Your Requiem Begins Here

Like most people, you've probably had the sense — at least once — that things were not right with the world and that not everything was as it seemed. You've felt that sinister truths hid behind a façade of normality, veiled partially by the rational, orderly "natural laws" we call science. And when night falls, when the shadows grow long and the wind whistles through the trees, you shudder and remember the truths of your ancestors, who were right to fear the dark.

You've just entered the World of Darkness, a world very much like our own, save that the shadows hide very real monsters (though most people fool themselves into believing it isn't so).

In **Vampire: The Requiem**, the first Storytelling game set in the World of Darkness, you and your friends tell the story of some of these monsters, namely those mortal men and women who find themselves transformed into vampires (or Kindred, as they call themselves). Neither truly alive nor dead, the Kindred survive on the blood of mortals. They can shrug off terrible injuries, they never grow old, and they have a variety of inhuman abilities. Nevertheless, the Kindred fear many things, from the burning touch of sunlight or fire, to the widespread exposure of their kind before their mortal prey. Most of all, they fear the Beast, that savage aspect of their damned souls that hungers for blood and violence and can drive them into uncontrolled rage or acts of sheer depravity.

Their origin is lost to time, but many Kindred think that the curse comes from God Himself as punishment for terrible sins. Kindred society has existed in some form for the last two millennia. Tonight, the most powerful vampire in a domain usually goes by the title of Prince and rules over a feudal hierarchy of smaller domains and hunting grounds. The Kindred divide themselves both by blood (into five large extended families known as clans, which are traced from sire to childe) and by association (into several powerful covenants, political groupings of like beliefs and outlooks). Personal rivalries, alliances and other distinctions complicate even these simple divisions. Ultimately, every Kindred must make her way alone through the endless night.

The Game

Vampire: The Requiem is a Storytelling (or roleplaying) game. In it, a group of players cooperates to tell a story. Each player takes on the role of a single Kindred, except for the Storyteller. This player essentially takes on every other role, describing the world to the other players, acting out the parts of other characters and determining what challenges the players' characters face. Players roll dice to determine if their characters can overcome the challenges before them. In a typical exchange, the Storyteller describes the scene in which the players' characters find themselves. ("You rise from a day's slumber in the small basement you use as a haven. A scratching at the door tells you someone is trying to get in. What do you do?") The players then describe their characters' actions, usually in the first person. ("I sneak up to the door and look through the peep hole.") The Storyteller then describes the results of the action, going back and forth until the scene is resolved. Dice are rolled when players have their characters try things that aren't guaranteed success.

Jumping out of a moving car without getting hurt would require a dice roll; leaving a stationary one wouldn't.

This booklet contains everything you and four of your friends will need to play your first game of **Vampire: The Requiem**, except for some pencils and paper (for notes) and several 10-sided dice (these specialty dice are available in most hobby shops and are sometimes called "d10"). Those of you who are going to be players should read over the character backgrounds in the center of this booklet and choose the one you want to play. The Storyteller should read the rest of the booklet in preparation before playing.

The Rules

Vampire: The Requiem uses a set of rules called the Storytelling System. Many of the rules are introduced in the scenario proper or on the character sheets (special powers and so on), but there are a few basics to go over first.

- **Rolling Dice:** When rolling dice in the Storytelling System, you do not add the numbers together. Instead any single die that comes up 8 or better is considered a success. You usually only need one success to accomplish a task, but more is always better (causing more damage in combat, for example). Any die that comes up a "0" (considered a 10) counts as a success and can be rolled again (and potentially get another success). If you roll no successes at all, your character has failed that action.

- **Dice Pools:** The number of dice you roll to attempt something is called your dice pool. It is usually made up of the total of two traits on your character sheet (one Attribute and one Skill) and modifiers imposed by any special equipment your character uses or adverse conditions.

- **Modifiers:** The Storyteller determines what modifiers apply to any dice pool. These either add to, or subtract from, the dice pool (the number of dice rolled). These modifiers usually come from tools used (a bonus is listed with the tool), Merits that the character has (described in the character description), or general circumstances. The Storyteller should grant or impose a bonus or penalty (usually ranging from +2 to -2) if the circumstances are especially favorable or deleterious. For example, an at-tempt to climb a wall that is slick with rain and slime would suffer a -2 penalty, whereas doing so on one with plentiful handholds and ledges would gain a +2.

- **Chance Die:** If modifiers reduce your dice pool to zero dice (or even less), you should roll a single die (called a *chance die*). A 10 rolled on a chance die generates a single success, while any other result is a failure. Rolling a 1 on a chance die indicates a *dramatic failure*, and the Storyteller should describe especially troublesome results (a gun jamming, a blow-out during a car chase, etc.).

- **Actions:** Almost anything a character does is considered a *simple action*. You determine the dice poll, roll the dice, and see if you succeed or fail. In combat you can perform one simple action per turn. Sometimes, you'll be asked to take an *extended action*, which represents doing something over a period of time, like researching something in a library or searching a room. In this case, every time you roll the dice represents a fixed amount of time (usually 10 minutes, but it varies for some more involved actions). You accumulate successes from roll to roll until you get a certain number (described in the text), at which point something happens, or you run out of time. Some actions can also be *contested*, which means that two people are working against each other, such as in an arm-wrestling match, or when a character tries to sneak past a watchful guard. In a contested action, each player (or the player and the Storyteller) rolls the dice pool for their character and the person with the most successes wins. Finally, some actions are *reflexive*, which means that they happen automatically and don't take up any time — you can perform them and still perform a simple action in that turn.

- **Turns and Scenes:** A *turn* is a 3-second period and is used in combat. A *scene* is a longer period (usually as long as it takes for everyone to do what they want in a particular place). Some vampiric powers function for a single turn, while others last the whole scene.

The Character Sheet

The middle folds of this booklet contain character sheets for the four characters that players will use in **Mary's Child.** These sheets contain all the game

introductory game

numbers that define a character's capabilities, divided into a variety of types of traits. Most traits are rated from one dot (•) to five dots (•••••), much like a star rating system for movies. Different traits represent different things:

• **Attributes** represent inherent capabilities, such as Strength, Intelligence or Presence.

• **Skills** represent learned abilities, like Firearms or Medicine. A word or phrase in parentheses next to a Skill indicates a Specialty, an area of the overall Skill in which the character is particularly talented. If you are asked to roll a dice pool in which your character doesn't have the right Skill, you suffer a penalty of either -1 (for a missing Physical or Social Skill) or -3 (for a missing Mental Skill). If, on the other hand, you have a relevant specialty in the Skill in your dice pool, you get a +1 modifier.

• **Health** determines how wounded your character is, and it has both dots and points. Your character's dots are filled in on your character sheet, and they represent the total number available to him when he is uninjured. His Health points are recorded in the corresponding boxes, denoting his current state of health. (See "Health and Damage" for how to mark off Health points and the effects of wound penalties.)

• **Willpower** represents your character's reserves. You can spend one point (and one point only) of Willpower on any roll, and you get three additional dice in your dice pool. Alternatively, you can spend a point to raise your Defense trait by two against a single attack. Willpower is valuable, and you regain it only for acting in accordance with your character's **Virtue** or **Vice** (see individual character descriptions). Willpower is ranked from 1 to 10, unlike most of other traits.

• **Blood Potency** represents the inherent power of the character's vampiric nature.

• **Vitae:** This is the amount of blood currently in a vampire's system. You spend Vitae to activate different vampiric powers.

• **Disciplines** are special vampiric powers, which are explained in the character's description.

• **Merits** are special edges a character has, such as Contacts or Resources or Stunning Looks. The effects of each are explained in the character's description.

• **Defense** and **Initiative Modifier** are traits used in combat and are explained in that section.

• **Speed** is the number of yards a character can move in one combat turn and still perform an action. A character can run up to twice his Speed rating yards in a turn if he sacrifices his action. Speed will most likely come into play in a chase.

• **Humanity** is a measure of your character's morality, of how far he has succumbed to the Beast. Your character can lose Humanity over the course of play. Humanity is ranked from 1 to 10, unlike most of other traits.

Combat

Stealing blood from the living and subject to beastly frenzies, Kindred attract violence. When a fight breaks out, it can be important to keep track of who is doing what, and how badly they are hurting each other. When that happens, follow these steps:

First tell the players that their characters are entering combat. Until the combat ends, everyone acts turn-by-turn, with each character everyone getting one chance to act each turn.

Next, have everyone roll Initiative, which is the result of the roll of a single die + the character's Initiative modifier as listed on the character sheet. (This is a rare case where you add the number that comes up on a die to the value of your trait, instead of rolling a dice pool and looking for a success.)

Starting with the character with the highest Initiative result and continuing on to the lowest, each character gets to take a single action (usually an attack). The player can choose to yield her character's action until later in the Initiative queue, or until the next turn if she wishes. Resolve each character's action before asking the next player what his character does.

If a character attacks another character, the attacker rolls the appropriate dice pool:

• **Unarmed close combat**: Strength + Brawl, minus target's Defense and armor (if any)

• **Armed close combat**: Strength + Weaponry, minus target's Defense and armor (if any)

• **Ranged combat (guns and bows):** Dexterity + Firearms, minus target's armor (if any)

- **Ranged combat (thrown weapons):** Dexterity + Athletics, minus target's Defense and armor (if any)

Add bonus dice based on what weapon is being used or what effect is being performed, then subtract penalties for circumstance conditions. The player rolls the remaining pool. Each success equates to a Health point of damage inflicted, the type of which is determined by the nature of the attack. The Storyteller describes the attack and wound in narrative terms.

Once everyone has acted, a new turn starts and the player with the highest Initiative gets to act again. Players *do not* make new Initiative rolls every turn.

Complications

- **Avoiding Damage in Close Combat:** Your character's Defense trait represents his instinctive ability to duck and weave and make close-combat attacks harder, and so serves as a penalty to incoming attacks. If your character hasn't yet acted this turn and is willing to forgo that action, he can dodge, which doubles his Defense for the rest of the turn. If your character is attacked multiple times in the same turn, however, it becomes harder for him to avoid being hurt. For every attack targeted at him past the first, reduce the character's Defense by 1 (to a minimum of zero). If your character is dodging, the doubled Defense reduces by 1 for each additional attack.

- **Avoiding Damage in Ranged Combat:** Unless a ranged attacker is close enough that he could just as easily attack in close combat (a few feet), or is throwing a weapon, Defense doesn't apply. To avoid damage in a firefight you can either find cover (hide behind something solid) or fall prone (drop flat to the ground). Falling prone constitutes a character's action for the turn but levies a -2 penalty on ranged attacks. Anyone within close-combat striking distance (a few feet) gets a +2 bonus to hit a prone character, though.

- **Concealment and Cover:** If your character is partially concealed behind an object, she is harder to hit with ranged attacks. The penalty goes from -1 (crouching behind an office chair) to -3 (poking up out of a foxhole). If you are *completely* concealed, the attacker suffers no dice pool penalty but has to score enough successes to shoot through the inter-

vening object (called the cover). Piercing an object reduces the number of success rolled by a number based on the durability of the cover: from 1 (for wood or thick glass) to 3 (for steel). If this penalty reduces the number of successes to 0, the attack fails to penetrate the cover and you take no damage.

- **Range:** Every ranged weapon has three ranges listed in yards in the format short/medium/long. An attacker suffers no penalty when her target is within the short range. If the target is at medium range, she suffers a -2 penalty. At long range, this penalty goes to -4.

Health and Damage

- **Damage Types:** There are three types of damage, each more serious than the last: bashing, lethal and aggravated. *Bashing damage* generally results from blunt or stunning attacks. *Lethal damage* generally results from cuts, gunshots and other more serious attacks. (Note that, because they have no functioning internal organs to damage, Kindred take bashing damage instead of lethal from gunshots.) *Aggravated damage* generally results from especially vile supernatural attacks.

- **Marking Damage:** When a character suffers damage, the player marks off that number of Health points, starting with the box under the leftmost dot of his Health trait and proceeding left to right. The symbol used depends on the type of damage.

Bashing damage is marked with a slash (/) in the first available empty box. So imagining that Louis (one of the characters in this scenario, who has seven Health dots) had just taken one point of bashing damage, his Health boxes would look like this:

Lethal damage is marked with an X, and it pushes any existing bashing damage right on the track (so that it always appears to the left of bashing damage). If Louis next took a point of lethal damage, his track would be:

Aggravated damage is marked with a large asterisk (*) by adding a vertical bar to an X. It also pushes any existing lethal and bashing damage right on the track (so that it always appears to the left of lethal or

bashing damage). If Louis next suffered a point of aggravated damage, his track would be:

❉ ⊠ ◻ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

• **Wound Penalties:** If a character is reduced to two or less Health points (by whatever type of damage), the player suffers penalties to all die rolls. With the third-to-last box is marked with a wound, the penalty is -1; when the second to last is marked it is -2; when the last box is marked it is -3. (These modifiers appear on the character sheet for easy reference). These penalties apply to all rolls except those related to losing Humanity (see below).

• **No More Health:** Marking off a character's last Health box usually means that the character has become incapacitated. If that rightmost wound is bashing (and the character is mortal) she falls unconscious. If that rightmost wound is lethal or aggravated, a mortal character quickly bleeds to death. Note that this would mean the character has no bashing damage at all, since it will always be the rightmost. Kindred react differently to these conditions.

• **Additional Damage:** An unconscious mortal or a severely battered Kindred can still be damaged by further attacks. Without further Health boxes to mark off, you represent this damage by upgrading existing wounds. Any new bashing or lethal wound upgrades an existing bashing wound to lethal (make the leftmost / into an X). Additional aggravated damage converts a point of lethal or bashing damage to aggravated (make the leftmost X or / into an asterisk).

• **Healing:** Mortals recover from damage thanks to rest and medical attention. Kindred need to spend Vitae to heal.

Effects of Vampirism

Part of the scenario in this booklet deals explicitly with the characters discovering that they are Kindred, but it can be useful to have some of the basic game effects of that transformation all in one place.

• **Blood Consumption:** Kindred have a trait called Vitae, which represents the amount of blood in their system. They automatically spend one point of Vitae to rise every night, so eventually they must feed from the living. They also spend Vitae for other effects. Most young vampires can only spend one Vitae per turn and hold at most 10 Vitae. A vampire without any Vitae left suffers a lethal wound when she rises (when she would normally spend a point of Vitae). Any other effects that require Vitae expenditure fail if the character has none to spend.

• **Reduced Damage:** The Kindred anatomy is animated by a supernatural curse, not the functioning of delicate organs, so it takes a lot to inflict serious damage upon them. Firearms inflict bashing damage to Kindred instead of lethal damage. Blades and arrows still inflict lethal damage, however. In addition, a vampire does not fall unconscious if all her Health boxes are marked off due to bashing damage. She remains able to act but still suffers a -3 wound penalty. Additional damage upgrades existing wounds as normal. If all a Kindred's Health boxes are marked off due to lethal damage, she enters a coma-like state called torpor. A vampire loses all of her Health points to aggravated damage is destroyed.

• **Healing:** Kindred do not heal like mortals. Instead they must spend Vitae to do so. One point of Vitae heals two points of bashing damage or one point of lethal damage. The vampire can take other action in the same turn as healing bashing or lethal damage. Aggravated damage is much harder to heal. It takes five points of Vitae and two full nights per point of aggravated damage to heal.

• **Physical Augmentation:** Vampires can boost their Physical Attributes (Dexterity, Strength, Stamina) for a moment by spending Vitae. Each point will add two dice to dice pools using one of these Attributes for the current turn (the vampire can take a regular action that same turn at no penalty). Certain Disciplines allow for more efficient use of this ability.

• **Fire and Sunlight:** Vampires suffer terrible damage from exposure to fire or sunlight. Both anathema cause a number of automatic points of aggravated damage per turn, depending on their intensity and the amount of exposure. A cigarette lighter held to one's skin or a hand held in sunlight that is filtered through heavy drapes would inflict only one point per turn. Being tossed in a wood fire or looking out a window on an overcast day would inflict three points per turn. Being caught in a chemical

fire or fully exposed under direct sunlight would inflict five (or more) points per turn. (Note that Kindred of Clan Mekhet — like Jack and Mary in the **Mary's Child** story — suffer one extra point of aggravated damage per turn from fire and sunlight.)

• **Daytime Slumber:** Vampires are overcome by a crushing fatigue upon the rising of the sun and remain immobile (and to all appearances truly dead) until sunset. If they are attacked during the day, they can rise, but it is extremely difficult: the player rolls a dice pool made up of his character's Wits Attribute alone, a success meaning the character notices the disturbance. The player then spends one point of Vitae and rolls the character's Humanity as a dice pool. The character rises for a single turn per success on the Humanity roll.

• **The Masquerade:** One of the Kindred's firmest traditions is the Masquerade, an edict that they hide their existence from mortals (and thus act as mortals would when in their company). This law is more than a social edict, however. It reflects an inherent part of the vampiric nature. A Kindred's reflection (and any photographs or video) appears slightly blurred or grainy. This is not enough to stand out at first glance (viewers often assume there's a flaw in, or dirt on a lens or mirror) but it is enough to make identifying individuals and their features very difficult. Kindred can suppress this effect for a scene if the player spends a point of Willpower.

• **Frenzy:** The Beast within all Kindred is violent and savage, and it can overwhelm the conscious mind with overwhelming anger, fear or hunger. Regardless of the type of frenzy, the process is the essentially same: The player rolls Resolve + Composure. Success means that the character resists the frenzy for a single turn per success and can roll again at the end of those turns (hoping to accumulate more successes). If the player manages to accumulate a total of three successes, the frenzy subsides. If, however the player fails one of these rolls, the character immediately enters frenzy. (Note that rolls to resist frenzy count as reflexive actions.)

Hunger frenzies are triggered only when the character has four or fewer Vitae in his system. Anger frenzies are triggered by especially infuriating circumstances (public humiliation, the triumph of a rival, being assaulted) or the Predator's Taint. Fear frenzies are triggered by being near fire or sunlight or by the Predator's Taint. The Storyteller can increase or decrease the number of successes needed for a frenzy to subside depending on the intensity of the trigger.

A vampire in frenzy attacks, runs or feeds (as appropriate) at the exclusion of all else. These vampires can't do anything complex, but the Beast's savagery does give them some advantages. They ignore all wound penalties, they gain a +1 bonus to dice pools for physical actions, and any attempts to affect their minds (with Disciplines such as Majesty or Dominate) suffer a -2 penalty. The frenzy usually subsides once the thing that triggered it is either destroyed or out of sight.

• **Predator's Taint:** Vampires know each other on sight because their Beasts rise to the challenge of another predator's presence. Normally this reaction feels like nothing more than a simple undercurrent of tension. When Kindred meet for the very first time, though, this tension is so acute that it can cause frenzy. The nature of the frenzy (anger or fear) is determined by the relative Blood Potency of the vampires. Vampires with lower Blood Potency than those they face must resist fear frenzy; vampires with equal or greater Blood Potency must resist anger frenzy. This risk of frenzy can be decreased or eliminated by circumstances that make meeting other Kindred less traumatic, such as when the newcomer makes an immediate offer to help or the meeting occurs in a place where the characters both feel safe. In general, a single success is needed to resist frenzy caused by the Predator's Taint. (Note that two of the players' characters in this story — Becky Lynn and Jack — have Disciplines that affect the Predator's Taint.)

• **Losing Humanity:** A Kindred's worst fear is giving in completely to the Beast. The more heinous sins they commit, the stronger the Beast grows and their Humanity trait falls. At Humanity 7 (where all characters start), theft or any worse misdeed can cause moral degeneration (a loss of Humanity). When the character commits such an act, the player rolls a number of dice based on the severity of the sin. The worse the sin is, the *fewer* dice are rolled. (Petty theft is four dice, manslaughter or massive property damage is three dice, murder is two dice.) If the roll fails, the character loses a point of Humanity. (Willpower can't be spent on this roll.)

Characters with reduced Humanity justify their sin to themselves instead of repenting, and they become that much more callous. It will now take a worse sin to cause another roll to degenerate. At Humanity 6, only grand theft or worse can spark such a roll. At Humanity 5, it takes intentional mass property damage or worse. At Humanity 4, it takes an impassioned crime such as manslaughter.

Characters who do lose Humanity also risk becoming unhinged mentally. If a player fails a degeneration roll, he should immediately roll his character's reduced Humanity as a dice pool. If he fails that roll, the character gains a derangement. This can be any form of minor but pervasive mental disorder, such as depression or a phobia. The player should roleplay this new character quirk, but it has no mechanical effect.

• **Dealing with Mortals:** Kindred are no longer truly human, and as they degenerate, they tend to lose the instinctive understanding of social cues among the living. When dealing socially with the living, a Kindred's Humanity trait serves as her maximum dice pool for any actions involving Social Attributes or Skills. Therefore, a vampire with Humanity 5, Wits 3 and Empathy 4, would roll seven dice (Wits + Empathy) to read a fellow Kindred's body language, but only five dice (Humanity) to read a mortal's.

Mary's Child

This is the first scenario in a nine-part chronicle called **Danse de la Mort** ("Dance of Death") which will be released online at www.worldofdarkness.com. The chronicle takes the characters deep into the World of Darkness, revealing some of the secrets of the city of New Orleans and, ultimately, the fate of the characters. But before any such grandiose concerns, the characters have to come to grips with their existences as vampires and make a place for themselves within the community of the Kindred of the city. They must begin the Requiem and keep their sanity intact. The first lesson is always the hardest.

This scenario is meant for the Storyteller's eyes only. If you are planning to take on the role of one of the characters in **Mary's Child**, please stop reading now. Storytelling games are much more enjoyable if you experience the plot twists and surprises along with your characters, so don't spoil the fun for yourself.

Preparing for Play

First, read through the rules at the beginning of this document, just to get an idea of how the mechanics of the game work. Then, have a look at the character sheets in the middle of this booklet, and note the characters' different capabilities and advantages. We don't expect you or the players to memorize everything right out of the gate, but if you give the characters a quick once-over in conjunction with the rules, the numbers will make more sense in game play.

Let the players read over their characters' backgrounds, roleplaying hints and traits, and answer any questions they might have. Help them understand how the rules work with regard to the dots and numbers on the character sheets.

Also, read through **Mary's Child** once before attempting to act as Storyteller. We've tried to make it as easy as possible on you, but you should have an idea of what's coming up. Plus, players will always make decisions that you — and we — didn't see coming. That's great! That's part of roleplaying. It does, however, require you to think on your feet. If you know how the plot progresses, you can take what the players do and allow those decisions to steer the game toward the conclusion, rather than having to say, "No, you can't do that because it would take us too far off track."

Throughout this scenario, you will find sections of text for you to read aloud to the players. You will also find occasional sidebars labeled "Complications." Players are clever, and even players who don't have much experience roleplaying will think of actions for their characters to take that we can't anticipate. The Complications sidebars give you, the Storyteller, some warning about how the players might derail the story in certain places and how you can steer it back on track without seeming too heavy-handed.