, technically, is sight. For all practical purposes, however, a vampire would not be able to affect a victim at any range greater than ten feet. This power, as well as having practical combat applications, is highly useful for overcoming a number of vampiric weaknesses. If, for example, a vampire could not enter a prospective victim's home, it could attempt to charm the person into leaving the safe haven of the building. As with a *charm person* spell, the vampire is unable to order its charmed victim to do anything obviously self-destructive, such as jumping off a cliff. The creature could convince the victim that the vampire is his or her friend, however, and that the victim should leave a place of safety to greet his or her "friend."

As these dark creatures get older, their

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charm-gaze gets stronger. An Ancient vampire can charm simply by the sound of its voice. By uttering soothing words, the creature enraptures its victim. Under optimum conditions, the maximum range of this vocal charm is 40 feet. This range is greatly curtailed under certain conditions such as in a strong wind or loud battle. Most fearsome of all, perhaps, is the charm-gaze of Patriarchs. These great vampires are capable of charming with their powerful will alone. No barrier is capable of blocking this ability. In fact their thoughts are so strong, they can affect a victim even on the other side of a stone wall. Thankfully, several restrictions apply to this power. First of all, this ability is limited in range to some 40 feet. Second, the charm can be performed only on someone that the vampire knows is present. A Patriarch could not, for example, simply extend its charm-gaze beyond a wall, on the off-chance that somebody might be there. The creature must know the victim is there by first detecting him or her with its delicate senses.

Vampires have the innate ability to imitate another wizard spell: *spider climb*. They are able to use this power at will, with no limits on duration or frequency. This innate spell-like power operates, in most respects, like the wizard spell except that it requires no verbal, somatic, or material components. Note that a vampire is still subject to all its normal restrictions when using its spider climb power. Thus, many vampires cannot climb up a tower and enter a castle unless they are first invited. They could, however, climb up a tower and attempt to charm someone through a window. (These and other restrictions, and weaknesses of, vampires are discussed in the next chapter.)

The ability to climb otherwise unclimbable surfaces enables vampires to situate their lairs in places that mortals cannot enter. A tall tower with no stairs or doors leading up to it would be a perfect place for a vampire to hide its sanctuary. It would be able to climb up the sheer wall of the tower and enter through a window to its waiting coffin.

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In Combat

Great magic is required to combat a vampire. These lords of darkness are not subject to attacks from nonmagical weapons. To a vampire, mundane weapons are not even an annoyance. Only lesser magical arms are required to harm a young vampire, but as the creature progresses, ever more powerful enchantments are required.

If a weapon of insufficient enchantment is used against a vampire, it will simply be ineffective. In some cases, the weapon will simply glance off the body of the vampire, doing no more damage than would a strike from a feather. In other cases, the weapon seems to inflict a wound—albeit a very minor one—but this wound does not discommode the vampire one whit. In still other cases, the weapon seems to pass *right through* the creature, as though the vampire were simply a mirage.

The only common exception to this discussion is a nonmagical weapon that has been *blessed* by a priest of a good deity. This is not a certain thing, however. *Blessed* weapons are discussed in more depth in Chapter V, “Vampire Weaknesses.”

Even if weapons sufficiently enchanted to cause physical damage are wielded against a vampire, the creature’s destruction is still far from assured. This is because the monsters have the innate ability to regenerate physical damage. Wounds close, broken bones reform themselves, even missing limbs regenerate with time. The speed at which this occurs increases with the monster’s age. Still, even the most lowly vampire regenerates at an alarming rate.

The physiological (or more correctly, *necrological*) processes of vampire regeneration remain largely unknown, despite the best efforts of several sages. Symbolically, however, the reason is understandable: a vampire’s undead body is somehow locked in its physical condition as it crosses the veil between life and undeath; as aging is halted, so is incurred damage. This has a number of interesting side

effects. For instance, if a vampire cuts its hair or nails, they will grow back to the length they were when the vampire died as a mortal, and then cease to grow further. A tattoo or other mundane mark placed upon the skin of a vampire after its mortal death will quickly fade, while such a mark that was in place *before* its death will reappear no matter what the vampire does to eliminate it.

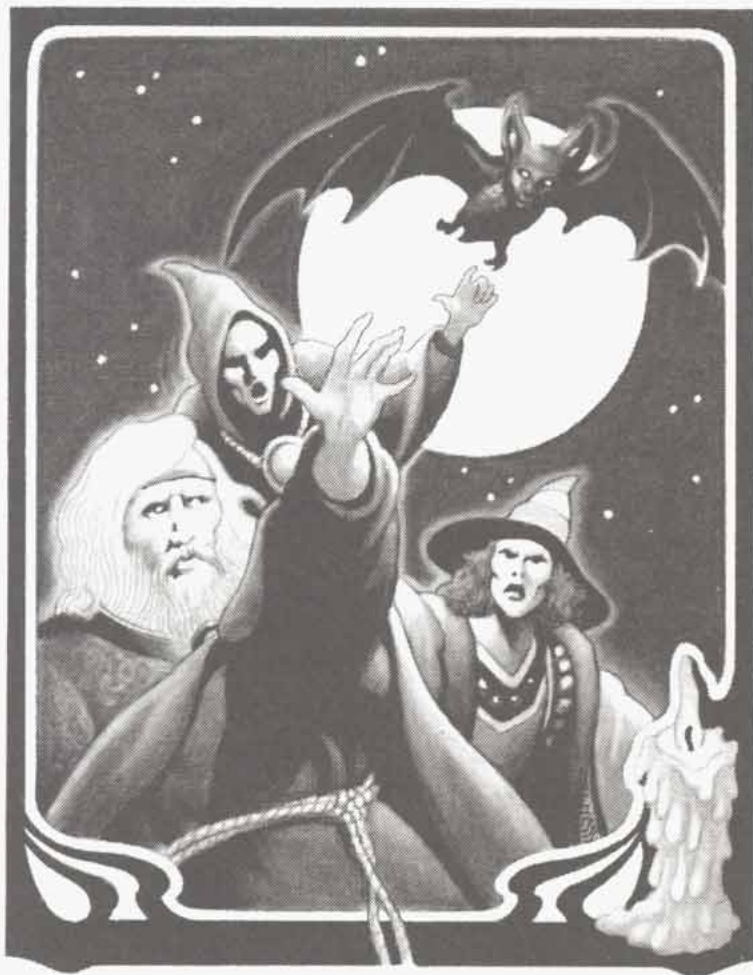
Certain marks inflicted upon the flesh of a vampire by magical means, called *stigmata*, will *not* fade except under specific conditions. Such marks and *stigmata* are discussed in Chapter VI, “Destroying a Vampire.”

Even with the above conditions taken into account, it is still very difficult to destroy a vampire through physical combat. In the majority of cases, once a vampire has suffered sufficient physical damage to “kill” it, it transforms to a gaseous form and attempts to return to its coffin or other sanctuary. After eight hours of complete inactivity, it regains corporeal form with all of its physical wounds healed. For this reason, it is *vital* that vampire hunters finish the job when they force a vampire into gaseous form! If they do not track the gaseous creature to its sanctuary or prevent it from reaching its sanctuary, they will be faced with the prospect of a totally unharmed vampire rising after only eight hours. This vampire will likely be somewhat “irked” and plan some distinctive kind of vengeance against those who challenged it. (If a vampire forced into gaseous form by overwhelming physical damage is prevented from reaching the safety of its coffin or sanctuary for a period of twelve hours, the creature is destroyed.)

Shapechanging

The bright light I brought forth from my staff was highly effective in driving away the flock of bats that had bedeviled us for so long. In our naivete, we thought we were safe. In fact, our troubles were only beginning.

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The thick mist appeared without warning, seeming to rise from the ground like a foul exhalation. At first we paid it little mind; at night, ground fogs are fairly common. But then we noticed how the fog was moving, swirling toward us even though there was no wind to drive it. What could we do? How can you fight a fog?

It was then that the leading tendril wrapped itself around Ballas, our scout. Poor Ballas screamed, screamed as though his soul was being torn from his mortal body. And then he collapsed lifeless into the mire.

Little did we think we would ever see Ballas again. . . .

—From the journal of Morgren Dunderlorn

Probably the most visually obvious testament to a vampire's supernatural nature is its power of shapechanging. In order to better protect themselves or combat others, all vampires share a common ability to spontaneously alter their physical forms. The forms presented here

are those available to the "typical" vampire. There are many vampires, however, who possess unique powers and can assume an even wider variety of shapes.

Gaseous Form

Vampires are capable of intentionally disassociating the physical components of their bodies, turning into a cloud of mist. The transition from physical to gaseous form takes one minute (one round), during which period the creature is unable to take any other action, either physical or magical—including, of course, parrying attacks. While the creature is in the process of changing to gaseous form, it is also fully susceptible to physical and magical attacks.

A vampire in gaseous form is totally immune to any physical attack. Even the most highly enchanted weapon passes right through the vaporous cloud with no effect. Magical attacks are still effective against *some* vampires in gaseous form; this varies from individual to individual. Some vampires are totally immune to *all* magical attacks while in gaseous form. There seems to be no way to predict beforehand whether an individual vampire will show this immunity or not. I surmise that the older a vampire is, the more likely the creature is to be totally immune to all attacks when in gaseous form. Some sages see this as evidence that such immunity is an acquired or learned trait; I, however, think it more likely that creatures possessing this immunity are more likely to survive over the long term.

Vampires regenerate their damaged parts normally while in gaseous form. The only exception is if the creature has been physically defeated in battle, in which case it must rest in its coffin or sanctuary for eight full hours to regenerate fully. If a vampire is forced into gaseous form by physical damage and then the creature is pursued to its coffin or sanctuary, it will be found to have reverted to corporeal form within this sanctuary. In the majority of cases,

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the creature will be totally comatose—unaware of its surroundings and incapable of responding to stimuli—until eight hours have passed. In this condition, it is unable to revert to gaseous form again and is thus highly vulnerable to destruction.

This is not always the case, however. I, myself, have faced a vampire whose behavior was horribly different. I followed the vaporous cloud to the creature's sanctuary and gained entrance. Within I found the fiend, lying there still as death. I prepared my stake and mallet . . . and with a terrible roar the monster sprung up from its bier and attacked me and my colleagues with immense ferocity. At the first strike from my compatriot's enchanted sword, however, the creature crumbled to ash. This particular vampire could rouse itself from its comatose state and fight, gaining a +3 bonus to hit, due to ferocity. However, the creature had only 1 hit point remaining. Any hit that inflicted damage would instantly and irrevocably destroy the monster. Inventive DMs can easily come up with other interesting variations on the theme.

Returning to the subject at hand, a vampire in gaseous form has considerable control over its characteristics. It can modify its density to range from that of a thick fog to that of a thin, virtually invisible mist. As its density changes, as a matter of course, so does the volume the gaseous cloud takes up. In its most dense form, which is thick, white and totally opaque, the creature takes up a total volume of six cubic feet. In its thinnest form, it takes up a volume of 36 cubic feet. It can change the actual dimensions of the cloud almost without restriction, so long as the shortest dimension is no less than one tenth of an inch. Thus, in its densest form, a vampire could range from a sphere a little over two feet in diameter to a tendril of fog one-tenth inch in diameter and over fourteen miles long! A vaporous vampire can change the density and shape of its gas cloud at will, and such changes take no more than a few seconds (1 segment).

A vampire in gaseous form demonstrates an amazing cohesion that even the strongest wind cannot dissipate. The vaporous vampire can totally control its motion, and its movement is unaffected by winds up to hurricane force! If a vampire in gaseous form is caught in winds of hurricane strength, that is, speeds of about 125 miles per hour or more, it is swept along with the wind. Although it is not dissipated, it is totally incapable of controlling its own motion. This failing is of little help to mortals, I suspect.

Vampires in gaseous form move slower than do creatures in corporeal form, but not much slower, and their speed increases with age. Vampire hunters should be aware that an "Old" vampire in gaseous form can travel faster than a man on foot. This is very important because successful vampire hunters *must* be able to follow a vaporous vampire to its coffin or sanctuary and destroy it there. In gaseous form the creature must remain close to the ground; specifically, within ten feet. It can, however, flow up a flight of stairs, although not up a ladder or the wall of a building. The cloud of vapor can pour *down* a wall or cliff face, regardless of height, without any damage to the vampire, and does so at the same rate of speed as the cloud can travel across flat ground.

The ability to assume gaseous form offers many benefits to a vampire. The most obvious is a means of escape. Many vampire hunters have seen victory slip from their grasp as their infernal foe dissipated into a mist, invulnerable to their attacks. It can escape thusly from locked rooms, prison cells, sarcophagi—in essence, from virtually anywhere a mortal would be imprisoned. As long as there is a gap with at least a dimension of one-tenth inch—the space under a door, for example—the creature can reach freedom. (Remember, too, that with its great strength a vampire can frequently *make* such a gap.) Conversely, this ability makes it very difficult to forbid a vampire entrance to some place in which it is interested.

For those vampires that must return daily to

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a coffin or other sanctuary, gaseous form allows them to protect this sanctuary from intruders. As an example, I recall a creature whose sanctuary was a sarcophagus in the catacombs beneath a deserted church. The monster had walled up all entrances to the catacombs with stonework, and had surrounded the sarcophagus itself with rock, using a *transmute mud to rock* spell. The only entrance to the catacombs was a fissure between the rocks less than half an inch wide, and to the sarcophagus a tiny bore hole no more than one-quarter inch in diameter. The creature was indecently proud of its slyness, fully expecting that no prospective hunters would ever be able to find its sanctuary. As it turned out, its slyness proved to be its downfall. I located the sanctuary and blocked the fissure between the two rocks. Then, when my warrior colleagues inflicted sufficient damage on the creature to drive it into gaseous form, it had no way of reaching its haven and was hence destroyed. (Had the creature shown the forethought to leave *two* entrances to its lair, the story might have turned out differently.)

Animal Form

In addition to the ability to assume gaseous form, a vampire can physically change its form into that of a wolf or a bat. This transformation is *always* voluntary, unlike that to gaseous form; a vampire cannot be forced to assume animal form. (In other words, a vampire cannot assume an animal form when physically defeated in battle.) The animal form that a vampire assumes will always be slightly larger than the norm, and more menacing. Some experts claim that the animal form of a vampire is always close to the archetype for that creature, the perfect form of the species; others state that the animal form always has the spark of intelligence visible in its eyes. Personally, I believe both statements to say more about the experts than about vampires. A hunter trying to recognize a vampire in animal form should not

depend on such subjective measures.

Even behavior is not a foolproof way of determining whether a particular wolf (or bat) is actually a vampire. An animal-form vampire is, of course, completely in control of its own behavior, and hence can act either in ways totally in or out of character for the natural animal. Thus, if it suits the monster's purposes, it can blend undetectably with the normal members of a pack of wolves or bevy of bats. Unless the monster commands otherwise, however, the natural members of such a group will consider the animal-form vampire to be the dominant leader of the group, and will treat it as such unless the vampire commands otherwise.

The transition from human to animal form takes one minute (1 round), and during the change, the monster is unable to do anything else. Vampires are generally unable to transform directly from animal to gaseous form, or vice versa, but must change to human form as a transitional step. Thus, changing from animal to gaseous form would take the creature *two* minutes (2 rounds)—one minute to change from gaseous to human form, then another minute to change from human to animal form. The only exception seems to be when the vampire in animal form suffers massive physical damage. Then and only then, the creature seems able, indeed forced, to transform directly from animal to gaseous form.

Considering that the transition from human to animal form takes one minute, and that the monster is unusually vulnerable during the transition, why would the fiend choose to change forms at all? The most obvious use for this ability is camouflage, allowing the creature to stalk victims unseen, or to escape detection by those with the temerity to hunt it.

There is another major benefit, too. When a wounded vampire changes form, it often seems to totally shake off all damage it has suffered up to that point. Speaking from experience, there are few things quite so terrifying as to

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have grievously wounded a vampire in animal form, and then have the monster transform into human shape and show no signs whatsoever of ever being wounded! It seems that when the vampire changes form, the new form it assumes is “perfect;” in this case, free of wounds or other damage. Luckily for all mortals, I have noted that the monsters seem to be able to use this ability only once per day, no matter how many times they change form.

It is important to recall one thing. As I stated at the outset, these observations refer to the “typical” vampire, and there is no such thing as a typical vampire! There are tales of vampires capable of taking the form of dogs, cats, birds (particularly owls or crows)—even, in one case, an evil black steed similar in appearance to a nightmare. I have come to suspect that Patriarchs have the ability to assume at least one form in addition to the “standard” wolf and bat, and that this additional form is specific to the individual vampire.

Animal Control

Combating and destroying a solitary vampire is difficult enough. The creature’s powers and abilities are enough to strike fear into the heart of even the doughtiest vampire hunter. However, the hunter is almost never lucky enough to face an unallied vampire. The monsters are very protective of their unlife, and will usually surround themselves with servitors or minions of one variety or another. Vampires have the innate ability to summon and control certain species of lesser creatures.

By nature, a vampire is able to completely control all animals whose form the vampire can assume. Thus, because a “typical” vampire can assume the form of a wolf or a bat, the monster is the natural master of all wolves and bats. As with the shapechanging capability, there are probably vampires capable of summoning and controlling many different types of creatures. This could explain recurring, albeit

unsubstantiated, rumors of attacks on mortals by huge flocks of crows and other birds. Theoretically, the creatures that can be controlled by individual vampires will usually relate to the personal nature of the monster, or to the characteristics of the vampiric line: a subterranean vampire might be able to control rats and burrowing creatures; a vampire that once was a woodsman might be the master of all forest creatures; a seaman converted into a vampire might be able to command fish, sharks, or even whales; a vampire from tropical climes might command tarantulas or venomous centipedes, and so forth. The possibilities are so wide-ranging as to be terrifying to dwell upon.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that there is not the same connection between a vampire and its minions as there is between a wizard and its familiar or a homunculus. There is no shared life-force. Thus, the vampire suffers no ill effects should a minion be destroyed.

Only the rarest of vampires can summon animals in the magical sense—that is, cause the animals to magically appear in the vampire’s vicinity. Most vampires, instead, send out a mental call which all animals of the appropriate type must answer. The call seems to have a maximum range of something over one mile. If there are no appropriate creatures within that range, then of course no animal will answer the vampire’s summons.

A vampire can call upon those creatures three times per day, but the type of animal the monster can summon is dependent upon the surrounding environment. In a subterranean place, for instance, bats or rats will typically be called. In the wilderness, wolves and, rarely, bats will be called. The creatures respond to this magical call and travel as fast as they can to the vampire. The summons fails if the animals are physically prevented from approaching the vampire (for example, by a crevasse, fast-flowing river, etc.). It is important to remember that summoned animals do not

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appear immediately—a wolf one mile away from the summoning vampire will take several minutes to answer the summons.

Once the animals have arrived in the vicinity of the vampire, they are totally under the monster's mental control. (Any such creatures already present will also obey the mental commands of the vampire; this does *not* count against the vampire's three daily uses of its summoning power.) They will fight (to the death if so ordered) or do anything else within their physical and mental capabilities. The vampire is even able to overcome the summoned creatures' normal fears and instincts. For example, it may force wolves or rats to attack foes from which they would normally flee. The length of time the vampire can maintain this total mental control varies depending on the type of animal and (sometimes) on the individual vampire involved.

While a vampire can summon creatures from one mile away, it can issue mental orders to creatures no more than 50 yards distant. Thus, even though a pack of wolves might answer the monster's call, the vampire could *not* cause those wolves to attack an enemy more than 50 yards from the vampire.

Summoned bats do not physically attack. Rather, they will swarm around a vampire's enemies, confusing and blinding them. Hence, wolves are perhaps the most fearsome animals that a vampire can control; these beasts are usually ravenously hungry and will quickly answer a vampire's call. If wolves are called by the lord of a land, they will always be worg wolves, while wolves summoned by a common vampire will always be of the common variety.

Most vampires are unable to communicate bi-directionally with the animals they summon and control. The vampire issues mental orders; the animals obey. In general, there is no way the vampire can receive information from these animals. Thus, a vampire typically could not use a summoned bat as a spy to gather information. Of course, this is only true of the "typical" vampire. There are some unique

individuals that *can* communicate bi-directionally with certain animals, or even "speak" their language. I must admit I find this a terrifying concept, because virtually any creature of the forest or hedgerow thus becomes a potential spy or scout for a vampire. Nevertheless, as with the spell *speak with animals*, there remain severe limitations on what the vampire can communicate and learn by this means. The minds of lesser animals are very limited, and are focused almost exclusively on the moment-to-moment requirements of survival. Animal communications reflect these limitations. Thus, it would be impossible to conduct a philosophical discussion with a rabbit, for example, or to instruct that creature to perform complex tasks, those involving judgment and contingencies. Nor would a controlled rat be able to turn a key, and a controlled wolf would likely be unable to remove the bar from a door, and so on.

These limitations of communication and control are *not* sufficient to stop a vampire who can speak with animals from forming close bonds—friendships, as it were—with certain creatures. These animals would consider the vampire a compatriot or a leader, and would obey the monster's commands willingly even after the period of complete mental control ends. Such willing "animal friends" would probably not sacrifice their lives for the vampire, but otherwise would be loyal minions.

Some examples of vampire-controllable animals are rats, bats, wolves, cats, snakes, ravens, vultures, and wasps.

Other Minions

It is an unpleasant point to add that vampires also exercise power over their fellow undead, particularly zombies, ghosts, and the like. Fortunately, they are not omnipotent in these matters, even though they are technically the "kings" of the undead, and many of the more powerful creatures may resist

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being controlled, particularly other vampires. Because of this, the presentment of holy accoutrements can disrupt the vampire's authority. Take not too much heart in this; breaking the vampire's control does not guarantee that the undead will leave you alone.

(Editor's note: For a thorough list of potential animal and other minions, refer to the Monstrous Compendium RAVENLOFT® Appendix.)

Salient Abilities

Many laypersons, and even some experts who should know better, cling to the totally false belief that all vampires are virtually identical. I must admit that I can understand this fixation: if one can list, categorize, and completely describe *all* the attributes and powers of a vampire, the fiend becomes significantly less horrifying. Humans and demihumans find the *unknown* to be much more threatening than the worst of the known. Consider, then, how much more terrifying a vampire becomes when one must admit that

the creature might have abilities and attributes that are totally unexpected. Clinging to the familiar catalog of characteristics is, thus, intellectual laziness—a refusal to take that first step into uncharted territory. It is also a highly self-destructive behavior, particularly among those who would hunt vampires.

As mentioned earlier, most of the discussions to this point refer to the “typical” vampire—and hence are wrong to one degree or another, because the truly typical vampire does not exist. We could, of course, consider “typical” to refer to a broad category of creatures into which most vampires fall. The majority of vampires will show some similarity with this “main sequence” of *vampirism* (if I may so coin a word). The more unusual vampires, thus, fall outside this sequence.

Even those vampires that *do* fall near the “typical” classification sometimes exhibit abilities beyond the norm. These otherwise undifferentiated vampires sometimes show one, or perhaps more than one, unique *salient ability* or power. Research seems to indicate



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that vampires develop such abilities over centuries of unlife. Whether this implies that the salient ability is a learned skill, such as a human's proficiency in some normal endeavor, or that it is merely a gift of prolonged existence, is unknown. Whatever the truth of the matter, salient abilities have rarely been reported in vampires younger than the "Eminent" age category.

In addition, it seems that only vampires who are lords of a land can develop salient abilities. If, by some magical means, a vampire stops being a lord of a land, it immediately loses any and all salient abilities and becomes once again a mundane vampire.

Once again, I feel it necessary to re-emphasize that the following descriptions are *by no means* comprehensive, but I hope that I have provided at least a solid foundation for understanding these creatures of the damned.

One particular vampire may exude such control over its undead minions that they become very difficult to turn aside through the presentment of holy symbols. Thus, a common zombie or animated skeleton might continue to assault a cleric and his party who would normally obliterate the walking undead in their tracks. It is almost as if one were trying to turn the vampire itself. Such an occurrence becomes even more dangerous to the unwary vampire hunter because, occasionally, the undead master is not even present—it simply exercises its salient ability over its minions and they carry its power against holy wards with them into battle. And I believe the older the vampire, the more powerful the undead it may so protect.

One of the more alarming aspects of vampires which I have mentioned is their ability to drain the very essence of life from a victim with a touch. Even more troubling, I have heard reports of certain vampires who possess an enhanced capability. Long-experienced warriors and clerics can, at the touch of one of these ultra-powerful monsters, find themselves as

weak as novices, and those of limited experience may die with a single touch!

Just as some vampires may have superior life-draining abilities, others may enjoy superior regenerative powers. Imagine striking at a cursed beast with all the might of magic and steel that your party can muster, only to watch the vampire's wound heal a minute later! It is fortunate that such puissant creatures are far and few between.

One particularly unpleasant vampire with whom I have battled was one of such ill temper that, at the end, when we had finally traced it to its lair, it flew into a frenzy of rage and became a blur of lethal blows before us. We were struck, it seemed, from all sides at once by this solitary adversary, and our best-executed blows in retaliation found only thin air where we expected its solid body to be. In its rage it moved so quickly, in fact, that we were forced to retreat until the sun rose, and then had to hunt until almost sundown for the creature's resting place.

There are a few vampires who were spellcasters in their previous lives, and they frequently retain those abilities as long as they are not clerics whose deities have forsaken them. But there are also a few vampires who, through unknown means (perhaps their master is a spellcaster, perhaps they rest in a magical place; I cannot say with any authority), gain the innate ability to cast wizard or priest spells. The vampiric quality of immortality, alone, makes this type of vampire quite dangerous. Consider the ramifications of an evil being with innate magical powers and an eternity in which to develop them!

While all vampires retain the facility of animal summoning, a few also have the ability to call upon gargoyles. These despicable monsters are often indiscernible from the ornate architecture which graces many castles, so they may become a sudden and terrible hindrance to vampire hunters who thought they had caught their quarry alone. Gargoyles are so malicious that a vampire need only

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summon them and they will do the rest, without need of instruction. They seem to sense goodness and delight in goading and torturing it.

I have also mentioned previously the ability of the vampire to charm the unsuspecting. A simple look into the eyes of the creature and an unfortunate hunter becomes the vampire's ally or willing victim. Yet an even more frightening prospect is that of a vampire who can even charm you while it is in gaseous form! There are a few of those, by report, who have charmed their pursuers when they believed it to be helpless and on the run. As the vampire swirled into airy mist, it twirled in hypnotic patterns and left the hunting party dumbfounded, glassy-eyed, and altogether helpless. No matter that it was near death; it convinced its new devotees to follow it off a cliff and was rid of the danger.

Another specific vampire who is particularly dangerous while in gaseous form is the one whose life-draining ability remains intact in that form. I have seen a young warrior cry in triumph upon dealing the blow to the vampire that dissolved it into mist, only to find himself immersed in that mist, swooning and dying before my eyes. He suffered no pain, no injury—only a look of dizziness and then death.

Experienced vampire hunters have witnessed their prey taking gaseous form while attempting to escape or when severely injured, but few have seen the creature simply step through a nearby wall while in solid form. Yet, as I have once seen, there is a unique vampire or two who can do just that. Unlike the wizard spell *passwall*, which, as I understand it, requires the presence of even the tiniest fissure in the obstacle, these salient vampires may pass through solid objects as if they were not there!

Still another special talent among some of vampire-kind is that for creating extraordinary fear, even beyond the norm. While most vampires must consciously put fear into their enemies, there are a few select monsters that



are of such horrifying countenance that their mere presence strikes terror into the mortal heart.

One other salient talent which springs to my mind is that of the lucky vampire who can disappear and reappear elsewhere instantly. Such vampires can hardly be fought to the point of dissolution. Rather, at that point in which they consider themselves to be in trouble, they simply "pop" out of view. Although I have witnessed this ability only as a means of escape, I imagine that the vampire could also use it to gain a constant surprise upon its adversaries.

In another vein (if you will pardon the expression), some salient abilities are not so enviable among vampires. For example, there are a small number of vampires who have an entirely unquenchable thirst for human blood. Such monsters ravage the countryside, attacking numerous victims every night, creating perhaps even more new vampires than they would care to. Such creatures, fortunately,

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Powers by Age

Age Category	Fledgling	Mature	Old	Very Old	Ancient	Eminent	Patriarch
Hit Dice	8 + 3	9 + 3	10 + 2	11 + 1	12	13	14
Str*	18/76	19/91	18/00	18/00	19	20	21
Int*	16	16	17	18	18	19	20
Dex*	16	17	17	18	18	19	20
Cha*	14	15	16	17	18	18	19
Movement**	12	15	15	18	18	21	24
Save vs. Charm	-2	-2	-3	-3	-4 (voice)	-4 (voice)	-5 (will)
Weapon Needed to Hit	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4
Regenerated Hit Points/Round	3	3	3	4	4	4	5

Vampires, regardless of age, have a Con of at least 18

* These values are minima—if the vampire had greater ability scores prior to becoming a vampire, the higher score is retained

** Vampires fly (in bat form) at a rate of 18 (C)

do not long survive, for they enrage even the lowliest of the masses to hunt down and exterminate them. Those insatiable blood drinkers are usually the victims of lynch mobs who hunt them *en masse* and destroy their lair and everything in it. While they survive, though, they create an enormous amount of mayhem and suffering.

A related “especially cursed” vampire is one who is enslaved to *blood lust*. The mere sight of blood pitches them into a frenzy which can be satisfied only by the ingestion of that source of blood, virtually at all costs. This is not much of a boon to the vampire if he is attempting to masquerade as a mortal, to live in even the slightest harmony with society. Such a compulsion might be compared to a water-starved man in the desert who stumbles unexpectedly upon an oasis protected by lions—he must have that water, even at the cost of his life. A few unlucky vampires are so affected by blood lust that they need not even have the sight of it; the simple warmth of the human body unhinges them.

Still other unlucky vampires are unable to mask their true natures. With years of unlife,

their skin tone changes perceptibly, becoming waxy or unnatural of color. This infirmity may be concealed with makeup, of course, yet the creature is vulnerable to the inevitable smudge or discerning eye. A rare few become somewhat translucent with time, almost ghostlike, and there is little that makeup can do for them.

Lastly, there are some vampires who become so alienated of nature that their control of animals escapes them. Rather, animals become crazed in the presence of such a vampire, impossible to control, wont to flee. Occasionally, such animals are so enraged by the creature that they willingly, even anxiously help to track him down and attack him if possible (bless them).

Age Categories

Although age categories apply to all vampires in or out of Ravenloft (keeping in mind the exceptions discussed above), it is extremely unlikely that the most powerful of the vampires will be seen outside the demiplane of dread. Quite simply, as a vampire grows older and more evil, the chances of being drawn into Ravenloft increase.

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Undead Minion Control

Type or level of undead	Fledgling	Mature	Old	Very Old	Ancient	Eminent	Patriarch
1 HD	13	10	7	4	1	*	*
Zombie	16	13	10	7	4	1	*
2 HD	19	16	13	10	7	4	1
3-4 HD	20	19	16	13	10	7	4
5 HD	—	20	19	16	13	10	7
Ghast	—	—	20	19	16	13	10
6 HD	—	—	—	20	19	16	13
7 HD	—	—	—	—	20	19	16
8 HD	—	—	—	—	—	20	19
9 HD	—	—	—	—	—	—	20**

Undead of higher HD (including special) are immune to control by vampires of any age category.

* Automatically controlled (no chance of failure)

** Vampires of any age category are automatically entitled to a saving throw, to resist being controlled

The Use of Weapons Against Vampires

When weapons of insufficient enchantment are used against a vampire, it is up to the DM to choose exactly how such an attack will fail. Van Richten's description of the possibilities can be embellished upon by inventive DMs. The best choice is the one that will be most dramatic at the moment.

Shapechanging

The movement rate for a vampire in gaseous form is three less than the vampire's normal movement rate. For example, an **Old** vampire would travel at a rate of 13.

While changing form, a vampire suffers a +4 penalty to Armor Class and a -1 penalty to all saving throws.

Once—and *only* once—in any 24-hour period, a vampire can automatically heal *all* damage it has suffered to that point simply by changing form from human to animal, or vice versa. (It cannot heal itself by assuming gaseous form, however.) In other words, when the transition is complete, the vampire is restored to its full hit-point total. If a vampire in animal form has even a single hit point and reverts back into human form, it regains full points from the

change. If the vampire in animal form is reduced to zero or less hit points, however, it is forced to assume gaseous form.

The statistics for a vampire's two animal forms are as follows:

Wolf form: Int per vampire; AL CE; AC 2; MV 18; HD per vampire; hp per vampire; THAC0 per vampire; #AT 1; Dmg 3-36; SZ L; ML 16.

Bat form: Int per vampire; AL CE; AC 2; MV 3; FI 18 (C); HD per vampire; hp per vampire; THAC0 per vampire; #AT 1; Dmg 2-12; SD Special: -3 penalty to opponents' attack rolls (see the *Monstrous Compendium*, Bat, Giant); SZ M; ML 16.

As with the transition to gaseous form, the vampire suffers a +4 penalty to Armor Class, and a -1 penalty to all saving throws during the change into and out of animal form.

Animal Control

Results of Summoning

Type	Number	Duration
Bats	10-100	2-12 rounds
Rats	10-100	1-10 rounds
Worg wolves**	3-18	2-8 rounds*
Wolves	3-18	2-8 rounds*

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* will remain in area, free-willed, when this period expires

** can be summoned only in Ravenloft, and only by the lord of the land

A summoned swarm of bats will cover a roughly circular area measuring 20' in radius. Anyone caught in this swarm will be blinded, make all attack rolls at -4, have their armor class reduced by 4, and have their movement rate cut in half. The swarm will move at a movement rate of 18, attempting to envelop the greatest number of people. After 2-12 melee rounds, the bats will disperse. Under most circumstances, the bats summoned will be the tiny "flying mouse" variety. In special environments, larger bats such as flying foxes or fruit bats may respond. Only 4-24 of these larger creatures will answer the call.

In tropical climates, vampire bats may answer the summons. If the vampire summons the bats to bedevil foes who are awake, 10-60 of the tiny creatures will arrive, having the same effect as the "standard" swarm of small bats. Vampire bats frequently carry diseases, and anyone bitten by one of the nasty creatures has a 5% chance of contracting a serious disease.

Controlling Undead

Once undead are controlled, the vampire can maintain its dominance indefinitely. A vampire can simultaneously maintain control over a number of undead whose HD are equal to half the vampire's age. For example, a 137-year-old (Mature) vampire can control up to 68 HD of undead.

Salient Abilities

The use of salient abilities is optional, and DMs should use them sparingly. Their purpose is to help create unique and powerful creatures that will keep player characters wary of creatures whose stats the PCs *think* they know. Of course, the DM is free to create other salient abilities to suit his or her needs. The following list of abilities can be used for random

determination, but powerful NPCs are best shaped by the DM's designs and campaigns, enhancing the story as much as the vampire.

If random determination is required, the procedure is as follows: for every full century the vampire has existed beyond the age of 500, roll 1d10. (Thus, for a vampire that has existed 975 years, the DM would roll 1d10 four times.) For each roll that yields a result of 1-4, the vampire receives one salient ability; roll 3d6 and consult the following list. If the vampire already possesses the ability, follow the instructions given under "Reroll." Should a previously gained power be rolled a third time, disregard the result and roll again.

(Roll 3d6:) **3. Innate Magic:** The vampire can cast any selected 1st-level spell at will. There is no limit to the number of times per day the vampire can use the power, and it never requires material components. The spell must be selected when the vampire first gains this ability, and it may never change.

Reroll: The vampire may select an additional 2nd-level spell that it may cast at will. As with the first-level spell, there is no limit to the number of times per day the vampire can cast the spell, and it need not use material components.

4. Passwall: The vampire can pass through walls at will as if they were simply not there, traveling at the movement rate appropriate for gaseous form (although the vampire is *not* gaseous while using this ability). Note that unlike the *passwall* spell, the vampire does not actually create a physical hole in the wall. It merely passes through the wall. The duration of the power is 2d4 melee rounds, and it can be used once per day.

Reroll: The power is the same as above except that it can be used two times per day.

5. Transport: Once per day, the vampire can transport itself as by the wizard spell *dimension door*.

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Reroll: Once per day, the vampire can *teleport* itself, as per the wizard spell of the same name.

6. Charm While Gaseous: When the vampire is in gaseous form, it can attempt to “charm-gaze” with the same restrictions that apply to its normal charm attack. The mist will begin to swirl in hypnotic patterns, attracting the attention of the victim. This is considered a gaze-type attack. The vampire can use this ability once per day.

Reroll: The victim of the gaseous vampire need not be looking at the creature for the charm to be successful. The vampire attempts the charm by “whispering” thoughts into the victim’s mind. This may be used two times per day.

7. Blood Lust: The creature has a mad craving for blood and must have it at all costs. If the creature can see an open wound or other source of fresh blood, the sight drives the monster into a frenzy. While in this frenzy, the

vampire will do whatever it takes to reach the source of blood and drink it. The frenzy is *not* so intense that the creature will put itself into a situation that it knows will certainly destroy it. (The DM must adjudicate this carefully. The monster will attack the largest of adventuring parties in its attempt to drink blood because there is a chance that it can defeat them. It will *not* attempt to ford a river (if running water destroys it) or expose itself to sunlight to do so.) The vampire is sated after having reached the source of blood, and isn’t susceptible to further frenzies for 2d6 turns.

Reroll: So strong is the creature’s craving that it need not see blood to go into a frenzy. The vampire can smell any exposed blood within 20’. If it can either see or smell the blood, but not both, the creature won’t destroy itself in its frenzy, as discussed above. If it can *both* see and smell the blood, however, the frenzy is so strong that the creature will do *anything*, even something obviously self-destructive, in an attempt to reach its goal. The vampire is then immune to further frenzies



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for 1d4 turns.

8. Undead Master: Lesser undead under the control of a vampire are turned as if they were the vampire controlling them. The vampire must be in the immediate area directing the combat.

Reroll: The vampire does not need to be present. It need only deploy its minions to a task.

9. Superior Energy Drain: The vampire drains four life energy levels with a hit, rather than the normal three.

Reroll: The vampire drains five life energy levels with a hit.

10. Fear aura: All living things will fear the vampire because it constantly exudes an enchanted aura of fear. Any living thing within 10' of the creature suffers the same effects as a dragon's fear aura. (Humans and demihumans with fewer than one Hit Die flee for 4d6 minutes. Characters with fewer Hit Dice than the vampire must save vs. petrification or suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls against the creature, and will be in constant fear of it. Characters with more Hit Dice than the vampire are immune to the fear.) The vampire can still attempt to charm-gaze a victim normally. If it fails, however, that person is immediately overcome with fear and may not be charmed by the vampire again that day.

Reroll: The fear aura has a range of 15', and even characters with more Hit Dice than the vampire must save vs. petrification or suffer a -2 penalty to hit. In addition, characters with fewer Hit Dice than the vampire make their saving throw with a -3 penalty. So strong is the fear effect that the creature is unable to charm a victim by gaze or by voice. A Patriarch can still charm a victim by will.

11. Vampiric Rage: Once per day, the vampire can fly into a *vampiric rage*. The rage will last for 2d4 melee rounds, during which time the

vampire can make two physical attacks per round. This benefit does not affect spell-like or spellcasting attacks.

Reroll: The vampire not only enjoys double normal attacks while enraged, but its AC is improved by two (i.e., AC 1 becomes -1). The vampire may use this power three times per day.

12. Improved Saves: The vampire receives a bonus of +1 to all its saving throws (in addition to any other bonuses it might receive).

Reroll: The vampire receives a bonus of +2 to all its saving throws.

13. Superior Regeneration: The vampire regenerates two more hit points per melee round than it would normally.

Reroll: The vampire regenerates four more hit points per melee round than it would normally.

14. Animal Frenzy: Natural (non-monstrous) animals within 50' of the vampire sense the creature's evil nature, which drives them into a panic. This makes trained animals skittish, nervous, and nearly impossible to control, and causes wild or untrained animals to flee.

Reroll: So great is the evil nature the vampire exudes that animals are able to track a vampire. Only predatory or hunting animals (such as wolves or dogs) will willingly track a vampire. The base chance for success in tracking the vampire is 50%. The following cumulative modifiers apply:

- Each hour since the vampire's passing: -10%
- Tracking over muddy or slushy ground: -5%
- Light drizzling rain: -5%
- Downpour: -10%
- Animal is a trained hunting animal: +10%

Note that the vampire can assume gaseous form or fly away as a bat in order to avoid being tracked.

15. Skin Tone: Years of undeath have affected

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the vampire physically. The monster's skin has turned stark white, identifying its nature to anyone viewing the creature. (The creature could still disguise its nature using makeup, of course.)

Reroll: The vampire's flesh is translucent. Any light source of equal or greater intensity than a torch will shine through the creature's skin and flesh, silhouetting its skeleton. As above, the creature can attempt to disguise this with makeup. Masks and clothing remain normal.

16. Gargoyle Control: The vampire can summon and control 1d4 gargoyles. The monsters will arrive in 2d4 melee rounds and will remain in the vampire's control for 2d4 melee rounds. When the period of control expires, the gargoyles will remain in the area as free-willed monsters. There must be gargoyles available to be summoned (within 1 mile) for this power to be successful.

Reroll: Gargoyles need not be in the area for the summons to be successful. The vampire has the power to transform any native rock in the immediate area (maximum of 1 mile) into an

appropriate number of gargoyles. The transformation takes 2d4 rounds to occur.

17. Energy Drain While Gaseous: The vampire can drain life energy from a victim even when in gaseous form. The monster can affect only one victim per round with this attack. By surrounding the victim, it drains *one* life level but does no physical damage.

Reroll: The power is the same as above except the vampire drains *two* life levels from the victim.

18. Extra Feeding: The vampire must feed twice as frequently as normal (see the section on feeding).

Reroll: The vampire must feed *three times* as frequently as normal.

All vampires with salient abilities are subject to the rules governing mundane vampires unless their special power specifically counters it. For example, a vampire that has gained the *transport* power cannot *dimension* door into a sanctified place that it has not received permission to enter.



CREATING NEW VAMPIRES

I can still remember my first night in this form," the vampire said quietly, "even though it was five centuries ago. It was a mixture of joy and horror as I contemplated both my escape from death and the nature of that escape. I still remember keenly the feel of the chill air on my face as I broke out of the earth into the moonlight, and the raging fire in the pit of my stomach that was my hunger. . . ."

—From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richter

Traditional Methods

According to most related tales, a vampire can create another simply by killing a mortal either with its life-energy draining power (draining all the character's experience

levels) or by exhausting the mortal of his or her blood supply. If the victim's body is not properly destroyed, it arises as a vampire, under the control of the creature who killed it, on the second night following the burial. As an aside, I pose the question: What exactly does it mean when the victim "arises" as a vampire? When the sun sinks fully below the horizon on the second night after the burial, the victim in the grave "awakens." The occupant of the grave is now a Fledgling vampire with all the characteristics, powers, and weaknesses which accompany that condition. Most vampires remember the instant of their death and the nature of their killer, and understand immediately their new nature. Certainly their new hunger gives them a good idea of what they have become.

They must immediately free themselves from their grave, either by breaking it open from within or by assuming gaseous form and diffusing out. If this is impossible, the vampire will die in about a week unless it can somehow summon minions such as a pack of wolves to dig it out. Once free of its grave, the vampire's first and only priority is to feed. Only after it has fed sufficiently *might* it remember to conceal the fact that the grave has been opened and is now empty.

There are several *nontraditional* processes of creating new vampires as well, but these are much less widely known. One is in the taking of a "bride" or a "groom." I shall discuss that peculiar marriage at length in Chapter XI, "Relationships Between Vampires." Other methods of proliferation are as follows:

Vampiric Saliva

This method is, thankfully, exceptionally rare. The saliva of certain vampires contains various neurological substances. First among these is a slow-acting but highly lethal poison. A single bite from a vampire can inject enough toxin to kill a robust warrior. Unlike most poisons, however, this toxin does



CREATING NEW VAMPIRES

not kill the subject for several days. Few people make the connection between the vampire bite and the victim's collapse, hence the body is quite likely to be buried improperly. Meanwhile, within the dead body of the victim, other necrological agents from the vampire's saliva are having their effect. Several nights after the victim's death, he or she comes to consciousness as a vampire.

Vampiric Curses

Some of the monsters also have the dread ability to impart vampirism via a curse. With their voice and their gaze they are able to afflict a victim with a terrible wasting disease that drains body strength. After a number of days, the victim dies and then rises as a vampire the night after burial. The only means of saving the victim known to me is to destroy the cursing vampire before the victim finally succumbs. Of course, the body can be destroyed to prevent it from rising, but this is obviously too late to help the victim.

In general, any victim brought to death by any draining effects of a vampire, but *not* by normal combat or spell damage, is a candidate to become undead.

Saliva Poisoning

A character bitten by this type of vampire is entitled to a saving throw vs. poison. It is best if the DM makes this roll secretly. If the save is successful, the victim suffers only 2d4 points of damage; should this be enough to kill the victim on the spot, he or she *won't* rise as a vampire. If the character fails the save, 2d4 days later he or she will suffer sudden heart failure and drop instantly and painlessly dead. Within 1d4 days of burial the character will rise as a Fledgling vampire, under the control of its killer.

Vampiric Curses

Some vampires have the ability to cast a special version of the unique priest spell, *divine*

curse, once per day or even less frequently (DM's choice). The effects of this curse are always the same. Should the victim fail a saving throw vs. spells, every time the sun rises thereafter he or she loses 1 point of Str. When the victim reaches 0 Str, he or she dies and will rise the next night as a vampire under the control of the monster who cast the curse. If the vampire that inflicted the curse is destroyed, the curse comes to an end and the character regains 1 point of Str per day. This is a particularly unpleasant effect, and vampires able to use this curse should be few and far between.

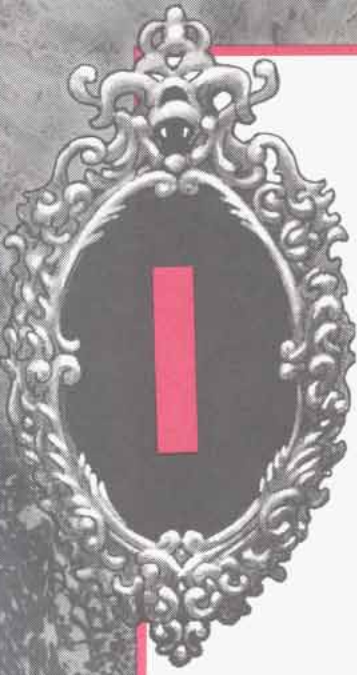
Vampires With Surviving "Goodness"

It's entirely up to the DM if a particular newly-formed vampire retains some part of his or her mortal attitudes, emotions, and beliefs upon the transition to undeath. For DMs who like concrete rules, try the following:

If a character is killed by a vampire, and the creating vampire is destroyed or leaves the area before the victim rises as a vampire, roll 8d6 and compare the result to the victim's Wis. If the result is equal to or greater than the victim's Wis, the newly-formed vampire is completely and utterly Chaotic Evil. If the dice roll is *less* than the victim's Wis, however, there's a possibility that the new Fledgling vampire might retain some portion of its previous world view, *possibly* including alignment. (See Chapter XII, "The Mind of the Vampire.")

IMPORTANT NOTE: This *does not* mean that a PC who becomes a vampire can remain a PC! The only purpose of this "rule" is to give DMs the opportunity to add some role-playing spice to vampires. To repeat, *a PC who becomes a vampire immediately becomes an NPC, under the complete control of the DM.*

VAMPIRE WEAKNESSES



was highly impressed by our neighbor when he stopped by for his first visit. He was a very well-spoken chap, exceedingly polite, and almost over-formal for simple folk such as we. For example, when I responded to his knock on our front door, the gentleman simply stood on the doorstep and conversed, even though I stood back and opened the door to allow him to enter. When I asked why he preferred to talk outside, he responded that his upbringing had indoctrinated him with the belief that one should never enter another's home unless one is specifically and formally invited. So charmed was I by this olden-style formality that I immediately bade him enter. . . .

—From the journal of Vidimus Tansim

My discussion of those few salient abilities that are a hindrance to the vampire seems a natural bridge to the subject at hand: that of their general weaknesses. Do not take too much heart from this chapter! Vampires are among the most powerful of the undead, possessing great strength and numerous seeming magical abilities. Coupled with this is their inhuman tenacity and their undying hunger. Taking all into account, vampires should surely be masters of all they survey, destroying civilization and life as they see fit.

It is very fortunate for (demi)humanity that vampires have a number of weaknesses that can be exploited. Again, those who would hunt vampires should be cautioned. These creatures are of great might and terrible cunning. To confront one is literally to stare death in the face. Not only must the hunter overcome the monsters' strengths, but also must he master his own weaknesses; almost surely the vampire will discover and capitalize upon them.

Some of the most common vampiric vulnerabilities are holy symbols, blessed accoutrements, sanctified places, mirrors,

garlic, and running water.

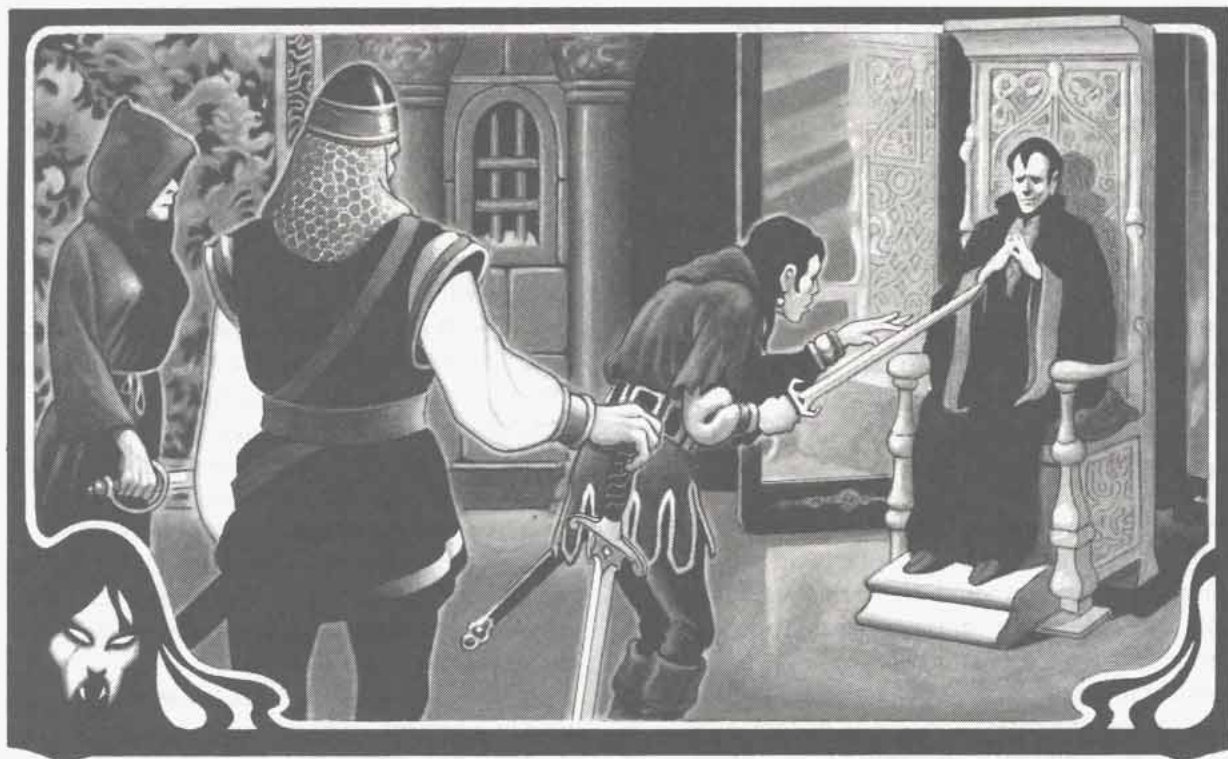
One thing that the potential vampire hunter should remember is that not all vampires are affected by the same things. The discussions below relate to "typical" vampires—which, of course, is an oxymoron; no vampire is "typical." In practice, there is no guarantee that any individual vampire will suffer from any of the above "standard" weaknesses.

This holds particularly true with respect to uniquely powerful vampires, or the heads or progenitors of vampire lines. (A "vampire line" is defined as "all those 'subsidiary' vampires created by the same progenitor vampire, or by vampires who were created by the progenitor, etc." A progenitor is a vampire whose creator has been destroyed, or one who was not created by another vampire, but came into being by some other method.) These creatures tend to be unusual and will commonly possess strengths and weaknesses altogether different from the "standard" vampire.

This same is true for the original set of vampires created personally by a head of a vampire line. These creatures are referred to as the *first brood* and comprise the progenitor's strongest and best "children." Typically, a first brood will be approximately five-to-ten vampires in size. The first brood will exhibit many of the same qualities as their progenitor, but modified in form. For example, if the head of a vampire line were able to shapechange into the form of a fly, his first brood might be able to summon and command swarms of flies. As another example, if the progenitor were held at bay by anyone reading from a holy book, the sound of such readings might cause physical harm to members of the monster's first brood.

To repeat, any mortal who comes into contact with the head of a vampire line, or other such uniquely powerful creature, should exercise the greatest of caution. Such an encounter may require many months of painstaking research as the hunter attempts to glean some hint as to the vampire's unique weaknesses.

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Keeping a Vampire at Bay

Althea kept the mirror between us and the blood-sucking fiend, as we instructed. At first the vampire circled, glaring at us in hatred, seemingly unable to approach the silvered glass which Althea kept always before its eyes. But then suddenly a huge bat swept down from the night sky, claws reaching for Althea's eyes. In her attempt to protect herself, she let the mirror fall, and it shattered on the stony ground. And in that instant, the vampire was among us, and the screaming began. . . .

—From the journal of Donal Pembroke

Ideally, any vampire encountered should be destroyed, because such evil is corruption in the heart of the land. This, however, is beyond the abilities of most mortals, and the primary goal becomes one of survival. Fortunately, there are a number of ways that might allow mortals to hold a vampire at bay, or even drive it away.

Good Holy Symbols

There is no consensus among experts as to exactly why the holy symbols of good-aligned faiths have such an effect on vampires. No one can argue with the fact that this effect exists, however.

The majority of philosophers believe that the symbol itself is not significant; *it is the faith of the person holding the symbol that is important.* The precepts of any good-aligned faith will classify the vampire as a blasphemer against the gods and against nature. Thus, any pious follower of such a faith will view a vampire with righteous outrage. According to these philosophers, it is this righteous abhorrence, of which the holy item is just a symbol, that so affects a vampire.

It should be noted that a holy symbol need not be a traditional one, such as a cross or star, to have power over a vampire. Any symbol of a deity dedicated to the precepts of Goodness will serve the purpose.

Again, what seems to be more important

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than the actual condition or shape of the symbol is the faith and belief of the person presenting it. If the person's faith in his or her god is weak, then the symbol's power over the living dead is also weak. Therefore, good-aligned holy symbols can be used, to limited effect, by laypersons (that is, people who are not priests) or by priests of insufficient experience to truly turn a vampire. This is usually referred to as "presentment," to distinguish it from true turning. Presentment is discussed below.

Evil Holy Symbols

As with other undead, vampires are sometimes subject to control by priests of evil-aligned faiths. Just as a good-aligned priest can use a holy symbol in an attempt to turn or banish a vampire, so can an evil-aligned priest use his symbol in an attempt to control the vampire. In both cases, the priest's faith and willpower are key issues, and the outcome is never certain.

With lesser undead, should the evil priest establish control, that control is virtually complete. Not so with a vampire; a controlled vampire retains its own free will, and acts in much the same way as a mortal might when threatened with physical pain. It will obey the letter, but not necessarily the spirit, of any orders it is given, and will always try to pervert the controlling priest's intent so as to break the control. Only if the priest's and the vampire's desires run in perfect parallels will the monster truly and wholeheartedly cooperate. In the vast majority of cases, the vampire will use its cunning and considerable powers to reverse the situation, likely without the priest's awareness, so that the slave will become the master. . . .

There is no equivalent of presentment with evil-aligned holy symbols. A vampire is totally unaffected by an evil symbol presented by a layperson or by a priest of insufficient experience.

Turning Versus Presentment

In addition to priestly turning as discussed above, many vampires are also subject to the presentment of a good-aligned holy symbol by a layperson or by a priest of insufficient experience to actually turn the creature. It should be noted that presentment of a holy symbol will never drive a vampire away; it will only keep it at bay temporarily.

As with actual turning, presentment depends almost exclusively on the faith and the force of personality of the person presenting the symbol. Even the slightest wavering of faith or dip in confidence can allow the vampire to ignore the effects of a holy symbol. A presented holy symbol in the hands of the most virtuous and pious believer will force a vampire to remain at least five feet away from the character holding the symbol.

Whether or not the item is actually being used in a turning or presentment attempt, vampires hate the sight of good-aligned holy symbols. This hatred usually manifests itself in an unwillingness to look at or touch the symbol, or to flinch away from it. A masquerading vampire must exercise much self-control to suppress this natural reaction. Vampires seem distracted and apparently have difficulty concentrating when a good-aligned holy symbol is within their field of vision.

Blessed Accoutrements

In addition to holy symbols, there are a number of other religious items that can be used to exert control over the majority of vampires. Although they are usually not as effective as holy symbols, they can be used in a pinch.

These items, collectively called *blessed accoutrements*, vary in nature and form, depending on the religion or mythos from which they come. Regardless of the mythos, however, to be effective, blessed accoutrements must be associated with a faith that reveres a good-aligned deity. These items must have

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been *blessed* by a priest of that religion. (Note that an item that is not directly associated with the faith, but has nevertheless been *blessed*, does *not* qualify as a blessed accoutrement.) Blessed accoutrements can *never* be used to turn a vampire; only to keep it at bay. Although a priest's *bless* spell normally has a temporary duration of approximately six minutes, a *blessed* holy item remains *blessed*—*only* for the purposes of holding a vampire at bay or warding a portal—until something befalls the item that would desecrate it. (Events that would qualify as desecration vary from faith to faith, although there are certain actions that would *always* fill the bill, all of which are too unpleasant to discuss here.)

Some examples of blessed accoutrements are holy wafers, holy water, prayer beads, blessed books or tomes, and robes or clothing.

Blessed accoutrements can occasionally be used as weapons uniquely able to mark and harm vampires. This will be discussed in the next chapter, "Destroying a Vampire," under the heading "*Stigmata*."

Additional Protection

There are three additional items that are useful for keeping vampires at bay. Once again, one must realize that not all vampires will be subject to these items.

The state of undeath offers many powers and abilities denied to mortals. The connection with the Negative Material Plane also causes vast changes in a mortal turned into a vampire. Despite these issues, however, there is one vital fact that can always be used against a vampire: *at one time it was a mortal*.

It is this fact that likely explains a vampire's negative reaction to mirrors. If a mirror is presented boldly and with conviction to a vampire, the monster will recoil from it. Exactly why is this? It appears that vampires often resent their undead state, and yearn for the warmth of humanity and feeling of being alive. Mirrors, because they do not reflect the image

of vampires, remind the creatures in a most painful manner of their undead state.

Garlic also has a strong effect on vampires. The reasons for this are unclear, but some innate quality in the plant causes vampires to cower from it. Some sages believe the reason is simply that vampires find the odor extremely offensive—so offensive, in fact, that a vampire will never approach any significant quantity of garlic, but I find this explanation much too simplistic. Perhaps vampires find garlic to be toxic to their necrological processes, as wolfsbane (actually aconite) is to werewolves. In any case, garlic can be used as a partial protection against the monsters.

Many legends tell of vampires being kept at bay by running water, and conclude that running water somehow has some warding power over vampires as does garlic and mirrors. As far as I can tell, these tales are probably true with regard to the base events, but totally wrong in their conclusions. It is true that all but the most powerful



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vampires—generally speaking, Eminent and Patriarchs—are quickly destroyed if they are immersed in running water. Vampires are, of course, aware of this vulnerability, and hence will avoid running water if there is a chance they can be immersed in it. This means that vampires will be particularly wary of bridges, stepping stones, ferries, and other means of crossing running water. (After all, bridges can collapse, ferries can sink, etc.) If the benefit is great enough, vampires *will* risk such means of crossing running water, but will always do whatever it takes to minimize the risk. If circumstances allow, however, the fiends will shapechange to bat form and fly across a river. Thus it can be seen that an aversion to crossing running water is not a strict prohibition, but merely a rational choice.

There is one exception: a vampire in gaseous form is *strictly prohibited* from crossing a body of running water that is more than three feet wide.

Myths and legends tell of other items or situations that can drive away vampires or keep them at bay. Among these are wood ash, dove feathers, and the singing of a small child. It is not known if these items are truly effective against vampires. I believe that these tales actually describe idiosyncratic weaknesses of certain individual vampires, which should not and cannot be generalized to all of the foul race.

Sanctified Places

Although the realization caused my gorge to rise, I suddenly perceived the only way I might escape the fiend that pursued me.

There was one fresh grave in the graveyard, one that had been closed this afternoon.

In desperation, I cleared away the fresh earth, exposing the coffin. I could hear the unnaturally fast footsteps of the vampire as I climbed into the coffin with its cold occupant and closed the lid. Of course I was unable to re-cover the coffin with

dirt, but I prayed—more fervently than I had ever prayed before—that it would make no difference.

—From the journal of Zylara Windermere

There are certain structures and locales that can strongly influence or prohibit vampires. These structures and locales can best be described as *sanctified places*. As a general rule, these locations are rare.

In order for a building, structure, or area to be considered a sanctified place and to hold power over a vampire, it must be one of two specific types of establishment.

The first type of safe house from the vampire is one that is expressly *owned*. The location must be owned by an individual or strongly defined group. If the location is inhabited, it must be inhabited by the owner or by a member of the owning group. The following are examples of locations that meet this criterion:

- a house, owned by the residents
- a monastery, owned by the order of priests that dwells within it
- a graveyard, owned by the priestly order that oversees it

The following locations would *not* qualify:

- an inn, because the residents staying in the various rooms do not own them
- a public area, such as a village green
- a town's public graveyard, because the area would generally be "owned" by an elected (and hence ephemeral) town council
- a trading coaster's warehouse, because the building is owned by a "corporation," which is a legal fiction

Churches, temples, and the like, even when officially owned and operated by amorphous groups such as a town council, qualify because they are symbolically owned by the deity to which the buildings are dedicated.

The second type of place that is off-limits to a vampire is one that is in some way *hallowed*.

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In the case of personal homes, they are the retreat or sanctuary of the owner, and are inherently hallowed. Churches and temples are obviously hallowed by their nature. Note that, in this case, the word “hallowed” does not *necessarily* mean religious or holy; rather, it means “respected” or “venerated.”

The following list of structures/areas gives a general idea of what *might* be considered hallowed ground. As with holy symbols, the types of hallowed ground vary with different cultures and religions:

- house or home
- church
- holy burial sites
- hallowed hunting grounds

In general, even the most powerful priest is unable to sanctify a location that does not have some tradition of sanctity or veneration associated with it. Thus, even a high priest could not buy the title to an abandoned estate—actually the lair of a vampire—and then somehow sanctify it, just to aggravate the vampire if nothing else. Unless the estate had some tradition of sanctity attached to it, the priest would have to establish the building as a temple, attract a body of other priests and a congregation, hold services, etc. Then and only then might the building be considered sanctified. (And if you think the vampire in the catacombs would sit still for that, then you would not last very long in the lands of mist. . . .)

Homes

Homes, that is, houses or other spaces where individuals or families have their permanent residence, enforce their own restrictions on a vampire. Homes are not actually sanctified places (except in the most unusual of cases) and so give priests or laypersons no benefits when turning or holding at bay vampires and other undead. They do, however, give those within a unique protection against vampires.

In short, a vampire is completely unable to enter a home unless invited by a *resident*; the creature is simply unable to physically enter the residence. There are a few important notes that apply. First of all, to qualify as a “resident” of a home, a person must have been invited to live there indefinitely. This can be the actual home owner, the spouse, a relative of the owner, a live-in servant, etc. A guest of the owner does not qualify as a resident. Second, the invitation must be overt, stated in words. An implied invitation, such as an open door, is not sufficient. A single invitation to enter a home will allow the vampire to enter that home but *once*, immediately after the invitation is extended. The sole exception is if the invitation is offered by the “man of the house”—the oldest member of the household. If it is the “man of the house” who formally offers the invitation to a vampire, the creature is thereafter always free to enter that home without further invitation. Third, just because a vampire is unable to actually enter a house, those within are not totally protected from the creature’s wrath. A vampire has a number of options open to it. For example, it could attempt to charm someone inside the house, or otherwise convince them to officially invite the creature to enter. It could summon minions, who would *not* be forbidden to enter the house. Alternatively, it could burn the house to the ground or otherwise force its potential victims to leave the structure. In short, fleeing to one’s home to escape a vampire offers temporary protection at best.

In the lands of mist there are a number of exceptions to the above remarks. Strahd Von Zarovich is the absolute ruler of Barovia and thereby owns all properties contained in it. This mighty vampire lord can enter any building or structure that he wishes, simply because he “owns” them all.

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Graves

Many experts find the statement hard to believe, but it seems that the majority of vampires, the "lords of the undead," are unable to physically open the grave, crypt or other final resting place of another who was interred according to the precepts of the religion the person followed in life. (They can obviously open their *own* resting place with impunity.) Although surprising on the surface, when viewed symbolically, this makes perfect sense. An interment site is, in one manner of speaking, the only property owned by its inhabitant, for eternity. And, assuming the deceased was interred with the formality and ritual associated with his or her faith while alive, the interment site is thus sanctified, at least to a degree. For these reasons, a "typical" vampire is unable to enter, break open or otherwise physically disturb an interment site without the express permission of the "inhabitant" (who, obviously, is unable to give it).

This does *not* prevent a vampire from magically animating the inhabitant of a grave, however, and then having the animated corpse break out of the interment site. The restriction also does not apply to unfortunates who were interred without benefit of clerical rites and rituals: bodies buried in a mass grave, criminals who were excommunicated before or after death, etc.

Holy Symbols

To be effective, a presented holy symbol must be from a Good-aligned religion, and must be presented boldly by a character who is actually faithful to that religion. The DM should adjudicate this according to previous role-playing. "Sudden converts" to a faith to which they normally just give lip service will find themselves "vampire fodder."

The character then makes a Cha check on 4d6, modified by +1 for every age category of the vampire above Old. This means that a character trying to hold an Eminent at bay must make a Cha check with +3 added to the



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dice roll. If the dice roll is equal to or less than the character's Charisma, the vampire is held at bay for 2d4 melee rounds. If the DM wishes, some of the modifiers below may be applied:

Modifiers for Turning Vampires

Situation	Modifier
Priest has major spell access to the <i>Sun Sphere</i>	+2
Priest has minor spell access to the <i>Sun Sphere</i>	+1
Priest is using a makeshift holy symbol	-1
Priest is using a <i>blessed</i> or finely-crafted holy symbol	+1
This specific vampire has previously caused the priest to fail a horror or fear check (Ravenloft only)	-2
Priest is any Neutral alignment	-1
Priest's player role-plays the turning/controlling attempt in an exemplary manner	+1

In order for a holy symbol to qualify as *finely crafted*, it must be made of some precious metal or a material that is sacred to the priest's religion. For example, a priest of the goddess Mielikki (from the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting) would probably use a symbol made of finely-wrought wood, preferably still living, rather than of gold or platinum. In any event, the symbol must be constructed by a priest of at least 7th level, and takes a minimum of one week to prepare. If the symbol is a precious metal, it must be of at least 1,000 gold pieces in value. If it is of some other material, it must be of the finest quality possible. For example, the wooden holy symbol would have to be made of some rare and particularly sacred tree and would be difficult to find. A makeshift holy symbol, in contrast, would be something that was hastily put together.

The role-playing modifier has been included in the interest of colorful game play. This is an optional modifier that allows the DM to reward

players who really get into character—for example, if the player stands up at the gaming table and declaims something like, "Profane Creature of Darkness, in the name of Torm I expel you from the domain of the living." If the DM is running a game that is not heavily role-play oriented, this modifier can be excluded.

A number of other modifiers may be applied to the die roll, depending on the personal power of the vampire in question, the priest's faith and willpower at the moment of turning, any prior and unsuccessful conflicts between the priest and a vampire, and a number of other factors. DMs should feel free to add other modifiers that make sense in their campaigns.

Because the lands of Ravenloft are a physical manifestation of evil incarnate, the effects of sanctified land and structures are diluted as compared to those in other locales. Normally, when in Ravenloft, undead are turned according to the *Turning Undead* table presented in Chapter III in the RAVENLOFT® boxed set. If the vampire is on sanctified ground, however, the standard *Turning Undead* table from the *Player's Handbook* is used (making it easier for priests to turn the monsters).

Sanctified places also give the following modifiers to related functions (in or out of Ravenloft):

- presentment of holy symbol: +2 on Cha check
- vampire touching/manipulating holy item: -2 on saving throw
- vampire passing portal warded by *blessed* item: -1 on saving throw

In addition, when the vampire is in a sanctified place, it can't inflict the -2 penalty on turning subservient creatures, as described on page 15 of the boxed set.

Players and DMs should bear in mind that keeping a vampire at bay does not negate its ability to attack the person presenting a holy symbol. The creature could hurl objects,

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attempt to gaze-charm the character with the symbol, summon minions to deal with the offender, or a host of other actions. A successful presentment simply means the vampire cannot approach within 5' of the holy symbol. (If the vampire is somehow forced to come within five feet of the character, the effect of the presentment ends.) Note that a vampire *could* attack with a long polearm, such as a spear.

If a Good-aligned holy symbol is within a vampire's field of vision, it suffers a +1 penalty to its Initiative for as long as it can see the item. A vampire seeing a Good-aligned holy symbol will normally show some sign of distaste or hatred—hissing and spitting in anger, flinching away as if in pain, etc.—unless it successfully saves vs. spells. A successful saving throw means the creature has suppressed its natural reaction. If it successfully saves, the creature can view the item without effect from then on.

Vampires find it very difficult to touch, move, destroy, or otherwise manipulate Good-aligned holy symbols; even covering the item or removing it from view requires a great effort of will. To touch or otherwise manipulate a holy symbol, the vampire must successfully save vs. spells. This save is separate from the roll to see if it can suppress its visible reaction. A successful save means the monster can touch the item *this time*. Any subsequent attempt to touch or manipulate the item requires another save.

Note that vampires gain a bonus to both the above saving throws as they progress in age. The monster receives a bonus of +1 for every age category past Fledgling. Thus, a Mature vampire gains a +1 bonus, while a Patriarch receives a bonus of +6!

Blessed Accoutrements

The procedure for holding a vampire at bay using a *blessed* accoutrement is the same as that for using a holy symbol. Use the table for Turning Undead in the *DMG* (or, when playing in the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting, use the

table in Chapter III of the boxed set), but with a +2 penalty to reflect the lesser power of a *blessed* accoutrement. The dice roll is *further* modified by +1 for every age category of the vampire above Old. If the dice roll is successful, the vampire is held at bay for 2d4 melee rounds at a distance of five feet. If the DM wishes, some of the modifiers from the **Modifiers for Turning Vampires** list above may be applied.

Another common use for blessed accoutrements is to keep a vampire from entering a certain place. These evil creatures have great trouble passing through a portal that is adorned or protected by *blessed* accoutrements. A portal so protected will keep a vampire from entering for 2d4 rounds. After that time, the creature must make a saving throw vs. spells in order to enter. This saving throw is modified by a bonus of +1 for every age category of the vampire beyond Fledgling.

Below is a list of typical accoutrements that are frequently *blessed*. Keep in mind that these are examples, and the collective list of accoutrements would be as varied as the number of existing religions. Two die-roll modifiers are included with each item. The first is applied to the Cha check die roll when someone tries to use an accoutrement to hold a vampire at bay; the second is applied to the vampire's saving throw roll when it attempts to pass through a portal warded by a *blessed* accoutrement:

- holy wafer (+2/-2)
- holy water (+3/-3)
- prayer beads (0/0)
- blessed book or tome (+1/-1)
- robes or clothing (-1/+1)

Mirrors

A character can also use a mirror to keep a vampire at bay, in much the same way as a holy symbol, except the Cha check is made with a +1 penalty. A successful roll means that the vampire is kept at bay for 2d4 rounds at a range of 5', but *only* if the mirror is directly

VAMPIRE WEAKNESSES

between the character holding it and the vampire, so that the vampire can see its reflection (or lack thereof). The vampire can avoid the effects by "flanking" the character with the mirror, by shattering the mirror in some manner, or by forcing the character to drop the mirror. As with other means of keeping a vampire at bay, modifiers from the **Modifiers for Turning Vampires** table can be used.

Causing Damage With Holy Symbols and Holy Water

In order to damage the vampire with a holy symbol, the presenter must make a successful Cha check on 1d20 and then touch some part of the vampire's skin with the symbol. Generally, this requires a successful hit vs. AC 4, although this can change, depending on the circumstances. If the Cha check and the attack roll are both successful, the vampire sustains 2d6 points of damage and is kept at bay for 2d4 rounds.

The character wielding the holy symbol *must* be of Good or Neutral alignment. Vampires suffer no damage from a holy symbol wielded

by an Evil character. Below are some optional modifiers to the Cha roll:

- Character is CN, N or LN: +4
- Character is CG or NG: +3
- Character is LG, but does not worship the deity to whom the holy symbol is dedicated: +2
- Character is a priest who worships the deity to whom the holy symbol is dedicated: -2

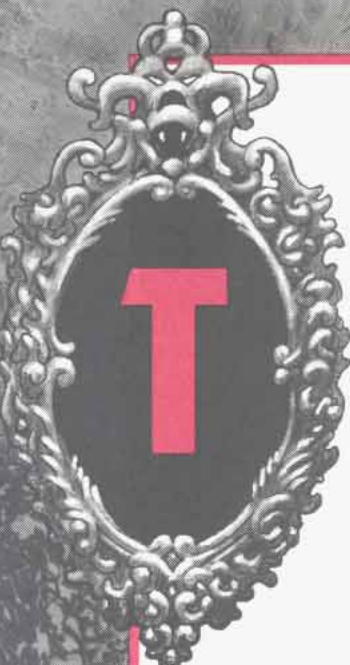
Damage inflicted by a thrown vial of holy water, or by any other contact with holy water, is 1d6 + 1 hit points. In addition to taking damage, a vampire will be *kept at bay* for 2d4 rounds after any direct hit from holy water.

Controlling a Vampire

When an Evil priest tries to control a vampire, use the appropriate (*DMG* or *RAVENLOFT*® boxed set) Turning (Undead) table. A success on this table means that the priest has established control over the vampire. As with good priests turning vampires, the optional rule of percent spell failure can be applied to evil priests attempting to dominate a vampire.



DESTROYING A VAMPIRE



The small boat capsized, and all of us—my colleagues and the fiend—were cast into the torrent. This was our opportunity. As the rocks battered at us and the rapids threatened to drown us, we grabbed at the hissing, screaming monster and struggled to immerse it. Its strength was inhuman, and the wounds it inflicted on us were terrible. But we withstood it as the only certain way of destroying the hideous creature.

We thought we had succeeded when the thing wailed as if in agony, and its body shifted in our grip—but the creature had become a bat. We grabbed for it, but it slipped from our grasp and flew away into the night sky. At that point we knew that even if we survived the upcoming rapids, our troubles were only just begun. . . .

—From the journal of Vraymar Orcbane

Driving a vampire away or keeping it at bay is quite difficult enough. Unfortunately, in the majority of cases this will only guarantee that the fiend will approach again, at a time of its choosing and when you are least prepared. The ultimate goal is to significantly damage and then destroy the creature. Unfortunately, this feat is much more difficult to achieve than it is to discuss. However, the creatures are not wholly omnipotent and there are, thanks to all that's holy, some means to strike them down! That, of course, is my intent in committing this guide to pen and ink.

Of course, the easiest way to destroy a vampire is to be sure that it never rises at all. When a person is killed by a vampire, as I have postulated, it is almost certain that that person will become a vampire as well. The best way to prevent a victim from rising as a vampire is to completely destroy the body rather than bury it. If the body *must* be buried for religious or other reasons, there are other ways that it can be

prevented from becoming a vampire. The way most certain is to drive a stake through the heart of the body, fill its mouth with a consecrated substance, and cut off its head.

Remember: the vampire hunter who relies upon tradition is almost certainly doomed to become the thing he hunts!

Wooden Stakes

Folk tales make this means of destruction sound much simpler than it really is. In fact, there are several significant issues that must be addressed. First, the stake must be prepared from wood. Ash is normally the appropriate wood, but certain vampires may be immune to ash, and another wood must be used. The appropriate wood may vary depending upon the individual vampire, and will often be somehow related to the creature's personal history (how it became a vampire, etc.). For example, a vampire who lives in a graveyard might only be killed with a stake of yew wood.

In the night, when a vampire's power is at its height, a wooden stake is largely ineffectual. For obvious reasons it is best to confront a vampire while it is unconscious in its sanctuary. Unfortunately, this is not always possible and the vampire hunter must be prepared to face a conscious and active vampire.

If attacking a conscious and unrestrained vampire, the stake must be manually driven through its heart. In other words, the stake must be used like a dagger or a short sword and driven into the chest of the monster, who will hardly remain still while someone positions the stake and prepares to strike it home with a mallet. Even this is harder than it sounds; as evidenced by its inhuman strength, the muscles of a vampire are much more sturdy, perhaps more dense, than their mortal equivalents. Thus, the attacker must have great strength in order to drive the stake into the monster's chest cavity. In addition, it must be remembered that the heart is a relatively small target, and very

DESTROYING A VAMPIRE

difficult to hit if the vampire is moving. Even if the vampire is somehow restrained, it is far from a sure thing that the attacker can drive the stake manually through the heart.

If the vampire is unconscious or immobilized, success with a stake and mallet is still not guaranteed—if the stake is ever removed from the vampire's body, the creature will rise again. To prevent the monster from ever rising again, the attacker must decapitate the vampire. Otherwise, the possibility of it rising to stalk the lands still exists.

Blessed Weapons

Weapons that have been *blessed* by a priest are a special case: for the duration of the *bless* spell, a *blessed* but otherwise nonmagical weapon *can* strike a vampire. It inflicts only minimal damage, however, unless wielded by a warrior of exceptional strength.

Running Water

Many tales state that vampires are exceptionally vulnerable to running water. For most vampires this is at least partially true. A vampire that is totally immersed in rapidly flowing water should be involuntarily reduced to gaseous form in a matter of minutes. There are several vital considerations to keep in mind, however. First, the water in question *must* be rapidly flowing; oceans, creeks, slow streams, and the like will not suffice. Second, the word "immersed" has a specific meaning in this context: fully three-quarters of the vampire's body must be below the surface of the water, and this portion *must* include the entire chest, from the creature's waist to its neck. (In essence, the monster's heart must be immersed.) Vampires are as capable of floating or treading water as any humanoid creature. Thus, merely throwing a vampire into a river and waiting for it to expire will probably *not* work. The vampire

must be so held that its entire chest is completely immersed for at least one minute in order to inflict any damage whatsoever upon the creature.

As is so often the case with vampires, this is much easier said than done. The creature is hideously strong and the panic engendered by even partial immersion seems to give the creature additional reserves of strength. Often the attacker becomes the attacked.

The monster can also use its many spell-like powers to destroy those who would try to hold it under. Luckily, as soon as the creature is even partially immersed in running water, it is incapable of *voluntarily* assuming gaseous form. It *can*, however, shapechange into another form.

If the attempt is successful, the results are quite extreme. Should the creature be kept suitably submerged for only three minutes, it is forced into gaseous form—which bubbles to the surface—and must flee to its sanctuary.



DESTROYING A VAMPIRE

Sunlight

For this discussion and the following paragraphs, the word “sunlight” refers to the direct rays of the sun or such rays reflected by a mirror.

Most vampires can be destroyed by exposure to sunlight, and even momentary exposures can be lethal to Fledglings. These creatures hate the sunlight with a passion that mortals can't begin to understand. If a vampire is up and about in the daylight hours, then it will always take great pains to shade itself from the sun. With very few exceptions, vampires will never willingly pass into the sunlight. If this means that they must fight a battle to the death, allow a mortal enemy to escape, or make any other such sacrifices, so be it.

As soon as a normal Fledgling vampire is totally exposed to sunlight, it is instantly incapable of using *any* of its magical abilities. All it can concentrate upon is trying to get into shelter. If at the end of one minute the creature has not escaped the rays of the sun, it is instantly and permanently annihilated.

As a vampire ages, however, it becomes able to sustain brief periods of time in the sun. Older vampires seem to be able to resist the lethal effects of exposure to sunlight for varying periods of time. A Mature vampire might withstand one minute of exposure, for example, while an Ancient might withstand one *hour* in the sun without being destroyed. During this “period of immunity,” the creature is able to use all of its powers normally. The instant this period of immunity expires, however, the creature is stripped of its magical powers, and one minute later is annihilated.

A vampire that has existed for a millennium is no longer susceptible to the burning touch of the sun. A Patriarch can go forth during the daylight hours with the same freedom as a mortal. (There are also tales of vampires centuries too young to be a Patriarch, who are equally immune to sunlight—the possibility that such a creature can pass this immunity on

to a line of vampires is too horrid to dwell upon.)

A vampire *could* stand in a room with sunlight streaming through the window and remain totally unharmed so long as it did not step into a sunbeam. It is important to here relate the nature of *reflected* sunlight that harms vampires. “Diffuse” reflection, such as that from the floors and walls of a room, is harmless to the vampire, albeit highly distasteful. “Focused” reflection, however, is dangerous. As a rule of thumb, the reflected sunlight is dangerous only if the vampire could conceivably see a recognizable image of the sun in the reflecting surface. The sun reflected in a mirror, a polished shield, or perhaps even a well-cleaned plate would harm a vampire.

Even *partial* exposure to sunlight can be dangerous to a vampire—“partial” in this case meaning that only a small portion of the vampire's body (such as a hand or arm) is exposed to the direct or mirror-reflected rays of the sun. The vampire's period of immunity comes into play again. If the partial exposure extends beyond this period of immunity, the exposed portion of the vampire is burned as if by direct application of fire.

It cannot be stressed too often: most vampires *hate* sunlight. Even if a vampire is in the sunlight less than its period of immunity, it takes a massive effort of will for the creature to do *anything* other than seek shelter. Patriarchs or vampires innately immune to sunlight still dislike being exposed to the direct or reflected rays of the sun although the intensity of this dislike is infinitely less than that exhibited by their lesser kin. Such vampires will never show a tendency to flee from sunlight, but they might evidence other symptoms of distaste.

Vampires can sometimes be physically forced or tricked into the sun, but considering the great strength and intelligence of the creatures, this is never a minor undertaking. Usually a vampire destroyed by sunlight instantly crumbles into dust, if in any material form. Sunlight also affects vampires that are in

DESTROYING A VAMPIRE

gaseous form in the same ways as discussed above. If a gaseous vampire is destroyed by sunlight, the cloud of gas simply dissipates, never to reform.

Stigmata

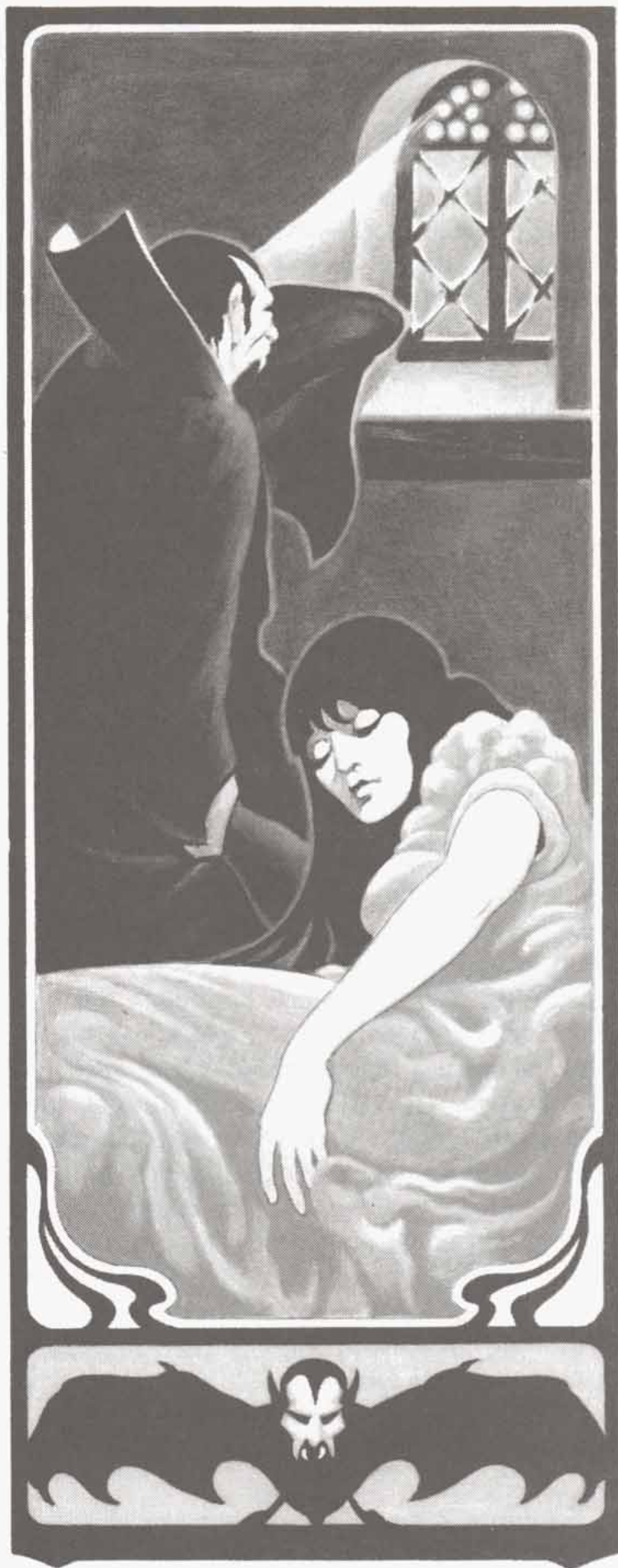
In three memorable cases, I have seen a fascinating phenomenon occur when a vampire was caught in sunlight, was struck by a holy symbol, or was splashed by holy water. In these cases, not only did the contact cause pain and inflict physical damage, but it also left a seemingly indelible mark on the vampire. In one case this took the form of a red discoloration, similar to a birth mark, the size and shape of the splash of holy water that struck the fiend. In the others, the mark was a blackened scorch where the sun struck the skin, and a brand in the exact form of the holy symbol.

Why is this interesting? Recall that the condition of a vampire's body normally tends toward the condition it was in when the creature died. Old scars, tattoos, and the like will reform, while new scars and similar marks will quickly fade. The marks, which I choose to call "*stigmata*" (singular, *stigma*), did *not* fade until a period of months had transpired in the first case, and several years had passed in the others. Particularly in the case of the holy symbol, the vampire was effectively and visually identified for what it was, depriving it of a means to masquerade as a mortal. Therefore, it was easier to hunt down the fiend and destroy it.

I have no idea how common a susceptibility to *stigmata* is among vampires, and it is not the sort of thing easily established experimentally. Tales of *stigmata* are rare, and if vampire and foe come into such proximity that a *stigma* can be created, in most cases either foe or vampire ends up destroyed.

Wooden Stakes

A single attacker using the stake like a melee weapon must have a minimum Str of 17;



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otherwise the blow will not be strong enough to penetrate the heart. To strike the heart, the attacker must roll a successful hit against AC -1 . If either condition is not met, the stake does not penetrate the heart, and does no damage to the vampire. Two people, but no more, can cooperate in wielding the stake in melee. The sum of their Str scores must exceed 17, and they make the attack at -3 to hit because of the difficulty involved in coordinating their movements.

If the monster is totally immobilized, no to-hit roll is required. Staking the creature takes 1 round.

Blessing a Weapon

If a priest of a nonevil deity casts a *bless* spell on any weapon (or item that could be conceivably used as a weapon), for the duration of the spell that weapon is capable of striking a vampire. The *blessed* weapon gains no to-hit bonus, of course. A successful hit inflicts one point of damage, plus any applicable strength bonus.

Immersion in Water

If a vampire is even partially immersed in running water, it temporarily gains the Str associated with the next highest age category. Thus, a Fledgling vampire dumped into a river will temporarily enjoy a Str of 18/91, rather than its normal 18/76. This temporary Str bonus vanishes as soon as the creature is out of the water. In addition, if the monster's arms aren't somehow constrained, it gets a $+4$ bonus on all attacks against any characters physically trying to hold it underwater. (This bonus represents both proximity and the fact that its foes are concentrating on holding it under.)

At the end of each complete round that the vampire has been immersed, it loses one-third of its *maximum* hit-point score. As soon as it is driven to zero or fewer hit points, it assumes gaseous form.

Example: A vampire has a maximum hit-point total of 60 hit points. In combat with a group of adventurers, the creature suffers 25

points of damage from an enchanted sword, giving it a current score of 35 hit points. To add insult to injury, it is then unceremoniously dumped into a fast-flowing river, with six burly warriors holding it down. At the end of the first round, the creature loses 20 hit points—one-third of its normal total of 60—which drops it to a current total of 15 hit points. At the end of the second round, it loses another 20 points, dropping its total to -5 . With a strangled curse, the creature reverts to gaseous form.

If a vampire is immersed in a large quantity of holy water, the creature loses one-half of its total hit points per melee round so immersed. All rules relating to immersion in running water—Str bonus, attack bonus, etc.—also apply. Even if the monster is not totally immersed, it suffers $2d6 + 2$ points of damage on every round that it is even partially immersed.

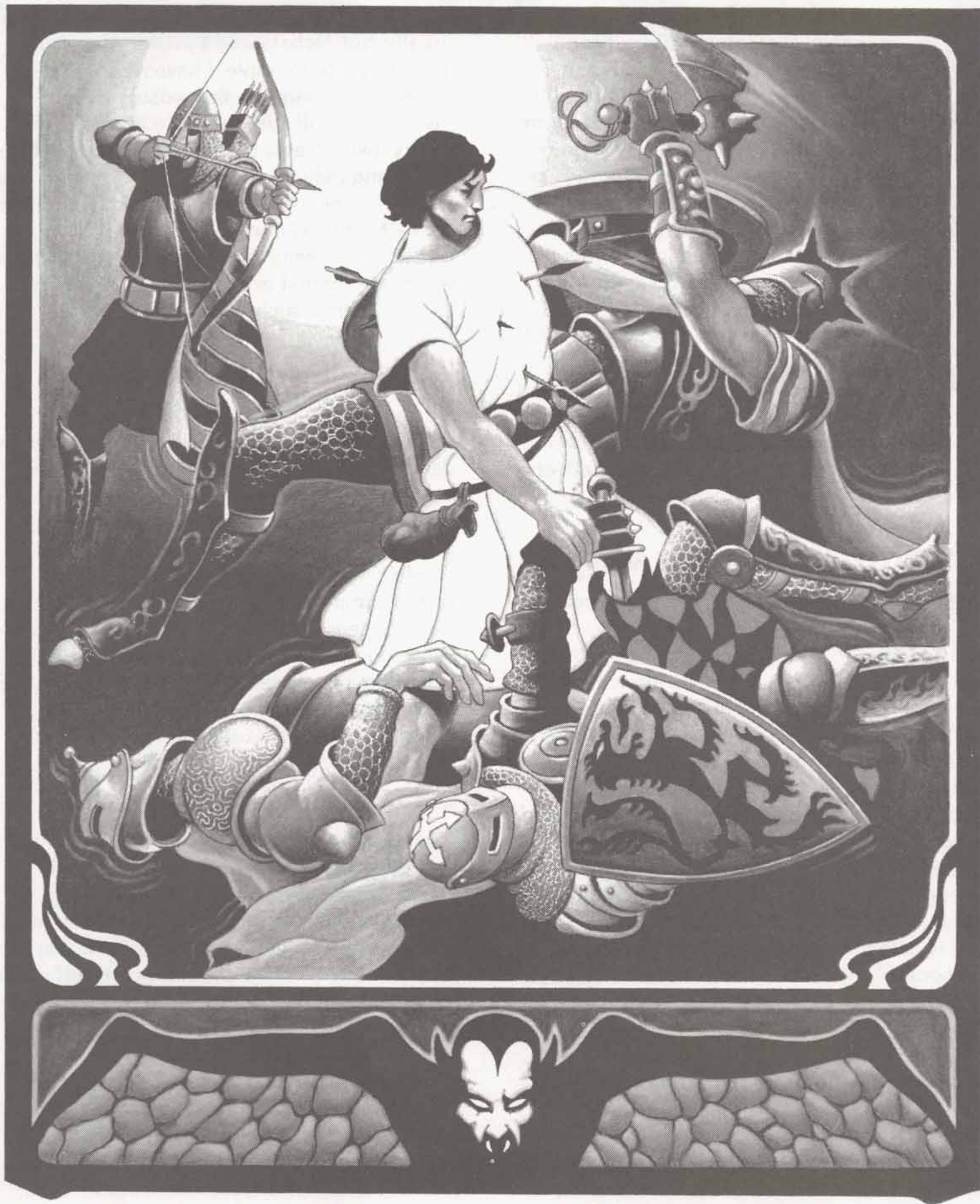
Exposure to Sunlight

At the end of every complete melee round that a vampire is partially exposed to sunlight, it suffers $3d6$ points of damage. The exposed flesh will often burst into flame, emitting a foul smell.

A vampire exposed to sunlight must make a saving throw vs. petrification, with a -2 penalty to the die roll. If it fails this save, it can do nothing but seek shelter from the sun. If it saves, however, it can act freely during its period of immunity, and can suppress any obvious signs of its discomfort. As soon as its period of immunity ends, however, it *must* instantly seek shelter from the sun. If a Patriarch or other sunlight-immune vampire is exposed to direct or reflected sunlight, it must save vs. spells, with a $+2$ bonus to the die roll. A successful save means that it totally suppresses its innate distaste for sunlight. A failed save, on the other hand, indicates that the creature shows some signs of discomfort, such as painful squinting, etc.

The duration of *stigmata* is up to the DM.

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MAGIC AND VAMPIRES



ampires are, by their nature, highly magical creatures. Thus it is only logical that their reactions and responses to magic might be quite different in their undead state from what they were while alive. There are two issues to consider: the use of magic *on* vampires and the use of magic *by* them. Vampiric spellcasting occurs most often among those creatures who had magic capabilities in life—I shall address that subject in Chapter XIV, “Retained Skills.” Vampires in general can use magical items, and I shall discuss that briefly at the end of this chapter. First, allow me to consider the issue of the effects of spellcasting *on* the “typical” vampire.

The Effects of Magic On Vampires

There are a great many spells and spell-like powers available to (demi)human spellcasters, or possessed innately by other creatures. For this reason alone it would be impossible to discuss individually how each different power affects a vampire. Fortunately, the vast majority of these powers can be grouped into representative categories, with most members of a category having a similar effect (or lack thereof) on vampires. I have, therefore, chosen to organize this discussion along those categorical lines, pointing out unique exceptions where appropriate. Note that these categories generally do *not* equate to Schools of wizardly spellcasting or to Spheres of priestly magic. They are generally classified by effect.

Before continuing, please note that exceptionally powerful vampires may well prove immune to spells that are highly efficacious against their lesser brethren. Conversely, vampires with unique heritages might well be subject to *dweomers* that are totally useless against most of their kin. If the

latter is the case, then such vulnerabilities are usually counterbalanced by some surprising immunity. For example, I have reason to believe that a vampire line exists whose members are all susceptible to illusions, but totally invulnerable to fire magic. Also, before discussing individual categories of magic, one thing must be made clear. Patriarch vampires are categorically immune to spells of low power. This means that the spells of priests and wizards of limited experience will be totally useless against such an ancient creature.

Illusion/Phantasm Spells

Illusions have a more powerful effect on mortals than vampires. Mortals exist inside the delicate walls of their own senses and thence are strongly subject to the effects of illusions. Even the slightest flow of phantasmal magic may be enough to disrupt their carefully-maintained mental picture of the world. Vampires, too, generally depend on external senses to learn about the world. These senses, however, are heightened to a literally superhuman degree. This makes the creatures unnaturally adept at perceiving flaws and tell-tale clues that identify an illusion as such.

Enchantment/Charm Spells

Most vampires are totally unaffected by magic that affects the mind—not only the classic *charm* or *hold* spells, but also more subtle magic such as *fear*, *taunt*, and *scare*. The mind of the vampire is subtly different from that of a mortal, and its mental processes are sufficiently changed to allow them to shrug off such *dweomers*.

There are certain spells from the enchantment/charm school, however, that do not directly affect the mind. *Enchanted weapon*, *shadow walk*, and *sink* are examples of such spells. Vampires are not innately immune to spells that do not directly affect the mental processes. This should not be taken to mean

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that such spells are guaranteed to affect a vampire.

Blindness and Deafness

Spells that cause blindness and deafness can effect vampires, but only while the creatures are in forms that use such senses. Thus, a vampire in the form of a human, a wolf, or something similar could be blinded and deafened. A bat, on the other hand, depends very little (if at all) upon vision, so a vampire in bat form will suffer few noticeable effects from a spell that causes blindness. That same bat, of course, would be virtually incapacitated by deafness because the creature uses echolocation in place of vision. In short, a wolf-form vampire affected by blindness could virtually ignore the affliction if it changed to the form of a bat.

A vampire in gaseous form uses arcane senses other than vision and hearing in their classical sense. A vampire in gaseous form cannot be affected by magical blindness or deafness because these spells actually target the physical sense organs. A vampire magically blinded or deafened could regain full use of visual and auditory senses by assuming gaseous form.

A gaseous vampire would still be affected by magical *silence*, of course, because this spell actually suppresses the physical characteristics of sound, vibrations in the air or another medium, and no sensory apparatus can detect vibrations that don't exist. The same argument holds for vampires within the area of a *darkness* spell.

Magical Imprisonment

Spells of magical imprisonment have varied effects on vampires. Some of these effects are related to the special supernatural powers of the vampire itself, and still others are results of the strange and evil magic at the heart of the land.

There are basically two types of magical imprisonment: those that physically impede movement and those that capture the life essence or soul of a being. The various *Otiluke's spheres* are examples of the former and *trap the soul*, *magic jar*, and *maze* are examples of the latter. Speaking generally, the former spells are effective against vampires (assuming the creature is affected by the spell at all). The latter, however, are much more problematic.

The "soul" or life force of a vampire seems to exist on both the Prime and Negative Material planes. Other creatures generally do not enjoy this duality; their life forces are on the same plane as their physical bodies. To trap or imprison the soul of a "dual-planar" creature like a vampire, a dweomer must trap that portion of the life force that is on the same plane as its physical body and then draw the remainder of that life force from the Negative Material Plane into the trap.

Even if the vampire's physical body is on another plane, this "double trapping" is an exceptionally difficult task. The chance that the spell will be effective is much less than normal, and the duration of the imprisonment is drastically curtailed.

Bless Spells

As might be expected from the creatures' responses to holy symbols, vampires find a *bless* spell cast on them by a priest of a good deity to be highly disturbing, having the general effect of a *curse* spell cast upon the living. A *curse* (that is, the reverse of *bless*) cast by a priest of a good deity has no effect.

A *bless* or *curse* spell cast by a priest of a neutral deity has no effect on a vampire, either positive or negative. A *bless* or *curse* cast by a priest of an evil deity seems to *benefit* the foul creature in some inexplicable way, however.

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Polymorph Magic

Because vampires have innate shapechanging abilities, it should come as little surprise that *polymorph other* and similar spells have abnormal effects on the fiends. If such a spell even affects the creature, it will involuntarily remain in its new form for no more than a minute. Then it will revert either to the form it was in when the spell took effect, or into any other form that the monster is able to assume. Spellcasting vampires can cast *polymorph self*, *shape change*, or similar spells on themselves—these spells operate normally.

Necromantic Magic

The use of necromantic magic against vampires can be highly dangerous. The vampire's connection with the Negative Material plane affords it an advantage over mortals that is difficult to overcome. Casting a necromantic spell upon a vampire is like to attempting to break a stone with a pitcher. For instance, I have seen a wizard attempt to drain life energy from a vampire, only to feel the effects of his spell rebound upon him, wither him to decrepitude, and invigorate the fiend in return. Therefore, I advise against the use of necromantic magic on vampires.

I must add, against my better judgement, that I have also seen a very effective use of this particular brand of magic against the lords of the undead: a spell that would reincarnate or otherwise bring life back to a mortal can destroy a vampire outright! However, if one attempts a spell of this nature and fails, the consequences can be tragic.

Effects of Magical Items Used By Vampires

As horrible as the concept may be, it must be accepted that vampires can use magic items often more readily than they can be

affected by them. The vast majority of vampires can use only those items that are usable by most mortals. Happily, if these vampires touch or attempt to use items that are specifically attuned to particular professions or nonevil persons, they generally suffer *twice* as much damage as mortals.

Vampires who retain magical skills from their former lives (discussed in Chapter XIV) can use items specific to the professions they practiced while alive, as well as those nonspecific items discussed above, so long as those items are not protected by Goodness.

Saving Throws and Magic Resistance

To be affected by magic, the vampire must fail *both* its basic magic resistance roll and its saving throw. Vampires suffer half damage (rounded up) from any magically damaging attacks. If a victim of the attack is normally entitled to a saving throw for half damage, a vampire would also be entitled to a saving throw. If the vampire saves successfully, however, it suffers *no* damage whatsoever from the attack.

Patriarch vampires are totally immune to all 1st- and 2nd-level spells—of the wizard variety only—regardless of the level of the character casting the spell.

This ruling might force the DM to make judgement calls regarding certain spells. The pertinent issue is whether the spell is intended to have an effect on the vampire itself. First, some obvious examples: spells like *magic missile* are totally ineffective against a Patriarch. Likewise, a Patriarch vampire can see through the effects of an *alter self* spell.

An *armor* spell will provide no protection against a Patriarch's melee attacks, but it *will* improve the subject's AC against a missile weapon hurled by a vampire. Likewise, a *shield* spell will provide a wizard with AC 2 against missiles hurled by a Patriarch vampire, and AC 3 against arrows fired by the same creature, but will provide *no* additional protection against a melee attack from the vampire.

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Using these guidelines, DMs can adjudicate how this immunity will work in other situations.

Gaseous Form

Vampires may or may not be vulnerable to magical attacks while in gaseous form—it's up to the DM. Some vampires may be partially susceptible to magical attacks while in gaseous form, but suffer only half damage, or may enjoy bonuses to their saving throws, ranging from +2 to +4.

Bless Spells

If *bless* is cast upon a vampire by a priest of a Good deity, the creature receives its normal magic resistance roll to resist the spell's effects. Should the creature fail this roll, it suffers a -2 penalty to hit for the duration of the spell. The creature also must save vs. spells or be held at bay for 1d3 rounds, and be unable to shapechange for the entire duration of the spell. The only exception to this is if the monster is reduced to zero or fewer hit points, at which time it is forced to assume gaseous form.

If *bless* or *curse* is cast on a vampire by a priest of an Evil deity, however, it automatically gives the creature a +1 *bonus* to hit for the duration of the spell, whether or not the priest wants to so benefit the monster.

Polymorph Magic

If the vampire fails both magic resistance and saving throw rolls, it is *polymorphed* into the form desired by the caster, but retains this form for only 1 round. When the round is up, the creature can choose which of its normal selection of forms it will assume.

Magical Imprisonment

On the demiplane of Ravenloft, this type of spell is totally useless. That portion of the vampire's "soul" that resides in the demiplane is protected by the magical nature of the demiplane itself. Thus, while within Ravenloft vampires are totally safe from having their souls trapped in any fashion whatsoever.

Necromantic Magic


The use of *energy drain* opens a channel to the Negative Material plane, which is home to at least part of the vampire's life force. If this spell is used against a vampire in Ravenloft, the *caster* immediately loses 1d4 + 1 experience levels, and is stunned for 1d4 rounds. In addition, the vampire *gains* 1 HD, plus concomitant combat benefits, etc., for 2d4 rounds; during this time, all damage to the vampire is taken from these "temporary" hit points. Outside the lands of Ravenloft, the vampire does not gain the additional Hit Dice. The *caster's* loss is permanent, until regained through adventuring.

Raise dead, *reincarnate*, and *resurrection* can have a devastating effect on vampires. If one of these spells is cast on a Fledgling or Mature vampire, and the creature fails its magic resistance roll and saving throw, it is instantly destroyed. If it makes its saving throw only, it suffers 3d12 hit points of damage; if it makes its magic resistance roll, it is totally unaffected. If the spell is cast on a vampire of Old or greater age, the possible results are as follows: 3d12 hit points of damage (magic resistance and saving throw failed); 1d12 hit points of damage (only saving throw made); or no effect (magic resistance roll made). At the DM's option, a *resurrection* or similar spell cast upon a vampire (who makes both a successful saving throw and magic resistance roll) may reverse and rebound upon the *caster*.

Magic Items Used by Vampires

If the penalty for touching or using a certain item is loss of experience points or experience levels, then a vampire is unaffected, but is totally incapable of using the item in question. Unless otherwise specified, vampires suffer normal (*not* double) damage from touching or attempting to use items that are inappropriate to their class. They still suffer double damage from items that are specific to certain alignments.

LIFE-BLOOD: VAMPIRIC FEEDING HABITS



he fiend had its arm casually draped around the shoulder of the unfortunate woman, who was looking into its face with an expression of what could only be called lustful desire. I screamed my frustration at the sky, but was unable to break the arcane bonds in which the fiend had bound me. It lowered its lips to touch the woman's alabaster throat, its eyes all the time fixed on mine and sparkling with inhuman enjoyment.

The woman's eyes turned up in her head, and she moaned with pleasure. As the creature bestowed its kiss, I saw the woman's youthful beauty begin to fade. Her skin dried and stretched over the bone structure of her face, wrinkles deepened around her eyes, and her lustrous black hair began to grey.

I closed my eyes in soul-sick horror.

—From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

For obvious reasons, the aspect of vampirism most important to mortals is that of their feeding habits. Vampires must gain sustenance by feeding upon the living. If they do not do this, they suffer terribly and will eventually die.

Mechanics

Uvampires prefer to drink blood directly from the living body of a victim, preferably one of their former race. The most efficient method of doing this is to use their prominent eye teeth to open a wound in a major blood vessel of their victim. In (demi)humans, major vessels are closest to the surface in the throat. Because the neck is also one of the least protected parts of the body (even when the victim wears armor) this adds to the desirability of this target area. Sometimes vampires will choose another major blood vessel such as the femoral artery, on the inside of the thigh near the groin, if circumstances

make this possible. One advantage of tapping this artery is that the marks left by the feeding are rarely seen by others.

Some tales describe the eye teeth of the vampire as hollow, and claim that the creature drinks blood through them as through a straw. In no case that I have studied, however, has this ever been the case. The teeth of a vampire are identical in structure to normal human teeth, albeit somewhat enlarged and often angled almost imperceptibly outward. My observation is that the vampire simply uses its teeth as implements to open a wound in the victim. It then sucks or laps up the blood using its lips and tongue, much as a babe drinks its mother's milk.

In the vast majority of cases a vampire will open only a small wound that will quickly heal, through which it can drain only a small amount of blood. "Small" is a relative term here; the debilitating effect is related to the robustness of the victim—while a battle-hardened warrior might shrug off a single feeding with no ill effects, the same blood loss might kill a weaker victim through shock.

Vampires usually feed through such small, survivable wounds because they do not want to kill their victim. Any (demi)human killed through blood lost to a vampire will of course rise as a vampire itself, subservient to the creature that killed it, unless the body is decapitated or destroyed. In most cases, vampires do not want to create subservient vampires, for reasons that will be discussed later.

If a vampire does not care whether or not its victim survives, it can open a massive wound in the throat. This wound will kill its victim as would a dagger drawn across the throat. So fast is the blood flow from such a wound that the creature probably cannot drink it all. It can usually ingest enough to sate its hunger, however. Such a victim is not necessarily raised as a vampire, unless the vampire is somehow able to drink all of his blood.

Vampires usually feed only from unresisting

LIFE-BLOOD: VAMPIRIC FEEDING HABITS

victims, which includes victims that have been gaze-charmed or victims that are immobilized in some manner. In order to drink the blood of its victim, the vampire must be undisturbed for a period of at least one minute. Thus, a vampire in the heat of combat *cannot* feed.

Signs of Feeding

Even a relatively small and survivable wound left by a vampire causes notable trauma to the flesh of the victim. There is not only the wound itself, which is often less than half an inch in length, but also discoloration caused by bleeding below the skin. This appears as a bruise that is usually an inch or so in diameter. The wound is easy to spot.

It causes no pain to the victim, however, and is not sensitive to the touch. This may be the result of some unknown component of a vampire's saliva, or could arise from some other cause entirely; I have no way of knowing. Thus, victims might be totally unaware of the wound until they see their image in a mirror, or until someone else brings it to their attention. The victim *may* feel some weakness that arises from blood loss, and may appear somewhat pale.

Sources of Blood

Uampires almost exclusively insist on the blood of living creatures; (demi)humans are preferred as victims, and members of the same species as the vampire above all. Why is this? It could be a physiological issue whereby, for example, blood from a human is most restorative to a once-human vampire. Or it could simply be symbolic: the evil creature holds within its heart a great hatred for the species to which it once belonged, and wishes to wreak the maximum amount of havoc on its erstwhile fellows.

Vampires prefer healthy victims, but can also draw blood from those who are mortally wounded and sinking into the final coma i.e.,

characters who are below 0 hit points, assuming the optional "Hovering on Death's Door" rule is in effect (see the *DMG* index under "Combat, death"). The amount of blood that can be drained from such a victim is usually limited because generally it was severe physical damage (hence blood loss) that put the character into that condition in the first place.

Vampires can also feed from the corpses of freshly-slain characters. Blood spoils rapidly in regards to serving it as a foodstuff for vampires, so the corpse must have been killed within four hours of the vampire's attempt to feed. Because the heart of the corpse is not pumping, the vampire is drastically limited in the amount of blood it can drink from the body, and this amount decreases with time.

In time of dire need, I believe that a vampire *can* feed on the blood of animals, although the creature will find this foodstuff bland and unsatisfying, and it will leave the vampire ill. (When drinking from a rancid pool becomes a question of survival, then tainted water is better than none.) Because vampires are masters of all creatures whose form they can assume (generally wolves and bats), in regions where such creatures dwell a vampire will never starve. The subservient creatures will obey the commands of their undead master even to the death, and so will offer their lifeblood to preserve their master's unlife.

The Experience of the Victim

I shake in horror to think about it now. But at the time, as the fiend spoke, I felt its velvet voice thrilling through my body. So seductive were its words that I gladly opened the collar of my coat and bared the skin of my neck, and then stood trembling as I awaited the approach of the dark figure.

I gasped aloud with pleasure as its lips touched my flesh, and its hands grasped my shoulders. Then came an instant of pleasure so piercing it was like pain—or pain so sweet it was like pleasure. I could hear the throbbing of my

LIFE-BLOOD: VAMPIRIC FEEDING HABITS

heartbeat in my ears, and also a deep and distant thudding that must have been the beating of the vampire's heart. The drumbeats synchronized until the sounds were one. I cried out from the ecstasy of it. . . .

—From the journal of Alatheia Greenbough

How can a vampire charm a victim into submitting to having his or her blood drunk? Surely the very nature of a *charm*, which cannot force its recipient to put itself in imminent danger, prevents the subject from accepting a command so obviously self-destructive. Then again, the vampiric charm-gaze is not the *charm* spell.

This is one of the most insidious factors in the nature of vampirism. It would seem that there is some deep and dark desire within the psychology of (demi)humans that makes submitting to a vampire's "kiss" somehow attractive. Vampires are often portrayed as creatures with an intense sensual appeal. This, it seems, allows charmed victims to believe that offering their throat to a vampire is *not* the self-destructive nor even suicidal act that it is.

In addition, some victims who have survived the attentions of a vampire report that the experience was highly pleasurable, much as this may fly in the face of reason. They felt no pain as the beast opened the wound in their flesh, and described the actual sensation of the feeding as one of "voluptuous pleasure." (I find my gorge rises when I consider this, but I have heard it from so many sources that I cannot disregard it.)

I have also heard the words used by a vampire while attempting to charm a victim into allowing it to feed. The monster seems to instinctively perceive a desire to submit that lies in the dark recesses of the human mind. It plays upon this desire, talking about "the gentle joy of surrendering," of "opening oneself," and of "experiencing the unequalled bliss of total sharing."

Vampires will often feed from sleeping

victims. If the victim is not awakened when the vampire makes the wound, he or she will remember nothing of the experience when they awaken normally. At the very most, the victim will recall that he or she experienced a dream of intense and sensual pleasure.

Philosophical Considerations—Why Blood?

Why must vampires drink blood? Even those few "atypical" individuals who do not drink it require sustenance that is in some way an equivalent to blood. (Note: "atypical" is certainly as subjective a term as "typical" when referring to vampires.) As with so many facets of vampirism, the answer is likely symbolic. Generally speaking, vampires are creatures of undying evil who hold an implacable hatred for the living. Even those who do not actively hate the living consider them to be somehow meager reflections of vampires, and "cattle" whose sole purpose is to act as victims and tools for the vampiric "elite." This belief system carries with it the implication that vampires feed upon the living in both a spiritual and metaphorical sense. It would be appropriate, then, that vampires should also feed on the living in a physical sense as well.

Where does this symbolic equivalency arise from? Some sages believe that it is a jest of the ancient and evil deities who originally set vampires loose upon the worlds of the universe. Others hold that a parallel arises from the very nature of reality; in other words, we know that evil preys upon good, and vampires vindicate this axiom on the supernatural level.

Alternative Forms of Sustenance

The variety of "foods" on which "atypical" vampires may subsist is staggering, and usually particularly disgusting. I personally know of some vampire-like creatures who feed

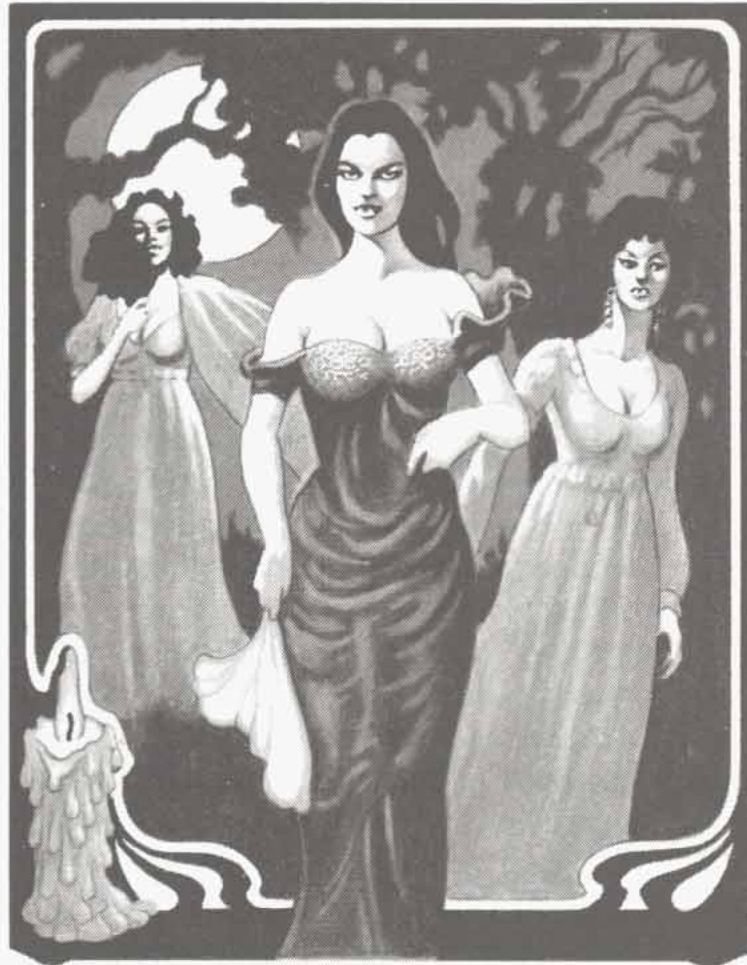
LIFE-BLOOD: VAMPIRIC FEEDING HABITS

on cerebrospinal fluid, draining this clear liquid through holes that they punch in their mortal victims' skulls or spines. Obviously, such wounds are much more immediately debilitating to the victims, and much slower to heal. Similarly, there is reputed to be a line of vampires that subsists on lymphatic fluids drained from the glands of their victims. Recurring but unsubstantiated rumors also tell of creatures who drain the aqueous and vitreous humors from the eyes of (demi)humans, rarely if ever killing their victims through this feeding, but always leaving them blind.

There are also known to be vampires that "feed" upon life energy directly from their victims via touch, without the intermediary of blood. These creatures feed upon the actual life experience levels of victims, who will eventually perish if they are completely depleted of their acquired memories and skills. Other creatures feed in ways that are more arcane or symbolic, tapping their victims' intelligence, will power (Wis), strength, dexterity, force of personality (Cha), even physical vigor (Con). Some can drain these characteristics simply by striking a target in melee; others, and thankfully, the more common monsters, can feed only from willing or immobilized victims, and do so through a "kiss." Still others drain vigor from their victims by inflicting physical damage, seeming to draw their sustenance from the pain they cause to their prey (i.e., they absorb hit points directly when they strike a victim in combat).

Most feared by spellcasters, there are even some who seem to feed on the magical power that flows through the body of a wizard, or even a priest. A touch from such a creature causes the victim to forget spells that have been memorized, and—in one extreme case of which I know—allows the vampire to cast the forgotten spell at the level of ability possessed by the victim!

Being of extremely high intelligence, a few vampires are sensitive to natural balances,



albeit in a sense warped by their undead state. Thus, they may occasionally depart from their usual diet of blood in order to avoid depleting the neighboring village of all life.

Here allow me to summarize some of the possible dietary items:

- Blood
- Spinal fluid
- Heart (eaten)
- Brain (eaten)
- Bone marrow
- Body water
- Body salt
- Life energy levels
- Abilities (Con, Int, etc.)
- Memories (spells or proficiencies)
- Bodily health (hit points)
- Mental disciplines psionic strength points (if used)

LIFE-BLOOD: VAMPIRIC FEEDING HABITS

Physical Effects of Feeding

When a vampire feeds, its body shows various physical signs. Its skin, normally cool and pale, becomes warmer and takes on a healthy, almost ruddy tinge. In addition, the creature's levels of energy and activity seem higher.

In contrast, when a vampire has gone without feeding for a period of time, the reverse effects occur. Its skin becomes colder and paler, sometimes inhumanly so. The creature also becomes more sluggish. (Do not misunderstand this: the monster is still capable of incredible feats of exertion when necessary. The "sluggishness" relates more to its preferred level of activity than to its capabilities. A sluggish vampire is very much like a sluggish shark: to consider either of them to be weak is a dangerous error.) These symptoms become even more pronounced if the creature has been unable to feed sufficiently, as discussed in the following section.

Note that the above comments refer to "typical," blood-drinking vampires. Vampires that depend on other sources of sustenance *may* exhibit similar changes, but it is foolish to depend on these signals in any way.

Frequency

How often must a vampire feed? This question has been debated for years, perhaps centuries, by sages everywhere. The following comments are based on my own research, and are not guaranteed to be true. Other reputable researchers might have different answers.

Generally speaking, a "typical" vampire must feed once in any 24-hour period. Not doing so causes the vampire to grow weaker until, with prolonged denial of sustenance, the creature is destroyed. It may be surprising, but it seems to be the case that a vampire's need for food *decreases* as it ages. Perhaps this is a result of its growing connection with the Negative

Material Plane, from which it draws much of its unnatural energy. The vampire's *hunger* for blood *increases* with age, however. A Patriarch can subsist on much less blood than can a Fledgling, but the ancient creature has the *desire* to drink much more blood than its youthful kin. Should its source "dry up," so to speak, it can subsist on "starvation rations" much better than can the Fledgling creature, however.

Victim Limits of Blood Loss

Generally, a vampire will drain enough blood to inflict 1d4 hit points of damage to a victim *per round* of feeding. If the victim's throat is torn open, a vampire can drink up to 12 hit points worth of blood from such a wound. If the victim has fewer than 12 hit points, however, the vampire can drink only as many hit points of blood as the victim possesses, remembering that -10 hit points is *dead*. For example, if a mortally wounded, comatose character is at -8 hit points, a vampire could drain only 2 hit points worth of blood, and this drain would immediately kill the victim.

The maximum amount of blood that can be drained from a corpse is the equivalent of 4 hit points. This decreases by 1 hit point per hour that the subject has been dead. Thus, a vampire cannot feed from a corpse that has been dead for more than 4 hours.

If the victim is willing, charmed, or otherwise completely immobilized, the vampire does not have to make an attack roll. It can automatically open the type of wound it wants, small or catastrophic, and drink for as many rounds as it wishes, provided it is left undisturbed.

The sensation created as the vampire opens the wound is often enough to cause a sleeping victim to wake. A sleeping victim is entitled to a saving throw vs. poison. A successful save means the victim has awakened; a failed save means the victim remains asleep and the vampire is free to feed for as long as it likes.

A victim will feel weak after the vampire has

LIFE-BLOOD: VAMPIRIC FEEDING HABITS

fed only if the vampire has drained one-quarter or more of the victim's current hit-point total. The damage caused by blood loss heals normally; the lost hit points can be restored through curative magic.

Frequency

A typical Fledgling vampire must drink 12 hit points worth of blood in every 24-hour period. The source of this blood is immaterial; it can come from living victims, fresh corpses, animals, or even sealed "caches" of chilled blood. This requirement is decreased by 1 hit point for every age category beyond Fledgling. Thus a Patriarch could subsist on only 6 hit points worth of blood every day, but would be unwilling to do so without good cause.

For each day that a vampire does not feed sufficiently it loses 1 HD, with all concomitant losses of THACO, saving throws, etc. In addition, it "regresses" in power with regard to Str, magic resistance, and period of sunlight tolerance as if it had lost one age category for each day it fed insufficiently. As an example, a Patriarch on the first day of starvation loses 1 HD (decreasing to 13). In addition, its Str drops to 19, its magic resistance to 25%, and its period of sunlight tolerance drops to 1 hour. If it doesn't feed enough the next day, it loses another Hit Die (decreasing to 12); its Str remains at 19, but its magic resistance drops to 20% and its period of sunlight tolerance to 3 turns.

A vampire cannot "regress" below Fledgling with regard to Str, magic resistance, or period of sunlight tolerance. It *does* continue to lose 1 HD for every day on which it does not feed adequately.

Vampires quickly regain the HD and abilities they have lost. On each successive day that a vampire feeds sufficiently, it regains 1 lost HD and one age category.

If a vampire is ever reduced to 1 HD, the creature becomes a raging beast, incapable of doing anything but attacking any source of blood.

If the Victim is Other Than (Demi)Human

Within Ravenloft, vampires *cannot* take sustenance from any creature other than a demihuman. Outside of the demiplane, such emergency feeding is possible.

If the vampire feeds from creatures that are roughly man-sized or larger, the rules for vampiric feeding remain unchanged. It can drink 1d4 hit points of blood per round from a small wound (up to the victim's hit-point total, of course), or up to 12 hit pints of blood from a catastrophic and immediately lethal wound.

Smaller victims are more problematic. If the victim has fewer than 1 HD, a survivable wound is impossible and the vampire has no option but to kill the creature. It can then drink as many hit points worth of blood as the creature possesses.

Experience of the Victim

Unless the subject of the charm-gaze has some concrete reason to believe that the vampire will kill him or her out of hand, submitting to feeding is *not* a self-destructive act within the parameters of the *charm* spell effect.

Drained attribute points will typically regenerate at a rate of 1d3 points per day of rest. Hit points drained by a vampire heal at the same rate as normal damage. The effect of having a spell drained is just the same as if the spellcaster attempted to cast the spell, but failed. He or she is free to memorize the spell the next day.



LIFE-BLOOD: VAMPIRIC FEEDING HABITS

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THE SLEEP OF THE DEAD



I was the closest of close-run things. We knew that, outside the old castle, the blood-red sun was less than a finger's span above the western horizon, and that we had but minutes to do what was necessary. The vampire's resting chamber was cunningly trapped, as we expected, but my nimble-fingered colleagues were able to disarm the devices without mishap. I held the stake and the mallet as we approached the ornately-carved coffin that must have been the fiend's resting place. My companions threw back the lid. . . .

The coffin was empty!

That was when the hissing laughter—from nowhere and from everywhere around us—filled our ears. "Unfortunate," chided the harsh voice. "So close. But the day has ended, my friends, and now so do your lives."

—From the journal of Mordent Zachariah

Vampires can instinctively sense when dawn is approaching, and feel an overriding urgency to retire to a safe place to sleep. As sunrise draws near they feel a growing panic if they are not within their sanctuary. Once they are safely sequestered away, they can feel, deep in their bones, the moment at which the sun first appears over the horizon. Their reaction at this moment varies from creature to creature.

Depth of Sleep

There are basically two groups of resting vampires: those who truly sleep, that is, become fully unconscious, and those who merely become partially dormant. In human terms the difference is between a deep sleep, where the sleeper is totally oblivious to his surroundings, and a light doze where he is at least partially aware at all times.

I will first discuss those vampires who fall

into a deep sleep. At the moment of dawn, such a creature sinks into a state of complete oblivion, and cannot be roused by any means before the moment that the sun touches the western horizon. These creatures are obviously highly vulnerable because they have no way of sensing the approach of a hunter or the touch of the stake's point before the first blow of the mallet. However, at the instant that the sun sinks below the horizon, these creatures awaken and are instantly in full command of all their powers. This means there is none of the disorientation felt by many (demi)humans upon first awakening.

Vampires who only "doze" are much more dangerous quarry. They are always peripherally aware of what is going on around them. Depending on the circumstances, it may not be possible for hunters to sneak up on a dozing vampire without rousing it. Loud noises or bright lights will definitely wake the creature. If the creature is within a coffin or sarcophagus, it will awaken the instant that this vessel is opened (if it has not already been roused).

It is important to remember that vampires are incredibly cunning. Just because the dozing creature has been awakened by the approach of hunters does not necessarily mean that it will immediately leap to the attack. If circumstances warrant, it may prefer to "play dead," and lure its would-be killers to their doom. Vampires that doze also wake instantly and without disorientation at the instant the sun sinks below the western horizon. If such a creature is awakened while the sun is still above the horizon, however, it does suffer some moments of disorientation, and is unable to use some of its abilities for some time.

Note that the depth at which a vampire sleeps will have a great effect on the sanctuary it chooses, and how it protects its resting place. Vampires that sink into deepest oblivion at the moment of dawn recognize their immense vulnerability and will, thus, go to the greatest lengths to hide their sanctuaries and attempt to make them totally impenetrable to mortals who

THE SLEEP OF THE DEAD

might be hunting them. Any traps that they place will be as lethal as the creature can possibly make them because it knows any hunter who gets through the traps will almost certainly end the vampire's existence.

Vampires who doze, however, might make different decisions. They, too, are vulnerable during daylight hours, but nowhere near as much as their deep-sleeping kin. While they will generally be as careful about hiding and warding their sanctuaries (why take chances, after all?), they will be less concerned if circumstances prevent them from taking all the precautions they might want. They will probably set lethal traps, but also tripwires and other warning devices to alert them to the approach of attackers.

Soil From the Homeland?

Many tales pertaining to vampires claim that the creatures must sleep in vessels that contain soil from their homeland, or even soil taken from their own graves. If they do not do so, these tales tell, they are destroyed. As with so many such tales, the truth varies from individual to individual, and from place to place. And, of course, with vampires there are always exceptions to the rules. However, these creatures at least *believe* the presence of such an item to be an absolute requirement, and will go to any lengths to ensure that it is present. I use the word "believe," simply because I have never heard any substantiated report of a vampire being destroyed through *not* having the required item present during sleep. Vampires *believe* they will be destroyed if an appropriate element is not present, and so will make sure that it *is* present. But is this belief based in fact?

Personally, I find myself drawn to the idea that this "requirement" is actually a baseless superstition, perpetuated and believed by vampires as well as mortals over the centuries. I am convinced that a vampire forced to sleep without a symbolic tie to its mortal life will *not*

be destroyed. Of course, proving this experimentally is somewhat problematical. Vampires will obviously not test my hypothesis because, if I am wrong, they will be destroyed. And vampire hunters are understandably more interested in destroying the creatures than in experimentally examining their limitations. Still, it is an interesting concept to consider.

Vampires Without Sanctuary

What happens to a vampire that is prevented from reaching its sanctuary before the moment of sunrise? The consequences vary widely.

Some creatures—particularly, it seems, those individuals that sleep deeply—fall unconscious the instant the sun appears above the horizon. They are totally insensate, and totally vulnerable. If the light of the sun falls upon their bodies, they are destroyed (although not always instantly, as in the case of older vampires). They are also vulnerable to anyone with a stake and mallet. It seems that Fledgling and Mature vampires most likely fall into this category.

Others can remain conscious past sunrise, but their first and only priority is to reach their sanctuary so they can fall asleep. Most of these creatures lose their ability to shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form as soon as the sun appears above the horizon, whether or not the rays of the sun actually fall on the creatures' bodies. (It is knowledge of this weakness that adds to their panic as dawn approaches.) These creatures have only a few (1d3) hours in which to reach sanctuary and sleep, or they are irrevocably destroyed. Old, Very Old and Ancient vampires most likely fall into this category.

Finally there are those creatures who retain all their powers after sunrise so long as they are not exposed to the direct rays of the sun. Sleeping is still of the highest priority to these creatures. However, they have hours in which to reach their sanctuary and fall asleep. In fact,

THE SLEEP OF THE DEAD

these creatures can remain active—if so forced—almost the whole day. If, however, they have not yet reached sanctuary and fallen asleep by the moment of sunset, they are irrevocably destroyed. Such vampires that have been kept from sleep for several hours do not wake instantly at the moment of sunset. Instead, they continue to sleep for a number of additional hours equal to the time they were kept awake. This could well make it impossible for a vampire to feed sufficiently, and hence weaken the creature. Eminent and Patriarch vampires are most likely to fall into this category.

It is virtually impossible to predict beforehand how an individual vampire will react to being prevented from reaching its sanctuary. I have faced a Fledgling vampire, no more than two years undead, that was virtually undismayed at being prevented from sleeping for several hours. Conversely, I have heard tales of an Eminent vampire that fell unconscious at the instant of sunrise, no matter what danger it faced in doing so.

Exceptions

Predictably, there are exceptions. There are some vampires that seem not to need sleep at all. Or if they do, they are more like mortals in that they can delay sleeping for hours or days, should it be necessary, and suffer relatively little as a consequence. When these creatures are also immune to the rays of the sun, they become hideously dangerous foes. They can easily blend with human society, moving equally freely by day or by night. It is lucky that these creatures are very rare!

When Traveling

The dual requirements of sleeping and avoiding the rays of the sun make traveling long distances somewhat problematic for vampires. Short trips are relatively simple because the creatures can

travel by night—on horseback or via other normal transportation, or in animal form—and hide out in makeshift sanctuaries during daylight hours. Vampires that must sleep on soil from their homeland or with some item symbolic of their mortal life are more limited than others, of course. They must find some way of carrying the soil or suitable item with them. This usually precludes travel in animal form unless minions have previously arranged suitable sanctuaries along the way and at the final destination. For vampires masquerading as mortals in civilized lands, this is relatively easy to arrange, of course. Representatives of the vampire can purchase or rent suitable buildings and furnish them with art and objects that have symbolic significance to the vampire. Who, after all, would suspect vampiric activity if a wealthy businessman were to send ahead and have a country manor decorated in a style reminiscent of his childhood home?

Vampires will sometimes arrange to have suitable sanctuaries carried with them. (This is usually required if the vampire plans an extended voyage.) For example, a creature could travel in a coffin that is supposedly carrying a dead body “home” to its final burial place. The people charged with transporting the coffin could be servitors of the vampire or could be simple tradespersons hired to do the job. The vampire could stay within the coffin, never emerging, and suffer the effects of starvation. Alternatively, the creature could sneak out of its coffin at night to hunt. (Obviously, this second option represents a grave risk, particularly in a closed environment such as a ship at sea.) The smartest alternative would be to arrange for a cache of blood, if the requirement for low temperature could somehow be met.

While a coffin is almost traditional as the portable sanctuary of a vampire, virtually anything else large enough could serve. The major advantage of a coffin, from a vampire’s point of view, is that most people are somewhat unwilling to open it up to confirm its contents.

THE SLEEP OF THE DEAD

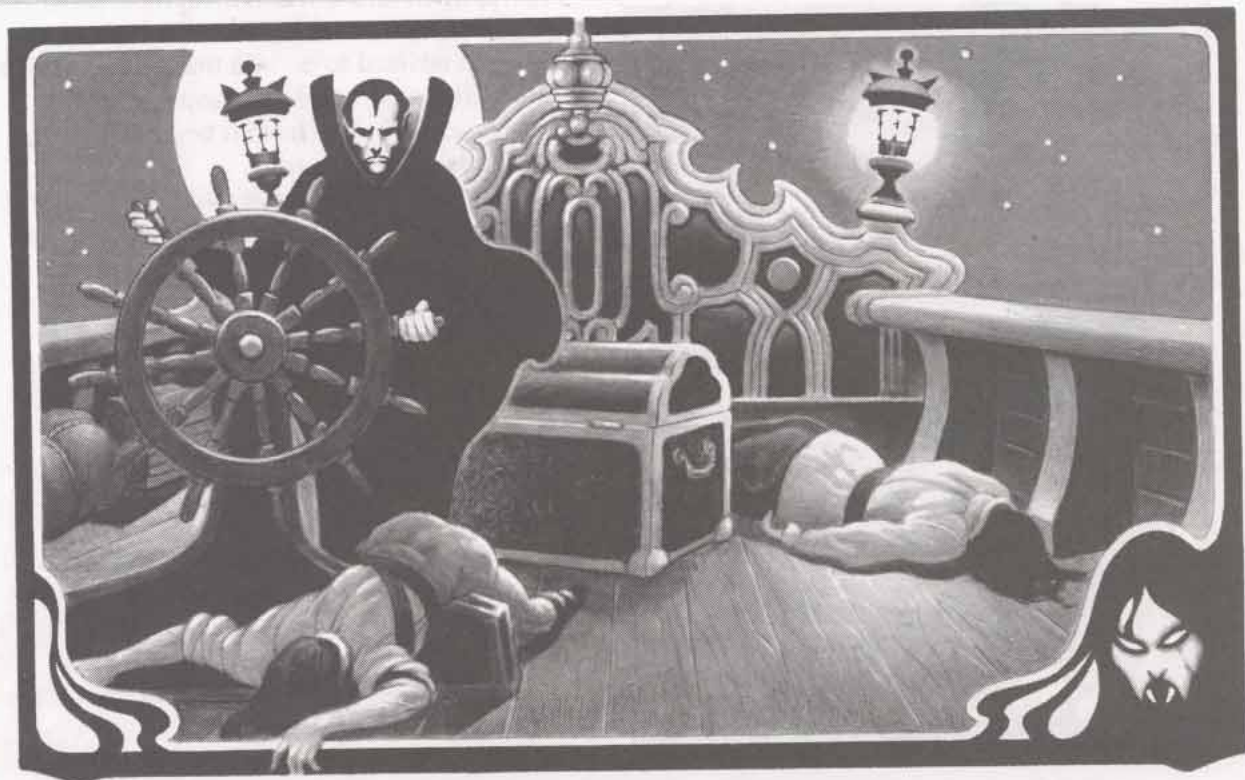
This is particularly the case if the body within is said to have died of some contagious disease.

Vampires are exceedingly cunning, and will show great creativity in the precautions they take. When hunting the travelling vampire, I suggest that you attempt to eliminate places that it *could not* hide, and consider every other possibility a good one.

With *very* few exceptions, all vampires have to sleep sometime. The exceptional, sleepless vampires that Van Richten describes still lose 1 HD for every day that they do not sleep. They regain *all* lost Hit Dice the first time they sleep for a whole day (i.e., from sunrise to sunset).

If awakened during daylight hours, a “dozing” vampire is stunned and unable to take any action for 1 round. Thereafter, it can't shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form for an additional 1d4 rounds, although it can cast any spells it has previously memorized.

With few exceptions (DM's choice), all vampires require dirt from their graves to be in their resting places. Within Ravenloft, vampires do not necessarily need to sleep on soil from their homeland or from their grave because of the demiplane's proximity to the Negative Material Plane. There remains *some* symbolic truth to the tale, however, in the case of numerous vampires. These creatures often must have within their sanctuaries, and in contact with their bodies while they sleep, some item that is symbolic of either their origin or their mortal life. This item can be virtually anything, from a piece of clothing, to a gift from a relative or friend, to an object that is somehow related to their homeland.



HIBERNATION

I once interrogated a vampire as to how it felt to hibernate. The creature described a condition of "sleep but not sleep," where thoughts are sluggish as thick honey and take months or years to flow. Where dream images intertwine with true memories. Where sounds and sometimes smells from the surface find their way into the sanctuary, but disturb the mind no more than a rose petal falling on a still pool of water. Time has no meaning; hunger has no meaning. There is no future, there is no past. There is just the endless now.

—From the personal journal of Dr.
Van Richten

Vampires are by nature immortal. Why then



are there so few vampires of advanced years in existence? In any given year, there are probably dozens if not scores of new vampires created within the lands. Logically, then, there should be a considerable number of Very Old and Ancient vampires.

In fact, there appears to be surprisingly few of these creatures. Why? What is it that limits the practical longevity of these creatures?

It seems that after a century, or maybe several centuries, insanity sometimes takes them (see Chapter XII, "The Mind of the Vampire"). Also, vampire hunters may destroy them. Or perhaps the creature, in a despair that mortals can never know, ends its own wretched existence.

With so much going against them, the longevity question turns upon itself and we ask, "How do *any* vampires reach Patriarch age?" I conclude that this is the main purpose of "going into the ground," or *hibernation*. When the weight of the years grows too much for a vampire, when fatalism and bleakness set in and the creature starts to fear for its sanity, the creature is advised to go into the ground. As do mortals after a good sleep, I suspect that vampires usually arise from hibernation with their minds clear of worries.

Vampires have the unique ability to hibernate for periods which may exceed a century. In addition to combating despair, the creatures may do this if circumstances are such that they are currently unable to feed sufficiently, or if they believe that they are in imminent danger from vampire hunters.

Entering Hibernation

A vampire must consciously decide to go into the ground; hibernation cannot be forced upon an unwilling vampire. The vampire does not have to "fatten itself up" for hibernation as other creatures do, but the monster *must* feed twelve or fewer hours before it actually goes into the ground.

The location in which a vampire chooses to

HIBERNATION

hibernate is very important. First, it must be exceptionally secure because a hibernating vampire is exceedingly vulnerable. Obviously, it must be where sunlight can never reach. Second, the site must be surrounded on all sides by rock or earth to at least several feet of thickness. A catacomb beneath a deserted temple would serve, or a cave, as would a common grave (hence the phrase, “going into the ground”). Some vampires will excavate a resting and hiding place for themselves several feet *below* the occupant of a grave.

Hibernation differs from normal vampiric sleep. Once the vampire has made the decision to hibernate and has sequestered itself away in its sanctuary, it slips into a state in which it is nominally and intermittently aware of its circumstances and of the passing of the years around it. It is difficult for the creature to rouse itself from this condition at will. Only in the fullness of time, when the cycle of hibernation draws to its close, can the vampire rise from this state of “sleep but not sleep.” A hibernating vampire exercises little control over how long it stays in this dormant condition, cannot “preset” a time or date to revive, cannot predict beforehand how long the hibernation will last. Left unmolested, a vampire generally will not awaken until forty years or more have passed, and there are tales describing vampires that have hibernated for more than one and a half centuries.

Hibernating vampires are not absolutely oblivious to their surroundings while dormant. They can sense danger, should anyone break open or enter their sanctuary, and will struggle to rouse themselves. This enforced arousal is quite damaging; in fact, there is a chance that the trauma of the awakening will instantly destroy the vampire.

Effects of Hibernation

The time that passes during hibernation is not physically kind to a vampire. Its condition deteriorates steadily; the monster loses strength and stamina while in the dormant state. Vampires that were weakened through starvation before going into the ground sometimes never emerge from dormancy, instead just fading away into oblivion. The physical appearance of a vampire is horribly changed as well. The creature’s flesh and muscle mass atrophies, its skin dries and tightens, and sometimes its skeleton even shrinks marginally. A vampire that has been in hibernation for more than fifty years looks very much like a mummified corpse: wizened, dry, and very brittle. The creature’s fragility is very much an illusion, of course. The overconfident vampire hunter may find himself at a distinct disadvantage against a newly awakened hibernator.

Rising from Hibernation

When the cycle of hibernation comes to a close, waking from dormancy is not instantaneous. It takes the vampire days, sometimes *many* days, to rise from the depths of semiconsciousness. The condition of the creature is dependent both upon its condition before it went into the ground and upon the amount of time it has hibernated. A vampire that was weakened by starvation and then has spent a century in the ground is a vulnerable creature, indeed, and is unable to shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form for several days after waking. It is also much more susceptible to magical attacks. The creature quickly regains most of its normal powers as soon as it feeds sufficiently during the days after its arousal. Thus, the highest and often *only* priority for a newly-awakened vampire is to hunt and to feed. Needless to say, the monster will be ravenous to the point of recklessness.

HIBERNATION



If a vampire has "atrophied" to the point where it has 6 HD or fewer remaining, the creature cannot hibernate. If it attempts to do so, it will continue to lose 1 HD per day and will eventually be destroyed. A vampire that wishes to "go into the ground" must drink at least 4 hit points worth of blood no more than 12 hours before it begins to hibernate. This blood can be from any source.

The length of time that a vampire will remain in hibernation is determined randomly. Hibernation lasts $40 + 6d20$ years. For every 20 years (or portion thereof) that a vampire remains in hibernation, it loses 1 HD, and temporarily regresses one age category in terms of Str, magic resistance, and period of sunlight tolerance. A vampire cannot regress below Fledgling, although it will continue to lose 1 HD every 20 years. If the creature is reduced to 0 HD, it is irrevocably destroyed and its body crumbles to dust.

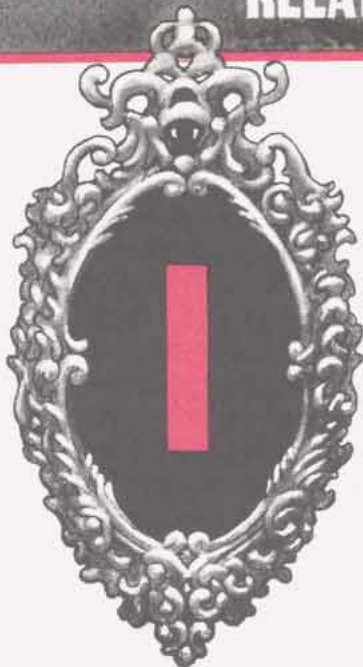
It takes 2d8 days to shift from hibernation to full wakefulness. The creature regains 1 HD and one age category (with respect to powers) for

each day that it is able to feed sufficiently (12 hp worth of blood). Also, for a period of 2d4 days after awakening, it can't shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form (although it can be forced into gaseous form if reduced to zero or fewer hit points), and it suffers a -3 penalty to any and all saving throws.

Premature Awakenings

If a vampire is awakened prematurely—by someone opening its crypt, for example—there are several issues to consider. First is the length of time the creature has been in the ground. In addition to lost HD from hibernation, it loses 1 HD for the trauma of being awakened prematurely. If this reduces the monster to 0 HD, it is instantly destroyed and crumbles to dust. If the monster survives the shock of being awakened, it is still stunned and unable to take any action for 1d4 rounds. In addition, the monster is unable to cast any spells for 2d6 hours after awakening. Finally, it suffers the inability to voluntarily shapechange and a -3 penalty to saving throws for 2d4 days.

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lie to my offspring," the vampire told me with a smile. "It is really that simple. A new fledgling knows little about the world, about itself. In general the only information it has is what it remembers from folk tales and legends, often pure falsehood."

The vampire chuckled and settled itself more comfortably. "So I tell my offspring that

their existence is inextricably linked with mine," it continued. "If I am destroyed, I tell them, 'then so are you. Your existence is as long as mine, no longer.'

"They usually believe me," it added complacently. "Or, at least, they fear to test the truth of what I tell them. This is a kind of loyalty; they will do whatever is in their power to protect me from harm, believing that the moment of my destruction is also the moment of theirs."

"Do they not learn otherwise?" I asked.

"They would," the creature admitted, "in time. But I always destroy them before that time comes. After all, I gave them unlife, so I am entitled to rescind my gift. Is that not true?"

—From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

By nature most vampires are solitary and territorial predators, whether competitively building their power and amassing influence or just jealously defending a personal hunting ground. This rapacious, ruthless, and competitive nature sometimes brings vampires into conflict with each other.

Although vampires generally much prefer to compete through minions and champions, or even through more intangible means such as influence-peddling and rumor-mongering, the

creatures do sometimes come into physical contact. Unsurprisingly, physical contact often leads to physical combat.

A few individuals apparently enjoy interacting with others of their kind, and form social microcosms of their own. This usually occurs only with vampires of considerable power and maturity that have existed long enough to pass beyond a stage of blind competition and jealousy. When such vampire "societies" form, they can become frighteningly powerful, frighteningly fast, and there is virtually nothing that can stand in their way.

It is lucky, then, that these societies are usually relatively short-lived (although in this context that may mean they last as long as a century or two). Over the centuries vampires may learn patience and cooperation, but only to a degree. At their core they are still selfish and evil monsters, and this nature will almost inevitably resurface. Initially a society of vampires may appear stable and united, but soon enough one vampire and then the others will develop their own hidden agendas. What may begin as solidarity will eventually degrade into the mere *semblance* of cooperation, with each vampire conniving to gain power, prestige, or wealth, to the detriment of its "colleagues." Societies sometimes break up when the participants finally choose to go their separate ways, but most societies are torn apart by infighting, both figurative and literal.

Some vampires know better than to form societies with others of their kind. Instead, they form shifting and temporary alliances with other vampires in positions of power. Vampires that choose this route will be as careful in their dealings with their kin as thieves are with their fences: the deals will be so constructed that both sides gain and neither party comes under the sway of the others.

Younger vampires—those below the age category of Ancient—will almost never reach any level of cooperation. They are almost exclusively loners, and the only other vampires they will consider coming in contact with are

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the slave creatures that they, themselves, have made. Some of these “master” vampires use their slaves as food gatherers, sending the servant creatures forth to feed in the world, take the concomitant risks, and then return to offer their necks to their controller. But this is a significant risk: should the master vampire’s care and control slip even in the slightest degree, the servant creatures could accidentally or purposely lead hunters to the master’s lair.

Of course, vampires well know the bitterness and the hatred that their servant creatures feel toward them, and so are aware that their servants will turn on them and destroy them should the chance ever arise. For this reason, master vampires usually destroy their servants long before they become powerful enough to challenge for their own dominance.

Combat Between Vampires

How can one vampire harm another? First, so great is the enchantment that surrounds a vampire that one creature is able to strike and physically damage one of its own kind. The one exception is in the case of Patriarchs: a Patriarch can only be struck by another of its own age category.

Second, there is always the possibility of spell usage. Spellcasting vampires might well have powers capable of harming, even destroying their kin. (Note that one vampire is incapable of charming another, however, due to the monsters’ innate resistance to “charm attacks.”)

Although a blow in melee from one vampire can inflict physical damage on another, it should be noted that one beast is unable to drain energy experience levels from another. Why? The likelihood is that the creatures are not alive, and have no life energy to drain.

Vampires that drain other attributes through a strike in combat *can* drain them from another vampire, however. I, myself, have seen two of the creatures locked in mortal combat—hands locked like vices around each other’s throats,

hissing and spitting like cats! As they struggled, horrible wounds opened in the flesh of one vampire. Meanwhile, the other grew progressively more feeble until it finally collapsed to the ground, whereupon the victor tore the defeated’s head from its body. As the victor stood above its vanquished foe, howling its elation, the wounds on its face and body closed with the unnatural speed typical of vampires. I speculate that the conqueror was actually sapping the fundamental strength (Str) of the conquered, while the conquered was only able to drain the health (hit points) from his better.

Kin-nectar

The majority of vampires can feed only from a willing, charmed, or otherwise immobilized but living victim. Can one of these creatures feed from another vampire? Apparently, yes. The following discussion will concentrate on those creatures that drink blood, because these are the most common. Similar conditions apply for other types of feeders.

One vampire *can* drink the blood of another. In fact, vampiric blood, described by one vampire as “kin-nectar,” is a better source of sustenance than the blood of mortals at least in one sense. Vampires need to drink much less kin-nectar than they would mortal blood in order to meet their food requirements.

Yet few vampires enjoy drinking kin-nectar, it seems; they vastly prefer the taste of blood sipped from the vessel of a living (demi)human. It may be that there *are* some vampires that prefer kin-nectar, and perhaps one or two who *require* it. These creatures are in the unenviable position of depending upon other vampires for their survival—not a particularly secure position in which to be.

If one vampire drinks the blood of another, the creatures enter into a close relationship: for several (1d3) hours following the feeding, the two creatures’ minds are so intimately linked

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that they can communicate telepathically as easily as by speaking. This telepathy persists regardless of distance or intervening matter as long as both vampires are on the same plane. One vampire cannot “overhear” thoughts not intended as communication, however.

In addition, the vampire who drank the blood has a significant level of control over the vampire who provided the blood for as long as the telepathic link exists. The creature who fed can issue orders telepathically and the second creature must obey them, within reason. Most vampires will find this interconnection distasteful and, in the case of the creature who was fed upon, downright dangerous, so the monsters usually shun kin-nectar. Most will only participate in this kind of feeding on either side if they totally trust the other participant (which is very rare) or if they simply have no choice in the matter.

It is nearly impossible for two vampires to feed exclusively from each other for a protracted period of time. They can do it for the short term, but it will become debilitating to both creatures in the long term. Such “mutual” arrangements would be incredibly rare in any case, because both vampires would in turn make themselves vulnerable to the telepathic orders of the other.

Progenitor and Offspring

Conventional wisdom is categorical on one point: newly-formed vampires are slaves of the creatures that created them, with no free will of their own. Even one of the most reputable tomes on the subject repeats this: “Once they become undead, the new vampire is under the complete control of its killer.”

But how true is this? And what constraints are there on the control that does exist? For the first days or weeks of a Fledgling vampire's existence, it is highly susceptible to the orders of its creator—so I have discovered from my research. If there is no telepathic bond between creator and created, then the master vampire

must be in the vicinity, and must be willing to communicate with its offspring.

How, then, do vampires keep their slaves under their control beyond this period? They do so in much the same way that mortals dominate others: through intimidation. The fledgling is new to the vampiric world, and at least partially ignorant of its own abilities. Its creator can, if it is careful, create the perception in its offspring that the master is immensely more powerful and knowledgeable than the newly-created vampire, which it may in fact be. Through simple intimidation and by playing on the offspring's natural doubts and fears, the master can create a situation enabling it to “rule” for decades.

The reader may realize that this situation is totally different and much more unstable than the “traditional” picture of the master and its unquestioning slaves. Offspring vampires may have considerable free will from the moment of their creation, although they do have an “inborn” propensity to bow to the will of their creator. After several years have passed, however, this propensity wears off.

The journal entry that opened this chapter indicates the risks that accompany creating an offspring vampire. The “master” must keep the intimidation level high and discipline tight. If the offspring senses weakness in its master, it may consider challenging for dominance or simply fleeing. As time passes the offspring vampire will learn more about its own strengths, and probably more about its master's weaknesses. As soon as the offspring believes that it may be able to defeat its master, the two creatures will almost certainly come into conflict. Of course, the majority of vampires will destroy their offspring before this point is reached. Some, however, will send them away, officially granting them their freedom. (This is merely another psychological trick. If an offspring vampire is “freed” before it realizes it can depose its “master,” it may feel some gratitude toward its creator.)

The vast majority of vampires view their

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offspring simply as disposable tools, to be used and then discarded. Yet there are some, it seems, that feel some kind of empathy for their "children." These rare creatures will "raise" their offspring, teaching them all they need to know to survive in the world, and then send them forth to "live their own lives." Gratitude is an uncommon thing among vampires, however, and offspring of such sentimental creatures generally view this "care" as weakness. Vampires who care for their offspring are most often destroyed by those very offspring.

Vampires differ in their motivations when creating offspring. Some fledglings do it accidentally, not yet understanding the consequences of killing a foe. Others do it to create slaves for themselves. Some few seem to need contact with members of their own kind, and create companions. This latter group are more likely to become the sentimental "parents" described above, and are hence most likely to meet destruction at the hands of their offspring.

When a vampire is destroyed, all semblance of control over its offspring immediately vanishes. Most offspring will immediately go about their own business. I have heard of some rare creatures who have sought the destroyers of their creator and wreaked vengeance on them. I find this somewhat hard to believe because it implies a sense of loyalty, even love of a kind, between vampires. Still, stranger things have proved to be true.

Vampire Brides and Grooms

I truly loved her," the vampire admitted quietly, pain showing on its normally stoic face.

"Would you believe that? I loved her. I would have given anything, anything—even the rest of eternity—if she had loved me in return."

It paused, and I thought for an incredible moment that the monster might cry. But then it seemed to rally its strength, and its chill gaze nailed me to my chair.

"I misjudged her totally," the vampire

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physiological systems related to such effects in mortals are still present, and sometimes still functional, in vampires). It may be an obsession dating from the days before the vampire became what he now is, as is the case with Strahd Von Zarovich's obsession with women who resemble his lost Tatyana. In these cases, the vampire creates its bride in cold blood, for the sole purpose of satisfying its own desires.

Sometimes, however, the emotion may be close to what mortals classify as love. The happiness of the vampire becomes tied up with the prospective bride, and its well-being depends on hers. In these cases, the vampire might actually believe it is bestowing a gift when it turns the mortal into its bride—the gift of freedom from aging and death.

To actually create the bride, the vampire bestows what is known as the "Dark Kiss." It samples the blood of its mortal paramour—once, twice, thrice—draining her almost to the point of death. This process causes the subject no pain; in fact, it has been described as the most euphoric, ecstatic experience, in comparison to which all other pleasures fade into insignificance. Just as the subject is about to slip into the terminal coma from which there is no awakening, the vampire opens a gash in its own flesh—often in its throat—and holds the subject's mouth to the wound. As the burning draught that is the vampire's blood gushes into the subject's mouth, the primitive feeding instinct is triggered, and she sucks hungrily at the wound, enraptured. With the first taste of the blood, the subject is possessed of great and frenzied strength (Str 18, if the character's Str isn't already higher), and will use it to prevent the vampire from separating her from the fountain of wonder that is its bleeding wound. It is at this point that the creator-vampire's strength is most sorely tested. He is weakened by his own blood loss, and also by his own rapture as the "victim" of a dark kiss. Overcoming the sudden loss of strength and the inclinations of lust, the vampire must pull

her away from its own throat, hopefully without harming her, before she has overfed. Should the subject be allowed to feed for too long (more than 2 rounds), she is driven totally and incurably insane, and will die in agony within 24 hours.

Once the subject has stopped feeding, she falls into a coma that lasts minutes or hours (2d12 turns), at the end of which time she dies. Several (1d3) hours later, she arises as a Fledgling vampire—and her creator's bride. Her vampire creator must be present to teach her the requirements and limitations of her vampiric existence. Otherwise, she might not understand the necessity of feeding, and might even wander out into the sunlight and be destroyed.

The first moment that the bride realizes the ugly truth about her new nature can be highly traumatic, unless her creator takes steps to ease her acceptance. Even if her creator is sensitive to her emotional pain and gentles her into realization, only the most strong-willed person can come through that moment of understanding with sanity totally unshaken. The simultaneous acts of love and hatred, of taking a bride by murdering her, create an emotional paradox which is often impossible to resolve. In some cases, perhaps a majority, the knowledge of her fate totally unseats the bride's reason, and she becomes wildly and irrevocably mad. If this occurs, most creator vampires will be forced to mercifully destroy their brides—in the prescribed manner, as described later—and end their suffering. Of course, some cruel creatures will simply allow her wander off to meet her own fate, even though doing so will cause the creator-vampire some damage.

The actual process of creating a bride inflicts some limited damage on the vampire. Even the small amount of blood the bride drinks weakens it for some time.

Any vampire can have only one bride or groom at a time. A vampire is physically incapable of creating another bride or groom while it has a companion already bound to it in

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this relationship. If the vampire wishes to create another bride or groom, it must either destroy its current bride or groom or follow the ritual described later to dissolve the bond between them.

The Relationship

Although there are some folk tales that describe the bride of a vampire as its slave, in much the same way that offspring are slaves, a bride is free-willed from the moment of her creation. The creator vampire *does* have great influence over the bride, however, although this control is totally nonmagical. When a vampire is created in the traditional manner—that is, when a victim's life energy is completely drained away—the new fledgling instinctively understands much about the vampiric way of unlife, and about its own strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Not so the bride.

Newly-created brides are generally ignorant of their own capabilities. If in life they heard folk tales and myths about vampires, they

might have some vague conception, but often these tales are totally wrong. The bride is effectively dependent—totally dependent—on her creator, to learn how to survive as a vampire. This obviously gives the creator great power over the bride. By lying to her or bending the truth, he can convince her that she must obey his every order or suffer horrible consequences. With time, and through experimentation, the bride might find out the *true* level of control her creator has over her—that is, none. She is still in a very inferior position, of course, because she is a Fledgling and her creator is at least an Ancient. Some creator vampires—particularly those who created the bride out of love—will be totally honest with their creation, depending on loyalty, friendship and even reciprocated love, to stop the bride from trying to bring about their destruction. This is probably the most beneficial situation for both vampires, because two creatures cooperating are much more effective than two creatures involved in machinations against each other. A vampire

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and bride who truly love and trust each other make a team that is exceptionally difficult to defeat!

Communication

One of the reasons “married vampires” are so difficult to defeat is that a vampire and its bride share a telepathic communication that has a range measured in miles. Regardless of intervening terrain or obstacles, the two vampires can communicate instantly and silently as if they were speaking together. It is important to note that this communication is very much like silent speech. One vampire cannot read the other’s mind against the subject’s will, so the bride cannot pilfer secrets from the mind of her creator. As the sole exception to this statement, one member of the pair *can* sense incredibly strong emotion in the other’s mind. (This could be equated to hearing a vocalized gasp of surprise or fear.) Only extreme fear, pain, surprise, sadness or exaltation can be sensed in this manner.

Love and Jealousy

No matter how close and honest the relationship between a vampire and its bride, the bride *is* still a vampire, with the selfish, ruthless, and rapacious characteristics which that implies. Relationships between a vampire and its bride are rarely idyllic, and are often stormy enough to make a civil war seem like a garden party in comparison. As the bride grows in power and knowledge she will probably start acting in her own best interests, rather than in those of her creator, and begin to gratify her own desires. Her creator will frequently respond to this selfish behavior with intense and raging jealousy. Many of these relationships have ended with the two vampires at each other’s throats, tearing each other apart. (The bride will usually lose such a conflict, of course.)

Negative Consequences of the Bond

While the bond is in existence, there is a strong metaphysical link between the two vampires’ unlife forces. (No doubt this link explains the telepathic communication the creatures share.) So close is this link that the destruction of one member of the bond inflicts grave damage to the other member.

Dissolving the Bond

The bond that joins the bride and her creator is eternal, unless the creator takes measures to break the bond. Although the bride must participate in this ritual—either voluntarily or otherwise—she cannot instigate it. The ritual *must* be performed at the will of the creator.

To break the bond, the creator vampire must first open a wound in its own body and allow a quantity of its blood to spill on the ground. It must then open a similar wound in its bride, and allow her blood to mix with its own in a puddle on the ground. At this point, the bond between the two vampires is terminated and can never be re-established. The telepathic link between the vampires is also ended. Perhaps most importantly, the consequences of one vampire suffering upon the destruction of the other will now not take place. One of the two vampires is free to destroy the other—if it so wishes, and if it can do so—without any repercussions.

Other Remarks

Traditionally, a female vampire will create a male groom, while a male vampire will create a female bride. This is not always the case, however. There have been cases reported where male vampires have created male grooms, while female vampires have created female companions. There are no restrictions whatsoever concerning this, apart from the

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vampire's own tastes and proclivities. (It horrifies me to dwell on it, but I believe to this day that my son Erasmus was not transformed into a vampire in the traditional way. I surmise that Baron Metus—may his soul rot forever in the deepest pits of the Nine Hells—turned my only son into a vampire's groom. . . .)

“Kin-nectar”

The restrictions on orders given by one vampire who has drunk the kin-nectar of another are the same as for a *suggestion* spell. The vampire gets no saving throw to resist the orders, and its magic resistance does not apply.

A vampire feeding from another requires only half as many hit points worth of blood (rounded up) as it usually does to meet its food requirements. On the other hand, the vampire fed from loses *twice as many* hit points as the other vampire drinks. For example, a Fledgling need drink only 6 hit pints worth of blood, but the donor vampire loses 12 hit points. These lost points represent a special case: the creature *cannot* regenerate these points normally. To regenerate hit points lost to feeding, the vampire must feed sufficiently to meet its daily requirement, and must do so upon mortal blood (whether from an animal, a demihuman, or from a cache of stored blood). Immediately after the feeding is complete, the donor vampire can begin to regenerate the hit points lost to feeding. (If the vampire feeds in turn from *another* vampire, it cannot regenerate those lost hit points.)

Progenitor and Offspring

For the first 4d4 days of the Fledgling vampire's unlife, any order given to it by its creator has the effect of a *suggestion*, against which the Fledgling receives neither saving throw nor magic resistance rolls. After this initial period the automatic susceptibility of the Fledgling to its creator diminishes. The offspring still has some propensity toward following the instructions of its master, but this propensity is considerably less than it was

initially. This state lasts for several years.

For the first 1d4 years of its unlife, the offspring vampire will react to its master as though under a *charm* spell. This isn't strictly a spell effect, however, so the offspring doesn't receive regular saving throws to shake off the effect. If the master instructs it to do something that is dangerous to the offspring, but not suicidal, the offspring receives a saving throw vs. spell. If it successfully saves, it refuses to follow that order, although in general the *charm* stays in effect.

Vampire Brides and Grooms

“Donating” blood to the prospective bride or groom inflicts 3d8 hit points of damage on the creating vampire. This damage—and *only* this damage—does not begin to regenerate until the first sunset after the bride is created. All damage inflicted on the vampire by other means regenerates normally.

If one vampire in a bride/creator relationship is destroyed, the other vampire instantly suffers 6d6 hit points of damage. There is no limitation in range to this effect, because the psychic shock propagates through the Negative Material Plane, to which all vampires have a strong connection. Even if the two vampires are on different planes, the survivor will sense and suffer from the other's destruction. The creature is unable to begin regenerating this damage—and *only* this damage—until the next sunset. In addition, it cannot shapechange or voluntarily assume gaseous form for 24 hours, and is unable to create another bride or groom for 3d6 years thereafter.

The range of telepathic communication created by this union is 1 mile for each age category of the bride or groom. The age category of the creating vampire is immaterial.

To dissolve the bond, the amount of blood that both vampires must spill is enough to inflict 2d8 hit points of damage on each creature. They cannot begin to regenerate this damage—and *only* this damage—until the next sunset after the ritual is complete.

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o vampires fear death?" The fiend echoed my question with a laugh. "Death? No, we have already died." Then its expression sobered. "Nonexistence? Yes, that we fear above all.

"Think of it from our point of view," the creature proposed in the most reasonable of tones. "You, as a human, fear death. But you are—what—fifty? If you were to die today, what would you lose? Twenty years of life, perhaps thirty at the most, and the last decade or more racked with pain and tortured with the humiliation of failing faculties. Bah! Nothing."

The vampire leaned forward, intense, as though it mattered vitally that I understand, that I be convinced. "I, as a vampire, fear nonexistence," it said quietly. "I have lived ten years for every one of yours. And if I were to be destroyed today, what would I lose? Eternity!"

It slammed an iron-hard fist onto the table. "Thirty years? I could spend thirty years studying a well-written book or a finely-wrought painting. I have time enough to think, to experience the changing of the world."

The monster sat back and viewed me from beneath hooded eyes. "Now," it purred, "do you understand why your deaths"—and I knew it meant the death of mortals—"mean nothing to me?" It paused. ". . . And mine means everything?"

—From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

The logical first step to eliminating a vampire is understanding it, which is probably why you are reading this guide now. Of course it is vital for the successful vampire hunter to acquaint himself with the strengths and weaknesses of the monster in question, and to consider the variations of the theme. Understanding what their mortal vulnerabilities are is obviously prerequisite, as well. But I am of the opinion that understanding the *psychology* of the

vampire is your greatest weapon. Knowing how the creature thinks may give you critical clues as to how and where it will be at its most vulnerable state. It can also save your life if you know what to say (and *not* to say) in the presence of a vampire.

The Psychology of Immortality

Philosophically speaking, immortality is probably the greatest difference between mortals and vampires. Mortals know that their time in the world is tightly bound; no matter how long the road may be—and for elves and other such creatures it can be long, indeed—death inescapably waits at the other end. This, of necessity, affects the way mortals view life. "Time is precious," "time is slipping away," "time is fleeting," "time, the subtle thief of youth": these are the proverbs and truisms of mortality. So many facets of (demi)human psychology and philosophy can be understood when viewed through this lens.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the psychology of vampires is very different, in some very profound ways, from that of the mortal races. Having already died, vampires little consider the specter of death as mortal do. Provided that they can avoid accidental destruction or annihilation at the hands of foes, these fiends could theoretically continue to exist to the (hypothetical) end of time!

One must not forget, however, that vampires were once mortal creatures. Although the transition to undeath drastically affects the body, its effects on the mind and on thoughts, beliefs, and philosophies are much less predictable and generally more subtle.

Before discussing the psychology of immortality in more detail, it is necessary to distinguish between the three "classifications" of vampires, based on their origins. The first classification includes those who became vampires because of "deadly desire," like Strahd Von Zarovich (see Chapter XIII, "The Who's Doomed of Ravenloft," in the

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RAVENLOFT® boxed set). The second comprises those who became vampires as the result of a curse, whether laid by a mortal or by an evil deity. The third and final category is the most numerous: those unfortunates who became vampires as a result of the attack of another vampire.

The first two categories have one major factor in common: in almost all cases, these vampires were evil while they were alive. The transition to undeath never affects this except, in some cases, to *intensify* their evil.

The final category is a totally different case. Victims of vampires have no commonality with regard to ethos, moral strictures, philosophy of life, care toward others, or any other factor. The victim of a vampire could be a saint or a sinner, a paladin or an assassin, a compassionate healer or a ruthless alley-basher.

The fact is that the vast majority of vampires are chaotic and evil in the extreme. How does this come about? In most cases, it seems, the transition to undeath itself works this grim change on the mentality of a vampire's victim; the Fledgling's previous world view is largely irrelevant.

There are some fascinating exceptions, however, some documented cases of Fledgling vampires that managed to cling to some of the attitudes and beliefs they had while alive—for a time, at least. What set these exceptions apart? Was it, as some sages suggest, a characteristic of the vampire that created them? Or was it something within them? My own theory is this: the victim must have an immense strength of will, and the vampire that killed the victim be prevented in some way from implementing the innate control that such creatures have over "secondary" vampires. (This can happen if the creating vampire leaves the area, or is destroyed, between the time of the victim's death and the night the victim first rises as a vampire.)

Some of the most fascinating examples of this sort of "carry-over" were recorded by a sage, whose name has been tragically lost, in a



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treatise whose title I have borrowed (with thanks) for this chapter: *The Mind of the Vampire*. Two samples follow:

A young, naive man, raised in a sheltered and privileged family, was slain by a vampire passing through the neighborhood. At first, he was unaware of his true nature (or unwilling to accept it), believing that his “death” had been only profound sickness and that his “premature” burial had been a mistake by his overzealous family. Evidence of his vampiric nature soon became apparent, however, but the poor wretch was unable to fully renounce the life he left behind. He took to “haunting” his old home, watching from the darkness and trying to pretend he was at least peripherally part of mortal life. He would seem a totally pathetic figure had it not been for his vicious attacks against anyone who tried to take away from him the semblance of his former life.

An intrepid vampire hunter was slain by one of the creatures she so tenaciously hunted; the monster that killed her was immediately destroyed by her colleagues. For whatever reason, these colleagues neglected to take the precautions to prevent the woman from rising as a vampire. The trauma the woman suffered when she realized her vampiric condition was almost—but not quite—enough to drive her mad. She had taken up her life’s pursuit as a moral duty, to rid the world of the scourge of vampirism, and now she had become what she had always hated! She set the trauma aside, however, and decided to play out the hand that Fate had dealt her. She dedicated her unlife to continuing the work she had started as a mortal: to use her newfound powers to help her track down and destroy others of her kind. Unfortunately, she soon confused her mission with a quest for power, and was destroyed by Strahd Von Zarovich.

A Question of Alignment

The “typical” vampire is described as having an alignment of Chaotic Evil. There are some philosophers who believe this fact says more about (demi)human perceptions than it does about vampires. *Chaotic*, holders of this theory point out, means simply that vampires consider their personal interests over those of others, or of “the many.” While they do not go so far as to condone this stance, they do consider it to be understandable because vampires are immortal. *Evil*, strictly speaking, is defined as “holding life in low regard.” How, these philosophers ask, could a creature be classed otherwise, that must feed on living victims to survive? The point that these philosophers proceed to make in their heavy-handed and pedantic fashion, which I have abbreviated here, is that describing vampires as *Chaotic Evil* actually conveys very little information about the creatures’ behaviors and attitudes.

But this thesis raises a fascinating question: if I set aside the matter of feeding habits, could a vampire exhibit *other* behavior patterns that could be described as “good”? The answer is “theoretically yes,” and I can even cite one short-lived example. A man of good alignment was killed by a vampire, and became a vampire himself under the control of his dark master. When the master vampire was destroyed, the “minion” vampire became free-willed. Even though undead, he still held the beliefs and attitudes that, while alive, had categorized him as Good. Now, in secret, he decided to use his powers to at least partially set right the damage that he and his master had done. In fact, for some decades he was a secret benefactor to his home town.

Unfortunately, things changed with the passage of time. At first, the undead benefactor wanted no thanks, and kept his identity and nature inviolably secret. He lived in a cave on the outskirts of town and saw no living soul. After a decade, however, it seems that he began

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to resent the fact that the townsfolk showed no signs of gratitude for his largesse. He began to leave behind notes, asking for some kind of "concrete appreciation," generally money, in return for his efforts. (He had no need for the money, of course; the coins were purely symbolic of the thanks he thought he deserved.) His demands became progressively higher until the townsfolk decided the requests from their secret benefactor were too great. When they ceased to pay, the vampire's feelings towards the townsfolk turned to hatred and he fell upon them like a scourge until some intrepid adventurers destroyed him.

I have a theory that explains what happened in this example. Eternity is a long time. As the years passed, the vampire's feelings began to change. Slowly he lost his sense of kinship with the living, and put his own desires, even when those desires were somewhat irrational, before theirs. Finally, he came to believe that their very fates were petty things, unworthy of his consideration.

I strongly believe that this attitude shift happens, in time, to all vampires. With some individuals, it occurs almost instantly, while with others it may take decades. Although I have no firm evidence on which to base this conjecture, I would guess that no vampire can retain a nature other than one of Chaotic Evil beyond the Fledgling age category.

Psychological Progression

Most vampires are unique personalities, as are mortal (demi)humans. Individual (demi)humans may go through a "psychological progression," themselves. Commonly, the young of all (demi)human races are rather foolhardy, simply because the concept of death has yet to become real to them. They then enter a stage of experimentation, but usually temper their curiosity with at least some caution. This is followed by a period of more conservative activity, particularly if they are starting a family.

Then, as the first chill winds of mortality begin to blow through the soul, they will often temporarily relive the wild and joyous exuberance of youth. When this phase has passed, they frequently return to conservative pursuits. And finally, in the twilight of their years, they become introspective, trying to extract the underlying meaning of their lives. Certainly (demi)humans are individuals, but still a substantial number of them pass through most if not all of these stages.

Why, then, should it be surprising that vampires also show a psychological progression? Certainly, the stages are somewhat different and the time scale involved is vastly changed, but in the "life" of even the most individualistic vampire, at the very least an echo of this progression can be detected.

The first stage is usually characterized by the creature feeling a dark joy in its new powers. It is overwhelmed by the sense of power engendered by its strength and its supernatural resilience. Newly-formed vampires will often assume animal form for the pure and simple-minded joy of flitting as bat over the forests of the night or running, seeming tireless, with a pack of wolves. Some of the creatures gain great satisfaction from testing the limits of their powers, often for the sheer joy of the experience, even if its actual exploits are basically meaningless in the grand scheme of things. (There are recurring rumors that could be interpreted as examples of vampiric "pranks"—trivial events that nevertheless required great strength or other supernormal abilities.) This experimental stage of a vampire's unlife is usually over quite quickly. Some vampires go through this phase in a few weeks or months while others continue for more than a year.

The first attitude shift usually begins when a vampire comes to recognize it is not in fact invulnerable. This can occur through stupidity, as when a Fledgling chooses an inappropriate sanctuary and is burned by the sunlight. More frequently it comes when a vampire in its

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foolish revels has attracted unwanted attention, and the first vampire hunters come after it.

The first party of hunters represents a turning point for the vampire. For the first time it cannot ignore the fact that there are those in the world who would like nothing more than to destroy the "blood-sucking fiend." It hardly seems to matter whether this first group of attackers actually manages to harm the vampire or not. The simple fact of their assault triggers the change because it forces the vampire to fight to defend itself. In many cases this is the first time the new vampire kills (demi)humans. The vampire will usually draw two conclusions from this event. The first is that some (demi)humans wanted to destroy it, and thus *all* (demi)humans are *potential* foes. The second is that the vampire is a phenomenal fighter, a virtual killing machine.

These two conclusions generally trigger the next phase. During this stage, many vampires become rampaging fiends, killing for the pure joy of it, sometimes feeding from several victims in one night, even after they are totally sated. Vampires will often create their first "servitor" vampires during this phase, before they realize the consequences of their actions. This phase can last for several years, and in some vampires it never ends until the creature is destroyed. For most creatures, however, this stage will last no more than twenty years.

Usually the next stage is one of boredom. The "innocent" joy the creature derived from exercising its powers is gone as the monster becomes accustomed to those powers. Even the thrill of the hunt frequently begins to pall after a decade or two. In short, the prospect of an eternity of unlife becomes bleak when all the creature has to look forward to is its next kill. There is also a great sense of loneliness.

At this point, vampires typically diverge into two groups. There are some who try to interact once more with (demi)human society in one way or another. With varying degrees of success, these creatures will try to take on the mask of mortality, to "play the grand facade,"

to borrow a phrase once used by a vampire (I will discuss this concept at length, later). If the creature fails in its first attempt to "assimilate," it will rarely try again. If it enjoys some measure of success, however, this is usually the path the monster will follow for the rest of its existence. It will become one of the "shadow people" (to use another vampire term), always existing more or less on the periphery of (demi)human society, moving through it when necessary, and secretly preying upon it.

Vampires who decide against dabbling in society, or those who fail in their first attempt, usually deal with the boredom and loneliness in a more destructive way. To add interest to their bleak existence, they often escalate in cruelty. Rather than killing one person, they kill a caravan of merchants. Rather than terrorizing a small village, they bully an entire county. Creatures in this phase often put much energy and imagination into new ways to spread destruction over the land. Obviously this phase is most likely to attract the attention of vampire hunters. Conspicuous behavior coupled with relative weakness has spelled the destruction of many vampires during this stage. For one reason or another, vampires rarely continue in this mode of mass destruction beyond the transition to the Mature age category. (Either they "grow out of it," or are destroyed.)

One definition of "maturity" in (demi)humans is the ability to emotionally accept one's mortality. Conversely, in vampires, one definition of maturity might be to emotionally understand the consequences of *immortality*. Usually after about 100 years of existence, vampires will come to realize that they could truly *never* cease to exist . . . if they are careful. At this stage vampires come to realize, sometimes for the first time, just what they have to lose.

This brings about several changes. The most noticeable is that the conspicuous destruction of the preceding phase comes to an end. The creature recognizes how much of a risk this behavior represents. Not only will it eventually

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bring down upon it the vengeance of an individual or group powerful enough to destroy it, but it might also stumble upon such a group or individual in one of its violent forays, and thus hasten its doom.

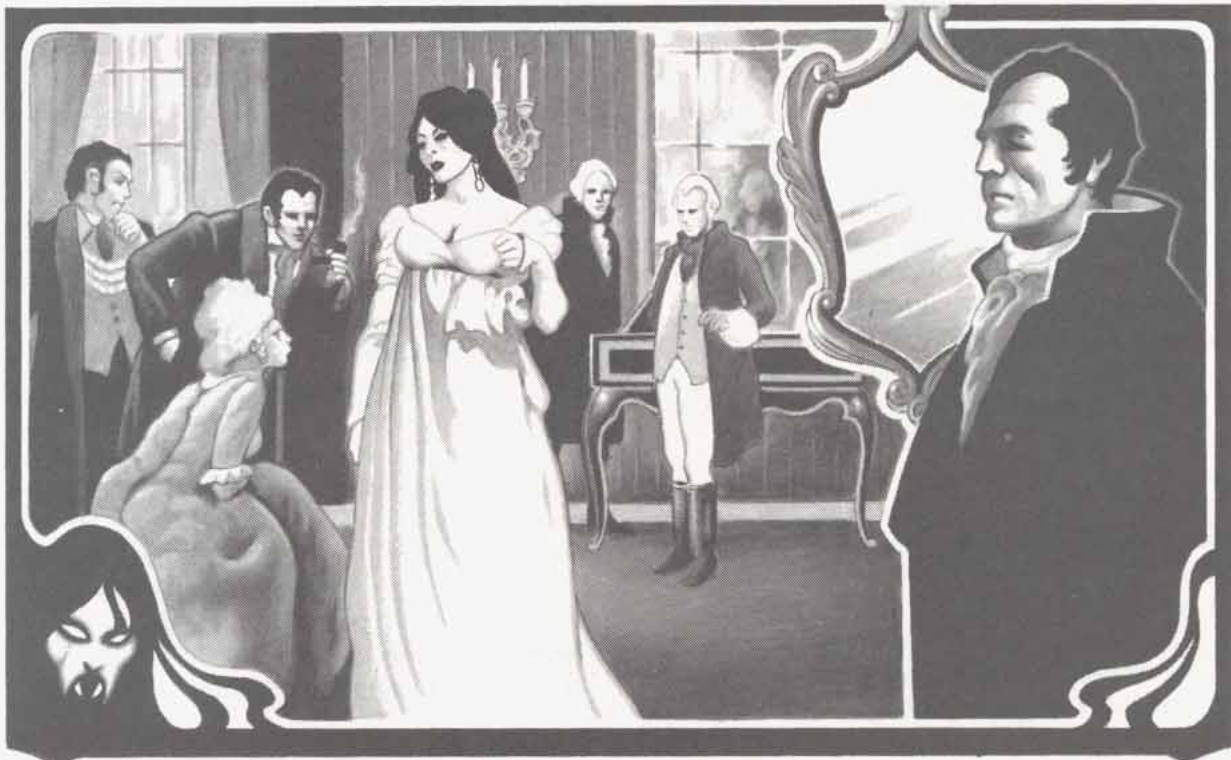
The second change is that the vampire will start to take more precautions to protect itself. It is usually at this stage that vampires begin to set up multiple sanctuaries for themselves, all hidden and warded to the best of the creature's (considerable) abilities. If it lives in the wilderness it will seek out and summon animals and monsters to serve as guardians (and food sources in times of dearth). If it is "playing the facade" it will hire and charm guardians, and begin to establish layers of protection around itself. Vampires at this stage may consider creating servitor vampires, but will be very careful to keep them under complete control to ensure that the servitors do not attract unwanted attention, and to destroy them before they grow powerful enough to challenge their master.

Security, to be worth anything, must be

security against all dangers, and perhaps the greatest danger to a vampire is boredom. Thus at this stage, vampires will often go to great lengths to ensure that they have diversions open to them. They may engage in physical activities, either in human or animal form, such as hunting purely for pleasure. They may surround themselves with things of beauty. As their intelligence grows sharper with age, they may entertain themselves by learning new languages, and by working their way through the libraries of humanity. So great may be their need for company and companionship that they create a "groom" or "bride"—a vampire with which they have an intense bond and kinship. ("Grooms" and "brides" are discussed in Chapter XI, "Relationships Between Vampires.")

This stage of maturity can last for several centuries. Indeed, many vampires never progress beyond it. For them, security and sources of diversion are all they need.

For other vampires, however, these two factors are required, but not sufficient. They need something more. This "something more"



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is often found in a hunger for power. This is something of an echo of the earlier stage where they tried to spread their range of destruction over larger and larger areas. Now, however, it is their sphere of influence that they wish to expand.

The nature of this sphere of influence depends on the personality of the vampire. The most obvious manifestation of power hunger is the desire to rule, but a vampire-king is soon faced with a quandary: what do the people of the land think when their king has ruled for fifty years? One hundred? One thousand? Sooner or later, the vampire's true nature will be revealed.

Therefore, I surmise that most vampires in this ambitious psychological stage either put a mortal "figurehead" on the throne while they rule from behind the scene, or they participate in a more insidious manifestation of power hunger: in the vast majority of societies, rulers can come and go—even despots and tyrants—and "power brokers," the buyers and sellers of information and favors, retain their places of power (and their heads) regardless of law or morality. I am sure it is in this shadowy stratum of society that those vampires prefer to operate.

Still other vampires display their hunger for power through a fixation with the magical arts. Those that were wizards (or even priests) in life will sometimes pursue their magical endeavors in unlife. With immortality, a vampire can amass a treasure trove of old tomes, laboratory equipment, and magical items. But even more valuable is the time they can dedicate to their studies. If a particularly powerful spell will take ninety years of research, what of it? A vampire has eternity to invest in the results that it desires.

I believe this cannot be over-stressed! Vampires capable of casting spells have literally unlimited time in which to research and develop new or "customized" versions of familiar spells. The nature of these idiosyncratic abilities depends on the vampire's personality. One thing is certain, however:

those who would hunt a spellcasting vampire—even one "only" several centuries of age—should be prepared to face magic of a nature and lethality that can hardly be imagined by mortal mages.

Many humans and demihumans become "arrested" at particular stages of their psychological development—so, too, do vampires. Other events can later reverse this "arrested development." For this reason, there is no direct correlation between the psychological stages discussed above and age category. Particularly intuitive vampires might progress to the stage of power hunger within a mere century or two; others might never even reach this phase. As a general statement, however, a vampire who manages to achieve the age of Patriarch will have reached the pinnacle of psychological development.

Ego

Mortals are cattle," the vampire said without animosity. "You supply us with food, primarily, but with much more as well. You are our tools, you ephemeral, posturing fools. We use you as pawns in our ongoing plans." The creature leaned forward to fix me with its icy stare. "That is the only significance to your existence: you serve us."

—From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

One consideration that does not seem to correlate with a particular phase of a vampire's psychological development is ego. Virtually from the outset, a vampire will have an exceptionally strong ego and sense of self-importance. A major consequence of this is the belief that mortals are basically unimportant. Should a mortal—hence, an "insignificant creature"—challenge it in any meaningful way, a vampire is very likely to respond with disbelieving fury and overwhelming vengeance. For this reason, among others, injuring a vampire is a

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dangerous thing. One should destroy the creature or not challenge it at all! There is a positive aspect to this inflated ego, however: vampires will frequently underestimate the risk that mortals pose, believing that the “obvious superiority” of immortals to such ephemeral creatures means that all mortals are incapable of harming it. A wily vampire hunter can sometimes play upon this overconfidence.

Insanity

Throughout the “life” of a vampire, there is always a grave risk of insanity. Perhaps it is the enforced separation from the community of mortals that unseats the creature’s reason, or perhaps it is the prospect of the eternity that stretches before them. Perhaps it has a more physiological reason, based on the changes that occur in the brain on transition to undeath. Whatever the reason, a significant proportion of vampires become insane.

Sometimes the transition from sanity to insanity is hard to spot. As a result of the creatures’ immortality, they will often engage in plans that might take centuries to reach fruition. The creatures’ day-to-day actions, when viewed without the long view of immortality, might make little or no sense. The transition to insanity is insidious, subtly more complicated as the vampire engages in more and more intricate plans—“wheels within wheels,” to quote one vampire—and more labyrinthine plotting. Eventually the creature’s day-to-day actions make no sense to the creature itself, but it follows through with them anyway.

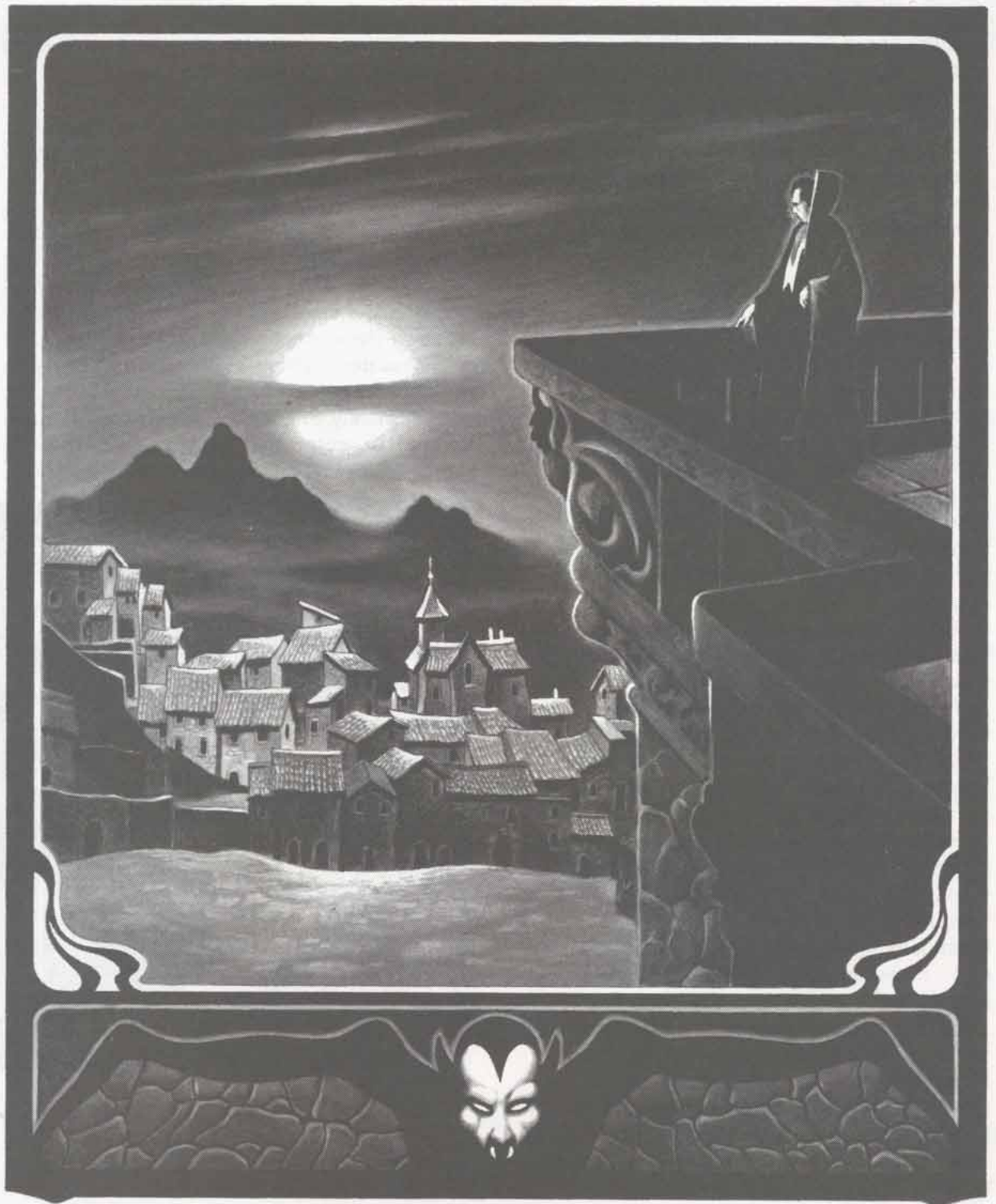
In other cases, the transition to insanity is more obvious. As the vampire grows older its behavior becomes more psychotic, more paranoid as it begins to grow tired of its way of life. The tiny part of it that is still mortal yearns tenaciously for the things it had in life, while the part of it that is a vampire scorns those pleasures of the flesh. Eventually, the strain of

the creature’s dualistic nature becomes too great. Soon after, the vampire becomes subject to fits of rage and insane behavior.

This easily identified kind of vampiric insanity will usually draw unwanted attention and eventually destruction upon the vampire. If the insane individual is the minion of a more powerful creature, the master vampire will almost always destroy the servitor at this point. In a similar vein I have heard that, in a far-away city, there were three vampires who had totally integrated themselves into the upper crust of society. These creatures were renowned businessmen, patrons of the arts, and even *ex officio* members of the city council. Unfortunately, one of the creatures went insane. In order to protect their own positions, the other two immediately destroyed it.



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o this day I cannot remember what first aroused my suspicions. But suspicious I was: I believed that there was something unethical or illegal about how the young Berron Labras inherited the ancient estate from his grandfather, Jonat Labras. (I admit it: I suspected that Berron had slain Jonat just to acquire the estate.)

I began to investigate. I found that the estate had been in the Labras family for five generations. I also found that each time the estate changed hands, the current owner died or disappeared and a young relative appeared from abroad to take over the property. On a hunch, I examined samples of handwriting from all five owners of the estate. To my horror and shock, the writing samples—spread over a period of two centuries—had undeniably come from the same hand. . . .

—From the journal of Fastil Merryvane

In addition to hibernating, discussed earlier, another way in which vampires can minimize the risks of madness and detection is to “play the grand facade”: to take on the guise of mortality and assimilate, at least partially, into mortal society. A vampire might continue this charade for weeks, years, or even decades. If it takes the precautions described in this chapter, it can continue the pretense for centuries. The vampire might imitate a noble or a peasant, or anyone in between. In any event the impersonation will usually be flawless due to a vampire’s uncanny ability to imitate human gestures.

Exactly why the assumption of a mortal life

aids a vampire in survival of the ages is unclear. Some sages believe that all vampires yearn for the mortality which they once had. By pretending to be a mortal and by being accepted as kin by mortals, a vampire can at least partially relive what it has lost. Others simply seem to enjoy contact with mortals, for a wide range of reasons, and seek it out almost from the start. Still others see the facade as a vital tool in achieving their goals, whatever they may be.

Whatever the reason, all vampires who decide to “play the facade” must face a similar set of problems. The ingenuity shown by these creatures in overcoming these problems is, at times, astounding.

The Roles of the Vampire

When the murders began, I realized at once that there was something familiar about the methods used. At the time I had no opportunity to dwell on it, however. The city council was breathing down my neck—understandably, because the first four victims had been city council members—and I had important skins to protect.

It was only several weeks into the reign of terror that I realized why the methods were so familiar. I had read about them in a local history book. I found the volume in the constabulary library quickly enough. The reference was two hundred years old, from when this great city had been nothing more than a tiny fishing village. But there was no mistaking the handiwork of the killer.

It was the Spider, Ancient Assassin, back in business after a hiatus of 200 years. . . .

—From the journal of Superintendent Bryndan Oleary

The first question that must be asked by a vampire who wishes to assume the role of a mortal is, what kind of mortal? Specifically, what position in society will the vampire hold?

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This is not a trivial question, and the answer will depend largely on the vampire's goals when entering society in the first place. If the intention is to garner power, then the role chosen will be different than if the vampire simply wants to stave off boredom.

Vampires will usually shun the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. There are many logical reasons for this. Obviously it is very hard to rise to a position of power from the peasantry. The risk of detection is, perhaps surprisingly, greater should the vampire mingle with the lower castes. Deviations from the norm are less tolerated than higher up the social scale, where differences can be reframed as "charming" eccentricities. Superstition is more prevalent, and people are more likely to suspect vampires in their midst. And finally, if the vampire's goal is simply to enjoy its stay in mortal society, the abuse generally heaped on the poor will quickly diminish this enjoyment to nothing.

No, it is much better for the vampire to insinuate itself into the middle or upper echelons of society. Here the creature can minimize the chance of detection by insulating itself, to whatever degree it sees fit, from casual contact. For example, a rich merchant who owns a trading coaster is expected to be somewhat limited in his contact with others. Equally, a patron of the arts can be forgiven for limiting personal contacts with others to specific occasions. In addition, the upper classes are much more likely to accept odd behavior as eccentricity than are the lower classes (speaking generally, of course).

The other major benefit a vampire gains from entering the upper class or aristocracy (if possible) is proximity to power. By insinuating itself into the social whirl of a nation's capital, a vampire can learn many things that will aid it in its own climb toward dominance (if such is its goal, of course).

Vampires are uniquely suited to insinuate themselves into society. Certainly, there is the requirement for some degree of wealth, if only

as "stage dressing," but vampires have many ways with which to acquire this wealth. On the personal level they are unmatched at quickly earning the trust, respect, and friendship of mortals. This is a result of both their unusual force of personality (Cha) and judicious use of their charm-gaze. With careful work vampires can position themselves to become power brokers: dealers in information and disinformation, disseminators of rumors, and the center of a network of interlocking favors and obligations. From this position they can start to amass wealth and power, should this be their aim.

Some vampires shun the upper class haunts of the wealthy, preferring to enter a different form of society: the criminal underclass. Here urbanity and suave conversation take a back seat to violence and determination. The criminal leaders and rulers of this dark underworld reach their exalted positions through a combination of cunning and ruthlessness—both traits of which vampires have an abundance. Many of the powers possessed by a vampire would make a mortal thief sick with jealousy: the ability to shapechange, the ability to assume gaseous form, the monster's natural *spider climb* power. A vampire can quickly rise through the ranks of criminals by beating thieves at their own game and by openly eliminating rivals, eventually reaching the pinnacle of success. I have reason to believe that vampires hold positions as grandmasters of various thieves' and assassins' guilds throughout the lands of mist, and elsewhere as well. An interesting question to which I have never found an answer is whether the subordinate members of these guilds know that their leader is a vampire, and if they truly care. I would suspect that some guild members know the nature of their leader, but could not care less as long as the guild continues successfully.

Another fascinating role that a vampire may assume is that of the "gentleman adventurer." This compelling figure would be as much at

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home in polite society as he would be outside it (often *far* outside it). This is the perfect role for a vampire to take on. An aloof manner and a very daunting reputation may keep others so distant that they never suspect the adventurer's true nature. And the character's propensity for going off on adventures provides a perfect cover for the vampire's "hunting trips."

In all of these roles there is one issue that the vampire must address, and that is feeding. Usually this is not a major problem. In a town or city of any size there are enough poor and destitute to sate the hunger of an army of vampires. The creatures would rarely, if ever, kill, choosing instead to drink small amounts from numerous victims. Even if the vampires did kill, few citizens would miss a destitute beggar or two.

Disguise

To successfully infiltrate society, a vampire must disguise, or draw attention away from, those characteristics that set it apart from mortals. This often requires great cunning, yet these fiends usually have a surfeit of that characteristic.

Physical Traits

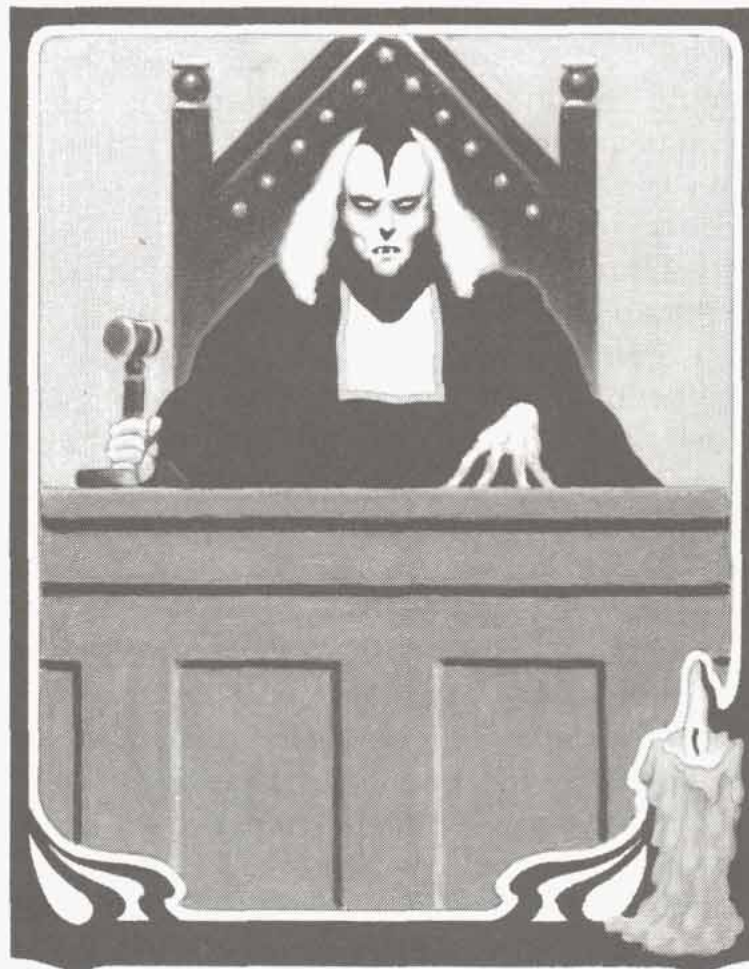
The most obvious traits that identify a vampire are physical. For instance, the skin of a vampire is typically pale and cold. While this alone is not enough to identify the creature's true nature, when combined with other clues it can be damning. Vampires who wish to survive in society must avoid even the slightest risks.

There are two ways to handle the issue of skin color. One is to change it, either through makeup or magic. The other is to leave it alone, but simply provide a convincing rationale for it. A "gentleman adventurer" vampire might blame his cold and pale skin on a "jungle fever" he suffered some years ago and, in the absence of any reasons to suspect otherwise, he could reasonably expect everyone to believe him. Skin temperature cannot be disguised by

makeup, but a vampire could simply devise an excuse for not physically touching anyone. A life-long phobia, a religious requirement, or something similar would serve.

One physical characteristic impossible to explain away is a vampire's absence of an image in a mirror. Obviously the creature's only choice is to avoid mirrors and other polished surfaces. Thus a vampire's home will have no mirrors or highly waxed floors. If the vampire should go abroad in society, it will always be on the lookout for reflective surfaces and avoid them. This is a ticklish point, and the vampire must be very careful that mortals do not realize it is avoiding mirrors, because this can be almost as damning as the lack of a reflection. Vampires are exceptionally cunning, however, and will frequently find some way of worming out of this problem.

Other physical characteristics that can give a vampire away are its resistance to physical damage and the inhuman speed with which it heals. This is easily solved, of course. The



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vampire simply has to avoid being drawn into combat or into situations where it might be harmed. Or, if it is drawn into combat that it cannot avoid—if challenged to a duel, for example—it has merely to slay its foe before that unlucky soul even has a chance to strike the vampire. Considering a vampire's physical strength, quickness, and magical abilities, this is usually very simple to arrange.

Behaviors

Vampires are cursed with certain behavior patterns that can give away their true nature to careful observers. The most notable of these behaviors are discussed below.

As was mentioned in Chapter VIII of this treatise, some vampires are able to ingest normal food and drink, and to keep it down for at least some period of time. But individuals unable to do so must either disguise or explain the fact that they do not eat or drink.

The easiest solution is simply never to enter a situation that involves public eating—dinner parties and the like. The vampire may simply claim a prior engagement. Alternatively, it could explain that its religion forbids it from eating and drinking in public, or even that it is allergic to many types of foods and must adhere to a very specialized diet. (This latter is something of a risk because obliging hosts might offer to meet whatever dietary requirements the individual has.) In social gatherings among the upper class, wine often flows freely. Fortunately for the vampire, it is easy to claim an aversion to alcohol based on any number of reasons (religious prohibitions, personal taste, allergic reaction, etc.).

More difficult to explain away is the creature's aversion to holy accoutrements. These are rarely in evidence at social or business gatherings, however, because religion is a personal matter and few people would risk offending guests of other faiths. The vampire would have to build a reputation as either a complete atheist or as a devotee of a faith that requires private worship, and in this way avoid

being invited to temples or chapels. The greatest risk to a vampire is casual or purposeful display of holy symbols. For example, a visiting prelate might well be invited to the same social gathering as the vampire, and the prelate would almost certainly wear the holy symbol signifying his or her office. The vampire would either have to decline the invitation or otherwise avoid the prelate, or trust to his or her abilities to suppress signs of distaste brought on by the holy symbol.

If suspicion has built up to such a point that someone tests the vampire—by trying to turn it, by demanding that it grasp a holy symbol, by splashing it with holy water—the vampire has stayed around much too long. No vampire in its right mind will let things get to this level, of course. It is much safer to simply drop out of sight and reassume the facade in another guise after years or decades have passed.

Fortunately for the vampire, the vast majority of social events in the upper strata of society occur after dark. This is not as true in the lower levels of society—another reason why vampires usually take on upper-class personae. Peasants, shopkeepers, even middle-class businesspersons must work during the day, and one who does not will attract unwanted attention. Among the "idle rich" and the aristocracy, however, few care how others spend their days. A vampire moving in these circles can simply accept only those invitations which take place after sunset. If necessary, the vampire might provide an additional explanation: perhaps he suffers from a "childhood malady" that makes the eyes painfully susceptible to bright lights.

In criminal society there is less risk of detection, because so many of this underclass's activities naturally occur at night.

The Extended Facade

The body of a vampire shows no sign of aging. Even after a millennia or more of unlife a vampire looks little changed from the day on

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which its mortal body died. In the short term this is not an issue. If a vampire wishes to continue its masquerade over a period of years or decades, however, this longevity is something that must be addressed, especially among the short-lived races, such as humans.

A vampire playing a prolonged facade must take care to simulate the effects of aging. This can be done through makeup or by magic. Both represent risks, of course. Even the best disguise can be penetrated, and magical alterations can be detected, arousing suspicion, and they even can be dispelled. Powerful magical items such as a *hat of disguise* can assist the vampire in keeping up the charade of mortality, but the risk remains.

Many vampires minimize this risk by keeping their affectations short-lived, or by changing locations and identities every decade or so. A vampire might “pack up shop” in one city and disappear, only to resurface with another identity on another continent.

If the vampire is looking to gain nothing more than diversion from the facade, there is no problem with this kind of relocation. If the goal is wealth, however, the vampire must find some way of transferring its accumulated possessions to its new locale. It must be very careful in doing so because shipping manifests and such represent a way by which hunters can track it down.

If the vampire’s goal is power, the situation becomes even more problematic. In essence, the creature is stuck in one location because power is rarely portable. Vampires seeking power must either take great precautions to hide their agelessness or isolate themselves by working only through trusted intermediaries. (Few vampires feel totally comfortable with this, of course, because trust does not come naturally to these creatures.)

Vampires playing a long-term facade will sometimes go to the extreme of faking their own death, and then appearing as a “young heir” to take over the “dead benefactor’s” property and wealth. This can be risky,

however, because both the vampire’s disguise and the details of the “inheritance” must be able to withstand scrutiny.

“Shadow People”

Vampires have a term for those of their kind that feel the need to spend prolonged time in facade. The term is “shadow people.”

To many vampires it is a pejorative term. Those individuals despise the facade, considering it to be a grotesque lie. “Vampires are what they are,” these individuals claim, and should revel in their true nature rather than trying to assume the mantle of “lesser creatures.”

More mature and intelligent vampires tend to view the facade as a great game, a challenge. They recognize the benefits of partial assimilation into mortal society, and respect those of their kind that are particularly expert at the facade.

Finances

Why do I need all this?” The vampire waved a hand negligently around, indicating the beautiful works of art that surrounded us. “In truth, I do not need it at all. But I enjoy it, much more than you are capable of understanding. Do you see that statue over there?” It indicated a figure carved from smooth black stone. “I can see the grain structure of the rock, details much too small to be detected by your mortal eyes,” it told me, “so I can experience another level of beauty from that statue which is forever beyond your grasp. And, after all,” the creature said with a satisfied sigh, “I was not in a position to enjoy luxury while I was alive. Why not take advantage of the opportunity afterward?” It smiled grimly. “Many mortals talk about an afterlife, an existence after death and how much finer it is than earthly life.” It sat back complacently. “Well, this is the afterlife,” it said, gesturing around it. “And I find it to be very fine, indeed.”

—From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

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Vampires who play the facade need money if they wish to minimize the risk of discovery. At least some level of wealth is needed to insulate oneself from the press of (demi)humanity. A home must be purchased, servants hired, the other trappings of mortal life acquired. If the vampire has chosen to enter the upper classes, then maintaining the appropriate lifestyle—with regard to entertaining and such—is vitally important, and extremely expensive.

Of course, many vampires relish wealth for its own sake. This is not necessarily a result of greed. Many of the creatures seem to enjoy opulence and surround themselves with beautiful objects of art. As do many mortals, they enjoy wealth for what it will buy them in the way of comforts and diversions.

Also, a wealthy vampire can acquire and outfit a number of sanctuaries within its “territory” and elsewhere. The more sanctuaries a vampire has, the greater its security. The vast majority of vampires understand this and will amass wealth for this reason if for no other.

Sources of Wealth

Vampires are generally denied the sources of great wealth open to mortals. For example, how could a vampire possibly claim an inheritance? Or earn its own fortune working its way up from a common laborer? Or, for that matter, even keep possession of whatever wealth it had while alive?

Most vampires acquire their “starting capital” through theft of one kind or another. Depending upon the personality of the individual vampire, and upon the location, the nature of this theft can vary wildly. For example, in unpatrolled areas a vampire could become a fiendishly effective highwayman, robbing unguarded travellers and merchant caravans with relative impunity. Perhaps a

“lone adventurer” might join a party on a treasure hunt, only to murder his associates when the prize is achieved. In a town or city the vampire might indulge in mugging, or in breaking and entering. In any case the creature’s abilities would give it a massive advantage over mere mortals. A vampire might also hire itself out as a lethal assassin.

One of the most interesting options open to a vampire in need of starting capital is also one of the most risky. It is possible for a vampire to kill a wealthy person—perhaps the owner of a manor—and temporarily take that person’s identity, thus playing a very specific kind of facade. This would usually involve a magical disguise of some kind to handle the physical resemblance, but the other facets of the impersonation—voice, gestures, movements, and so forth—would be remarkably easy for a vampire create. The risk of detection would remain relatively high unless the vampire made sure to limit contacts with the outside world—by claiming a virulent illness, for example.

The impersonation need not last long, of course. The vampire would need only sufficient time to orchestrate a convincing excuse for shipping away some measure of the unfortunate victim’s wealth, and then could make its escape. With at least some portion of the victim’s possessions converted to untraceable form, the vampire could vanish and resurface elsewhere with a “nest egg” on which to build.

After a vampire has generated starting capital, it can build that money into a fortune, just as a mortal might do. The vampire, however, has a major advantage: time. The creature can spend a “paltry” one hundred years building a business empire, then liquidate and get on with its real plans.

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uspicion had been building in my mind that the self-styled Countess Abalia was actually a vampire. In fact, I had totally convinced myself that she was a fiend. You will understand my stupefaction then, when on that evening I saw her primping and preening in a little hand mirror she held before her face. With most unseemly haste, I positioned

myself behind her and looked in the mirror . . . to see her face, smiling archly at me.

It was only later, after my inaction had led to so many deaths, that I understood what had happened. The Countess Abalia was not only a vampire, but also a wizard of considerable skill. Both the mirror she held and the reflection I saw in it were nothing more than magical illusions. . .

—From the journal of Melnor Melabbey

To quote from a respected bestiary, “In most cases, vampires do not lose the abilities and knowledge which they had in life when they become undead. Thus, it is possible for a vampire to have the powers of, for example, a wizard, thief, or even priest.” Thankfully, this is not always the case, as the transition to vampirism sometimes seems to wipe the victim’s mind clean of most or all previously held skills.

Priests

Only those priests who worshipped evil deities during life *may* retain the ability to cast spells after death. The reason for this is simple: priest spells are bestowed by the

priest’s deity or by its minions. Deities dedicated to Good will certainly not bestow spells upon vampires because these creatures will always use those spells for evil purposes. And some evil deities may refuse to bestow spells or, perhaps, only bestow *certain* spells upon vampires.

The process that a vampire-priest must follow to attain spells is the same as for a mortal priest. In other words, the creature must meditate and pray to receive the powers. Vampire-priests seem to be much more skilled at casting spells from the Necromantic sphere than are mortals, and less adept with spells from the Sun sphere.

Turning or Commanding Undead

Vampire-priests who followed nonevil deities while alive retain none of their mortal abilities to turn or command other undead. Priests who worshipped evil deities sometimes retain this ability after death and, in fact, often wield it with an aptitude they never had in life.

Wizards

Individuals who were wizards while alive can retain their spellcasting abilities regardless of their previous alignment, and seem to retain the ability to cast all spells they were able to wield while alive, with much the same effect. The fact that vampires can develop inhumanly high levels of intelligence gives some creatures the ability to cast sometimes many more spells than they could while alive.

Vampire-mages must memorize spells as they did while alive. The same holds true for gaining access to new spells. Vampire-mages must have spellbooks, like mortal wizards. These undead wizards are particularly adept at casting spells of the Necromantic and Illusion/Phantasm schools.

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Thieves

Of all professions, it seems that thieves gain the most from their transition to vampirism. Not only do vampires skilled in the thieving arts often retain these abilities, but many seem to be even more proficient after passing through the veil into undeath. As has been stated before, vampires are stronger, faster, and more dexterous than the great majority of (demi)humans, and their senses are significantly keener than those of mortals.

When one couples these improvements in physical skills with the spell-like abilities of a vampire—such as shapechanging, assumption of gaseous form, and the ability to spider-climb at will—it becomes obvious that a vampire-thief is the ultimate nightmare for anyone concerned about security. The only positive factor is that the vampire-thief will probably be unable to enter a private dwelling without invitation (although the creature's charm-gaze can frequently make up for this).

Bards

The skills of the bard seem to suffer the most from the transition to vampirism. Of course, a vampire-bard gains similar enhancements to its roguish skills as does a normal thief, but bards who could cast wizard spells while alive invariably lose this ability when they become vampires. Opinions are divided on why this is. I believe it is because bards, unlike true wizards, rarely if ever understand exactly *why* their spells work, casting them only by rote. Changes occur with the transition to vampirism, and the bard understands too little of magical tradition to properly alter the spell's components and cast it as a vampire.

An even greater change occurs in the bard's ability to inspire and sway the opinions of mortals. Vampire-bards *always* lose this ability. This may, on the surface, be very surprising. It is true that a vampire's ability to mimic behavior allows the creature to play instruments, to sing, even to recite poetry with superhuman virtuosity. But there is something missing from the vampire's performance which forms the core of a similar performance by a bard: the understanding of the thoughts, fears, hopes, and desires of the mortals in the audience. The transition to undeath so distances the vampire-bard from the emotions of mortality that it is incapable of forming the emotional connection with its audience that a mortal bard can create instinctively. Thus, while the musical performance of a vampire may be technically perfect, it lacks "soul"; the performance of a mortal bard may be less perfect, but it touches the emotions. (Of course, the creature's enhanced force of personality (Cha) and charm-gaze can somewhat make up for this lack.)

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Paladins

Unsurprisingly, all of the exalted and magical abilities of a paladin are lost, should the unfortunate soul become a vampire. The creature is considered to be a simple vampire-warrior. If the former paladin had a war horse, the mount will immediately turn against the vampire and try—vainly, of course—to destroy the abomination that its rider has become.

Should, by some extreme chance, the paladin ever be brought back from vampirism, the poor individual will no doubt be forced to undertake quests of extreme rigor to be atoned in the eyes of his or her deity, for the evil taint of vampirism.

Rangers

Vampire-rangers retain their tracking abilities, and their skills at hiding in shadows and moving silently. In fact, these abilities benefit from the creature's enhanced sensory acuity. It loses forever its ability to cast spells and its adeptness with trained or untrained animals. (The only exception to the latter is with animals whose form the vampire can take.)

Combat Abilities

Vampires who have had no mortal experience with melee are yet lethal foes in combat; this I know from painful experience. It seems that a previously unskilled vampire can pick up a sword or even a bow and use it, albeit with less facility than he boasts when attacking bare-handed.

How much worse is a vampire who, in life, was a highly skilled warrior! The weapon skills learned by an experienced fighter are frequently retained when the creature becomes undead, including specialty training.

A vampire wielding a two-handed sword or a heavy crossbow can be a daunting sight.

Nonetheless, it is better to face an armed vampire than an unarmed one because the creature can drain life energy only when it strikes a foe with a bare hand. Thus, while a two-handed sword in the hands of a vampire can cause hideous damage, there is not the associated risk that anyone killed by the attack will rise later as a vampire.

Nonweapon Proficiencies

Many vampires also remember skills they learned while alive that are not directly related to the profession they followed. These skills may relate to their childhood environment or to hobbies they took up at a later date.

The main impediment most mortals find in learning new skills is time. For an immortal vampire, time is hardly an issue. Thus, should it strike the creature's fancy, a vampire could gain proficiency in a huge number of skills over the years. This is aided by the fact that the monster's enhanced intelligence eases the process of learning new skills. Such ease with the acquisition of noncombat enhances the assumption of a facade. It is also an almost certain bet that the creatures can turn even the most harmless-seeming skill into a weapon against their foes.

This discussion, of course, refers to PCs and NPCs belonging to specific character classes. The DM decides whether any individual character turned into a vampire retains his or her character class abilities. As a general rule of thumb, the DM could assign a 65% chance that the character retains class abilities.

Priests

Vampiric priests who worshipped Evil deities retain whatever level of experience they had at the time of their death, and retain access to the same spheres they had as mortals. As with living priests, the DM must adjudicate what spells are bestowed, based upon the

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vampire-priest's actions and the nature of its deity. For example, if a vampire-priest worshipping the god Bane prays for and receives a *flame strike* spell, and then uses it to kill some followers of Bane, then Bane would be unlikely to grant the vampire-priest more spells until the creature had atoned for this indiscretion. Priests who worshipped Good deities in life will naturally lose their spellcasting powers.

Vampire-priests advance in level much more slowly than mortals; they gain one to three levels per century. For every 500 years that a Patriarch exists, it has a 50% chance of advancing a level. Vampire-priests cast Necromantic spells as if they were one level *higher* than they actually are, and Sun spells as if they were one level *lower*.

If a vampire-priest worshipped an Evil deity in life, there is a base 50% chance that the creature will retain the ability to command other undead as a vampire-priest. Should the creature retain this ability, it commands other undead and turns paladins as if it were 3 levels higher than its actual level. As mentioned above for spellcasting, a vampire-priest has a 35% chance of advancing a level for each age category it achieves, and a 50% chance of advancing a level every 500 years it exists as a Patriarch.

Wizards

Vampire-mages retain whatever level of experience they had at the time of their death, and retain access to the same schools they had as mortals. They advance in level much more slowly than mortals. Each time the creature attains a new age category, it has a 35% chance of advancing one level in spellcasting ability. For each 500 years a Patriarch exists, it has a 50% chance to advance a level.

Vampire-mages cast Necromantic and Illusion/Phantasm spells as if the mages were one level *higher* than they actually are. In addition, any mortal who is the target of a Necromantic or Illusion/Phantasm spell cast by

a vampire-mage suffers a -1 penalty to any saving throw against that spell.

Thieves

A thief that becomes a vampire gains some significant bonuses. First, a vampire's Dex increases with age to a maximum of 20; the vampire-thief enjoys the normal bonuses to its thieving skills for exceptionally high Dex. Second and most importantly, the vampire gains an additional experience level upon its transition to undeath. This represents the improved coordination and sensory acuity described by Dr. Van Richten.

Vampire-thieves advance in level more slowly than mortals. Each time the creature attains a new age category, it has a 45% chance of advancing one level in thieving ability. For every 500 years that a Patriarch exists, it has a 55% chance of advancing a level.

Bards

Upon its transition to undeath, a vampire-bard advances one level of experience, but only with regard to its thieflike abilities and its power of identifying the purpose and function of magical items. Vampire-bards have a 10% chance to advance one level each time they achieve another age category. Patriarchs have a 25% chance of advancing a level for every 500 years that they exist.

Rangers

Rangers automatically gain one level of experience when they become undead, to reflect their hypersensitive senses. Vampire-rangers have a 25% chance of gaining a level whenever they achieve a new age category. Patriarchs have a 30% chance of gaining a level for every 500 years they exist. Vampire-rangers never attract followers.

Combat

The following comments refer *only* to vampires that were warriors in life (unless the DM decides otherwise). In undeath, the creature

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uses whichever THACO is better (lower): the THACO appropriate to a monster with its number of Hit Dice, or the THACO appropriate to a (demi)human warrior of the creature's level. For example, a 9th-level warrior becomes a Fledgling vampire (8+3 HD). An 8+3 HD monster has a THACO of 13 and a 9th-level warrior has a THACO of 12. Thus, the vampire-warrior's THACO is 12. When the vampire advances to Mature, it becomes a 9+3 HD monster, with a THACO of 11.

Weapon proficiencies are retained after death in many cases. Vampires may use weapons with which they are proficient with no penalty. The nonproficiency penalty for a vampire is -3. Warriors who had specialized in weapons while alive may retain the specialization as vampires (i.e., +1 to hit and +2 to damage with melee weapons; +2 to hit at *point blank* range with bows and crossbows). Vampire-warriors gain one new weapon proficiency slot for every 4 levels they advance after death.

Vampire-warriors have a 25% chance of advancing a level each time they reach a new age category. Patriarchs have a 35% chance of advancing a level for each 500 years that they survive. No matter how far a vampire-warrior may advance, it never automatically attracts a body of followers.

Nonweapon Specialization

Characters have a base 75% chance of retaining nonweapon proficiencies when they become vampires. For each age category after Fledgling that a vampire attains, it gains 1d4 nonweapon proficiency slots, modified by the bonus proficiency slots granted for high Intelligence. (For example, an Eminent vampire achieves Patriarch status. The monster gains 1d4 nonweapon proficiency slots. However, the transition to Patriarch also increases the monster's Int to 20. Referring to the Intelligence table from the *Player's Handbook*, an Int of 20 bestows an additional 9 nonweapon proficiency slots, bringing the creature's total of new slots up to 1d4+9.) The DM should also be careful

not to assign a vampire with proficiencies that are contradictory to the creature's nature (such as animal handling or cooking, for example).

Why Not PC Vampires?

To put it bluntly, it is *strongly recommended* that DMs rule PC vampires to be *categorically impossible!* As soon as a character has become a vampire, the player must turn his or her character sheet over to the DM. From that moment on, the vampire is an NPC, under the sole control of the DM.

Why? The most important reason is play balance. Even a typical Fledgling vampire has powers and abilities that puts the creature far beyond the capabilities of most mortal characters, except those of the highest level. And, if the PC party contained high-level characters, then the PC who became the vampire will probably have been high-level, himself, and might well retain his character class abilities in addition to his vampiric powers.

Why does a player want to portray a vampire character? The answer is probably, "To kick butt!" At one time or another, all players will feel the temptation to portray a character who's virtually unbeatable. But most players will quickly realize that the pleasure gained from running such a character is fleeting. The DM is doing his or her players a favor by not allowing them to run vampire characters.

There's another issue as well: by definition the vampire is an evil creature, or it has a strong tendency toward evil. At the very least, the monster must drink blood and survive—an activity which hardly could be described as "good." The DM should consider what effect a blood-sucking evil PC is going to have on his or her campaign. How will other PCs react? Certainly paladins and priests who worship Good deities aren't going to be overjoyed at having a "cursed monster" with them. All in all, it's much better to keep vampires as NPC monsters—the ultimate foes for PCs to strive against!

We think you'll enjoy your stay in Ravenloft

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Quickly! Soon the sun sets and the dead will rise! The vampires of Ravenloft know no mercy, and you must be prepared before the darkness engulfs you.

96 pages—Recommended for All Character Levels

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