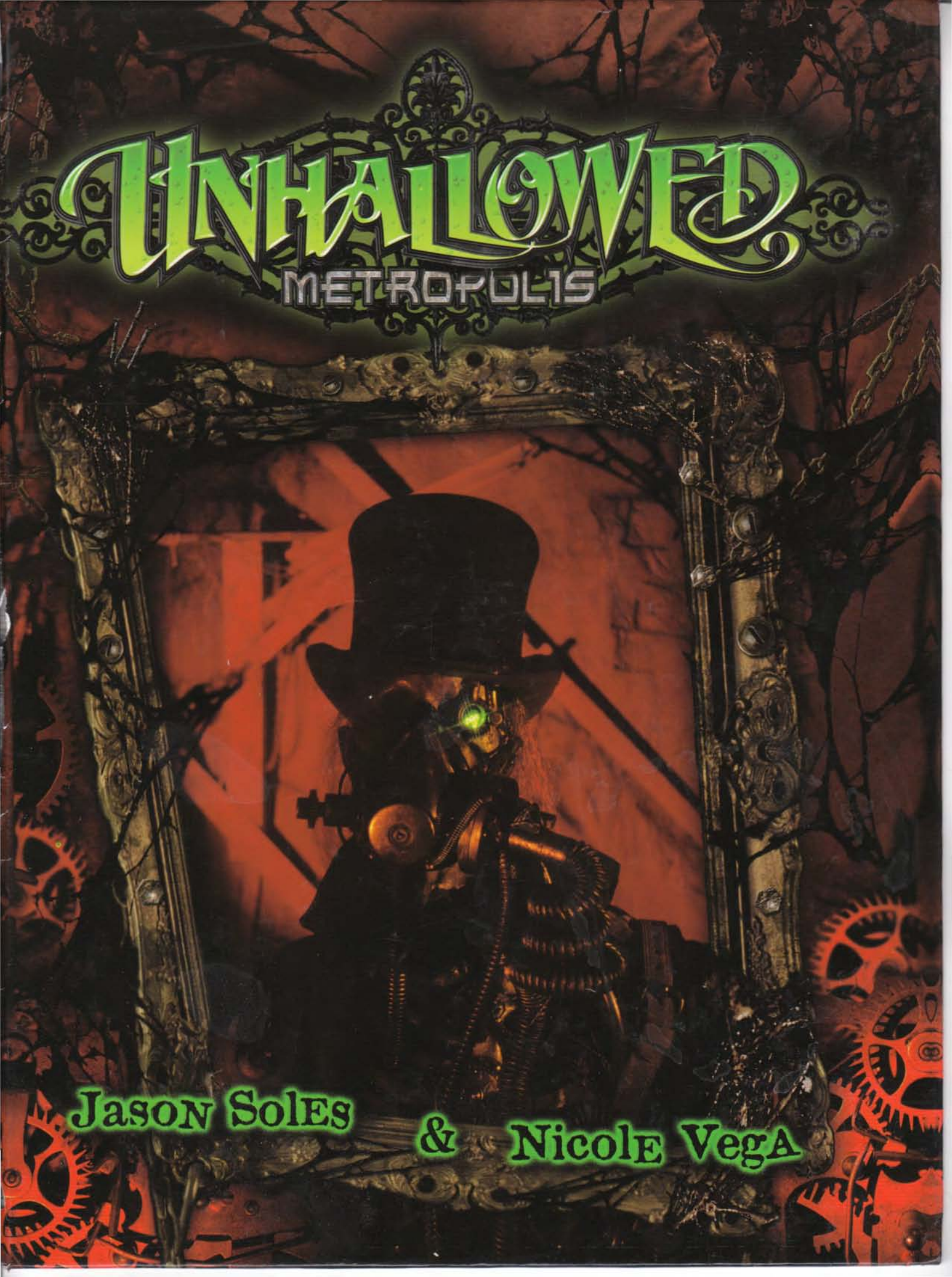
UNHALLOWED
METROPOLIS
Jason Soles
&
Nicole Vega

UNHALLOWED
METROPOLIS

Si quis hunc librum furetur, a Fortuna deseratur, aleae eius Canem iactent, et cadavera ambulantia personam eius devorent.

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The New Dark Age is Jason Soles and Nicole Vega.

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Attention

THIS IS JUST A GAME. Keep in mind that if you play with things MAN WAS NOT MEANT TO KNOW, the authors claim no responsibility, including, but not limited to breaking any law, tenet, or tradition, temporal or divine, implied or in print. Galvanic reanimation may work in the movies, but in practice… It's really tough.

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# Foreword

The first time I laid eyes on Jason Soles, it was Halloween night and he was in the basement of my house. That was more than a decade ago, and in some ways it seems he's been there ever since, subsisting on some reeking miasma of the underworld. I've watched his tireless pursuit of his own peculiar dark arts over the years, even collaborating here and there, and it's good to finally see him staggering out of the basement into the ghastly corpse-light of day.

Nicky I met years later. We were both guests at a house party, but I have no idea whose house it was. (Perhaps it wasn't a house at all, just the idea of a house, a shared delusion.) She was some kind of freak academic, engaging in noxious experiments under cover of night. It took about ten minutes to realize she was operating on some higher mental plane, one burnished by insatiable curiosity and honed by a savage wit. She couldn't get twelve words out without striking sparks and, maybe, drawing a little blood.

That Jason and Nicky would become collaborators in all areas of life only makes sense in retrospect. At the time they seemed destined for a murder-suicide pact – and the only question was which would be the murder and which the suicide. Instead they gestated all manner of strange, swirling ideas and eventually birthed this monstrosity, this Unhallowed Metropolis.

Even setting aside the subject matter, this game turns my crank. RPGs that start with 50,000 words of pure setting goodness are a rare wonder. So many games over the years have jumped straight to character creation, as if you should have any idea who you might be in a world that hasn't even been explored. This game knows that world-building is the proper foundation for all that follows, and moreover it revels in it.

The tapestry Jason and Nicky weave is wondrous. Fittingly, Jason's background as a visual artist gives the text a glorious solidity, the sense that these are not simply ideas but forms. Colors, shapes, motifs, and even smells render the text vivid with morbidity. Nicky's years in academe shine in the intensely thorough and detailed working-out of their joint creation. When I got to the political platforms of the Conservative and Liberal Parties of England in 2102 and read that the Liberal Party believes in "cremation, education, and work for all," my delight was palpable. This is our world projected through a cracked and mildewed lens, presented with doses of black humor as well as compassion, insight as well as outrage. Unhallowed Metropolis is not simple escapism – it is a work by people who are engaged with life on this planet.

There are so many details to cherish. I love that there is a lengthy section on corsets, which unexpectedly detours into combat corsets. There's the idea of Corruption, that your character is irredeemably doomed but that the journey to that doom is part of the fun. The hilarious and grotesque section on wounds is practically a sourcebook on its own. The fact that this book presents not one but two different types of artificial wombs – one of them considered "only homunculus-grade" – is a thing of pure joy. If Montague Summers, Edward Gorey, and Athanasius Kircher walked into a bar, this is the book they would write.

There's no doubt that Unhallowed Metropolis is not for everyone. It presents a world rotten from the core and festering with a sort of global gangrene that infects the landscape, the society, your characters, and the rules themselves. Like Call of Cthulhu, this is a game where everyone dies or goes insane – gloriously so, in ways that generate their own storylines and that can drive entire play sessions. I don't know just how many crawling, scuttling Unhallowed Metropolis gamers will emerge from the dark wastes to feed on victuals they can neither raise nor buy, but I predict they will be well sated by the feast this book offers.

Jason, Nicky, black blessings to you both for incarnating this peculiar world. And to you, Dear Reader, who now turns the page, already catching a whiff of the charnel house, a wisp of crematoria. Place the gas mask firmly upon your face, warm up your Galvanic Lightning Gun, and step inside – forever.

— John Scott Tynes, 2007

# CHAPTER ONE: UNHALLOWED GROUND

Welcome to the metropolis.

It has been two hundred years since first the outbreak of the Plague, when without warning the dead rose to feed on the flesh of the living. No nation was spared. Everywhere, the animates, or zombies as they came to be known by the common man, prowled the streets, killing and spreading the infection as they passed. For each victim claimed, a fresh animate rose to join the ranks of the risen. As panic and mass hysteria gripped the public, the cities were abandoned. Countless millions perished in the chaos that followed. Overnight, humanity found itself on the brink of annihilation.

Seventy percent of the world's population succumbed to the Plague, secondary epidemics, or the mass starvation that followed.

The year was 1905; it was the dawn of a new dark age.

In the following decades, the survivors learned to fight back and to retake what they had lost. Recalling the golden age that had come before, the Neo-Victorians set out to rebuild their shattered nation. Despite the heavy cost in human life, they reclaimed their cities one by one until only the sepulchres, or plague cities, remained under death's dominion.

Though the survivors have successfully constructed a new world on the bones of the old, their world remains rife with undreamt of terrors.

London 2105. The capitol of the Neo-Victorian Empire is a vast, densely crowded city surrounded by fortifications fifty-feet high. The dead walk the Wastelands beyond the walls, and spontaneous outbreaks of the Plague ravage the population within. It is only through constant vigilance and massed firepower that order is maintained.

Plague carts make daily rounds through the slums of metropolis to collect the remains of those who died the night before. Once the carts are loaded, plaguemen deliver their cargos to one of the dozens of public crematoria throughout the city.

Thick clouds of smoke billowing from countless factories co-mingle in darkened skies with the cremains of the incinerated dead. The dingy, haunted streets below are dimly lit by pale, crackling electrical light fuelled by energy broadcast from the city's Tesla array. It is here that monsters are born to prey upon their fellow man. Lunatics maddened by desperation, fear, and overcrowding compete with vampires, animates, and ghouls for prime hunting grounds among the city's slums and rookeries.

Residual psychic energy released from the deaths of countless millions during the Plague Years has worn thin the boundaries between life and death. All manner of spectral apparition gaze unseen upon the corporeal world; observed, in turn, only by mediums, those living souls born with the capability to communicate with the discarnate dead.

Driven by the public's insatiable hunger for immortality, Neo-Victorian physicians search tirelessly for the Elixir Vitae. The fabled alchemical solution promises not only life eternal, but also the panacea for the world's ills, the ultimate cure for the Plague. For many men of science, the search for the Elixir becomes a single-minded obsession that frees them from the confines of morality and ethical considerations. Though great advances have been made, most often such experiments produce Anathema, the misbegotten children of science.

Beneath the haunted streets, resurrection men and body snatchers hock their grisly wares at bloodstained meat markets. Their clients are degenerate ghouls and amateur anatomists who practice the outlawed science of reanimation.

Despite such horrors, there are those with the strength to fight the gathering darkness. From the heavily armed soldiers of the Deathwatch who guard the fortified perimeters of the metropolis to the detectives of New Scotland Yard who fight to hold back the rising tide of inhumanity in the streets, there are those who are called to defend the world from its monsters. There are also the Undertakers, the fearsome bounty hunters who stalk the undead abominations that prey upon those who walk the fog-choked streets, and the silent and lethal Mourners, who maintain a solemn vigil over the dead, ensuring rest eternal.

Above it all, the aristocracy gazes down from their monolithic manors with casual indifference upon the overcrowded streets below. Insulated behind walls of privilege, the Quality live in a world unmarred by the desperation that infests the lower classes. These barons of industry and scions of the noble families truly command the Neo-Victorian world.

# What is a Roleplaying Game?

Part storytelling and part improvisational acting, a role-playing game takes place in the imaginations of the participants, with the rules providing a framework by which conflicts are resolved. Unlike board or card games, the point of a role-playing game is not to win at the end of the game; instead, the purpose of the game is to enjoy the experience along the way.

You'll need three to six people to play an Unhallowed Metropolis game, with one of them agreeing to take on the role of the Narrator, or game master. The Narrator's role is to bring the elements of the game together by guiding the action and telling the story. The Narrator describes the action, plays all the characters that are not controlled by a player, and controls the dissemination of information as the game unfolds.

Players take on the role of characters, their alter egos in the game. A player decides what actions his character will take in the game. Before the start of the game, players will have to create their characters. See Chapter 3, page 117, for details. Players are encouraged to develop deep and interesting characters that are entertaining to play. Players take turns reacting to the events of the story by dictating the actions of their characters. In many cases, whether or not a given action succeeds is determined by a roll of the dice.

## What Kinds of Characters Can I Play?

Unhallowed Metropolis is not intended to cater to a single playing style. The Neo-Victorian world is rich and highly involved. Players may take on the roles of gritty action heroes, like Undertakers or Mourners, or may prefer more subtle power brokers, such as Aristocrats or deranged Doctors. More adventurous players may prefer to play a half-vampire Dhampir. If such exotic creatures seem strange to your inexperienced ear, worry not, intrepid reader, for all you need do is peruse these pages and your questions will be answered. Only a player's imagination and the inclinations of the Narrator limit a player's choice of character.

Not every character is ideally suited to every game. If the Narrator intends to tell stories of harrowing brutality in which players are continually flung headlong into the path of hordes of the animate dead, an aristocratic pacifist

**Gas Mask Chic**

*The machines of industry laid the foundation for an era of reclamation, but now, driven by science gone mad, they poison the skies and water with their foul excrement. A necessary evil of these enlightened times, the London fogs are the product of the endless labours fuelling the rebirth of civilization. The smogs constantly blanket the metropolis, forming a murderous miasma which penetrates homes, choking both the young and old in their sleep.*

*Occasionally taking the form of black snow or sickly yellow rain, the lethal smogs have a chilling effect on the climate within the cities. Temperatures drop tremendously when pollution is at its worst. No light can pierce the stygian depths of these dense, ash-laden clouds.*

*The smog is so deadly and pervasive that every man, woman, and child who can afford to do so dons a respirator before venturing outdoors. Even horses are equipped with rubber masks and filters when they go about their drudgery in the city streets. The upper classes favour ornate devices of tailored rubber and bronze. It is common to see well-dressed men in tailored rubberised suits and top hats walking with rubber-masked ladies, parasol in hand.*

may not be the best character concept. Likewise, should the Narrator plan to run a game devoted to the Machiavellian machinations of high society, a player playing a working-class Undertaker may find himself left out of the bulk of the action. The Narrator should endeavour to aid prospective players in creating characters suitable to the stories he wishes to tell.

See Chapter 7, Smoke and Mirrors, for guidelines on constructing a story in the world of Unhallowed Metropolis.

**Corruption**

An invasive Corruption eats at the heart of the Unhallowed Metropolis. This Corruption is the wellspring of the Plague and the horrors that haunt the Neo-Victorian world. It taints all who dwell within the city, pushing them to inhuman extremes. Those who make peace with the bitter angels of their nature will find some peace. Others fight continuously to control their demons or else face utter annihilation. A few embrace the darkness, selling their souls to free themselves of the bonds of morality. Every character must struggle against his own Corruption.

# What's In This Book

**Unhallowed Metropolis** is divided into sections for ease of navigation. Though players are not required to read the entire book, and indeed may spoil some of their enjoyment if they do so, Narrators should to read the whole book at least once.

**Chapter One: Unhallowed Ground**
Chapter One details the background and the history of the Neo-Victorian world.

**Chapter Two: The Formula**
Chapter Two explains the rules of the game and provides the foundation upon which the rest of the book will build.

**Chapter Three: Playing God**
Chapter Three details the character creation process.

**Chapter Four: Tools of the Trade**
Chapter Four describes the weapons, tools, and accoutrements available on the streets of the metropolis.

**Chapter Five: The Anatomy of Horror**
Chapter Five describes the undead horrors plaguing the Neo-Victorian world in gruesome detail.

**Chapter Six: Miracles of Science**
Chapter Six details the man-made marvels of the era, including in-depth looks at the science of aging, alchemical and galvanic reanimation, and the manipulation of life itself!

**Chapter Seven: Smoke & Mirrors**
Chapter Seven is a toolbox for helping Narrators run Unhallowed Metropolis games.

**Appendices**
Odds and ends to round out the experience of playing **Unhallowed Metropolis**, including the glossary and bibliography.

**What You Need to Play**

To play **Unhallowed Metropolis** you will need a pair of ten-sided dice, some scratch paper, and enough writing implements for the group. Each player should have a character fully developed before play begins, and the Narrator should have a scenario, or storyline, prepared.

# The Victorian Age

**From the introduction to *Our Glorious Ancestors*, The Rise of the Neo-Victorians, third edition, by H.E. Godwin, 2068**

*The Victorian Era, the period between the years 1837 and 1901, was the last golden age of mankind before the start of the Plague. It was a time of great innovation and social development, as our illustrious forebears, like their descendants, dreamt of a bigger and better world shaped in their image. Many of the modern advancements that have profoundly altered the course of human history have their roots in this era.*

### *The Age of Victoria*

*When Victoria I ascended the throne in 1837, Britain was in the throes of the Industrial Revolution, the glorious years after the defeat of Napoleon and the French in 1815. Britain was a burgeoning world empire built on the principles of free trade. Developments in steam power revolutionized both industry and transportation. The Metropolitan Police, "Peelers," had already been established. The Parliament passed the Reform Act, which gave the up-and-coming middle class the vote, thus doubling the number of men eligible to partake in England's democracy. The Poor Law Amendment Act had also been passed, establishing one of the foundations of Victorian life, the workhouse. Prisoners were given more humane treatment as well; an 1834 Act made hanging in chains illegal and left dissection of murderers' bodies to the discretion of the judge.*

*Victoria I was a woman of her times. She sketched; painted; and wrote, performed, and enjoyed music, all virtues considered necessary for a well-educated woman. Though a popular monarch, she did face several assassination attempts at the beginning of her reign. As was true for most Victorian women, her husband, Prince Albert, was the focus of her life. When Albert passed in 1861, Victoria I went into an advanced stage of prolonged mourning. For years she would not appear in public and took to wearing a widow's cap instead of her crown. This marked the start of the popularity of mourning attire among her subjects. Proper respect for the deceased has since been a mainstay of our culture. The Mourners' Guild, to name but the most obvious profession, owes much of its existence to the development of Victorian funerary practice. Britons of the pre-plague world buried their dead in graveyards, often within the city. The remnants of these great cemeteries, testimonies to the golden age of the past, can still be found in some parts of our older cities.*

*The Forgotten*

*While the Victorian Era held great promise for the upper classes, they represented only a small minority during this era. England was essentially two nations: those who ruled and those who served. Conditions for the poor were horrendous. In 1842, half of all children died before the age of five. Public executions were still considered a high form of entertainment; the buildings opposite Newgate Prison would rent out rooms or whole floors to spectators of the festivities, and the parties frequently lasted until the corpse was cut down. For the less well-off, printed broadsheets about the criminals to be executed were available with the condemned's crimes listed in graphic detail. When public hangings ended in 1868, it was to stop the drunkenness, injury, and even death among the spectators that resulted from the spectacle. In 1847, the Factory Act introduced the ten-hour day for women and children aged between thirteen and eighteen; this restriction was a marked improvement over previous practices.*

*Entertainment and the Pursuit of Pleasure*

*There was a wide range of entertainment for the Victorians, ranging from the highbrow to the absurd. The upper classes enjoyed tea gardens, zoos, firework displays, the theatre, concerts, galleries, and museums. Some of the more colourful spectacles included animal fights (such as ratting), boxing, music halls, freak shows, Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors, and penny dreadfuls. However, a tempering moral sense was added into much entertainment as the well-meaning middle class tried to instruct their poorer counterparts on the dangers of drink and abandoning God. One Magic Lantern show told the story of an impoverished widow with no faith in God who turned to drink and murdered her own son in a drunken stupor. Abstinence from alcohol was a common theme among melodramas as well.*

*Such prudishness was challenged by artists and writers, such as Oscar Wilde, who rebelled against the strict Victorian moral codes. They propagated the idea of a refined aesthete, one who would savour every sensation. The decadent demand for what Ernest Dowson called, "madder music and stronger wine" grew, spilling over into the forbidden and the seemingly bizarre. While some hailed these rebels as bourgeois idol-smashers, others feared that the pillars of society were being undermined and were in danger of being pulled down.*

*Science, Religion, and the Supernatural*

*Science and religion had an uneasy relationship throughout the nineteenth century. For many people, the theory of evolution set the two at odds. It was not only biology that had men in an uproar but also the growing science of geology, which had been controversially dating rocks earlier than dates recorded in the Bible. Science lectures became popular, as did public debates between religious leaders and leading scientists. The scientific community*

# Timeline

1791 - Luigi Galvani argues that "animal electricity" causes movement in muscles and nerves.

1800 - Act of Union forms the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

1809 - Jean-Baptiste Lamarck publishes Philosophie Zoologique, which explains his theories of evolution.

1812 - Territorial disputes between the U.S. and Britain lead to the War of 1812.

1814 - The U.S. and Britain sign the Treaty of Ghent, ending the War of 1812.

1815 - Napoleon loses his final battle, the Battle of Waterloo.

1818 - Mary Shelley writes Frankenstein.

1819 -. Queen Victoria I is born.

1829 - An Act of Parliament institutes the Metropolitan Police. Joseph Henry creates a new variation on the electromagnet and sets a new world record by using it to lift over a ton of weight.

1830 -William IV succeeds George IV as king of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.

1831 - First cholera outbreak in England. Michael Faraday discovers the magnetic induction of electricity, inventing the first induction coil.

1832 - The First Reform Act passes, enfranchising the upper-middle class and increasing the number of voters from 500,000 to one million. The Anatomy Act passes.

1833 - Wilhelm Weber and Karl Friedrich Gauss successfully operate a telegraph between Gauss' observatory and Weber's distant lab.

1834 - Slavery is banned in the British colonies.

1837 - William IV dies. Victoria I becomes Queen of England.

1839 - The City of London Police are established. The First Opium War between Britain and China begins.

# Timeline
## (continued)

1840 - Queen Victoria I marries Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

1842 - The end of the first Opium War.

1845 - The Potato Famine begins in Ireland.

1847 - The British Factory Act ("The Ten Hours Act") restricts the working day for women and children between the ages of 13 and 18 to no more than 10 hours per day with a total of 58 hours a week.

1848 - Revolutions take place in Paris, Vienna, Venice, Berlin, Milan, and Parma. Marx writes *The Communist Manifesto*. The discovery of gold in California leads to the first gold rush.

1851 - The Crystal Palace houses the Great Exhibition in London. Heinrich Ruhmkorff invents a variation of the induction coil, called the Ruhmkorff Coil, notable for producing sparks more than 30 centimeters long.

1852 - New Houses of Parliament open.

1853 - Alexander Wood invents the hypodermic syringe; vaccination against smallpox in Britain becomes compulsory. Queen Victoria I allows chloroform to be used on her for the birth of her seventh child, thus promoting anaesthetic use.

1854 - The British and French ally against Russia in the Crimean War.

1855 - Cocaine is first extracted from cocoa leaves.

1856 - The signing of the Treaty of Paris ends the Crimean War. Britain begins the Second Opium War. Nikola Tesla is born.

1857 - India mutinies against British Rule. British fleet takes Canton.

1858 - The Second Opium War ends.

1859 - Charles Darwin publishes *Origin of Species*. The first edition sells out in one day, and the work causes a storm of controversy.

*came into contact with more than just traditional Christianity; the growing spiritualism movement and the foundation of esoteric magical societies in the later Victorian Age was also to have a great influence.*

*Many intrepid scientists sought to prove the existence of something beyond the grave. In 1882, a group of scholars including professors of physics and philosophy, public figures, clergymen, and university graduates set up the Society for Psychical Research. They attempted to test scientifically the spiritualists' claims of life after death. Michael Faraday invented a machine to investigate table rappings; he thought he was able to disprove the rappings with his sensitive instrument and denounced spiritualism. The famous chemist William Crookes, on the other hand, sought to use science to establish the existence of psychic forces and believed his radiometer was capable of detecting invisible forces. He subjected the renowned psychic Daniel Dunglass Home to his tests and considered the results to be a success. Similarly, many people saw a link between the newly developed telegraph and communication with the dead; if people could communicate across continents why not across all barriers? Guglielmo Marconi was unable to determine the origin for some of the signals he received during his radio wave experiments. He spent his last years trying to find a device that could communicate across the threshold of death. Despite the great efforts of these intrepid pioneers, true and undeniable contact with the dead was only made possible by our own great advances since the Reclamation.*

### *The Early Victorian Period (1837-1851)*

*Early Victorian science tried to tie together the mind of the man with his physical body. This was especially true in the development of phrenology. Phrenologists asserted that the bumps on a man's skull indicated his nature and emotional capacity, and this new science impacted not just medicine but psychology and anthropology as well. Mesmerism, used to successfully treat hysterical epilepsy and as an anaesthetic in amputations, was also extremely popular. The Great Exhibition of 1851, designed to illustrate the wealth of the British Empire and to celebrate technological advances, closed the Early Victorian period.*

### *The Middle Years (1852-1869)*

*Scientific growth and accomplishments continued in the mid-Victorian years. We still benefit from many of these discoveries today. In 1853, Alexander Wood invented the hypodermic syringe, which eventually led to compulsory vaccination against smallpox in this nation. Queen Victoria I allowed chloroform to be used on her for the birth of her seventh child, thus promoting anaesthetic use. Cocaine was extracted from coca leaves in 1855 and was later used as an anaesthetic, commonly to help soothe teething babies. Transportation and communication around the globe also greatly*

*increased thanks to the transcontinental telegraph line and the opening of the Suez Canal.*

*Late Victorian Age (1870-1901)*

*In many ways the Late Victorian Age, spanning from 1870 until Victoria I's death, was an age of disillusionment. The economic boom was ending in 1873 as Britain was unable to keep up with foreign competition. The Empire had few allies and a growing number of enemies. Britain's armies were spread thinly across the globe, and some among the intelligentsia worried that the Empire could not defend itself domestically from either invasion or popular uprising. At home, however, the idea of Empire was growing in popularity. In 1877 the Queen was declared Empress of India. Control of the colony had shifted from private to royal hands.*

*Poverty was starting to become a social concern. The Marxist philosophy was spreading through the working classes of Europe, and unrest among the lower classes was rising. Fear of the lower class had been brewing among the upper classes since the European workers' riots of the late 1840s, which included the 1848 French Revolution. Between the 1871 Paris workers' revolt and the London riots of 1866 and 1886, the middle class and the aristocracy saw the potential for a workers' rebellion first hand. Fuelled by the Long Depression of 1873-1896, during which prices and wages decreased as businesses faltered, many worried the workers would join the anarchist movements spreading across the Continent. The rise of socialism in the middle classes signified their struggle against the class system of Britain that continues to this day.*

*The Late Victorian Period had its advancements as well. Education for all became a priority in Parliament. The 1870 Education Act saw to the institution of mandatory education until the age of ten; this was raised to eleven in 1893 and again to twelve in 1899.*

*Scientific innovations swept the globe. In 1876 the Scottish inventor Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. Thomas Edison, in the United States, invented the phonograph a year later and, two years after that, the electric light bulb. Throughout the 1890s the Serbian Nikola Tesla worked with motors, generators, and the transmission of energy, revolutionizing trade and commerce. In 1878 electric street lighting was introduced in London and in 1888 the first electrical power station opened in Deptford, England.*

*The last official act of Queen Victoria I was to lay the foundation stone for the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The Victorian Age had been an age of great innovation and technical achievement; trains, factories, industrial cities, and telegraphs now covered what was once countryside.*

# Timeline
## (continued)

1861 - Prince Albert dies of typhoid fever at age forty-two. Jefferson Davis is elected the first president of the Confederate States of America; The American Civil War begins. London's first horse-drawn tram service opens for business and closes a few months later. America completes the first transcontinental telegraph system.

1864 - Contagious Diseases Act passes.

1865 - The US Civil War ends; American President Abraham Lincoln is assassinated. The Thirteenth Amendment abolishes slavery, upholding and extending Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation.

1866 - Riots in London.

1867 - Karl Marx writes Das Kapital. First debate concerning a woman's right to vote.

1868 - End of public hangings. Pharmacy Act prohibits selling narcotics from street carts.

1869 - Ferdinand de Lesseps builds the Suez Canal, dramatically decreasing a ship's journey to Australia or the Far East.

1871 - Paris Workers Revolt.

1873 - James Clerk Maxwell publishes four equations (known as Maxwell's equations) that allow scientists to predict the behaviour of electric and magnetic fields as well as how these fields will interact to create an electromagnetic field. The Long Depression begins.

1875 - The Public Health Act is passed in Britain in an effort to improve the living conditions of the poor. Construction is completed on London's first sewer system, which reclaims the Thames and reduces cholera rates.

1876 - Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone.

1877 - Queen Victoria I is proclaimed Empress of India. Thomas Edison invents the phonograph.

1878 - The Criminal Investigation Department of the Metropolitan Police established. Electrical street lighting is introduced in London.

# Timeline
## (continued)

1879 - The British-Zulu Wars are fought in South Africa. Thomas Edison develops the first electrical light bulb that is practical to use.

1881 - London city population is 3.3 million; New York's population is 1.2 million.

1882 - Society for Psychical Research founded.

1883 - The Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police instituted.

1886 - Riots in London.

1887 - Queen Victoria I celebrates her Golden Jubilee. Albert Michelson and Edward Morley publish their famous experiment purporting to disprove the existence of a luminiferous aether.

1888 - Jack the Ripper murders six women in London. First electrical power station opens in Deptford, England.

1890 - Metropolitan Police move to New Scotland Yard.

1895 - The Niagara Falls hydroelectric power plant is built using Tesla's alternator design.

1896 - CID begins Rogues' Gallery.

1898 - Long Depression ends. Niagara Falls Power Project opens.

# The Plague Years

*"On all sides is sorrow; everywhere there is fear. I would, my brother, that I had never been born, or, at least, had died before these times. How will posterity believe that there has been a time when without the lightning of heaven or the fires of earth, without wars or other visible slaughter, not this or that part of the earth, but well-nigh the whole globe, has remained without inhabitants. When has any such thing been even heard or seen; in what annals has it ever been read that houses were left vacant, cities deserted, the country neglected, the fields too small for the dead and a fearful and universal solitude over the whole earth?... Oh happy people of the future, who have not known these miseries and perchance will class our testimony with fables. We have, indeed, deserved these punishments and even greater; but our forefathers also have deserved them, and may our prosperity not also merit the same..."*

*-Petrarch*

Despite the advances of the previous century, global progress ground to a halt with the outbreak of the Plague in the winter of 1905.

Without warning, the dead began to rise and feed on the flesh of the living. The effects of the Plague can scarcely be overstated; overnight the cities of the world were overrun and survival became the primary human occupation. The very natures of life and death were utterly and irrevocably altered the evening of 9 December 1905.

Millions perished in the nightmare that followed as cities and towns fell to the walking dead. Within a few hours of its

initial appearances, the infection had spread far beyond the possibility of containment. Confused and stricken by panic, the people of the time failed to take the appropriate sanitary measures, and the infection was permitted to spread virtually unimpeded through that critical period. The cities bore the brunt of the contagion: aided by crowding and the disastrous consequences of panic in the enclosed streets and buildings, the infection spread rapidly, closing off any possibility of rescue or escape for the city dwellers. On the third day after the onset of the infection, the cities were declared to be beyond reclamation. The military units deployed in response discharged a massive array of incendiaries into the centres of infected areas, beginning the event still known colloquially as the Burning.

In Britain and elsewhere, the cities were devastated by conventional weapons and ravaged by the fires raging uncontrolled. Particularly hard hit in England were the industrial cities of Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Sheffield. Overcrowded with the poor working class, these cities were transformed into death traps as animates stormed through the streets, devouring all living flesh in their path. The Royal Navy blasted much of Liverpool to the ground in an attempt to destroy the heavy concentration of animates within the city before they could escape to the surrounding countryside.

Civilian survivors gathered in overcrowded refugee camps that offered some solace from the unmitigated bloodshed. There was no way to make preparations for the millions made homeless by the Plague. Mass starvation and secondary epidemics brought about by crowding began to take their toll on the camps. Within many of these early encampments, which were crippled by poor hygiene and lack of medicine, deaths from natural causes such as disease and starvation occurred at an alarming rate. It was quickly discovered that these dead, though their extinguishment was due to natural causes, would rise of their own accord as one of the animated dead even though they had no known exposure to the infection. These were as any other animate corpse—fearsome, insensate, and hungry—and many times these unforeseen resurrections took heavy tolls within the barricades of these early compounds. Disbelieving friends and family would then fall prey to the same panic that had felled the cities. Reclamation teams of later years were to find the ruins of many such communities, where only a few artefacts and desperate letters to the future remained to tell the story of their fall.

Though the Burning proved insufficient to halt the spread of the infection, it is now widely believed that the destruction of the hotbeds of infection was the ultimate deciding factor in mankind's continued survival. Had the cities teeming with

# Timeline
## (continued)

1901 - Queen Victoria I dies. Edward VII becomes King of England. 30,515,000 living in England. Fingerprinting Bureau founded at Scotland Yard.

1904 - Michelson and Morley publish a retraction of the results of their famous experiment. Results are quickly confirmed by laboratories worldwide, and the luminiferous aether re-enters the dominant scientific lexicon.

1905 - First outbreak of the Plague. Mass starvation and panic envelopes the globe. Countless millions die worldwide by the year's end.

1906 - Conventional weapons and fires intentionally set to destroy the animate population devastate Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Sheffield. Parliament-in-exile passes the Nationalization Measure, effectively suspending private ownership of important industries and suspending the rights of unions to strike or bargain with the state. The German Empire collapses.

1907 - The first recorded instance of telepathy takes place at a camp outside Shrewsbury. Kaiser Wilhelm II dies defending Berlin from animates. Wilhelm III becomes Kaiser of the Kingdom of Prussia.

1908 - King Edward VII dies. George V becomes King of England. By now 18,000,000 British citizens are believed to have perished due to plague-related factors, including secondary epidemics and starvation.

1909 - Contact with spirits first scientifically documented.

1914 - The first major organized efforts to clear the countryside of animates begins. Dr. Roland Westmoore first documents evidence of psychical phenomena among refugee-camp survivors.

1915 - Maiden flight of the Prussian LZ2 zeppelin.

1916 - Prussian LZ2 zeppelin first used in the aerial bombardment of concentrations of animates. Prussians begin the construction of additional airships.

1917 - King George V dies. Edward VIII becomes King of England.

1919 - Prague reclaimed.

# Timeline
## (continued)

1923 - Passage of the Salvation Act closes England's borders to refugees.

1927 - Most of the English countryside is free of animates. England's borders reopen to refugees following the repeal of the Salvation Act. A new cabinet position, The Minister of Reclamation, is created.

1928 - First documented discovery of a ghoul community.

1929 - Paris is reclaimed. The Golden King comes to power in France.

1931 - Leeds is briefly reclaimed before being once more overrun by animates.

1933 - End of the Plague Years. The Reclamation begins.

1935 - The Reclamation of London begins.

1937 - Most of London's West End is reclaimed.

1938 - Canada declares its independence from the UK.

1939 - The government returns to Whitehall. The Foreign Defence Act institutes foreign aid to needy nations.

1940 - The Labour Representation Committee is formed.

1943 - General elections legitimise the Labour Representation Committee. Britain sends reclamation teams to train other survivors in Europe.

1944 - The military begins experiments to alchemically create supersoldiers capable of fighting animates on their own terms. The first thropes are the result of these experiments.

1945 - Professor Ashley Byrnes of the University of London first proposes the use of radiant energy to supply London with power.

1946 - Leeds is reclaimed again. British forces are sent to the Icelandic Peninsula to help local reclamation efforts.

1948 - The first Tesla tower is constructed in London.

the dead not been put to the fire, the hungry monstrosities within would have taken to the countryside in search of flesh, and many more of these early refugee communities would have been overrun. With much of the cities burned, mankind was forced to scatter, collecting into roving groups for mutual protection and survival and searching out defensible areas in which to make their settlements. Factories, military installations, asylums—these edifices, large, sturdy, and readily barricaded against the zombie hordes—became the centres of the new human world. Fortified settlements arose within and outside of the old cities, wherever humanity could get a foothold.

Within the cities, several of the industrial trade unions managed to co-ordinate the defences of their members and families in the massive factories built in the early Industrial Age, forming the few urban communities that were able to withstand the tide of animates. Those who had fed the engines of industry found the places of their exploitation turned into the fortresses that might guarantee their survival. With a structure of leadership already in place, local union members managed to get themselves and some of their family members into these easily defensible factories. They established scavenging routines and, in some places, were able to expand the areas of relative safety in the cities, turning parkland into food-producing gardens and farmland where possible. Entry into these freeholds was by no means granted to all, however. The limited resources available within the cities kept the populations of these freeholds low by necessity, and outsiders were admitted only grudgingly. It has long been an accusation levelled at the unions that more than one freehold denied entry to company owners, aristocrats, and the once-idle rich. Some freeholds reportedly had a policy of "Women, workers, farmers, and children in that order. Everyone else can put a bullet in their brains and save us the trouble." As the Plague Years wore on and the cities remained havens for the dead, the freeholds sought out contact with other enclaves and began a system of irregular trade. It was a common tactic for troops coming into a city to explore the industrial areas of cities in search of survivors and to try to gain access to any freeholds to use as ready-made bases from which to begin the full reclamation of England's urban centres.

The tenacity and quick thinking of Parliament and the heads of the Naval Service were instrumental in the preservation of society. In the first days of the Plague, the military saw to the seclusion of the heads of the British Royal Parliament in secure encampments far from the centres of infection. Within the military encampments, panic was controlled by force and incidences of reanimation were dealt

with swiftly. While many of the civilian encampments fell, those maintained by the military remained largely secure. The military's superior knowledge of emergency conditions permitted these encampments to establish and maintain satisfactory hygiene conditions, a primary factor in the downfall of many civilian encampments.

After initial heavy losses due to unreported plague infections, the Royal British Army rapidly implemented control measures in response to the threats presented by the epidemic. The brutal realities of the Plague Years demolished the earlier prudishness of the Edwardian Era and instilled a survival discipline reminiscent of the ancient Roman Legions. Though officers were treated with a little more dignity, infantrymen could look forward to frequent invasive medical examinations. Military doctors with no ties to the men carried out the inspections, and infected soldiers were summarily euthanized before being allowed to succumb to the infection. After the first few months of the Plague, outbreaks among soldiers dropped dramatically as the Military Health Protocols were adopted.

By order of the surviving members of Parliament, who were galvanized in this time of crisis, military forces turned their attention toward maintaining critical portions of the infrastructure. The nation's coal mines were secured and restored to partial operation within a few years of the onset of the Plague. Parliament passed an emergency powers act and gave unprecedented authority to the military, which quickly instituted a scorched-earth containment policy. In 1906, to speed the reclamation of the infrastructure, the Parliament-in-exile passed the Nationalization Measure, declaring all businesses to have been effectively co-opted by the state for the duration of the crisis and suspending the rights of unions to strike or bargain with the state.

Eighteen million British citizens are believed to have perished between the years of 1905 and 1908, representing sixty percent of the British population of that time. The rest of the world suffered even more catastrophic loses. Whole colonies and nations simply disappeared.

Even as the world reeled from the effects of the Plague, a new threat became apparent. The land itself seemed to suffer from the tide of death that was sweeping the world. Large areas of formerly fertile, arable land began to wither and change. The plant life in these regions began to alter. Livestock in these blasted lands, gone feral with the human abandonment of the countryside, began to die or change. Vast regions of farmland fell to this inexplicable blight, bringing famine down on an already desperate world.

The withering of the land could be traced to no single point but, like the Plague itself, appeared to spring from

# Timeline
## (continued)

1949 - Reykjavik is reclaimed.

1950 - King Edward VIII dies. Beatrice I becomes Queen of England.

1951 - The military's thrope experiments officially end.

1953 - First recorded incidence of true vampirism. Erich Merck and Carol Zimmermann proposes tanks of single-celled food as a solution to the hunger faced by London's growing population.

1958 - A massive animate attack on London. Representation of the People Act is passed, giving women the right to vote. Prussians reclaim Berlin.

1959 - London is fully reclaimed; over 30,000 have perished in the effort. This marks the end of the Reclamation and the beginning of the Neo-Victorian era.

1960 - The Special Powers Act institutes the Domestic Security Force (DSF or Deathwatch). Parliament repeals the Nationalization Measure, initiating a decade of bitter legal battles for control of re-privatised property.

1961 - The Domestic Securities Act institutes the Office of Urban Defence (OUD), which is authorized to regulate and commission freelance bounty hunters to eliminate animates. Four new divisions added to the Deathwatch

1963 - Sir James Gray completes a survey of the extent of Wastelands in the British Isles. He returns to London as the sole survivor of his expedition.

1964 - London's Tesla array is completed. Five new divisions added to the Deathwatch.

1966 - Dr. Tennyson Boulstridge coins the phrase "psychic devotion" in a lecture at St. George's Medical School in which he presents his findings to the trustees. Boulstridge is presumed to have been killed in the conflagration that consumed the old school later that year.

1967 - Passage of the Mortuary Acts establishes the Mourners' Guild and the plaguemen as well as the policy of mandatory cremation. Sir James Gray completes a second survey of the Wastelands and determines the blight is spreading.

# Timeline
## (continued)

1968 - Queen Beatrice I dies. Victoria II becomes Queen of England, taking the name Victoria against the wishes of Queen Victoria I.

1969 - The labour movement organizes massive protests and a general strike after the courts return businesses maintained by workers since the Plague Years to their original owners. A compromise restores order but marks the start of labour setbacks.

1972 - Dr. Robert Ashton first documents the spread of vampirism. Contagious Diseases Act reinstated.

1973 - Sir James Gray is lost at sea during his third attempt to survey the Wastelands.

1974 - New York reclaimed.

1983 - The reconstruction of London is completed. The media sensationalizes the attempts of Lord Benewick to intentionally contract vampirism.

1984 - The Conservative Prime Minister Jane Spencer Grenville is elected to office. Grenville is the first woman elected Prime Minister.

1985 - Professor Edith Halifax-Roussel of the Nonhuman Pathology Department at the University of London first documents the existence of zombie lords.

1986 - The Vampire Laws are passed.

1997 - Dr. Evelyn Alexandra Morely's experiments into reanimation cost the lives of 32 people.

1998 - The Society for Psychical Research is re-established.

2002 - Xavier de Witt completes the first survey of the Wastelands since the death of Gray, and he determines the blight has continued to expand at an unsettling rate. Subsequent surveys confirm the blight is growing.

2008 - The Bryant Centre for Anti-Agapic Science is founded at Cambridge Medical School. Parliament bans research into the reanimation of the dead.

nowhere and spread outward from innumerable points of infection. Refugees streaming to England's shores brought tales of blight in their native lands and of dangerous journeys over regions already consumed by the taint. It became apparent that the Wastelands, as they came to be known, were spreading and that these death-touched regions were becoming a threat to a populace already devastated by disease, hunger, and plague.

Many of the encampments established in these early days came under threat from the encroachment of the Wastes. Desperate survivors, forced to maintain encampments in the face of the closing blight, made their food from the twisted plant life that would grow in the failing soil, and they began to change. Most evacuated within a few months of the first signs of the wasting, preferring to take their chances with the horror-infested countryside rather than remain too long under the influence of the blasted lands. Of those that stayed to eke out a survival from the altered land, little is known. When the Reclamation forces made their first forays into the Wastes, they found the encampments deserted, entirely emptied of human life. A few zombies were found in nearly all of the ruins, but the records of the encampments leave large numbers of survivors unaccounted for. The large ghoul populations observed in the cities lost to the Wastes provides one explanation for the disappearances -- it is believed that the transformative power of the Wastes, combined with the hideous starvation conditions endured by the encampments when the crops began to fail, may have led to the transformation of human beings into another form, one uniquely suited to the horrors of the Wastelands.

Faced with the spreading blight and the continued threat of reanimation, the survivors turned inward, struggling to live. They became insular, building their walls higher and stronger against the things that moved through the lands outside. Engineers worked tirelessly, devising new and more perfect ways of exterminating the monsters of this strange and terrifying world. Only the Reclamation forces, few though they were at this time, ventured outside the protective walls to bring back reports of the world's decline.

By 1914, humanity had begun to rebuild. In this year, the first major organized efforts to clear the countryside of animates began. The brains of the freshly dead were destroyed and their bodies burned on great funeral pyres before they could rise. The remains were buried in mass graves across the countryside. The first settlements, originally little more than reinforced encampments, grew into new cities. Though the old, abandoned ruins had been indefensible death traps, easily overrun by the

hungry dead, these new cities were built behind towering walls guarded by armies of men. Their streets were laid out on simple grids with narrow streets and alleys. These places were built to last.

The Plague continued to take its toll on human life, but the survivors had learned to preserve themselves against the threat of reanimation. The animate dead remained a constant threat but could be held in check with the proper precautions, especially within the fortifications. Only a fraction of the unbitten dead would rise – though, in some areas, as many as one in three - but most of these were burned.

Through sheer perseverance and great cost of life, the countryside was painstakingly cleared of the ambulatory dead. Large animate concentrations were located and destroyed with extreme prejudice. Despite these accomplishments, the clearing of the countryside was ultimately in vain, though it allowed reclamation efforts to centre on cities during the pivotal years of the Reclamation. Inevitably, any attempt to establish new settlements, such as farming communities, in the Wastelands has been doomed to failure, resulting in the settlers adding to the population of animates stalking the Wastes.

By 1927, most of the countryside was clear of the animate dead and the survivors turned their attention to the cities still overrun with zombies. These cities were terrifically dangerous, often still smouldering from the fires that spread during the Burning Days of the Plague Years. Though the cost in human life was astronomical, British pride demanded the liberation of these cities. Those that fought to free them not only faced the dead hungry for their flesh but also endured crumbling ruins lacking electrical power or running water. Many times, even after the last of the zombies had been put to rest in a given area, a military casualty or one of the settlers' dead would spontaneously rise, initiating a new wave of contagion and forcing the whole process to start from the beginning.

Such was the case when Leeds was finally liberated in 1931. After months of fighting house to house to clear the city of the walking dead, a soldier returned to his unit and failed to mention a bite on his left arm. By the time the first work crew arrived to commence restoration efforts a week later, the Plague had decimated the military presence of the city. The events of 1931 marked a major failing in the British Royal Army's medical examination process, an event that was thankfully seldom repeated. It would be another fifteen years before Leeds would finally be clear of major animate incursions once and for all.

# Timeline
## (continued)

2010 - Coal miners and teamsters go on strike after coal-mine safety funding is cut. The military is used to break the strike. Twenty-four strikers perish.

2012 - Queen Victoria II dies. George VI becomes King of England.

2023 - The Neo-Victorian Way of Death, by Lady Rosalyn Hartfield, is published.

2028 - Parliament abolishes the British Factory Act of 1847.

2032 - Two hundred eighty three people are killed in the London food riots.

2033 - One hundred forty eight people are killed in the food riots.

2034 - The first Anathema is revealed in London. The creature and its creator, Dr. Michael Andersham, are killed by an angry mob. Experimentation to create most derivative life forms made illegal.

2036 - An animate attack on Edinburgh claims 18,000 lives.

2037 - Anarchist cell Red 23 assassinates Prime Minister Trevor Harris. A major food riot sparks a plague outbreak that costs 2,700 lives.

2039 - Red 23 storms the offices of Creighton-Malden Industries, killing twelve scientists, including founder Wallace Malden.

2040 - Rome reclaimed. Papacy returns to Rome.

2042 - The Special Branch uncovers an anarchist conspiracy to assassinate King George VI.

2043 - After Parliament debates intervening on the behalf of the beleaguered working class, industrialists greatly increase their charitable donations, in effect creating a privately run welfare state and ending the food riots of 2030s.

2046 - Sir Robert Sutherland is assassinated. The existence of a modular zombie is first recorded.

2051 - Viktor van Haller introduces the ion rifle and galvanic destabilizer.

# Aftermath UK

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was formed by the Act of the Union, passed in 1800. It is made up of four nations, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and ruled by a centralized parliament in London. England remains the political heart of the UK; however, Parliament includes representatives from the other three nations. All of the UK is subject to the same laws and citizenry of all member nations are considered to be equal.

Support for Ireland's political independence grew in the nineteenth century. However, two acts granting home rule failed to win parliamentary approval. By the time the Plague broke out in 1905, the issue was still under heated debate. Ireland was quick to fall, as the majority of British resources focused on the main island. Today Ireland is largely the victim of the blight; Dublin remains the only major inhabitable city. Overcrowded and poor, it is seen as a last refuge for the UK's Catholic population. While in other nations many gave up their religion during the Plague Years, the Irish clung even tighter to their beliefs. Once they had reclaimed Dublin, the Irish began a strong extermination policy against any ghoul inhabitants of their isle. The Irish, being a strong and stubborn folk, are unwilling to give up living on the tainted lands or to share their ancestral home with any unholy abominations; the battle for Ireland has been slow and hard-fought, and there is no victory in sight.

Scotland, long a land of untamed natural beauty, quickly succumbed to the horrors of the blight. The sparse population of the Highlands made the blight more influential in the destruction of humanity than the Plague itself. When villages and towns did succumb, there was little to stand in the way of the contagion. During the Plague Years, Scotland faced some of the worst animate sieges. The entire north of the country is now a Wasteland largely inhabited by ghouls. The ghoul communities are thriving with little interference from humanity. Their isolation has enabled them to breed totally unchecked. There has been talk of rebuilding Hadrian's Wall. However, inhabitants of Glasgow and Edinburgh are firmly in opposition to giving up their hard-won homes. The rest of England and Wales live in fear of the hordes of the north descending.

When the Plague hit, many Welshmen in the North found themselves trying to rebuild and refortify the castles that the English had once put there to control the Welsh. They were quick to fortify mining villages against attack. Though most of these efforts were doomed to failure, a few survived, becoming new towns in the blighted countryside.

Most of central Wales was destroyed, though the coastal cities fared better. Wales remains largely Welsh speaking, particularly in the North; however, a more mixed population in the South makes for more cosmopolitan cities. Travelling through Wales is considered to be exceptionally dangerous. Despite the best efforts of the railways, many valleys remain particularly inhospitable, with hordes of ghouls and animates waiting to feast on any who have the misfortune of passing through.

# The Reclamation

The Reclamation truly began with the passage of the Reclamation Act of 1933. The Act outlined a comprehensive, systematic plan to retake those settlements that had fallen to the animates. It marked a major turning point in humanity's struggle for survival, at least for the Neo-Victorians. This was an era of hope in which ordinary men and women valiantly struggled to take back their world. A renewed nationalism swept England.

The process of reclamation is simple and is still used today when a settlement or borough succumbs to an outbreak of the Plague. Reclamation teams enter the occupied area and clear it of animates through any means necessary. Once enough of the city has been secured to begin reconstruction efforts, civilian construction teams move in to start rebuilding. The military defends these sites and uses them as forward bases to extend their control over the region. As more of the city is cleansed, the barricades are extended and more of the city can be rebuilt. During the first step of reclamation, temporary walls are put in position to seal off the perimeter from zombie attacks. Debris is then cleared inside the secured area so that construction can begin. The process of rebuilding often takes decades to complete, as the cities must not only be restored but also thoroughly fortified.

Where encampments could be found within cities, the first priority of the reclamation teams was to reintegrate those encampments and use these facilities as a jumping-off point for full-fledged reclamation efforts. Despite the offers of military support and aid, many of these pocket communities founded by the labouring class were dubious of the wisdom of surrendering their autonomy to military authority. Many felt that any government after such a disaster would serve the interests of the aristocrats and the forces of industry, not of the workers. As word of "reintegrated" labour freeholds and the actions used to reintegrate them reached neighbouring

# Timeline
## (continued)

2053 - The Psi Branch of the Metropolitan Police is founded.

2055 - Southwark Fire kills 700 people in South London. After a harsh police crackdown, anarchists commence a bombing campaign.

2056 - Detectives of New Scotland Yard uncover Amadeus Mahler's Limehouse reanimation lab and the vast smuggling operation that kept it supplied with corpses.

2058 - King George VI dies. Queen Victoria III becomes Queen of England. The anarchist bombing campaign ends.

2061 - Psi Branch ceases using empaths for interrogation after Detective Nancy Sinclair kills Walter Whitmore.

2062 - The government places a moratorium on psychical experiments.

2063 - A major plague outbreak in London's East End claims 22,000 lives.

2068 - Plague outbreak in London's East End claims 1,400 lives. H.E. Goodwin's *Our Glorious Ancestors* published.

2075 - A plague outbreak in London's East Endclaims 344 lives.

2077 - The Papal States are formed.

2083 - A plague outbreak in London's East End claims 280 lives.

2084 - The Lambeth food riots in South London. Two hundred and eighteen rioters are killed during the military crackdown.

2086 - The Lambeth Five are sentenced to life inprison for instigating the food riots.

2088 - The British Navy defeats the Prussians in a North Sea skirmish. The Prussian diplomat is recalled from London.

2089 - Amadeus Mahler's memoirs, *Necronaut, One Man's Triumphs Over Death in the Age of Industrial Alchemy,* is published after his death.

2090 - A British diplomat is ejected from Berlin under accusations of spying.

# Timeline
## (continued)

2093 - The British navy defeats the Prussians in the North Sea, marking the first major naval battle since the Plague. Britain and Prussia narrowly avoid going to war.

2095 - The British begin constructing dreadnought-class warships.

2097 - An animate attack on London claims 2,000 lives.

2098 - Ties to Prussia are normalized but remain tense. The British purchase five outdated zeppelins from Prussia and begin renovation.

2103 - Rampaging Mercurials kill 142 people in Stepney.

2105 - The present year.

settlements, resistance to the military increased. The military began to face two options: destroy the freeholds and their much-needed manpower or pressure Parliament to work with labour to find a solution. The Committee for Imperial Defence advised Conservative Prime Minister William Morris that they could see no option but to deal with labour freeholds; the manpower and facilities were desperately needed, and the military could not face a rebellion in the midst of the Plague. Morris acquiesced, and in 1940 a reformed Labour Representation Committee was formed and given a role in Parliament by an edict of King Edward VIII, which was confirmed by both the Houses of Lords and Commons. This role was legitimised by the general election of 1943.

Despite the theoretical simplicity involved in reclamation, casualties among military forces were horrendous. The smouldering cities were zombie-infested death traps of unstable architecture and ruined streets. Countless men were lost to the contagion they struggled to contain. As losses mounted, military scientists sought to create alchemically perfected super soldiers, troops immune to the ravages of the Plague who could fight zombies on their own terms. The result of these experiments was the thrope, a primal brute who was entirely fearless and completely uncontrollable. After some limited initial success, the program was scrapped in 1951 after the monsters turned on their creators and fled into the Wastelands. Even now, the legacy of the thropes haunts civilized men, for like the animate, the curse of the thrope is spread through its infectious bite.

Even as the cities were being reclaimed, a major effort was launched to repair the railways that spanned the nation. The railways were indispensable in rebuilding the blasted cities. In the modern era, railways have become the safest and most reliable mode of transportation across the country. The trains themselves have been reinforced and heavily armoured to ensure that external threats can be kept at bay while they and their cargo speed overland. In addition to safely moving passengers and cargo, trains also provide settlements with a degree of protection. Annually hundreds of shambling zombies are crushed beneath the wheels of trains as they make their ways across the wasteland. After moving through high-risk areas, most trains are quickly washed before the stench of decomposing corpses overwhelms passengers onboard. A number of terminals include water jets that provide this service to passing trains.

Though reclamation efforts are ongoing, the Reclamation is generally said to have ended with the liberation of London in 1959, an arduous process that claimed tens of thousands of lives.

### Enfranchising Women

*The first debate on enfranchising women was held in 1867, initiated by John Stuart Mill. The issue remained controversial but was put aside with the onset of the Plague. Due to the innumerable heroic acts of women during the Plague Years and their outstanding efforts in the Reclamation, the Representation of the People Bill was passed in 1958. This gave the vote to all women over the age of twenty-one. The first woman MP was elected that very same year. Since that time, women have served in the cabinet and as Prime Minister.*

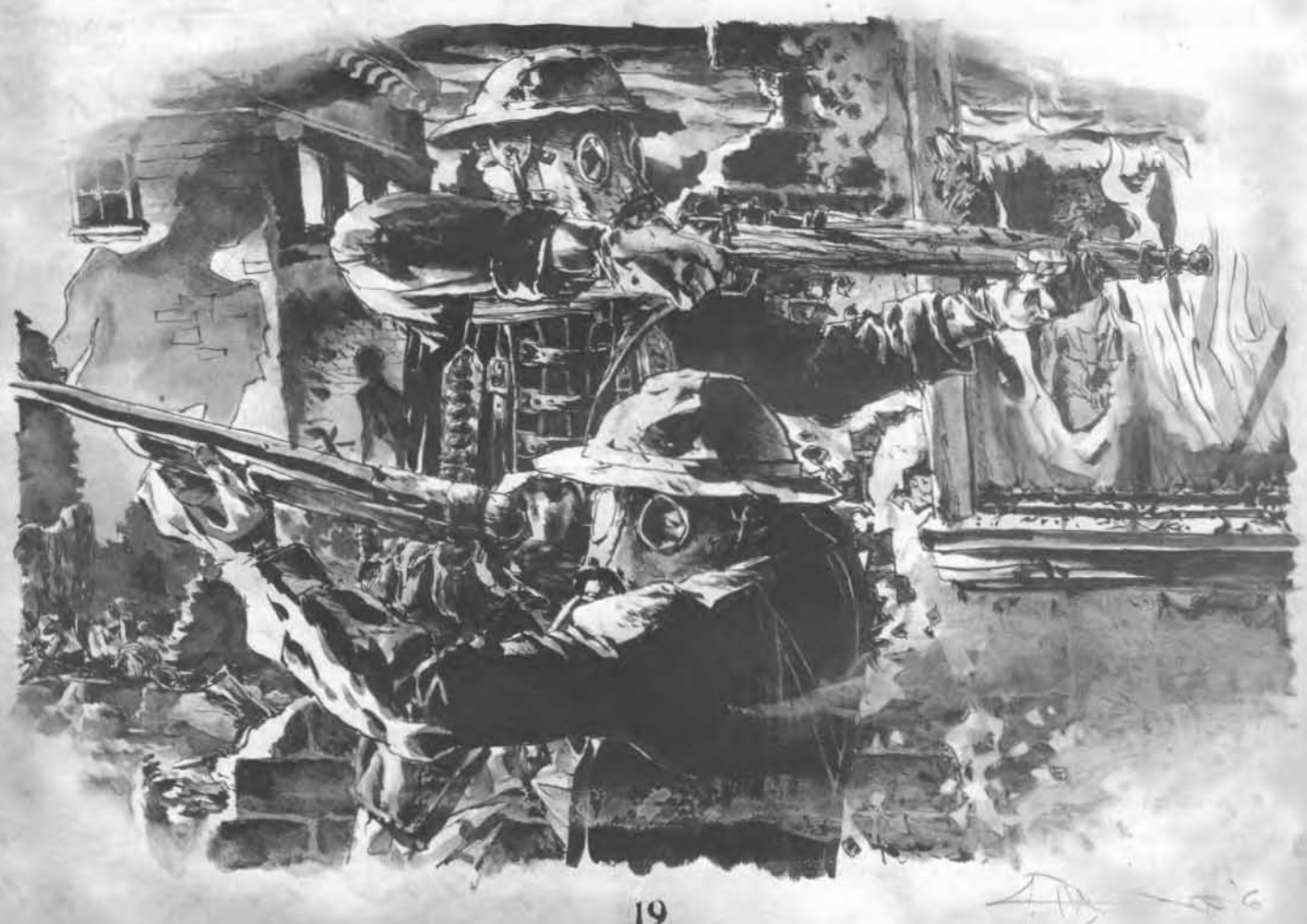
# The Reclamation of London

The Plague Years took a grave toll on London. Following the initial outbreak of the Plague, the population had been decimated and the slums of the East End and South London were completely overrun by zombies. In an effort to stem the tide of animates crossing from South London to the rest of the city, all bridges spanning the Thames were demolished. Though tens of thousands managed to escape the pandemonium before the bridges were blown and dropped in the river, the majority were not so lucky. London became a nightmarish no man's land occupied by the walking dead and desperate refugees. Isolated from the rest of the city, the survivors of South London were forced to endure hardships beyond comprehension. Their descendants still hold a grudge over the shameful actions of the London County Council to this day.

Meanwhile, fires erupting in the East End were allowed to rage out of control until they burned themselves out. Not only was well-organized fire fighting out of the question, but the fires were viewed as a tool to thin the animate population. Stepney and Shoreditch endured the worst damage. Large sections of these boroughs had been razed to the ground. When the reclamation efforts were launched in 1935, smoke still rose from the rubble.

Despite being extensively damaged and home to a vast animate population, the metropolis was never completely abandoned. Pockets of survivors held out in fortified compounds throughout the city and on the periphery of London. The largest concentration of survivors, over six thousand strong at the start of the Reclamation, dwelled behind hastily constructed walls within the Square Mile at the heart of London. These encampments provided the first bases of operation for major reclamation efforts within the city. Later these camps became the staging grounds for reconstruction efforts.

The sheer numbers of zombies that remained within London made reclamation a daunting task. The sections of the slums where buildings abutted one another created a dense, hazardous web of streets and alleys. Venturing into these streets to combat the hungry dead was akin to suicide. Thousands perished in fruitless advances into the East End, further swelling the ranks of the city's animate dead.



In the face of overwhelming odds, the Reclamation of London continued unabated. As areas were cleared of animates, fortifications were extended to cover more of the city. Over time, these fortifications began to overlap, and whole sections of the city were liberated. The West End was the first quarter of the city reclaimed. The area was taken rapidly, and few walls were constructed in the course of the advance.

Once the West End was secure, efforts to restore London's landmarks began immediately. Great care was taken to secure intact as many historical sites as possible, and those that could not be saved would be rebuilt. Many of the ancient structures had been badly damaged or were otherwise utterly indefensible. Some of these buildings were gutted to their facades, rebuilt, and reinforced from beneath. Those structures that could not be saved were levelled and replaced with modern structures. Reconstruction efforts lasted until the 1980s.

The greatest setback to reclaiming London occurred on 13 January 1958, when London was besieged by thousands of animates outside the city walls. While soldiers would occasionally have to deal with the odd animate or two approaching the fortifications, this was the first major incursion of its kind. Hundreds of zombies penetrated the defences and poured into the city, taking reclamation forces completely by surprise. Quick thinking and judicious use of incendiaries kept the attack from being a complete disaster. Three days later, order had been restored at the cost of some six hundred lives.

The most disturbing part of the attack was its undeniable co-ordination. In the following days, military intelligence gathered eyewitness accounts from survivors who had seen animate hordes on the move as they made their way toward London. Groups of slow-moving animates assaulted many smaller settlements en route to the metropolis, gathering more zombies in their wake with every attack. Survivors claimed these creatures acted with purpose and did not allow themselves to simply feed on every fallen man. Something was clearly in control of their actions.

Similar attacks have been occasionally reported throughout the Empire ever since. These attacks always seem to come without warning and are frighteningly organized for creatures thought to lack any intellect. They always start the same way: hordes of animates strike smaller communities to increase their numbers before converging on a major fortification. Generally these attacks are repelled with some loss of life, but in rare instances, they have overwhelmed whole cities. Once the attack begins, the animates attempt to surge over walls or through the gates. Once through the gates, the zombies revert to their natural behaviour.

It would be decades before the discovery of so-called zombie lords, thinking animates with limited control over the more common zombies. At the time, reports of organized zombies on the move were dismissed; after all, at the end of the Reclamation, who really wanted to consider the possibility of an escalating plague? It was not for another fifty years that the theorists in the Nonhuman Pathology Department at the University of London began to unravel certain horrific, albeit all too likely, explanations for the attack of 1958.

The University of London was one of the first of London's major institutions to be retaken. The libraries of this university, which sustained only minor damage during the Plague Years, became the main resource for the reengineering of the city. The problem of constructing an energy infrastructure that could be extended into the incompletely reclaimed zones and that could withstand the necessary disruptions caused by periodic, large-scale fires was solved by the brilliant implementation of the radiant energy technologies of Nikola Tesla by Prof. Ashley Byrnes, an engineer and survivor of the Plague Years. After reestablishment of communications with the New World, the continuing innovations of Nikola Tesla were incorporated into the developing design of the array, allowing simultaneous implementation of state of the art aetheric energy systems on both sides of the Atlantic. Beginning in the West End, a series of Tesla towers were constructed for conversion and aetheric transmission of energy obtained from the burning of coal. The network of towers was expanded as the walls of the city crept forward, creating a web of accessible energy. Galvanic weapons and communications devices were developed to make use of the radiant energy, eliminating the need for heavy backup power sources and speeding the clearing of London. Re-emerging industry adapted its machinery to make use of this radiant power; the homes and businesses that grew up beneath the walls ran on radiant energy. Today, all of London is powered by a massive network of Tesla towers, radiant energy across a spectrum of wavelengths supplied to every district within the city walls.

During the years of London's reclamation, the population between the expanding walls began to swell. The food provided by the farmlands under the peripheral walls, never substantial since the first days of the Plague, failed a little more every year. The solution came in 1953 from an interdisciplinary team at the University led by bota-

nist Erich Merck and engineer Carol Zimmermann, who designed and put into action the first subterranean single-celled food tanks in London. These tanks were fed with sanitized slurry from the wastewater systems, converting the organic wastes of the city into nutritious, high-protein microbial biomass, which was in turn harvested, sanitized, dried, and processed for consumption.

Originally intended as a supplemental food source, the tanks came to be relied upon as a major source of nutrition as the vitality of the land continued to decline. The poor and the working classes in particular came to rely on this single-celled protein food, commonly called "scop," as the prices of farm-raised food climbed out of the reach of the labouring class. In the Neo-Victorian world, the entire wastewater system of London is focused through a massive network of filters and tanks beneath the city, supplying the needs of a vast populace who rarely taste any other food.

Generally tasteless and greasy, scop, often sold in dried cakes or as a ready-made porridge, is a staple of the working-class diet. A number of firms make incredible sums of money selling dried and canned scop to the poor. Those who refuse to eat the stuff are forced to either forage for themselves, trap rats, fish the tainted waters of the Thames, or live off the scant supplies of pallid fish and shellfish sold by costermongers at market. While scop is unpleasant, it is at least less hazardous than most of the other foods available to the working class of London.

The varieties of scop organisms have grown over the years as scientists optimised the systems, seeking ways to utilize every scrap of nutritive value that could be obtained from the wastewaters of London. Several of these species are yeast varieties, fermentative organisms; the output from these harvests is sold, minimally processed, as an alcoholic drink called "slap". The liquid is foul-tasting but nutritive, high in vitamins, and, above all, effective. This liquid is also sold in a distilled and refined form, called "gin", presumably out of habit. Very few in the modern world can afford the grain-distilled liquors of the previous age.

The scop supply has, in recent years, proven insufficient on several occasions to meet the demands of the growing populace. Nutrient inputs from the failing farmland decrease every year, and the capacities of the nutrient reclamation systems feeding the scop tanks have been pushed to the limit. Projections by government scientists predict even greater shortfalls in the food supply in coming years unless some major innovation is made or some way of increasing the nutrient inputs can be found. Recently, disturbing rumours have begun to circulate that bodies collected by the Metropolitan Health Department are being rendered down to base components for the scop tanks and sold back to the public as food. Such ghoulish tales could easily be passed off as idle paranoia if they were not so prevalent. The implications of such an obscenity are so great that Her Majesty's government has not risked a public denial of the accusation.

# The Wastelands

The blight has spread to nearly seventy percent of the land-mass of the United Kingdom. The Wastelands are virtually uninhabitable. What little flora that grows in these tainted regions is sickly and foul. Crops fail to grow entirely or quickly ripen in bloated pustules of corruption. Ghoul tribes, wandering thropes, and animates call the Wastes home. Everywhere, once fertile farmland has been reduced to a desolate, ghost-haunted nightmare landscape. Tendrils of blight reach out from areas completely contaminated, spreading death and famine in their wake. Across the countryside, where once it was impossible to travel five miles in any direction without running into a village or fifteen without wandering into a sizable town, little remains but monster-infested ruins.

The cancer spreads through the southwest of England from Lands End almost to Bristol. The midlands look pock–marked, with small pockets of humanity surviving in the otherwise blighted land. In the southeast, London and Dover remain largely clear of the taint. Towards the North, Manchester has been rebuilt and is again a thriving city, but the Lake District has become one of the worst areas of the Wasteland. Several Welsh cities around the coast have survived, among them Swansea, Cardiff, and Aberystwyth. In Scotland, the Highlands, long a barren wilderness, have been totally permeated by the blight which continues to spread south. Edinburgh and Glasgow remain the last two cities untouched by the blight. With the exception of Dublin, the whole of Ireland is believed to have been consumed by the blight.

There exist within the Wastes tiny oases untouched by the blight. Their generally well-armed inhabitants, who do not take kindly to strangers, jealously guard these pockets of life. Even within an oasis, life is a constant struggle wrought with horror. All manner of abominations wander into these regions from the Wasteland, seeking the flesh of the living.

# Known Extent of the Blight Across The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Circa 2098

The Wastelands could never be reclaimed. Despite attempts by reclamation forces to cleanse the land of the Corruption, the damage was too severe. The cities in the Wastes had crumbled past all hope of repair. The Wastes themselves quickly solidified their reputation for being inhospitable to human life; poison plants, strange biting and stinging animals, unsafe water, and noxious vapours presented hazards by day, and unseen ghouls inhabiting the cities preyed on reclamation forces under the cover of night. Injuries suffered by the soldiers of the Reclamation quickly grew malignant and became fatal, and the fallen men rose in short order to prey on those still living. Even those who sustained no injury sickened and grew strange from exposure to the unwholesome air. Many teams sent to reclaim the sepulchres were destroyed without encountering a single animate.

Ultimately, reclamation efforts into the Wastes were entirely abandoned. The undead that once overran these lands decayed slowly into dust over the years. The ruins of the dead cities, disturbed only by occasional daylight forays for salvage, moulder quietly in the weird darkness that marks the Wastelands. The most haunted of the fallen cities, the sepulchres, crumble, unvisited by any but the most dauntless and foolhardy.

There are a number of coal mines within the blighted regions that are still active. The mines are insanely dangerous, and plague outbreaks are common. Mine reclamation, conducted by the soldiers of the Domestic Security Force's Penal Corps, is among the most horrific duties imaginable. Those that survive are permanently marked by their harrowing experiences.

**The Sepulchers**

*Rising from the Wastes like towering skeletal fingers are the sepulchres, the blasted ruins of cities devastated during the Plague Years. Swallowed in blight and haunted by countless restless spirits, these are desolate places that could never be reclaimed. Once home to legions of animates, sepulchres are all the more terrifying for their silence, their undead populations having long since crumbled to dust. Despite the apparent stillness, the entropic forces that poison the earth ensure that those who die within the confines of a sepulchre are certain to rise in death, rendering such places uninhabitable.*

*Today the sepulchres stand shrouded in an eerie silence, which is only broken when they are invaded by intrepid scavengers seeking to loot the ruins or the ghoul tribes that have come to revere these unwholesome places as holy sites.*

# The Rise of the Neo-Victorians

The Neo-Victorian Era began at the end of the Reclamation and continues to the present day. It takes its name from the reign of Queen Victoria II, who ruled from 1968 to 2012, but as many historians point out, the Reclamation is generally thought to have ended with the reclamation of London in 1959, during the reign of Queen Beatrice. Whichever date one subscribes to, it is impossible to deny that throughout the Reclamation, and the Plague Years before, survivors fanatically clung to the strict morality of their forbearers. In a world marred by chaos and uncertainty, the rigid social standards of that bygone age served to preserve a semblance of order.

Though Victorian custom was held to be the paramount of civility, some changes were necessary to acknowledge the grim realities of the present. As the Victorians were the product of their times, so too are the Neo-Victorians. Having lived alongside all manner of monstrosities, the Neo-Victorians have been forced to become an exceedingly pragmatic people. Though their predecessors sought to reform their society, the Neo-Victorians have been forced to focus on reconstructing theirs. Even now, concern within the Houses of Parliament focuses more on the corporeal evils stalking the streets than on the issues of temperance and morality.

## The Balance of Power

In the wake of the Plague Years, the English were a changed people, despite their desire to cling to the past. The roles of the sexes had been blurred; in a time of total war, there are no innocents. Men and women fought side by side for survival. Whereas years earlier it would have been unthinkable to train a female in the martial arts, young girls learned to load and fire carbines as soon as they were large enough to steady a gun. The concept of class, so vitally important to Victorian social order, was virtually suspended in the chaos of the Plague Years. Though great men would continue to struggle for dominion, for a brief time all lived in relative equality; wealth and social standing were meaningless in a world where survival was the only priority.

It was not until the walls rose around the cities and the mechanisms of progress began to rebuild the shattered world that the class struggle was once more ignited. Not even powerful opposition from the old guard and its allies throughout the institutions of the state could suppress a shift in power. Barons of industry rose to prominence at the head of great corporations, eclipsing even the re-established power of the aristocracy.

Beginning with the Reclamation and continuing through the latter half of the twentieth century, middle-class and lower-class workers could demand high wages during an unprecedented era of reconstruction. As the cities were rebuilt, industry flourished. By the time the Reclamation was declared at an end, the Nationalization Measure was repealed and a clause instructing that all businesses be returned to their rightful private owners or their heirs brought the most powerful forces in the nation into a protracted legal battle. The unions claimed that the factories and lands they had maintained and used during the Plague Years were by rights the property not of the original owners but instead those who had prevented their despoilment by the animates. When the courts decided in favour of returning the factories to their original owners and their heirs, the labour movement was furious. By 1969, the cry for reparations had led to street protests and more than one general strike. After the general elections of late 1969, a Labour government pushed through a compromise reparation plan that stopped the strikes and protests but left labour-union members grumbling and disaffected. At this time, the unemployment rate was less than one percent due to a high demand for construction workers in the cities; the setback to the unions was seen as a dark spot in a time of general prosperity for the working class. It was not until several decades later that the labour movement saw the first of the great setbacks it was to endure.

## The Shadow of Death

In spite of the best intentions of the architects of the Reclamation, it has become painfully obvious that the work remains far from complete. Though most cities are once more in the hands of the living, the Plague continues to threaten public safety. On occasion, minor outbreaks still ravage one borough or another, causing the deaths of a few thousand souls before reclamation teams can restore order.

Parliament has responded with the passage of a number of laws aimed at protecting the public from the ongoing epidemic. Following the passage of the Special Powers Act of 1960, the then Secretary of the State for War, Sir Edward Nelson, formed the Domestic Security Force, now commonly known as the Deathwatch. Under the Special Powers Act, the Deathwatch was authorized to use extreme force in its duty to protect the citizens of the UK from the animate threat. Charged with urban defence and animate pacification, the Deathwatch took command of the fortifications protecting the Neo-Victorian cities as well as all ongoing reclamation efforts.

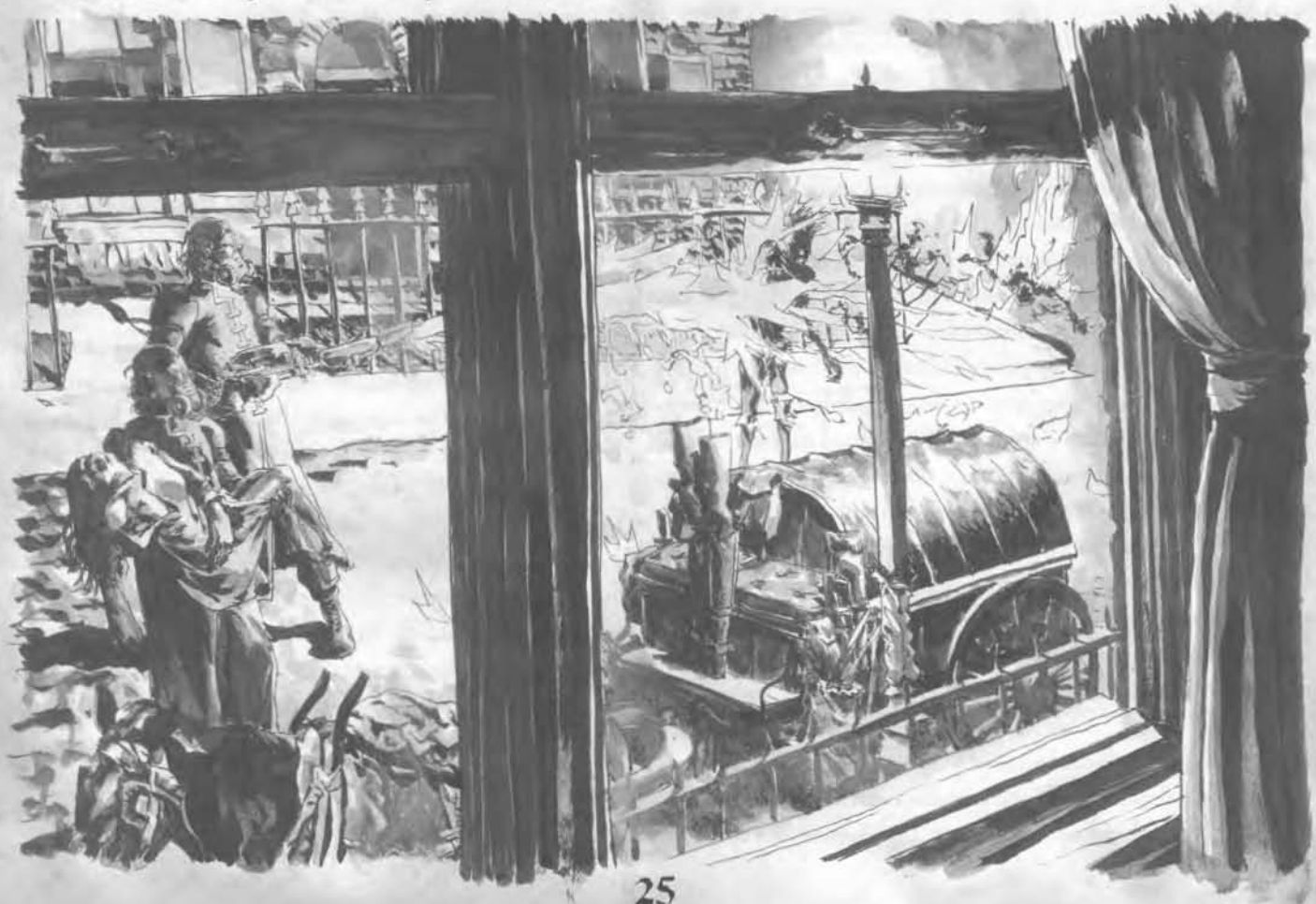
Originally made up of a sparse five divisions constituting less than seventy thousand soldiers, it soon became evident

that the beleaguered Deathwatch was woefully unprepared for the magnitude of the task presented. At its inception, the Deathwatch was simply under staffed and under funded. As a temporary solution to the problem, Parliament passed the Domestic Securities Act the following year, creating the Office of Urban Defence to license and fund freelance operatives to hunt down and exterminate the undead. Though it was intended as a temporary measure, the OUD has been so successful in its mission that the Domestic Securities Act has never been repealed. In addition to institutionalising the state-funded bounty hunters who would become the Undertakers, the law also eased restrictions on civilian possession of firearms, though this was largely considered to be a formality. From the earliest days of the Plague Years, civilians have armed themselves with any weapons available, including military hardware.

Backed by findings from the scientific community into the phenomenon of spontaneous animation and its threat to the public at large, Parliament soon passed the Mortuary Acts of 1967. These Acts, intended to safeguard public welfare and health, mandated that virtually all British dead be gathered and disposed of through cremation as soon as possible. Putting summary cremation into law was another legal formality rather than an actual change in public policy. Most of the city's dead had been cremated since the Plague Years. The Acts did result in the construction of a great number of public crematoriums throughout the country. Under the Acts, failure to report a death in the home carries a stiff sentence of not less than a year of hard labour. Furthermore, any person or persons infected with the Plague must be reported to the proper authorities with all haste for immediate euthanasia.

The aristocrats of the House of Lords only agreed to pass the Bill if an amendment was added granting them a dispensation from mandatory cremation. It was argued that proper burial was the only possible end for men and women of society. By the end of the year, a compromise was reached, resulting in the establishment of the Mourners' Guild to watch over the dead of the upper classes. Harkening back to the Anatomy Act of 1832, to this day only the wealthiest members of Neo-Victorian society can afford a funeral and proper burial in the London Necropolis, and then only with the purchase of an extremely expensive license and the application of thorough safeguards.

The authorities tasked with the collection of the dead are paramilitary retrieval teams colloquially known as the plaguemen. Daily, the plaguemen make their rounds through the metropolis, gathering the dead of the past night. After completing their rounds, the plaguemen drive their full carts to one of the city's crematoria for disposal. Unlike most other civil servants, the dangerous nature of the work requires plaguemen to carry military weapons to ensure their own safety.



# Vampirism: the Second Epidemic

Parliament's hand was stayed on other sweeping public health issues until a fresh epidemic came to light in the early 1970s. For years, vampirism had spread quietly through Neo-Victorian society. The rumours were largely ignored until Dr. Robert Ashton documented the spread of the disease and the subsequent destruction of one of its victims via decapitation in 1972. Until this time, the general population had regarded vampirism as either a myth believed only by the superstitious or as a mental disease, one of a number of violent pathologies manifested by the unfortunates of the slums. Similarly, only a handful of researchers at the highest levels of medicine and academia could confirm the existence of true vampirism, and even they had believed the condition to be vanishingly rare, a scientific curiosity rather than a threat.

The publication of Dr. Ashton's study sparked a series of investigations that would give the first clue as to the true scope of the vampire pandemic in London. It was quickly discovered that vampirism had spread through the lower classes of the metropolis. Infection rates in prostitutes were several times higher than in any other type of employment, and common street prostitutes were found to carry the infection at rates not much higher than those found in the courtesans and adventuresses who worked their trade in high society. The clients of these prostitutes were becoming infected at a swift rate. The infection itself seemed to be fatal, slowly killing the body of the infected and then causing the reanimation of the corpse. Most of these new vampires were destroyed shortly after their emergence into unlife, usually after carelessly attacking a citizen who was well armed against the various threats of life in the poorer districts of the metropolis. Some, however, appeared to act with more caution; contemporary urban legends held that some number of these monsters dwelled in the Underground, away from any risk of exposure to the enfeebling sun. Many of the infected prostitutes apparently remained in their trade, taking their nourishment from their clients and spreading the deadly infection. Investigations even turned up rumours of a flourishing trade among vampire prostitutes catering to a necrophiliac clientele, who largely hailed from the more decadent aristocratic houses.

Amongst Dr. Ashton's most shocking findings was the existence of so-called Legacies. Up until the publication of Dr. Ashton's work, those few possessing even rudimentary knowledge of the subject believed that all individuals infected by vampirism degenerated into mindless killers, existing only to feed on the blood of the living. Dr. Ashton discovered that a small number of vampires retained their intellect. Vampires created by intelligent vampires likewise seemed to retain their personalities. The existence of these Legacies painted a far more insidious picture of the spread of vampirism.

Early investigations, wrapped in the sensationalism of the time, stated that this was the singularly greatest threat to the continuation of humanity since the Plague Years! Dailies and penny dreadfuls purporting to cover the exploits of would-be vampire hunters sold by the millions. In all likelihood, these stories were blown completely out of proportion, yet public outcry was still tremendous. Parliament responded with the first of what would come to be known as the Vampire Laws, reinstating the much-maligned Contagious Diseases Act of 1864. The Laws charged police with screening registered prostitutes for signs of vampirism and other sexually transmitted diseases. Those showing signs of the ailment were to be held for observation or remitted to the care of a psychiatric facility or lock-house.

For several years, vampires faded from the headlines, but then in 1983, the Benewick case broke in the dailies. With little or no credible evidence, the papers unleashed scathing exposés claiming that scions of wealthy families sought immortality as vampires and naming the aging Lord Benewick as one of those who sought the rewards of vampirism. The resulting scandal gripped the public imagination. Here were those who had everything but yet were willing to trade their humanity for immortality, literally becoming monsters that fed on the living.

Ironically, the loudest cries did not come from the lower classes but from the highest levels of the social strata. The threat of a dark and undying aristocracy holding their titles and property in perpetuity was too much for many young lords and ladies to bear. Though considerable pressure was put on Parliament to act, it would be another three years before action was taken. The papers of the time claimed foul play and corruption amongst the politicians, but in truth, matters were not that simple: the very concepts of death and entitlement were in question.

Finally in 1986, Parliament passed a number of acts in rapid succession collectively known as the Vampire Laws. The Vampire Laws explicitly defined vampires as deceased and, as such, holding no legal rights to title or property. Those possessions owned by the dead would be divided amongst friends and family in precisely the same manner as in the case of ordinary death. Additionally, the laws categorized the vampires as a threat to public well-being, and as such, they would be destroyed summarily whenever and wherever they were discovered. Overnight, the vast majority

of vampires held in public institutions were destroyed. Those that were spared this fate were used as subjects in all manner of scientific experiments, from endurance tests to dissection. The Office of Urban Defence immediately requested an extension of its budget to cover the expense of vampire bounties.

## Immortal Dreams

The years of focus on vampirism served to bring the little known subject of alchemy to public attention. For over a millennium, alchemists had sought the key to the Elixir Vitae, the legendary waters of life. When viewed through the lens of science, the immortality represented by the Elixir seemed pure compared to the corruption represented by base vampirism. The science of age extension, still in its infancy at this time, was caught up by the aristocracy and the nouveau riche barons of science and industry, and a craze for anti-agapic science began. Phenomenal sums were placed in endowments for the premiere medical institutions of the time in the hope of spurring this research into producing some dazzling result.

The hopes of the death-fearing lords of Britain were not entirely disappointed. In a very few years, new anti-agapic serums appeared in the most elite of the experimental laboratories, promising results undreamed of in an earlier age. These serums were capable not only of prolonging life but also of actually restoring youth to some limited degree. The elderly and decrepit matriarchs and patriarchs of the old houses were the first to avail themselves of this astounding new technology, purchasing decades of vital, exuberant life at fees that would dwarf the treasury of a king.

Money poured into the medical centres, fuelling the creation of ever costlier and more effective serums, as the life spans of those wealthy enough to afford the treatments climbed ever higher. Scientists speculated that life spans of two hundred years, three hundred, or more would soon be attainable. Ultimately, it was hoped, the human form could be rendered perfect and immortal, and death itself could be banished forever. The possibilities of the science seemed endless. The young scions of the wealthy houses, outraged at the possibility of perpetual dependence and the depletion of family coffers into the accounts of the medical research establishment, again appealed to Parliament for justice. In the absence of a visible public threat and perhaps motivated by some degree of self-interest on the matter, the venerable heads of Parliament did nothing.

For a time, anti-agapic sciences seemed to have answered the human dream of immortality. By 2050, however, flaws in the process became apparent. The capacity of the human body to rejuvenate appeared to diminish with

each successive application of the courses, and the capacity of improved serums to combat this effect was less than had been hoped. Scientists radically revised their recent projected life spans, with an expected maximum near three hundred years in the absence of a major breakthrough. Those wealthy enough to do so continued to hold out hope and fund the research in expectation of prolonging their lives indefinitely. In the ensuing decades, many advances have been made, but the desperately desired breakthrough has not materialized.

## The Reanimators

Amidst the hopes of immortality, the dark side of alchemical research flourished. Those seeking the secrets of longevity did not confine their attentions to the continuation of human life; they sought the secrets of death and reanimation as well. These experiments attempted to re-infuse vitality into corpses of the recently departed. While these experiments continue today on fresh corpses, early on some researchers sought to restore full humanity to the animated dead.

In supplying their experiments, physicians and researchers were not always scrupulous concerning the origins of their raw materials; with cremation mandated, fresh corpses were at a premium, and good material was unlikely to be turned away by a researcher looking to buy. Several research institutions were closed or fined when caught in possession of murder victims, and it is not known how many lives were cut short to feed the resurrectionist market.

To date, there has been no true success in any attempt at revitalization. The failures, however, were occasionally memorable. In 1997, the West End was visited with horror when the laboratories of Dr. Evelyn Alexandra Morely were opened. Dr. Morely, a known resurrectionist and reanimator, had been operating out of a dissection chamber in the rear of her Harley Street manor. Neighbours had previously complained about the smell, but no serious danger was suspected. Then, on the night of 29 December 1997, Dr. Morely released her technical staff as well as all her research subjects into the streets. All were dead and reanimated, though not in a fashion familiar to the world at that time: these artificial animates moved much more quickly than the naturally occurring zombie and, as later examination would prove conclusively, were liquefying from within at an alarming rate. Before Deathwatch forces could subdue them, Dr. Morely and her creations had killed thirty-two people, including the young granddaughter of the head of King's College London. The doctor's notes, along with badly damaged remains discovered in cages in the dissection chambers, revealed that the infection had been deliberate; Dr. Morely had apparently succeeded in restoring some semblance of life to a corpse and had, in her excitement, promptly tried the serum on the living bodies of herself and her laboratory assistants. The results were disastrous.

As a result of this and other similar atrocities, all research into reanimation of dead tissue was banned in 2008. The sale and purchase of human corpses without proper licensing was made a crime punishable by forced hard labour in the mines, and reanimation is one of the few crimes for which the death penalty may be given. Incidents of this nature continue to occur, however, and it does not appear likely that the research will ever be entirely subdued.

In 2056, detectives of New Scotland Yard responded to an anonymous tip, uncovering a huge alchemical reanimation lab based out of a waterfront warehouse in Limehouse. The lab contained twenty-seven Mercurials in various states of reanimation. Forty-six more corpses were discovered in the lab's cryo-freezers. The partial remains of no less than seventeen additional corpses were found in the lab's incinerator. Apprehended at the site were Amadeus Mahler, self-proclaimed reanimator, and his assistants, Joseph Pinckney and Jean Percier. Pinckney and Percier were Mahler's chief smugglers, responsible for delivering an estimated one hundred and fifty corpses annually. Mahler, Pinckney, and Percier each received a sentence of twenty-years hard labour. Mahler lived to be one hundred twenty, but his book of memoirs, entitled *Necronaut, One Man's Triumphs Over Death in the Age of Industrial Alchemy*, was published only after his death in 2089.

As recently as 2103, Mercurial reanimates escaped from a hidden lab and rampaged through Stepney, killing one hundred forty-two people.

## Breaking Labour's Back

The Tesla towers powering London are run by coal obtained from a series of mines preserved by the military during the Plague Years and still controlled by the government. When the government cut funding for mine safety in 2010, the coal miners and teamsters went on strike. In response, the government, with the support of the now established industrialists, turned the prison population into conscript workers contracted to the mines. When the teamsters refused to haul the scab-mined coal, the strike was busted by military force, resulting in the deaths of twenty-four strikers. This blow to union power shook the union members' faith in both the Labour Party and in themselves. After a period of reappraisal, several unions became even more socialistic in outlook and splintered off into a party of Neo-Luddites.

Following the death of Queen Victoria II in 2012, George VI became the King of England. His reign would not be a happy one. The twenty-first century was a time of widespread social upheaval. King George spent much of his time fretting over an impending socialist revolution that never materialized.

The conditions for the labouring class worsened further after the devastating events of the early century. This period was marked by the end of public funding for schools, the establishment of the principle of self-representation, which placed all citizens on a par in the courts, thus eliminating the need for state-sponsored defence attorneys, and a growth in the pomp that surrounded the throne. After fifty years of frenetic activity, most of the major public-works projects had come to an end. Sealed behind vast fortifications, the cities could not spread beyond their boundaries and soon began to grow overcrowded as the population climbed following a post-Reclamation increase in the birth rate. Matters were not helped by the immigrants from the Continent who continued to migrate to Britain. As a recession began and unemployment spread throughout Britain, the rights of the working class began to further erode, first as a result of natural market forces and later due to the systematic efforts of the industrialists. By the mid-2020s, poverty had reached such levels that over ten percent of the population lived at least partially on food dispensed by charitable institutions throughout the metropolis. In 2028, the industrialists succeeded in lobbying Parliament to abolish the British Factory Act of 1847, which had restricted the working day for women and children between the ages of thirteen and eighteen to no more than ten hours per day. As unemployment rose, wages continued to fall, and profits soared. The continuing rise of poverty and the worsening conditions in the workers' sectors led to an increase in mortality rates in the poor quarters; infant mortality rose, and the average life span of the worker, worn down by work, hunger, and disease, dropped considerably. By 2030, the average person born to the poor quarters could expect to have a lifespan of barely forty years.

The increased death rates in the poor quarters meant greater numbers of reanimations. Infant reanimation became a significant problem: infants would die unobserved in the night then reanimate and bite the mother when she picked the thing up in the morning. OUD reports of the time are full of instances where the heads of mother and child pairs were brought in by a neighbour claiming the bounty after an unsuccessful attack by the reanimated pair. The plague carts stepped up their operations in these areas, visiting twice a day to the sectors hardest hit by poverty and disease.

By the late 2030s, incidents of civil disobedience were growing commonplace. Matters were made worse by the large number of firearms and weapons in civilian hands since the Plague Years. His Majesty's government had been unwilling to disarm the population following the Reclamation due to the ongoing threat posed by the Plague. Food riots turned into bloody stand-offs when hundreds were killed in harsh military crackdowns, and for a time, martial law was declared in London. The largest food riot of the era, which took place in 2037, resulted in a major plague outbreak that cost two thousand seven hundred lives. Rumours of worker uprisings spread through the highest levels of government.

## The Children of Science

In 2034, the city was rocked by the discovery of a new scientific creation. In autumn of that year, police were puzzled by a series of attacks on children in the vicinity of Cavendish Square. The children, generally servants' children around the age of six or eight, were attacked while playing alone in the street. All the attacks took place in the twilight hours, and all the children reported a medium-height man dressed in a cloak too heavy for the weather who had come out of nowhere and attempted to carry the child off. The first three children to be attacked reported that the attacker dropped them and vanished when they screamed. Some weeks later, a fourth child was discovered dead in an alley, killed by strangulation; traces of chloroform were found around the child's mouth and nose. The police redoubled their efforts by sending heavy patrols into the streets in search of the killer. In late November of 2034, a man in a large cloak was seen struggling with a child; police gave chase, trailing the assail-

ant to the home of Dr. Michael Andersham. The police swarmed into the house over the doctor's protests and carried away the dark-cloaked assailant. According to reports given by witnesses to the event, the hood fell back as the young man was being carried away, revealing "...a face somehow wrong, infuriating and painful to look at, though there was nothing misshapen or monstrous in the features – an evil face. One felt instinctively it was right to hate the man to whom it belonged."

Over the next days, the story was revealed in the dailies. The progress of science had continued in the wake of the anti-agapics revolution, delving deeper into the fundamental mechanics of human biology in the hope of unlocking the last and greatest secrets of life. Dr. Andersham, a preeminent physician with no children of his own, had been for some time attempting to modify a human embryo to withstand artificial incubation. Using material from himself and his wife, Dr. Andersham had at last succeeded in creating an artificially incubated life that was, in nearly all respects, perfectly human; the face and form of the creature were entirely human, betraying no hint of its origins, and the small modifications that would allow the creature to breathe the smogs of London unharmed were not at all evident in the outward form. Unfortunately, the creature had proved unstable; the doctor's notes detail years of patient discipline and experimentation, all conducted in an attempt to keep the developing psychoses from emerging. At the age of thirteen, the creature – the Anathema, the dailies called it – began escaping the control of its father, pulling its bonds free and walking the streets in search of ways to satisfy its cruel appetites.

In November of 2034, Dr. Andersham managed to persuade a magistrate to release the boy to him, pending trial. The trial was to determine the boy's guilt as well as Andersham's liability for creating the abomination. Neither the doctor nor his creation made it to trial; the night the Anathema returned home, Dr. Andersham and his creation were killed by a mob who stormed the doctor's house. In the wake of this string of tragedies, virtually all experimentation in the creation of human life was made illegal, and stiff penalties were imposed for the creation of derivative life forms based on human material.

## The Battle of Edinburgh

Since the Plague Years, settlements throughout the United Kingdom have suffered regular animate attacks originating outside their walls. Most attacks are not noteworthy, generally consisting of a small horde of animates mindlessly assaulting the walls of a city. These attacks seldom last long and are generally resolved without loss of human life. However, there is the rare report of a more organized attack originating in the Wasteland. During these attacks, larger numbers of animates converge on a single point in an attempt to overrun the settlement's defences.

For decades, the theory behind these attacks has been the manifestation of a zombie lord of exceptional strength, with the ability to muster a legion of animates for an attack. Beginning with a small horde, the zombie lord leads its animates from one lightly inhabited locale to another until it has obtained sufficient numbers for a full-scale assault. These attacks seldom meet with more success than the sporadic attacks made by small numbers of animates.

The attack on Edinburgh on 3 September 2036 was altogether different. Nearly ten thousand animates are believed to have assaulted the city in three waves. The first wave was easily annihilated, but subsequent attacks soon followed. The defenders had not had the time to properly rest and reload their weapons. Over eighteen thousand perished during the three weeks of fighting. Edinburgh was nearly lost entirely before the Deathwatch reinforcements began to retake the city. It would be more than five years before damage to the city had been completely restored.

Following the attack, scientists concluded the assault was made possible by a joint effort of no less than three zombie lords massing their forces in one place. The attack on Edinburgh was the first and most clear example of these abhorrent creatures working in conjunction. It was also among the most devastating animate attacks since the Plague Years.

## A History of Violence

Britain was shocked by the assassination of then Conservative Prime Minister Trevor Harris outside his West End home on 21 March 2037. Two years later, a group of three black-clad gunmen stormed the offices of Creighton-Malden Industries, an alchemical research facility, and killed twelve scientists, including founder Wallace Malden. It was later revealed that Creighton-Malden was testing unstable experimental anti-agapic agents on the destitute through a front of charitable organizations. A militant socialist group calling itself Red 23 took responsibility for both crimes in a letter sent to the Times following the Creighton-Malden mas-

sacre. Red 23 was only the first of many such cells that would strike at the heart of the Neo-Victorian establishment.

This new wave of terror was blamed on violent, fanatical anarchists devoted to the destruction of the government. In 2042, Special Branch uncovered an anarchist conspiracy to assassinate no less a personage than King George VI. The King was seldom without a heavy escort during the later years of his reign. Realizing that civil unrest was threatening to spiral out of control, Parliament threatened to intervene on the behalf of workers' rights in early 2043. Responding to the clear mandate, the industrialists greatly increased charitable donations, in effect creating a privately run welfare state. While the food riots came to an end, public dissatisfaction continued unabated...as did the assassinations.

On 5 November 2046, a pair of gunmen murdered Sir Robert Sutherland, a city financier, and his wife while the couple was on their way to the theatre. Five months later, an attempt on the life of Metropolitan Police Superintendent Grant Wallace resulted in the death of two gunmen and the capture of a third. After weeks of interrogation, official records indicate that the would-be assassin, one Gavin Chapman, took his own life while in custody but not before giving Special Branch enough information to launch a systematic series of raids on anarchist safe houses throughout the city. The operation was an immediate success, resulting in the capture or death of over thirty suspects. For a time, the streets were quiet.

Civil violence resumed after a fiery blast in South London killed over seven hundred people in 2055. Anarchists were quickly blamed for the Southwark Fire, which devastated a whole neighbourhood. In a series of reprisals, suspected anarchists and their families were arrested and ruthlessly interrogated. Those who resisted were met with extreme force. The situation worsened over the following weeks as violence spread to the streets. Within the year, an anarchist bombing campaign had begun targeting police stations throughout the metropolis.

Hostilities continued unabated until the death of King George VI on 20 January 2058 when the anarchists suspended their campaign of terror for a time. Queen Victoria III's ascension to the throne was allowed to take place during a period of relative quiet.

Although anarchist activity has dropped off sharply, the widespread dissatisfaction of the lower classes has continued. Further stirred by the worries of plague and the perceived indifference of the upper classes, dissatisfaction slowly worked its way toward disobedience. Generally these uprisings are quelled quickly by the Metropolitan Police or by the military; however, larger incidents of civil disobedience are not unknown. Long a hotbed of unrest, Lambeth was the site of a major food riot in December 2084; thousands took to the streets before the riot was finally put down through force of arms. The bridges were sealed off to keep the rioters from crossing into the West End. The crowd only dispersed after civic troops opened fire, killing two hundred and eighteen civilians. Lambeth has remained a powder keg ever since.

Anarchist elements were blamed for inciting the crowd in the investigation that followed. After months of brutal crackdowns, the supposed ringleaders were captured and put on trial in March 2086. Though the suspects convincingly protested their innocence, five were sentenced to life in prison and three others were given twenty-year sentences each. Within the year, two died of unknown causes and a third took his own life. Anarchists throughout the city were quick to make martyrs of the dead men, using their story to bring further attention to the cause. Soon after, an upsurge in organized violence began.

Anarchist cells throughout the city have declared a private war on the establishment. Small-scale bombings and shoot outs with the police occur with alarming frequency. As fast as detectives can identify and eliminate one cell, two more take its place. Despite the best efforts of the Special Branch of the Criminal Investigation Division, food riots and bombings remain an ongoing threat to the stability of peace in the metropolis.

## Galvanic Fire & the Defense of London

Great advances in galvanic technology have been made steadily since the Reclamation. The city's Tesla array provides a ready source of electrical energy to power a multitude of devices, from the street lamp to the radio, but it was not until 2051 that Viktor van Haller introduced the first significant advacnes in galvanic weaponyry. The galvanic syringe-rifle had existed since the Reclamation, created by scientists seeking ways of subduing the various horrors of the Wastes. The new weapons were far more powerful than those used during the Reclamation; most were operable by a single soldier, needing no onboard power plants but instead obtaining their charge from the ambient energy provided by

the city's Tesla array. Von Haller initiated the age of galvanic weapons technology with the creation of the ion rifle, a weapon capable of forcing a lightning bolt through the body of a target. Van Haller's ideas were later taken to a grand scale, producing the ion cannon and the ball lightning generator; the latter, a machine of fantastic destructive power, has been mounted along the walls of the city and used to great effect during animate assaults.

In November of 2063 a major plague outbreak occurred in the East End's Bethnal Green. In the worst plague epidemic since the reclamation of London, over twenty-two thousand citizens lost their lives as the streets filled with the animate dead. Though the Deathwatch managed to lock down the besieged areas in record time, the sheer number of animates kept order from being restored for nearly a week. Galvanic weapons lit the night with brilliant flashes of electrical fire as the soldiers struggled desperately to contain the threat. Four days later, the decision was made to use incendiaries to destroy the highest concentrations of animates. Whole neighbourhoods burned to the ground as the fires raged. Finally the Deathwatch stormed the streets en masse, destroying what animates remained.

The epidemic was blamed on an outbreak of cholera brought about by poor sanitation. Though reformers immediately began petitioning the city for improvements, little headway was made. Most aid efforts were directed toward repairing the fire damage caused by the incendiaries.

Another epidemic hit the East End in 2068, claiming fourteen hundred lives. This outbreak was blamed on animates that had escaped into the sewers of the Underground rather than poor sanitation, a more likely culprit. Though animates in the sewers seemed patently unlikely, the outbreak did result in heightened security measures as hundreds of access points to the sewers and Underground were sealed to prevent access. Infinitely adaptable, the ghoul populations dwelling below the metropolis easily found or created new methods to reach the world above.

Subsequent major outbreaks took place in the East End in the years 2075 and 2083, each claiming a few hundred lives. Smaller plague outbreaks continue to take place throughout the poorer districts of the city with frightening frequency, but the worst have always been centred in the East End. Scientists theorize that there may be some link between the unhealthy "miasmic" conditions of certain locales, which causes decreased vitality in the inhabitants, and the higher likelihood of reanimation. Leading spiritualists of the day, however, point to the centuries of death and misery in the East End as a cause; these metaphysical thinkers blame the energies of the place, fouled and tainted through countless miserable deaths, for the prevalence of reanimation.

In a terrifying reminder to the population of the metropolis that they had more to worry about than socio-political ideology, on 12 August 2097 a horde of fourteen thousand animates attacked the walls of London. Believed to be the largest attack of its kind, the assault was two-pronged. A group of six thousand animates hit South London from Surrey while a larger group hit East London from Essex. Heavy fire from galvanic weaponry reduced thousands of animates to ashes before they even made it to the walls. Those who made it far enough were mowed down by Vickers machine guns mounted on the walls. All told, only a few hundred animates managed to breach the city's defences, and those that did so were quickly sealed in locked-down neighbourhoods. Heralded as a success for the Deathwatch, the attack lasted two days and claimed less than two thousand lives.

## The Outside World

Immediately following the initial outbreak of the Plague, terror gripped the world, and global communications rapidly broke down in the ensuing chaos. Having survived the Plague Years, the Neo-Victorians have been reacquainting themselves with the world beyond their borders with the intention of eventually re-establishing their shattered empire. The first steps in this ambitious plan are to rebuild the Royal Navy and to open communications with a number of former colonies as well as to establish new ones. Though they have had some success, the rate of expansion has been painfully slow and not without opposition, but the Neo-Victorians remain cautiously optimistic.

During the Plague Years, the Empire lost all contact with its former colonies. To this day, vast portions of Africa and Europe remain little more than depopulated wastelands, haunted by the animate dead. China, having vowed to deal with internal threats without outside interference, has been sealed to outsiders since the outbreak of the Plague. Hong Kong is believed to have been completely overrun with legions of dead. Without a powerful British presence in India, the region fragmented into a number of smaller countries dominated by rival ethnic groups. Its densely populated cities were reportedly decimated by the Plague, and India remains a land of haunted plague cities.

England's greatest ally thus far has proven to be the Confederation of Iceland. Contact with Iceland, a sister island nation that survived the Plague and has prospered, has largely been beneficial. England's assistance of the Icelandic Confederation in the reclamation of the Scandinavian Peninsula has helped Iceland's influence

### The Tide of Immigration

*During the Plague Years, tens of thousands of desperate refugees fled the Continent for England, carrying with them heart-wrenching tales of woe and death. The flood of refugees from the Continent continued to pour into England during the 1920s and '30s. It is believed that by 1920, a full seventy percent of the world's population had been eradicated by the Plague or plague-borne factors. Britain gladly accepted all refugees who fled to her shores, except briefly between 1923 and 1927, when she shamefully closed her borders with the passage of the Salvation Act. For a time, it seemed that the growing numbers of refugees would outstrip England's ability to feed her citizens, and the Act was rushed through Parliament. Despite the notorious law, thousands of refugees made their way, under the cover of darkness, to the country during those years. Though untold numbers fell to zombies prowling the countryside, thousands more survived to document their trials. As the public read the tales of the miseries inflicted upon the thousands of refugees stranded in zombie-infested ports on the Continent, popular opinion soured, and the Act was eventually repealed.*

*The population of Neo-Victorian cities, especially London, is steadily reinforced by an unending tide of immigrants desperate to escape the poverty and chaos of the Continent. Most of these destitute travellers settle into the slums of the East End where their dreams of a fresh start are dashed on cold reality. Lacking either established friends or recommendations, an immigrant's prospects for gainful employment are few and far between.*

spread across the North Atlantic.

Continental Europe, however, has long posed a difficult series of problems for English leaders. During the Plague Years in England, the crush of refugees from the Continent brought news of hordes of animates vaster in scale than any the English had seen. Often dismissed as exaggerations by many, some tales, like those of the fall of Madrid, were so consistent that few could doubt them. It was only after the English had begun its own reclamation that they could begin to turn their eyes towards the Continent.

Europe has largely entered a new Dark Age. Only three major nations have avoided falling into this new darkness: England, Prussia, and France, and each has been able to do so for different reasons and in different manners.

With the exceptions of Prussia and France, most of continental Europe had devolved into a series of isolated city-states. The socio-political structure of the Continent has been in flux since the Plague; concerted reclamation efforts proved impracticable over much of the land-mass, and the threat of attack is constant. Apparently stable urban centres would seemingly vanish overnight as their once living populations spilled out across the landscape to perpetuate the nightmares they had once held at bay. Lost cities would be claimed by colonists from another nearby city only to fall again.

When the dead first began to rise, the German Empire was unified in the struggle to survive. Desertion and massive casualties tore the German armed forces apart, leaving the Empire defenceless. Without a unified and reliable defence, the German Empire disintegrated, leaving the Prussian Empire as the remaining major power in the region.

## The Prussian Empire

The Prussian Kaiser, Wilhelm II, was a brave but reckless leader who sought to take the battle to the animates and reach victory through force of arms. He lost his life in 1907 in the defence of Berlin, seeking to hold against the flow of the undead. On his death, his eldest son Wilhelm III took the crown.

Wilhelm III was a more thoughtful leader than his father. Under his reign, the process of urban fortification began, and the populace was moved into these fortified areas. Refusing to risk his people to foolish mistakes, the new Kaiser instituted martial law and strict hygiene protocols. Non-military personnel were not allowed to approach a suspected corpse, and no person showing signs of illness was left alone. Food and water were strictly monitored for food-borne illness and purity. Wilhelm's orders and leadership brought most of Prussia through the worst of the Plague and preserved enough of a population base to rebuild the empire. Given the risks of undead attack from the south and the east, Wilhelm realized that a solution must be found if his people were to thrive. Remembering the news reports of an airship being tested in 1900, he decided that the development of air power would be the only way to keep the kingdom together.

It was from the efforts of a Prussian noble, Graf Ferdinand von Zeppelin, that the Kaiser took his inspiration. The first Zeppelin, LZ1, had taken flight only six years before the outbreak of the Plague. Though construction had begun on the LZ2 by the time of the Plague, it was far from complete. The Kaiser made it a point to find Graf von Zeppelin and ask him to finish his airship project. Extensive state support, combined with the help of a host of engineers, made the LZ2 a qualified success by 1915.

Though the inflammable gas the airship required made it risky, the hazards were much less than the dangers of overland travel at the time. As the LZ line improved, the use of Zeppelins as platforms for the military bombardment of animate hordes became a practical reality. Prussia has been shaped by its dependence on air travel, becoming a series of walled cities and farms connected by only a few well-guarded roads to augment the floating backbone of the transportation infrastructure. Using airships has given the Prussians an advantage on the Continent that has been matched only by the galvanic technology of the Neo-Victorians. The recent English discovery that helium can be separated from natural gas has allowed the English to purchase older Zeppelin designs through trade of helium to the Prussians, and England has begun to establish itself as an air power in its own right.

The British and Prussians hotly contest the North Sea oil fields. The British have increased their naval presence in the North Sea over the last twenty years, and as most other known reservoirs of gas and oil lie in the Wastelands, the English petroleum monopoly has limited the Prussian's ability to field a greater power of helium airships.

Over the last century, Prussia has sought to expand through all of greater Germany with limited success. It has retaken some lands and even made headway into the old Polish territories, but large-scale reclamation of the

wilds of the Continent has proven difficult. Prussia has been able spread out into the Baltic by taking over the Danish peninsula of Jutland and many of the islands that dot the Baltic Sea, including Zealand and Funen. Integrating the islands once they are cleared of any resistance, living or undead, has provided Prussia with a relatively secure base to begin building a naval force to complement its airpower. Prussia seems poised to enter the Scandinavian Peninsula, but with the Icelandic Confederation already laying claim to it, she does not yet have the naval power to control this arena. Though the Prussian empire is England's largest trading partner, its ability to avoid potential conflicts with the British is unknown. England and Prussia were at the brink of war following several Prussian defeats at the hands of the British Navy in 2093. The matter was eventually settled through diplomacy, but relations remain tense. The largest concern of the Empire, however, are the curious rumours coming from their western border with France.

### France

France is the greatest mystery of all Europe. English survival has been a combination of fortunate geography and dauntless determination. Prussia has survived due to a strident militaristic discipline coupled with a dedication to expanding its technological and scientific base. France, however, has long been an anomaly that few other Europeans understand or trust. Whereas the English and the Prussians are locked in a race of technological and imperialistic advancement, the French seem to have surrendered much of their technology and turned back into a Baroque nation. They are ruled by a mysterious Council of Six led by a pharaonic figure known as the Golden King, le Roi d'Or, who seems to have ruled since first taking the throne following the Reclamation of Paris in 1929. With his rise to power, a strange mysticism has swept France, making its dealings with the outside world increasingly both reluctant and strange.

France has had little real engagement with the other nations of Europe for most of the last two centuries. Despite this historical precedent, the mood of the French seems to be shifting. French envoys have of late been seen in several Spanish city-states and even in a British holding in Northern Spain. There have been reports of military build-ups along their borders and increased shipbuilding over the last two decades, but there have been no outward signs of aggression, and nothing has happened yet to stir the greater imperial governments to act. The Prussian leadership has long been eager to seek an alliance with the English to check France and ensure that it does not expand its influence. The Prussians seem afraid of France, but their reasons for this have never been publicly shared.

Despite increasing contact in recent years, France remains a land of mystery and myth. The nation sends no ambassadors and accepts none; spies from other nations who attempt to penetrate the French courts disappear without a trace. The occasional refugee from France brings word of strange happenings and stranger creatures openly walking the land. Some rumours even speak of a horrible compact between the King and demonic powers. Others speak of an anticipated return to French primacy in Europe. Still, France makes no overt moves of aggression toward the other powers, and so the world waits.

### Europe's Minor Nations

English concerns about imperialist competition from France or Prussia are concerns about a world of transnational politics that is remote even for most Englishmen. The minor nations of Europe have other, more practical problems. Switzerland has been able to maintain its democratic government; the coming of the Plague was dealt with by abandoning its lowland territories and securing the passes into the mountains. Switzerland has developed trading relationships with both Prussia and France and is reported to have one of the best intelligence networks in Europe. Though it claims to be stridently neutral, Switzerland fears that any strife between Prussia and France or a Crusade from the newly formed Papal States to the south may drag it into affairs with which it is not prepared to deal.

The Papal States are a series of Italian city-states that formed a strong confederation under the leadership of the Vatican in 2077. After the loss of Rome during the Plague, the Church moved the Papacy to Venice and began to work towards the restoration of the Pope to his rightful offices in Rome. The Church lost much of its power during the early Plague Years. Priests were powerless in the face of the risen dead, and many of the faithful died alongside Protestant and heretic throughout the Christian world. Many came to believe that the Church was no longer part of God's will, if it ever truly had been. Over the last fifty years, however, the Church has managed to gain ground by becoming more militant and by accusing the past Pontiffs of corruption and apostasy. They have claimed that only a total dedication to the will of God will bring about an end to the Plague. Stories from traders have begun to circulate that the Papal States

are preparing to save all of Italy, with darker rumours that their goal is to bring Salvation to the entire world. This Salvation, it is said, will be done at the point of the sword and down the barrel of a gun. Though many Catholics in England deny this, the increasing isolationism and militancy of the Church has spread fear and mistrust between Catholics and non-Catholics throughout civilized Europe. The ultimate goals of the Papal States are unknown.

Covering much of the eastern Mediterranean, the Greco-Turkish Republic is a plutocratic nation consisting of much of the traditional Greek lands and segments of western Anatolia. The population base is largely from the islands of the Aegean and the Sea of Crete. From these bases, the Greeks have turned themselves into a naval power once again. Though not the equal of any of the Big Three, the Greco-Turks have established trading routes throughout the Mediterranean. They have only recently begun to feel the effects of the new competition with the Crimeans. The long standing tension between the Republic's Orthodox and Muslim populations has also begun to cause problems. After more than a century of relatively stable prosperity, pressures from population growth have started to result in a slow-down of the Greco-Turkish economy. As the population has begun to feel the pinch, they have started looking for scapegoats. With the Crimea being a largely unknown quantity in the minds of the Republic's populace, they have reached back to older and more established enmities.

During the early years of the Plague, the people of the Crimean Peninsula recognized that they had to cut themselves off from the rest of Asia. To this end, they built a wall across the Isthmus of Perekop, a narrow neck of land no more than four miles across at its widest. The first simple fortifications grew over time into a forty-foot-high, stone wall that has kept the hordes of the undead and the creatures from Asia's wastelands at bay. Famous as the Perekop Wall has become in the tales of sailors, even more outlandish tales are told of the Crimean peoples. They are seen in every port throughout Europe but are usually cloaked and hooded. The Crimeans rival only the Greeks in trade throughout the Mediterranean, yet few people could tell you what they look like. Dealing in goods reputed to be from the Far East, their ships carry highly valued spices, silks, and leisure goods, the true origins of which are carefully shrouded in mystery.

The rest of Europe lies under a veil of disorder and death. In London taverns, Greek traders tell stories of Slavic pagans who raid and destroy Christian and Muslim settlements as well as tales of Egyptian miracle workers and Levantine prophets. Rumours persist of desert mystics from North Africa who speak of terrors from both the sands and the southern jungles.

## Africa

The few reports that have come out of Africa in past decades describe a continent devastated by famine, epidemic, and the predation of animates. The former colonies have all fallen to death, madness, and chaos. Nothing remains of the regiments left behind to keep order during the Plague Years.

The centre of Africa has vanished into obscurity. Few brave Neo-Victorian explorers who have attempted to plumb the depths of the dark continent have ever returned. Those that have are virtually all raving lunatics, driven beyond sanity by the blasphemies of the jungle. Some mutter indistinctly of empires made up of men and zombies and controlled by inhuman witch doctors who demand living sacrifices to unwholesome gods. Though these tales are chilling, they remain entirely unconfirmed.

## The Americas

The Americas have fallen on hard times. When the Plague broke out, many cities became little more than overcrowded death traps. The United States and Mexico suffered exceptionally heavy loses. As in continental Europe, the cities were largely abandoned as they were overrun by the animate dead. Whole cities across the country remain unreclaimed, the surviving population having simply moved to safer ground. Though major population centres such as New York, Chicago, and Mexico City were later reclaimed, their populations have never returned to pre-plague levels. Of the major US cities, only Washington, DC was able to escape the destruction that befell most eastern cities. With a small civilian population and large military presence, it was a simple matter to secure the capitol. It remains one of the safest cities in the world.

The destabilization brought about by the Plague reversed the trend that had underscored US politics since the end of the Civil War, returning power to the states of the Union. The industrial centres of the North were slowly retaken around the same time as the Reclamation of London, returning military and manufacturing power to the nation. The American Reclamation, like the British conflict, ultimately proceeded through serial fortification of the cities, powered by radiant-energy technology.

The major population centres of the US resemble those in Europe, massively fortified urban behemoths crowded with humanity under lightning-studded skies.

The eastern coast of the United States has reestablished itself as a world power. Many of the major cities have been at least partially reclaimed, New York and Washington, DC being the largest centres of population in the present day. New York in particular has achieved prominence as a centre for industry and technological innovation. The Serbian Nikola Tesla, inventor of radio and radiant energy technology, came to the head of the technological vanguard in the early days of the American Reclamation. The communication of these advancements between Britain and the New World allowed parallel development of energy systems on both sides of the Atlantic and helped to establish relations between these nations in the post-plague world. Tesla's efforts in the Reclamation of New York were invaluable in reestablishing human control of that city, and his continuing innovations in aetheric energy provided the foundations for New York's current status as a centre of technological advancement.

The greatest asset of the beleaguered nation is its vast network of rails, enabling transportation between the cities; without this network, the vast stretches of Wasteland that sprawl between the cities would have rendered the States ungovernable by a central body. The rail network allows ready commerce among the manufacturing centres of the North, the significant arable lands remaining in the South, and the increasingly monster-sieged oil fields on the borders of the Wastelands in Texas.

The lands beyond the Mississippi and north of Texas are believed to have fallen entirely to the Wastes. No force sent to make reclamation of the western territories has ever returned. The Mississippi and the Red River are considered to mark the bounds of a no man's land populated by savages, animates, and worse. Recently military forts have been established along the border of the Wastelands in hopes of eventually reclaiming the territory. Little ground has been gained.

Canada faired much better than its neighbour to the south. Canada's success was directly tied to its small population. A much smaller animate population made it far easier to reclaim cities and secure their inhabitants. While spontaneous animation remains a constant concern, the blight is a more dire threat to the nation. To make matters worse, the railways that are so vital to the nation's infrastructure are aging rapidly and sorely in need of replacement. Canada officially declared its independence from the United Kingdom in 1938 after decades of isolation but remains a close ally of the UK.

Since the outbreak of the Plague, the outside world has had little contact with South America. Very little is known of the condition of the world south of central Mexico. The Caribbean islands are likewise shrouded in mystery, though some tentative reports of contact with the Haitian and Dominican peoples have begun to manifest in the port cities of the American South.

## The Seeds of Empire

During a time when other nations were torn apart by the epidemics gripping the world, Britain rose united from the Reclamation. The industries required to rebuild fuelled an era of unparalleled growth. Millions in the refugee camps throughout the country flocked to the cities for employment, food, and relative safety. It was to be a renaissance of sorts, albeit one marked with unspeakable horror and smog-shrouded skies.

This is the Neo-Victorian world within the walls of London. It is a city in which the ashes of the dead rain down night and day from a hundred crematoria. In the skyline, magnificent Tesla towers rise, throwing energy into the air to power the massive city below, while beneath the streets, a network of tanks bubbles with the food of the metropolis. This is a city where life is cheap and the blood of the poor drives the machines of industry.

Despite the horrors of the Neo-Victorian world, British power is increasing. More and more reclamation teams and explorers venture abroad every year, searching for new territories and new resources. Every year there are more mines, more engines, and more tracks into unexplored regions. The world is slowly rebuilding from the ashes of the Plague Years. In some places, the Plague has never ended. But beyond the slums that house the poor, the luminaries of the Neo-Victorians dream of a renewed empire. They know that their culture must wash over the earth, sharing with all men their hard-won prosperity and excellent English industry. The Neo-Victorians take heart in recalling the days of splendour when the sun never set on the British Empire and seek to re-establish themselves as the force of order throughout the world.

# Life in the Metropolis

*"When a man is tired of London he is tired of life, for there is in London all that life can afford."*
*-Samuel Johnson, 1777*

London is eternal. The metropolis is a living, breathing city, constantly growing and reinventing itself under the strains of tradition and pragmatism. With a population of nearly nine million souls within the breadth of its fortifications, the city itself is divided into twenty-eight boroughs which constitute greater London and its outlying suburbs. London, the centre of the Neo-Victorian world, is the greatest city on Earth. In its two thousand year history, it has survived countless calamities, including fire, pestilence, and civil unrest.

London's boroughs are a honeycombed maze of interlocking, fifty-foot-high concrete walls, which are designed to contain the animate threat. These walls radiate outward from the city for miles, protecting not only the city proper but also nearby farms and settlements outside London. Massive gates set into these walls remain open, except when contaminated districts must be quarantined and purged by the Deathwatch during outbreaks of the Plague.

The walls have become familiar landmarks, but even within these confines, London remains ever-changing. As old buildings are torn down, new ones rise in their place. Streets are widened or change direction. Rookeries are demolished as new ones spring up. Parks are established or paved over. The walls have merely constrained the outward growth of the city, forcing developers to build skyward or beneath the streets. Most new construction takes place in South London, where towering citadels reach into the sky. From here, the industrialists build their new world while across the Thames the old money estates lend austerity to the West End.

Beneath the surface of the streets are miles of tunnels and sub-basements housing thousands more citizens, known and unknown. The denizens of this subterranean underworld live like the tribes of old, fighting for both territory and scraps of food. The only law in these dark recesses is the Talion Law of the ghouls who claim the largest fiefdoms.

Over three hundred languages are spoken within the confines of the metropolis, making the capital the most linguistically diverse city in the world. Possessing unrivalled wealth, the metropolis is home to the vast financial resources of the City and the splendour of the West End. However, it is also a place of desperation and suffering. The legions of poor live out miserable, truncated lives in violent streets, soothed and numbed by the cheap narcotics sold by the pill-men of the slums. Most of those individuals flocking to the city take up residence in London's notorious slums. Here millions of people dwell on the verge of starvation.

Despite relative security and prosperity, the very air of the city carries a palpable sense of dread. Unquestionably, a great number of threats loom in the shadows of the metropolis. Though the Neo-Victorians have developed a number of reliable methods for dealing with the threat posed by the animate dead, occasionally these safeguards are pushed beyond their breaking points. Major outbreaks of the Plague are rare, but small-scale zombie attacks claim hundreds of lives yearly.

In addition to these extraordinary threats, a number of mundane ailments jeopardize public safety. Environmental hazards, widespread pollution, and a contaminated water supply have many health officials concerned. It was not so long ago that typhus and cholera swept through the East End, killing vast numbers of inhabitants. Despite the dire premonitions of a few outspoken health commissioners, there has been little attempt to improve living conditions, especially in the slums where the risk is greatest.

The devastating effects of abject poverty and dense overcrowding have caused an epidemic of mass killings. It is widely believed that environmental conditions, further sparked by media reports in the dailies, have resulted in the creation of a new class of human monster. These killers prey upon their fellow men for sport and directly complete with rogue ghouls and feral vampires for prime hunting grounds. Perhaps even more inconceivable is that these dark predilections do not seem to be the exclusive province of the slum dwellers of the East End.

The widening rift between the rich and the poor seems to grow daily. Malnutrition is so widespread in some neighbourhoods as to be universal. Starvation, especially among the very old and very young, has grown intolerably commonplace. Charitable institutions, once the salvation of the desperate, have been forced to turn away tens of thousands daily due to lack of funds. Scarcely a month goes by that a small-scale food riot does not break out in one of the poorer boroughs.

# The West End

The West End has been the refuge and playground of the aristocracy since it was first built up between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries as a collection of town homes and upscale shops. Upwind of the smoke drifting from the factories and habitations of the densely crowded East End, it is the natural home for Whitehall, the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, and the British Museum.

At the beginning of the Reclamation, walls were built to further isolate the quarter and its inhabitants. The checkpoints leading in and out of the boroughs of the West End are the most secure in the whole of the metropolis. These gates have been built with the intention of keeping out both the surplus population and the animate hordes. While the rest of the population chokes on poison air and lives out their lives in constant fear, the aristocracy hides in private estates behind an array of fortifications, entirely secluded from both the horrors of the Plague and the common man. Seldom do the inhabitants of these gilded fortresses venture outside the confines of their own boroughs, preferring to leave their business pursuits in the hands of networks of capable agents and couriers. Instead they remain sequestered in their posh neighbourhoods, which are heavily patrolled by the very best private security and police forces available. The lavish manors of the West End are maintained by armies of servants that pour into the quarter from across the metropolis. A number of gated communities in the West End are accessible only by residents, their servants, and the residents' invited guests.

# The East End

The majority of London's poor dwell in the vast slums of the East End. Stretching from Bethnal Green and Whitechapel to East Ham, Walthemstow, and the eastern parts of Essex, the very names of the boroughs comprising this quarter of the metropolis have become synonymous with hardship and desperate poverty. Here, nearly four million souls lead abjectly miserable lives in filthy, ill-constructed layers of courts and alleys piled one over the other.

The East End is home to a large portion of London's industry. Among the most impressive structures in the East End is the vast Grand Terminus, a massive rail hub and central shipping depot. Though factories were once decentralized throughout London, the East End has become the primary industrial sector since the Reclamation. During the Reclamation, it was convenient for the new manufacturing centers to be built near the transportation hub; additionally, large sections

of the East End burned to the ground during the Plague Years and subsequent attempts at animate pacification, providing ample ground on which to build new factories.

Most East End habitations lack the basic necessities taken for granted elsewhere in the city. Most who live in the shadows of the towering smokestacks lack even basic sanitation. Water supplies are poor; there are few paved streets and no decent food. Densely overcrowded, most slum dwellers must live six to eight in a room. As a result of these dreadful conditions, the destitute spend as much time outside their small, dank dwellings as possible. Congregation at local public houses or vagrancy in the streets are preferable to one's own lodging.

Though the factories provide much needed jobs to the destitute of the quarter, they render the East End among the most dangerously polluted sections of the metropolis. Long the source of cholera and worse, the putrefaction of the Thames is at its worst level since the height of the Victorian Era. Poor sanitation, general ill-health, epidemics, and caustic environmental factors ensure a high rate of mortality. Worse yet, fuelled by centuries of misery and death, the rate of spontaneous animation is far higher in the East End than anywhere else in the metropolis.

Drawn by the lowest rental rates in the city, the destitute are virtually exiled to this forsaken quarter of the metropolis. Ironically, the factors that make these boroughs so undesirable also lead to overcrowding, and overcrowding leads to epidemics. With the cheapest rent in the metropolis, the East End, and especially Spitalfields, has been flooded with waves of immigrants too poor to settle elsewhere in the city. Notorious for its few, but much discussed, opium dens, Limehouse is London's nefarious Chinatown. Racial tensions remain high as newcomers must continually compete with more established inhabitants for jobs and shelter.

Crime has reached epidemic proportions throughout the slums. Living in squalor with little hope of bettering their prospects, many of the poor seek their fortunes as petty criminals or worse. The cramped conditions affect some inhabitants in tragic and terrifying ways, reshaping them into psychotic killers. The pages of the dailies are filled with reports of heinous murders committed in the East End. Though the Metropolitan Police maintain a presence in the quarter, they are terrifically understaffed to handle the sheer volume of crime that flourishes in the East End.

## The City

The City is the historic Square Mile at the geographic heart of Greater London. The financial centre of the Neo-Victorian Empire, the borough is dominated by the industrialists, their powerful corporations, and the great banks of London. It is said to be a city of clerks, and nearly three hundred thousand flood the gates into the City daily in a race to reach their desks before the clock strikes nine. It is not possible to count these black-coated crowds with accuracy. By day, the streets of the City are a frenzy of activity, but its streets are vacant after dark. Only about ten thousand souls actually dwell within the confines of the Square Mile.

The City is proud of its history of self-reliance. During the Plague Years, the largest concentration of survivors living within the metropolis dwelled within the Square Mile, and by the start of the Reclamation, the City had already reinforced its walls and operated autonomously of outside organizations with a population of over six thousand people. Throughout the Reclamation, the City was a major staging ground for military operations into other areas of London. Now, at the request of the City of London Corporation, the Deathwatch maintains only a very small garrison within the Square Mile, just enough to operate the wall defenses. In the event of plague outbreak, the City of London Police are charged with quarantining the Square Mile and destroying animates, just another right afforded to the powerful and independent City.

The Corporation of London, based on a model of governance dating back to 1111, is the municipal governing body of the City of London. The Corporation regards itself as "the oldest local authority in England." Its status as the first independent local authority came about through the City's role as the centre of finance and trade in England; it was seen as so important to the national interest that it was given considerable autonomy by the monarchy. It exercises control only over the City and not over Greater London. The Corporation includes the Lord Mayor, the Court of Aldermen, and the Court of Common Council. The City is heavily patrolled by its own police force, the City of London Police, day and night. The City Police are an institution separate from the Metropolitan Police and answer to the authority of the Lord Mayor and the Corporation of London.

## North London

North London is a haven for the metropolis' middle class and includes the suburbs of Hampstead and Highgate, which retain a village atmosphere. North London has more hills than the south, and many of them give excellent views across the city. Large parks include Hampstead Heath and Alexandra Park; Hampstead Heath includes Parliament Hill, notable for its fine views over the city, and the Hampstead bathing ponds, and Alexandra Park is the site of Alexandra Palace. Many areas have significant minority populations: Stamford Hill is home

**The Rookeries**

*Rising like islands of squalor, rookeries are rundown hives of rampant criminality where no law holds sway. Any network of neglected architecture may become a rookery; the colonization by derelicts and criminal elements is the only necessary step, provided that the locale goes undisturbed by police for long enough to allow a firm presence to be established. Not to be confused with the slums of the East End, rookeries exist alongside the middle-class, suburban landscape of North and South London. Despite the best attempts of Neo-Victorian planners to create a city free of such deplorable habitations, rookeries naturally coalesce over years of neglect.*

*Rookeries are so dangerous that even the police seldom venture inside their confines, and when they do, it is either anonymously or in great numbers. Labyrinthine collections of alleys, bridges, buildings, and crawl spaces make it virtually impossible to locate, let alone pursue, anyone familiar with a rookery. The police rarely attempt to raid the rookeries, and when they do, all hell breaks loose. The inhabitants are as likely to flee in every direction as to riot and attack the police.*

*Once found throughout the city, many rookeries were levelled and paved over as new roads during the mid-Victorian era. Those few that remained in the West End were demolished during the Reclamation. Those rookeries that remain today are decaying structures that should have been torn down years ago. The London County Council has debated a return to the systematic destruction of rookeries for years. Only the cost of such an operation has stayed the hand of progress.*

to a significant community of Orthodox Jews, and the Green Lanes area of Harringay has large Turkish and Greek communities. Islington is one of the more affluent areas in North London.

# South London

Though South London exists within the city's great fortifications, it has been traditionally thought of as a suburb of London proper. The "Surrey Side," as South London is known, occupies all areas of the metropolis south of the Thames, including the boroughs of Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Greenwich, Kingston, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Southwark, Sutton, and Wandsworth. Separated from the rest of the city by the river, South Londoners have long felt removed from the people of the North. This sense of isolation was further compounded when the bridges across the Thames were purposefully destroyed to cut off South London, and its teaming masses of animates, from the rest of the city. Though few survived those dark days, the descendants of those who did have held a grudge ever since.

Since the end of the Reclamation, South London has become the playground of the industrialists. Underdeveloped and sparsely populated, the industrial barons were originally drawn to South London by the low cost of property. Here they built great manors and towering citadels south of the poor districts. These are structures that rival the greatest manors of the West End. Architecture is less tightly governed in South London; where the industrialists are allowed to create the world of their dreams.

Beneath their great edifices dwell the destitute of London's "Surrey Side." A world removed from the wealth that surrounds it, the multitudes of Surrey live in the largest slums outside the East End.

# The Thames

Before London, there was the Thames, the Silent Highway. It was upon this great waterway that the Romans built the first outpost that would grow into the metropolis. The Thames, the divide between northern and southern England, is the major entry from the sea that made London the world's greatest port.

Since the Reclamation, more and more factories and mills have been built along the East End waterfront. Traditionally industry was centered in the Lea Valley on the other side of the Thames, but between the construction of the protective walls around the metropolis and an inexpensive work force, more and more industrialists are focusing their efforts on the East End.

Across the river on the Surrey Side are Rotherhithe, home of the extensive Surrey Commercial Docks, and much of the rest of South London's dock works. The area is home to dockworkers, sailors, watermen, and others who make their living from the river.

# Subterranean London

The metropolis of London has been occupied for centuries. Over this time, it has acquired a vast number of subterranean landmarks. The Underground not only refers to the complex network of transit tunnels beneath the city's surface but also to the no man's land of forgotten tunnels, the cellars of the ancient city, abandoned train tunnels dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, closed stretches of the Tube, lost sewer lines, and over a half-dozen rivers. The subterranean rivers of London are the tributaries of the River Thames and River Lea that were built over during the growth of the metropolis. Since it is difficult to stop water from flowing downhill, the rivers now flow through underground culverts. Many have been converted into sewers.

Huge portions of the Underground were sealed during the Reclamation and never officially reopened. Other portions of this lightless realm were lost to human memory long before the Plague Years. The uncharted regions of the Underground constitute a vast labyrinth, rife with danger. No one knows the true size of this patchwork of tunnels and chambers. The Underground is virtually impossible to map: like the world above, the Underground is constantly growing and changing as tunnels collapse or are sealed off and later rediscovered.

The denizens of the Underground are a crafty lot, always looking for undiscovered treasures and hidden expanses. Occasionally their excavations result in releasing masses of walled-up animates that rampage from the Underground into the streets of the metropolis. Things still worse than the living dead are to be found in the labyrinths beneath the city; the legends of the poor districts are filled with monsters that come from the darkness. Many Undertakers have made their entire careers hunting the monstrosities that dwell in the tunnels.

Most of the inhabitants of the Underground are content to stake out their territory and remain in groups for protection. This dank network of tunnels is the last refuge for countless criminals, outcasts, and worse. Many who call the tunnels home are permanent residents who have forsaken the light of day. For their own reasons, they prefer the uncertain sanctuary of the rat-infested world below. Rent, after all, is cheap, and the air is no worse than that above.

The depths of the Underground are home to entire tribes of ghouls who fight endless wars for turf and available resources. Men seldom venture into the areas claimed as ghoul warrens. The ghoul tribes' own laws prohibit them from hunting the men that dwell beneath the city so long as these men remain within their own territories, but trespassers into the territories of a tribe are considered property of the tribe. Few who venture into the ghoul warrens are seen again.

Some renegade tribes prey on men despite the laws, launching infrequent but dangerous raids on human territories within the Underground or, more rarely, the world above. When word of these raids reach the ears of the more law-abiding tribes, the full weight of Talion Law comes down on the offenders in blood-soaked purges followed by months of quiet in the Underground.

Vampires have likewise found the accommodations available in the Underground to their tastes. The natural strength of these creatures allows them to make lairs in places other creatures could never reach. Not only does the enfeebling sun never touch these abysses, but the subterranean human population provides ample feeding, at least for a small number of vampires. When their population grows too dense, the vampires of the Underground turn on each other in brutal battles for supremacy. Their primal nature guarantees that the most fit among their kind are always left with food.

The tunnels are also home to the odd thrope or escaped Anathema as well as legions of restless spirits. In addition to these known inhabitants, the dwellers of the Underground speak of other, more terrifying creatures in the tunnels. The ghouls believe in formless horrors that devour all light and

### The Fortified Bridges

*During the blackest period of the Plague Years, the survivors remaining in London demolished the bridges that spanned the river, cutting off the rest of the city from the tens of thousands of animates making their way into the city from South London. Though the situation in the East End was little better, the decision to destroy the bridges no doubt saved countless lives while dooming thousands more to isolation away from the relative safety of less populated and more easily defended areas of the city. Even with the newly restored bridges, the Thames still represents a natural boundary that may be used to isolate outbreaks of the Plague. Today's bridges are equipped with easily sealed gates manned by crack Deathwatch personnel.*

of a host of animates led by a single sentient abomination. Though the truth of these tales remains in doubt, it is certain that the Underground is not a place for the faint of heart.

## The London Peculiars

*"It was a foggy day in London, and the fog was heavy and dark. Animate London, with smarting eyes and irritated lungs, was blinking, wheezing, and choking; inanimate London was a sooty spectre, divided in purpose between being visible and invisible, and so being wholly neither."*

*--Charles Dickens, Our Mutual Friend, 1865*

London has been notorious for its fogs since Roman times, but the peculiar mists of Neo-Victorian London are particularly terrible. The city is eternally shrouded in a thick, acrid miasma of smoke-laced fog fed by London's innumerable factories and crematoria. Some days the city is awash in corrosive rains, and at other times it is blanketed in reeking, black snowfall. Those who walk the streets of the metropolis are soon covered in a thin layer of grime and ash that grows thicker the longer one remains exposed to the unnatural elements. This noxious fumifugium poses a grave health concern, not only in terms of debilitating respiratory diseases which shorten the lives of untold millions but also due to reductions in visibility, which conceal the predations of all manner of Neo-Victorian horrors.

The smogs inflame breathing passages and strangle the lungs' working capacity, causing shortness of breath, pain when inhaling, wheezing, and coughing. The eyes, nose, and throat quickly dry out and are caked with a thick, black sludge that greatly interferes with the body's ability to fight infection, increasing susceptibility to illness. Even on the best days, when the smogs only manifest as a haze obscuring the horizon, few inhabitants of the city would dare venture from their homes without adequate protection. Those who can afford them wear respirators or gas masks. The destitute, who bear the brunt of fog-borne complaints, rely on little more than a wet rag tied over the nose and mouth.

Rarely during the spring and early summer, there is a smogless day when pale sunlight falls upon the metropolis. On these days, the city heats up to intolerable levels and the streets are flooded with traffic. Making one's way through the crush of humanity is virtually impossible, and riots are common as the city's inhabitants feel a desperate need to breathe clean air.

The smogs are at their worst during the winter months, when the accumulation of pollution from coal fires causes the mists to turn sickly yellow and to reek of sulphur. Over the endless winter days, the smog worsens as the mists grow darker and temperatures continue to drop. The situation further degrades as the inhabitants of the metropolis burn greater amounts of coal to fight the cold until day is effectively reduced to night. These are the Lost Days, when the city is plunged into darkness, and traffic grinds to a halt in the streets. As the fog moves throughout the city, it penetrates homes, offices, and public buildings, smothering any living souls it can reach. The old, very young, and infirm are particularly susceptible to its murderous grasp. Since the Reclamation, these fogs have claimed tens of thousands of lives directly and indirectly.

Lost Days can drag on for a week or more at a stretch, paralysing the city and keeping plaguemen from their rounds. Delays in corpse retrievals often result in disastrous plague outbreaks, keeping the Deathwatch, Metropolitan Police, and local Undertakers busy for days afterward. All too often, an eerie silence settles over whole neighbourhoods in the days immediately following a break in the fogs, a sure sign that something has gone very wrong. It is said that the only thing worse than a clear day is a Lost Day.

Virtually all modern Neo-Victorian buildings are constructed with the smogs in mind. The seals on windows and doors are engineered to be virtually airtight. Few windows open, and those that do are set with mesh-screened shutters to keep out as much particulate matter as possible. Finer homes are built with airlock doors that open and close one at a time to protect the air quality in the rest of the structure. Fresh air enters modern homes and offices through integrated fans that blow through impressive filtration arrays meant to screen out all impurities.

The lower classes must content themselves with home remedies such as damp rags set around doors and windows to form a seal against the ash-laden smog. In the poorest habitations and public houses, dwellers wear kerchiefs over their faces even behind closed doors.

Much business on the street is conducted behind tents of fine gossamer mesh. These meshes are replaced daily in the West End but are left exposed to the elements for weeks or months on end in the slums. In no time they turn from pure white to a sickly grey as yellowing ash and soot collect and often cause the fragile structure to cave in under its growing weight.

A foul effluvium rising from the Thames adds to the ever-present air of corruption. Factories have become grotesque tributaries, pumping industrial waste directly into the unspeakably tainted waters. Matters are made worse by the unreclaimable outputs of the scop tanks. The closer one gets to the river, the more overpowering the stink becomes until all of one's senses are filled with palpable wretchedness.

## Neo-Victorian Society

The Neo-Victorians possess an eclectic collection of virtues. On one hand, they are austere pragmatists who have survived illimitable horror, and on the other, they revel in the customs and pageantry of their forbearers. It may seem odd, even contradictory to the uninitiated, that a people so accustomed to living beside maddening tragedy should cling so tightly to the morals and traditions of centuries past. Throughout the crucible of the Plague Years, the survivors clung to the memory of a brilliant era when the sun never set, a time when empires spanned continents and London was the greatest city in the world. By the Reclamation, the architects of the new world had already planted the seeds of Neo-Victorian society.

The similarities between the Neo-Victorians and their forebears are powerfully illustrated by their shared economic policies. The Victorians strongly opposed any government intervention into the affairs of commerce, preferring to let the market sort itself out. This laissez-faire approach to governance remains popular to the present day. This has led to the continued destruction of the few available resources remaining as well as a continuous degradation in the living standards of the poor. Some industrialists would go so far as to suggest that child labour laws, maximum working hours, and factory health codes constitute a violation of their rights. In order to foster reconstruction efforts, the Neo-Victorian government, backed by the monarchy, even awarded monopolies to a number of these early corporations founded by fledgling oligarchs after the Reclamation. Their power left unchecked, these corporations grew to immense size, as they fulfilled their mandate to rebuild the blasted world.

During this period, men of industry earned immense sums of money opening factories and aiding the government in the reconstruction of cities. Within a generation, millions of penniless civilians moved from overcrowded refugee camps into vast and empty cities where they earned wages for the first time in their lives and established a new economy overnight. No sooner had the cities been clear of animates then entrepreneurs and capitalists began seeing to the needs and disposable incomes of these early Neo-Victorians.

Though economic growth ensured the vitality of the nation, the gentry watched the growing influence of the industrialists with jealous trepidation. Privileged beyond comprehension, the aristocracy have traditionally guided the governance of the nation. They immediately saw the new money of the industrialists as a threat to the social order. Before the Plague, the aristocracy controlled eighty percent of the land in England and maintained a stranglehold over Parliament. By the end of the Reclamation, many of these ancient bloodlines were no more; grand manors were reduced to ruin, estates to wastelands and open graves.

Of course, the new wealth did not entirely pass by the aristocracy. Many of the old families possessed a natural affinity for self-preservation through the accumulation of wealth. Those aristocrats who understood the zeitgeist of the era funnelled their remaining resources into the new industries opening up around them. Those without liquid assets borrowed against their families' good names. Noblemen with the wealth and inclination to invest quickly passed by their landed yet penniless peers and joined the ranks of the industrialists. However, even those without comparable means maintained substantial political clout, and Parliament remains in the hands of the aristocracy. Rather than fight a protracted and fruitless war for supremacy, the industrialists have simply learned to buy the

votes they require. From the tranquillity and safety of their towering fortifications, aristocrats and oligarchs look down upon those who live in their shadows.

Social class remains a primary concern to the Neo-Victorians. The members of each class are taught from an early age to know their place in the world. With the exception of the relatively brief period during the struggle for reclamation when all men lived as equals, social mobility has remained extremely limited. A man or woman born into a good family can expect a life of leisure, relying on a combination of old money, new money, and a good reputation. The surplus population are born to lives of toil and misery. The greatest disparity between the classes is most clearly illustrated by the differences in their lifespans. The upper classes, sustained unnaturally through the use of anti-agapic drugs, the finest medical care available, and limited exposure to the smogs, appreciate their lifespans into the centuries while the poor succumb en masse to the ravages of cancer and consumption brought about by miserable living conditions. The average lifetime of the working class is forty years.

## The Aristocracy

The aristocracy as a whole is utterly obsessed with maintaining both its power and the purity of its blood. The aristocracy treasures nothing so highly as tradition and age; after all, these concepts are the very essence of the heritage that sets them apart from the common man. That which is new could not have been inherited and is thus, in the eyes of the aristocracy, cheaply gained.

With the destruction of so many ancient lines during the Plague Years, a great number of peerages have become extinct. Marriages are commonly arranged to insure the continuation of aristocratic bloodlines. It is whispered in some circles that the perpetual shrinking of the breeding pool is taking its toll on the aristocracy. In years past, congenital madness and haemophilia were fairly common, but more recently, these relatively minor defects have blossomed into truly horrific mutations. These monstrous children seldom see the light of day, as the aristocratic families will go to virtually any length to protect their secrets.

A life of idle pleasure does not mean the aristocracy is without responsibility. Indeed, few escape the traditions of noblesse oblige. Because the aristocracy is elevated above the ordinary citizens, the members of the class are expected to act in a fashion becoming their station at all times. An aristocrat is expected to marry how and when the family decides; divorce is considered to be in poor taste, and there must, of course, be children to carry on the family name. Those who

### The Benefits of Peerage

*The aristocracy is made up of the titled nobility, or peers, and their families. If one is neither a peer nor the Sovereign, then one is a commoner. Since the Reclamation, monarchs have created a large number of new peerages, especially amongst the ranks of the industrialists, as rewards for services and valour rendered in the name of the crown. Titles may now commonly pass to elder female children as well as elder males.*

*Peers enjoy several important privileges. A peer can only be tried for felonies in the House of Lords. Peers also have the right of personal access to the Sovereign. Finally, peers are exempt from civil arrest. The privilege of the peerage extends to all peers and their spouses, even after the peer's death, unless the spouse remarries. Privilege may be extended to eldest children; however, younger children remain commoners and are treated accordingly by the law.*

find themselves unable to conceive – and there are not a few families whose fertility has been declining – will resort to varying degrees of medical intervention to ensure the production of an heir, and few of the extremities of medical science are out of the reach of those with sufficient resources. Men are permitted some degree of license both before and after marriage, though scandal must be avoided at all costs: bastard children spoil the integrity of a bloodline and rumours of disease have ruined social careers. Homosexuality is unacceptable within this social code; it is not uncommon for young men and women of the aristocratic houses to be consigned to the care of private psychiatric facilities to spare their families the inconvenience of their presence if their "vice" proves intractable.

Should the actions of an aristocrat fall outside the narrow confines of expectation, the consequences can be dire. In addition to being cut off from family resources, a black sheep will quickly see his friends disappear along with the opportunities they present. Each young aristocrat must walk a constant tightrope: how does one remain his own man while living up to the expectations of all who have come before him? Those who embarrass their families will have a great deal of trouble brought to bear against them. Offenders need to worry about more than the clannish family they offend; the honour of the aristocracy as a whole is insulted when an offence is given. In these desperate times, few insults are allowed to go unredressed.

Many aristocrats, raised in total isolation from the grim realities that constitute life in the Neo-Victorian age, live in artificial words of their own creation. Sealing themselves on their ancestral demesnes, these real-world Prosperos attempt to recapture a sense of grandeur and safety long since gone. These great manors are both sources of pride and asylums sealing their inhabitants away from a world they neither tolerate nor understand. Within his walls, the aristocrat is lord and master of his domain. It is a confined universe made up entirely of family members and ancestral retainers.

## The Industrialists

In many ways the industrialists are indistinguishable from the aristocracy that loathes them, but while the aristocracy is tied to the glories of the past, the lords of industry are devoted to growth and progress. Though most industrialists lack the benefit of ancient names lauded since the Conquest, they more than make up for their humble roots with unimaginable wealth. Hardly the uncultured upstarts the aristocracy holds them to be, these oligarchs have established their own dynasties over the generations since the Reclamation.

The industrialists are men of action who value each person based on his personal merit. Though industrialists and aristocrats have little regard for one another on principle, the potential for profit often brings them together, at least temporarily. For the industrialist's part, the aristocracy may be pompous and lazy, but old money spends as well as new, and the power that comes with the old names is a useful tool.

Industry and new money now hold dominion over the City. The industrialists maintain that it is here, rather than at the ancient Houses of Parliament, that policy is truly set. With the most powerful market in the world at their command, it becomes increasingly difficult to argue otherwise. Provided money continues to flow into the treasury, it is likely to remain business as usual for the foreseeable future.

It is ironic that the middle and working classes look up to the industrialists as a symbol of hard work and accomplishment when, in truth, the industrialists oppress the lower classes far more than the aristocrats. The aristocrats, secure in their privilege, are able to simply turn a blind eye to the suffering of the lower classes. It is the oligarchs who benefit from the social and economic inequalities of the status quo. These men grease the wheels of government to ensure that the very concept of reform remains a mechanism of their control.

## The Middle Class

The middle class is made up made up of professionals, artisans, and merchants. The members of the middle class manage the factories and act as the foot soldiers of Neo-Victorian bureaucracy. Many expect nothing more from their lives but honest toil. Others dedicate themselves to the single-minded pursuit of the high life, always striving to get ahead via any means necessary. These individuals are driven to seek patronage from their betters by swearing themselves to the service of a master.

The middle class lives in the shadow of the upper classes, whom they both imitate and despise. Members of this class notoriously aspire "above their station," desperately yearning for the acceptance of the upper classes. Though the members of the middle class are able to afford many of the smaller extravagances of life, Britain's Quality meets their efforts with disdain precisely because what they have has been purchased or earned rather than inherited. In turn, the middle class views the aristocracy as corrupt and morally barren. Conversely, they view the industrialists as the pinnacle of success, barons of industry who earned their fortunes. The truth of the matter, however, that most of the industrialists inherited their wealth in the same fashion as the aristocracy. The lower classes are viewed most often with pity, and the most enthusiastic reformers in London hail from the middle class.

Morality within the middle class is, if anything, more rigid than in the upper classes they emulate. The aristocracy is dedicated to maintaining the appearance of moral rectitude; for the middle class, nothing will do but to embody in every aspect the "refined morals" of their supposed betters. For many in the middle class, this rigid moralism is a source of pride; if they cannot possess the wealth of those they envy, they can at least possess their perceived virtue.

## Private Clubs

Private clubs are a centre of social interaction within the metropolis. The private club offers its membership an escape from the dreary life outside. Each club caters to a specific clientele with specific tastes and interests. Clubs devoted to spiritualism, alchemy, and parapsychology seem particularly pervasive. In addition to the stated interest around which a club is formed, many are also hot beds of intrigue and back-room deal brokering. Clubs are also the backdrops for "gentleman's bets", in which millions of pounds are won and lost over ridiculous wagers.

Clubs provide their members with places to meet, drink, and socialize. Members can sit and read or play games to pass the time. In clubs catering to an upper-class clientele, stewards bring guests food and drink upon request, and expenses are generally invoiced and delivered to the member's home rather than being settled on the premises. Clubs usually have sitting rooms, lounges, libraries, dining rooms, and bars. Some provide special amenities, such as private anatomy theatres or lecture halls. Non-members are usually confined to a visiting room where they can meet with members.

The oldest and most exclusive clubs were founded before the Plague Years and have exceptionally complex membership requirements. The high criteria for membership ensure that members tend to take great pride in their clubs. Though the popularity of clubs crosses class lines, membership in said clubs never does. Though there are clubs catering to various social and economic strata, the gentleman's club remains the ideal; few of the older and more elite clubs would consider allowing an individual of no family name on the premises, let alone allowing one to become a member.

Most clubs predating the Reclamation are gentlemen's clubs that only allow aristocratic men to join. Since the Reclamation, however, there has been an explosion of so-called social clubs. Unlike gentlemen's clubs, social clubs have members of both sexes, though the membership standards remain high. Despite the proliferation of social clubs, gentleman's clubs still remain extremely popular.

Each club has an extremely strict set of rules governing a member's conduct, and breaking the rules could cause one's

membership to be revoked. In addition to the immediate, public shame such action would cause, being removed from a club could be disastrous to both one's career and social life.

Not all London clubs cater to quiet intellectual pursuits; there are a number of secret clubs whose members are far less likely to boast of their affiliations. So-called hellfire clubs are dedicated to carnality, drug use, and other forms of social misconduct. These clubs are largely harmless, existing only to hide the predilections of their members from the prying eyes of outsiders, though some exist for darker purposes. Rumours of clubs devoted to cannibalism and vivisection have circulated for years. Other clubs are devoted to nothing less than experiments into the outlawed science of reanimation. Though such clubs have occasionally been exposed in the pages of the dailies, most are said to operate with the full knowledge of the Metropolitan Police.

These clubs tend to be even more stringent about their membership requirements than their more lawful counterparts; after all, one cannot allow just anyone to join a club devoted to the consumption of human flesh. The nature of such an intimate grouping ensures that these clubs play host to their fair share of power brokering and intrigues. It is not uncommon for members of such organizations to wind up floating face-down in the Thames after renouncing membership.

## The Lower Classes

Miserable beyond measure, the poor spend their lives in servitude, toiling in Neo-Victorian factories, sweat shops, and workhouses. The poor, made up of not only the employed and employable but also the truly hopeless, constitutes the largest segment of the population. In the slums of the metropolis, countless souls, many lacking homes and proper clothing, dwell in abject poverty.

Further aggravating the hardships endured by the poor, a number of labour laws and social programs were rescinded at the behest of the early industrialists during the Reclamation. There are few public schools operating in the aftermath, which suits most parents just fine. Instead of attending school, children are sent to work to put more food on their family's table. In Neo-Victorian society, the children of the working class are regarded as small adults. It is expected that the children start work as young as twelve years old to bring in money to help support the family. Most children end up working alongside their parents in the filthy factories. Some authorities have argued that a fourteen-hour day is completely acceptable, going so far as to declare, "Nothing is more favourable to morals than habits of early subordination, industry, and regulation."

The poor live a back-breaking existence, their lives worn out in toil. Between a fourteen-hour workday and the dangerous machinery of the factories, accidental deaths by

**The Workhouses**

*Workhouses have been established throughout the metropolis and may be found in virtually every borough except the West End. Miserable and cramped, workhouses are public poorhouses that give relief to paupers in exchange for hard labour. Any comers who are willing and able to work are given admission with few questions asked.*

*Workhouses are often thought of as a last desperate refuge not because of the severity of the work but because they are terribly overcrowded. It is not uncommon for malnourished or ailing residents to die in the night only to spontaneously reanimate; every year or so an entire workhouse succumbs to plague-borne horror as dozens of inhabitants fall victim to animates.*

dismemberment are commonplace. Those who do not suffer lethal or disfiguring injuries invariably succumb to environmental hazards leading to all manner of degenerative and painful diseases. The best most can hope for is a pittance upon retirement after a life of servitude. Drunkenness and opium addiction are all too common in the miseries of the slums.

Many seek to better themselves by finding honest employment with the police or in the military service. The Deathwatch is full of young men and women seeking an alternative to the endless toil of factory life. Those with the talent might even make their livelihood as Undertakers.

Others turn to a life of crime. The lures of the criminal life are many; compared with a life of ceaseless toil in the engines of industry, the potential price of a criminal life seems small to many born into poverty. Robbery and pickpocketing provide easy money for children of the slums who might otherwise never see more than a few pence together, and violence can be a lucrative business for a talented individual with a strong, or hungry, stomach.

## Government in the Neo-Victorian Age

Britain is still governed under the parliamentary system. The British Parliament consists of the Monarch and the two houses, the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Parliament is responsible for passing or rejecting bills put forth by the government and providing oversight for the government's actions. A General Election is held at least every five years or when called by the Prime Minister. Local constituents vote to select their representative in the House of Commons.

After the election, the head of the party that wins the most seats becomes the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister chooses his cabinet members from the Parliament, thereby forming the new government. Cabinet members can either be members of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. These cabinet ministers are in charge of running the country and controlling governmental departments such as finance, education, and security. In 1927, a new cabinet position, the Minister of Reclamation, was created in response to the crisis. This position is now in charge of maintaining the safety of living British citizens from their undead counterparts. Health care and welfare for the poor are strictly a matter of charity and not the concern of Her Majesty's government.

The House of Commons is made up of MPs (members of Parliament) elected from local constituencies. There are no term limits for MPs; they can be re-elected for as long as they are able to win the vote of their constituents. There are currently six hundred fifty MPs in the House of Commons, and most are members of a political party.

The two main parties are the Conservatives and the Liberals. The Labour party gained support from the trade unions in the mid-twentieth century; however, since the split with the unions, Labour has been reduced to a very minor force in the commons. The unions' new political representation, the Neo-Luddites, remains a fringe party as the unions themselves gradually lost their power and support during the twenty-first century.

The House of Lords is made up of Bishops and Archbishops, known as the Lords Spiritual, and the Peerage, known as the Lords Temporal, equal among themselves but with five ranks: Duke, Marques, Earl, Viscount, and Baron. The House of Lords has undergone several changes since the Reclamation. Bishops have less of a representation in the House of Lords than they did before the Plague. As cities and lands were lost to the Plague, Bishops found themselves with fewer dioceses and thus less representation in Lords. In order to reclaim these lost bishoprics, the Church has led the way in reclamation projects trying to restore as many cities and lands as possible.

The changing nature of hereditary politics in the Neo-Victorian Age has also impacted the Peerage. As families were wiped out by the Plague, many peerage positions became vacant. These hereditary titles have been granted to "new blood," frequently as a reward for service to the country. The Government has always been especially careful to reward those who favour its policies and practices. As a result, there is not often a divide between the two houses. It currently stands that two-thirds of the House of Lords are hereditary positions with one-third being appointed by the government. Those appointed are "life peers" serving until death. There still remain several "backwoodsmen" in the House of Lords. These are often able to trace their family's peerage

### Parliamentary Rules of Order

*MPs have to use specific terms of address, not names, when speaking to each other on the debating floor of parliament. These formal titles are based on the MP's status. Usually an MP will be referred to as "the Honourable Member for..." followed by the name of their constituency. If the two MPs are from the same party they will address each other as "my Honourable Friend." An MP who is also a lawyer is referred to as "Honourable and Learned." An MP who was or is a member of the armed forces is "Honourable and Gallant." A member of the Privy Council, the body that advises the Sovereign, past or present, is addressed as "Right Honourable."*

*During a debate in the house, certain behaviours, including smoking, eating, and drinking, are prohibited. The only exception to this is that the Chancellor may consume one alcoholic drink while delivering the budget statement. No reading material is allowed, and the use of charts, diagrams, and maps is also prohibited. Hats may not be worn, and military medals or insignia are not allowed. Members are not allowed to put their hands in their pockets and may not be armed, though each MP has a loop of ribbon in the cloakroom where their weapons may be left. Lastly, it is illegal to die in the Commons, whether by suicide, murder, or accident. The House of Commons is situated in the Palace of Westminster, and no commoners are allowed to die in a palace. Thus, any deaths that do happen there are reported as happening at St. Thomas' Hospital.*

to well before the onset of the Plague. These peers are sought after by the political parties and bribed in a variety of ways to get them to show up for key votes. For example, rumours say that the hugely unpopular Mortuary Acts of 1967 passed only by the votes of the backwoodsmen in the House of Lords. The House of Lords has approximately twelve hundred members, though only half to a third attend regularly.

The role of the Sovereign has lessened considerably over time. The Royal Prerogative gives her the power to declare war, make treaties, pardon criminals, and dissolve Parliament. In actuality, though, the Monarch usually finds herself working closely with the government to ensure that everyone's best interests are met.

Parliament has lost none of its sense of grandeur and spectacle over the years. The most important formal occasion, without a doubt, is the Queen's annual November speech at the Grand Opening of Parliament, when she addresses her ministers and the lords from her throne. However, her speech is written by the Government and approved by the cabinet beforehand. It contains an outline of policies and the proposed legislation for that parliamentary year. Before the opening the Yeoman guards do a ritual sweep of the cellars of Westminster to search for gunpowder and the deceased.

## The Current Government

In 2102 the Conservatives won their third consecutive term in office. They defeated the Liberals with a slightly reduced majority in the Commons. The Conservatives presented a platform of tougher police action, greater security, controlled immigration, increased trade with former colonies, as well as funding for reclamation and exploration efforts. The Conservative Prime Minister, Edward Foster, is serving his third term in office. Many attribute the success of the current government to his unfaltering determination while others feel his inability to compromise has been a failing.

### Issues of government today

*Citizen's Rights* - The rights of living citizens outweigh those of the dead. The physically deceased, whether animate or not, are no longer Her Majesty's subjects and thus are not protected by the same laws as living citizens. They can be used, destroyed, or trained in any way beneficial to the living citizens of the Empire. All bodies must be destroyed quickly and routinely, and any attempts to circumvent this mandate will be met with the quickest and harshest retribution allowed under the law. Citizens will not be allowed to jeopardize others through their own misguided feelings of loyalty towards the dead.

*Scientific Research* - The government enlists private companies and citizens to carry out research into the animates and the blight. Research also continues into the ghouls' and the Dhampiri's peculiar immunity to the blight

*Home Office* - The Home Office is concerned with public safety as well as immigration matters. As promised in their manifesto, the Conservatives have given greater power to the police. Criminals meet with quick and harsh justice whether they make it to trial or not. Despite the efforts of the Con-

servatives, crime remains as high as ever on the streets. The opposition argues that the tougher measures provided by the Conservatives are actually fuelling the fires of anarchy in the capital. Indeed, since implementation of the new measures, there has been an increase in secret organizations among the lower classes and many more are becoming sympathetic to the anarchists' cause.

*Foreign and Commonwealth Office* - The Foreign and Commonwealth Office pursues the reestablishment of trade with former British colonies as well as their aid, assistance, and reclamation. Close political ties with foreign powers are viewed

**Prime Ministers of England since the Plague**

**1907-1916:** Herbert Henry Asquith, Liberal
**1916-1923:** Christopher Wakefield-Keith, Liberal
**1923-1932:** Stratford Greeley, Conservative
**1932-1938:** Sir Robert Montgomery Bathurst, Conservative
**1938-1941:** William Morris, Conservative
**1941-1946:** Malcolm McCall, Liberal
**1946-1949:** Sir Robert Montgomery Bathurst, Conservative
**1949-1960:** Davis Walcott, Liberal
**1960-1965:** Gordon Wyatt Healy, Conservative
**1965-1969:** William Hallstead, Conservative
**1969-1976:** Thomas Lynch, Liberal
**1976-1984:** Stuart Morrison, Conservative
**1984-1988:** Jane Spencer Grenville, Conservative
**1988-1992:** Dennison Whitaker Blackwood, Conservative
**1992-1999:** Horace Devoy, Liberal
**1999-2007:** Henry Nelson-Grey, Liberal
**2007-2014:** Astrid Wyndam, Liberal
**2014-2019:** Anthony Scott, Liberal
**2019-2023:** Astrid Wyndam, Liberal
**2023-2027:** Benjamin Kenneth Edgerton King, Conservative
**2027-2032:** Charles Scott Mayhew, Liberal
**2032-2037:** Trevor Harris, Conservative
**2037-2040:** Benjamin Kenneth Edgerton King, Conservative
**2040-2048:** Douglas Alec Audley, Liberal
**2048-2052:** Francis Collard, Liberal
**2052-2056:** Patricia Harris-West, Liberal
**2056-2064:** Harold Rheese, Conservative
**2064-2066:** Sir Robert James Tremaine, Conservative
**2066-2069:** Warren Campbell, Liberal
**2069-2073:** Sir Robert James Tremaine, Conservative
**2073-2075:** Daniel Culverton, Liberal
**2075-2081:** Edmund Witte, Liberal
**2081-2089:** Katherine Hartley, Conservative
**2089-2093:** Arthur Reynolds, Liberal
**2093-present:** Edward Avery Foster, Conservative

**The Prime Minister**

**Name:** *Edward Avery Foster*
**Born:** *24 January 2029.*
**Age Entered Parliament:** *42*
**Age became PM:** *64*
**Education:** *King's College London, BSc in Chemistry and MSc in Pharmacology.*
**Family:** *Born second of four children. Married with 3 adult children, 2 grandchildren.*
**Interests:** *Science, Reading and Nature.*
**Biography:** *Born and raised in London, Foster came from a powerful industrial family. After graduation he tried his hand at business, establishing a pharmaceutical research company, which focused on new brands of opiates. The company ultimately failed, much to the embarrassment of his family. After this failure, Foster entered a period of despondency. He spent time on the Continent, a grand tour that lasted almost three years. On his return he married Sylvia Bryant, the daughter and heir of a wealthy manufacturing family. He then turned to politics, winning the parliamentary seat for the Cities of London & Westminster. It has been suggested that his family largely funded his campaign. Foster rose to a cabinet position under Prime Minister Katherine Hartley in 2081. Hartley's government failed to win re-election. Following this leadership crisis, Foster was elected to head the party while in opposition. Under his leadership, the Conservatives won the next general election. While PM, his personal passion has focused attention on research into the blight, particularly involving ghouls and Dhampiri subjects in experimentation. He has also led his government to strengthen relations with the Prussians through greater economic trade, deregulating many of the tariffs between the two nations to establish greater financial freedom and strengthening the interests of the industrialists.*

**CONSERVATIVE MANIFESTO 2102,**
**"CONSERVATIVES AT HOME AND ABROAD"**

•The Conservatives will instigate tougher measures at home. There is only one way to a safer Britain: heightened security.

•The Conservatives will increase the number of police on the streets while cutting bureaucracy and reducing paperwork within the force. With the increase of anarchist activities, particularly in the capital, the Conservatives will provide for more police patrols and support legislation to give the police greater freedom of action in emergency situations.

•The Conservatives will increase funding and support of the police and the Deathwatch.

•The Conservatives will look to the future by continuing to support private companies' reclamation efforts at home and offering tax incentives to companies actively working to reclaim parts of the countryside and fight against the blight and its inhabitants.

•The Conservatives will retain a strong focus on controlled immigration. We will pass legislation further restricting the access of foreign nationals to British soil.

•The Conservatives will support British heritage at home and abroad. Funding will be provided to support works of art and historical monuments.

•The Conservatives will increase trade with former colonies,

•The Conservatives will continue to fund and support missions of exploration and expansion, particularly in areas that still remain shut off to the new and growing world.

**LIBERALS MANIFESTO 2102,**
**"LIBERALS STAND FOR THE NATION"**

•The economy is the supreme need of the nation. As more and more countries find themselves in a position of economic stability, it is our job to welcome them into the fold and to uphold the spirit of free trade.

•The Liberals will start by rebuilding at home, not wasting money and human effort on foolish and dangerous foreign adventures.

•We believe in cremation, education, and work for all. The Liberals will pursue greater social progress at home. We will increase the capacity of current workhouses for the poor and set up new institutions for the destitute and insane. We believe it is our responsibility to support all our citizens.

•The Liberals will issue legislation deregulating business and research in an effort to support the freedom of industry and to encourage its growth.

as unfavourable. The Office restricts its management to economic and military matters, encouraging former colonies to establish their own political regimes.

Additionally, the Foreign Office provides support to UK exporters as well as encouraging foreign investment in the UK. The condition of many European countries prevents the unification needed for any sort of union of nations. Thus, trade relations favour the countries with the power to back up their own systems of import and excise taxes.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office also promotes British culture through the British Council, which has offices in all major reclaimed cities, states, and countries.

### The Monarchy

*Despite the rigors of the Plague, the monarchy has prospered alongside the British people since the Reclamation. Many political scholars believe the influence of crown has only grown since the rise of the Neo-Victorians. Additionally, advances in anti-agapic medicine have greatly lengthened the reigns of subsequent monarchs.*

*The current sovereign, Queen Victoria III, has ruled since the death of her father, King George VI, in 2058 and shows little sign of slowing down before her Golden Jubilee in 2108. A just and well-loved queen, Victoria III is widely acknowledged to have presided over the greatest period of expansion since the reign of her revered ancestor Victoria I.*

# The Church

Long before the onset of the Plague, theology was a strong source of conflict in English society. At times, this conflict has become violent, particularly after Henry VIII's decision to break away from the Catholic Church and create an independent Church of England. The transition was not a smooth one. Many clerics, both Anglican and Catholic, found themselves facing the stake on charges of heresy or the torture chamber for treason. Religion, politics, and power have been uneasy bedfellows throughout the subsequent centuries.

The Plague Years were hard times for the Church in England. Through the Victorian Era, the influence of the Church had been gradually waning as the world became more secular and rationalist. When the Plague hit, many of the members of the clergy were killed trying to care for the dying victims. Many lost their faith during the Plague Years, unable to accept a god that would unleash such horrific suffering on the world.

Since the Reclamation, the influence of the Church has grown considerably, becoming a potent force both politically and socially within Neo-Victorian London. The monarch remains the head of the Church, and the archbishops and bishops still sit in the House of Lords. Among the aristocracy, support for the Anglican Church is expected, and most of the old houses maintain at least a veneer of sanctimony. The Church offers an acceptable career path to sons of the nobility who are ineligible to inherit while the freedom of Anglican clergy to marry allows them to continue their family lines.

Many Neo-Victorians, especially those among the lower classes, maintain an attachment to Christianity in these dark times. The aristocracy often encourage these believers in the hope that religion will content the lower classes with their lot on earth. The middle classes encourage religion and morals as a way of combating drunkenness, fornication, and idleness. In the name of religion, they run soup kitchens and "Mercy Shelters" for broken families and survivors of undead attacks with nowhere else to turn. The charitable services of such organizations are by and large respected by the citizenry.

Though the Anglican Church is the largest and most powerful religious organization in Neo-Victorian London, a wide variety of creeds are practiced among the populace. The

Lutheran Church has a significant middle-class following. Evangelical Christians of all denominations can be found preaching in the streets of the poor quarters, hosting revivals in the rookeries of South London and admonishing the wealthy in the West End. An assortment of faiths, Christian and non-Christian, can be found in the city, and now, as much as ever, tensions between the city's creeds are high.

The power of Catholicism has waned in the metropolis. When cremation was made compulsory, many within the Catholic community objected, refusing to permit their bodies and the bodies of their loved ones to be destroyed. Many refused even to spike the heads of their dead, insisting that they should be buried whole and untouched. Secret burials were common. These practices lead to large numbers of reanimations among the dead of this creed, not infrequently resulting in the deaths of entire families.

Since the onset of the Plague, a new faction has emerged within many denominations of the Christian Church. This sect believes that the rise of the Plague marked the Rapture foretold in the Scriptures, that Christ returned and took to heaven those whose faith was true, and that the world of the present is a world ruled by the Adversary. They call themselves the Forsaken, believing that they are damned to remain on earth until these dark times come to an end. Members of the Forsaken are prone to acts of extreme penance and self-sacrifice, particularly flagellation and mortifications of the flesh. The Forsaken follow a common creed but may belong to a wide variety of denominations, particularly the evangelical and ecstatic branches of Christianity. However, no Forsaken remain a part of the Catholic Church, as the Catholics believe that in the End Times the gates of heaven close permanently.

Spiritualism, a rising force in religious thought in Victorian Britain, has experienced a revival in recent years. The existence of spiritual phenomena, heavily debated before the Plague, has become undeniable, and many find a path toward spiritual certainty in communing with the spirits of the departed. Dozens of spiritualist sects, including several which claim to directly descend from the Theosophy of Madame Blavatsky, have sprung up within London alone, and the numbers of adherents are growing. The Church of England has formally denounced mystical spiritualism, almost certainly in response to a perceived threat posed by this vibrant spiritual movement.

In these dark times, religion provides many with a path through the turmoil and confusion of existence to a hope for a better world. Not all the faiths in London, however, are faiths of the light. There are whispers of dark cults, worshippers of the monstrous who see the "gift" of immortal unlife as a perfect perpetuation of the human form. There are said to be vampire cults who, seeking to partake of the vampiric contagion, make sacrifices to these monsters and consume the blood of innocents to prepare themselves for the transformation. The ghoul cults, it is said, practice ritual cannibalism in the belief that the diet of human flesh will give them the power of the creatures they revere. These cults have been blamed for the periodic rashes of bizarre murders in the East End in recent years. No solid evidence for the existence of these cults has been found, but the rumours persist.

# Death Rituals of the Neo-Victorians

*"Victorian friends and family members hesitated to leave the side of a deceased loved one, which inevitably had to be taken from them for burial. Instead, for one reason or another, not the least of which was a scarcely abandoned hope of a return to consciousness, the corpse remained under constant supervision. Since the outbreak of the Plague, these once solemn ministrations have undergone a tragic and horrific transmogrification. We now employ strangers to keep silent vigils in our stead. Rather than pray for a return to life, these modern sentinels ensure that the spark of animation is snuffed as quickly as it is detected, thereby poisoning hope and rendering death all the more foul.*

*The Mourners are, of course, not to blame for this sad state of affairs, but they are symptomatic of a cancer growing at our core. Death is no longer part of the natural cycle, but an atrocity to be feared, not metaphorically but physically. Our proximity to death has become an intolerable burden. The dead are no longer considered merely unclean or impure but a threat to all life. Luckily, our lamentations are silent and the wailers out of work."*

—*Lady Rosalyn Hartfield,* The Neo-Victorian Way of Death, *2023*

The Neo-Victorians have retained a powerful connection to the death rituals of their forbearers. However a number of concessions have had to be made, especially where the dispensation of the dead is concerned. The death rituals of the Neo-Victorians were codified by the Mortuary Acts of 1967. Mourning periods are still expected at all social levels, but since the passage of the Acts the funeral itself has become the exclusive province of the middle and upper classes. Not only are funerals and their associated rituals prohibitively expensive, but also the rapid dispatching of the dead is a matter of public safety, especially in the more dangerous

boroughs of the city typically occupied by the poor.

There is a chance that any corpse will spontaneously animate, and this constant threat of infection from their dead has had a profound effect on the Neo-Victorians. Death is not only the inevitable end of life; it is also a public health concern of the highest order. Virtually all corpses are incinerated as soon after death as possible. Usually plaguemen transfer the dead to a crematorium within hours of their discovery.

The destitute tend to dwell in the most dangerous areas, where a high percentage of the dead animate within a scant few hours of death. Funerals among the lower classes have been replaced by wakes and public displays of mourning. The pubs are perpetually full of grim parties dressed in funeral attire, drinking themselves into dull stupors.

The abolition of lower-class funerals has caused a renaissance of peasant folk ritual. Particularly abhorrent to modern sensibilities is the sin eater, a wretch birthed in some remote era of pagan prehistory. Despised and loathed as unclean even by those employing his services, the sin eater is at worst a soul damned to be avoided like a common leper and at best a deceitful charlatan. His strange occupation is to take up the sins of the dead in exchange for a meal and a handful of coin. The sin eater either consumes food placed on the corpse or food passed over it, thereby symbolically taking the sins of the dead into himself.

As England Howlett wrote in "Burial Customs," "The corpse being taken out of the house, and laid on a bier, a loaf of bread was given to the sin-eater over the corpse, also a maga-bowl of maple, full of beer. These consumed, a fee of sixpence was given him for consideration of his taking upon himself the sins of the deceased, who freed, would not walk after death."

The middle class congregates in lower-risk boroughs where the dead seldom rise, and even then rarely before two days have past. The dead of these quarters are collected and taken to mortuaries at some cost to the bereaved. Mortuaries are public crematoria catering to the mourners rather than the public's health. In these places, the dead receive funerals and may be viewed by the bereaved before incineration. Even here a number of precautions are always taken.

Health codes require that the head of the deceased be impaled with a spike to destroy the brain and remove any possibility of reanimation. Head-spikes are beautiful works of bronze, lovingly engraved or embossed with such epitaphs as "BELOVED," "REST IN PEACE," or "GONE TO GOD." After the funeral, the loved ones remove and clean the spike for its inevitable future use.

Wealthier citizens, particularly the aristocracy, dwell in towering edifices where the risk of reanimation is quite low. Still, some risk remains, and even amongst the upper classes, the dead are seldom mourned in the home despite long-standing Victorian tradition. It is simply too dangerous to risk the spontaneous animation of a loved one even in the best of circumstances. A funeral industry has sprung up to see to the needs of the genteel dead. Despite the continual alterations to the Victorian Ars Moriendi, the Neo-Victorians remain absolute disciples of its principle doctrines.

Once the corpse has been washed and cosmetically treated, it is laid out for viewing. The corpse is watched over by a representative of the Mourners' Guild hired by the family of the deceased to watch over the body for three days before the funeral and interment. The Mourner, deathly still and utterly silent, sits with blade in hand to watch over the body. Should the corpse stir, the Mourner will sever its head from its shoulders at a mind-boggling speed.

After three days' time, a funeral is held for the deceased. Afterward, the body is carried by carriage to a Necropolis and buried. These dead cities are found outside the walls of the metropolis, where the grave robber's arts are hampered

by the necessity of transporting a body back through the massive walls. Here, opulence is the order of the day, and the dead live in an extravagance of which the poor of the lower classes could only dream.

Necropoleis employ large and well-armed security teams to keep out undesirables. Whether keeping the lawns clear of the destitute looking for a safe place to sleep or resurrection men looking for fresh meat to drag to market, these hired mercenaries must remain ever vigilant. Sometimes Mourners will be hired to watch over the deceased for a month or more and to dispatch anyone daring to disturb their client's peace.

### Mourning

Despite a proposed ban on memento mori, such customs as weaving hair wreathes and gifting family and friends with mourning rings containing the hair of the deceased continue unabated. Originally hair-work jewellery grew out of the desire for a mourner to retain a fragment of the deceased and came in various forms including brooches, bracelets, watch chains, and earrings. Now, despite fears that something of the Plague may remain in these tokens, little can be done to persuade mourners today of the inherent risks of gathering the materials for such practices.

The Godey's Lady's Book (1855) described the mourning art thusly: *"Hair is at once the most delicate and lasting of our materials, and survives us, like love. It is so light, so gentle, so escaping from the idea of death, that with a lock of hair belonging to a child or friend, we may almost look up to heaven and compare notes with the angelic nature—may almost say, 'I have a piece of thee here, not unworthy of thy being now.'"*

Coffin photos and memory cards have exponentially increased in popularity among all classes since the Plague Years. While the upper classes have elaborate photos taken in funeral parlours, the poorer classes content themselves with photos of the deceased love ones taken where they fall. Often, another family member is charged with distracting or holding back the plaguemen long enough for the photo to be taken. Likewise, obituaries in local newspapers have only grown in length. On many days, the papers are dominated by announcements of death.

The Neo-Victorians take mourning dress very seriously. Women are responsible for displaying their family's sorrow through their appearance. Widows, in particular, are expected to remain in mourning for no less than two-and-a-half years after the death of their husband, and commonly this period stretches on until a new husband is found or the widow's own death. Advice on proper mourning wear for widows is a subject of etiquette that dominates women's newspapers and magazines.

There are three stages of mourning dress. The first stage, deep mourning, lasts for a year and a day and is marked by full black attire including a bodice and a skirt trimmed with crepe. The mourner's face is hidden behind a crepe weeping veil, falling at least to the waist and topped with a widow's bonnet. Additionally, the widow wears black gloves and stockings. Even the hem ribbon of a petticoat must have a black ribbon pulled through it.

The second stage of mourning, known as ordinary mourning, lasts another year, though some widows remain in second mourning for the rest of their lives. During this period, crepe is completely removed from the dress; black silk trimmed with black ribbon, embroidery, or lace is permitted, as are jet accessories. More lavish trimmings may be added to the bonnet, and the veil can be drastically shortened or removed. The mourning bonnet can now be discarded, though many older mourners retain it.

The final stage of mourning, half-mourning, lasts an additional six months to a lifetime. During this stage, widows may have more fashionable dresses, but they still must limit their hues to mourning colours such as grey, soft purples, or black. They may also remove the black ribbon from their petticoat. Bonnets may also be made in more fashionable styles and be trimmed with feathers, beads, trims, flowers, and ties. Similarly, jewellery can be more stylish and fashionable.

A widower has only one stage of mourning, lasting for up to six months, at his discretion. The widower's suit should be of dark fabric without shiny buttons. He should wear a black, crepe armband and trim his hat in a thick band of the same material. Some among the lower classes have taken to wearing photos of their dead pinned to their hats.

It is expected that Neo-Victorians enter a period of mourning after the death of family or friends as well. The length and severity of the mourning is based on the closeness of relation. Though a subject of debate among the Victorians, it is now customary to dress children in mourning wear. Young girls bereaving their parents are often subjected to the same dress as widows.

Mourning wear is no longer discarded after a single funeral due to the prohibitive cost of such needless ritual and, instead, has become the height of Neo-Victorian fashion. Death is so prevalent and mourning wear so stylish that many Neo-Victorian women choose to dress in mourning their entire lives, whether they are widows or not. Though the lower classes also succumb to this mania, they generally either sew their own clothes or buy them used at estate sales. It can be extremely expensive to perpetually remain in mourning.

# Beyond Ritual

*"They believed that every fragment of matter in the universe represented a corresponding atom of spiritual existence; that this realm of spiritual being was the essence, force, and real substance of the material; but that both inevitability dissolved together, both being resolved back to their component parts in the chemical change called death."*

—*Chevalier de B –*, Ghostland, *1876*

The world is undisputedly populated by restless spirits, though their origins are not yet fully understood. Since the Plague Years, spirit phenomena have reached epidemic levels. It has become impossible to ignore the existence of spectres and apparitions. Hauntings are commonplace and often dangerous.

Thus, the Neo-Victorians do not exclusively or idly adhere to death ritual out of reverence for their forbearers. Neo-Victorian death rituals are an attempt at putting the dead to rest, especially in lieu of a proper burial. Though such customs are not proven to reduce spirit activity, they certainly help to put the minds of the bereaved at ease.

### The Spirit World

Even in these enlightened times, when so much is understood about the oddities of the supernormal world, there are events that defy convenient explanation. Strange knockings, whispers in an empty room, and faint glowing lights are all examples of spiritual phenomena. Invisibly superimposed over the material is a world occupied by the spirits of the dead. These ephemeral entities exist alongside the living, detectable only by those possessing the curious supernormal sense required to peer beyond the veil separating the corporeal world from what lies beyond. In the two centuries following the Plague Years, the boundaries between life and death have grown thin. Whether one believes spirits to be the souls of the deceased or merely the shadows of intelligence left after death, it can be no wonder that in a world so bathed in agony and desperation, not even the dead find peace.

Though tales of spiritual phenomenon abound in human history, the first irrefutable reports emerged in the wake of the Plague. Encampments from the pre-Reclamation era recorded innumerable instances of apparently spiritual activity, both benign and malignant, beginning almost immediately after the first wave of the infection. The manifestations were more severe in locations that would fall to the Wastelands, with the frequency and malignity of occurrences increasing rapidly as the land succumbed to the blight. As humanity began to recover from the devastations of the Plague, reports of hauntings increased rather than diminishing. Within London itself, it is estimated that not less than one-third of the city has been subject to some form of spiritual intrusion at some time since the end of the Reclamation.

Despite the frequency of reports of spiritual phenomena, little serious attention was initially paid to these occurrences. The scientific community initially regarded reports of "hauntings" as hysterical manifestations resulting from terror and grief. It was believed that the growing spiritualist sentiment was the result of an essentially religious yearning for meaning -- that the existence of "ghosts," terrifying yet reassuring, gave some definite hope for an afterlife at a time when the religious beliefs of the old world were seriously weakened. The Theosophical Society in Britain, though weakened by the Plague, was the first organization to begin seriously monitoring the increase in spiritual activity, maintaining records of modern hauntings that date back to the earliest days of the Plague. It was not until 1998 that the Society for Psychical Research was formally re-established and scientific examination of haunting-type manifestations began in earnest. In the Neo-Victorian world, parapsychology and spiritualist sciences, though still in their infancy as fields of study, have begun to achieve respectability as fields of endeavour, providing unique insights into the supernormal aspects of the natural world.

The first scientific reports of mediums, persons with the ability to commune with the spirit world directly, date to before the Plague Years. These reports were not widely accepted in their own time, but the perspective of later ages has brought a new light to this half-forgotten body of research. The science of the Neo-Victorian world has documented a large number of individuals capable of speaking with spirits, and the nature and features of the present-day mediums' gift do not appear to be substantially dissimilar from those of their Victorian predecessors.

The medium's gift is that of "second sight," the ability to reach beyond the veil separating the worlds and make contact with the things that lie beyond the perception of ordinary men. Spirits are not ordinarily perceptible to the living unless the spirit is actively manifesting. Strong spiritual forces are capable of making their presence known in a variety of ways: mysterious noises, changes in temperature, and even visible manifestations. However, most manifestations are brief and limited in scope, as well as somewhat startling to a naïve observer, making it difficult for the average witness at a manifestation to determine what, if any, message the spirit is trying to convey. It requires the unique abilities of the medium to achieve contact with these entities and discover what drives them to manifest among the

living. The medium is additionally able to reach out to spirits incapable of manifesting, pulling knowledge required by those on the corporeal side of the veil from their weak and distant memories.

Though the existence of spiritual entities is well documented, their origins are hotly debated. The scientifically minded prefer to think of them as residual psychic energy imprinted on the physical world at the time of death. These sceptical parapsychologists see spiritualism as a desperate attempt to assuage the fear that nothing exists beyond death. Though there is some convincing evidence to support such the residual-energy model, the case for this theory is far from complete.

Opponents of this theory, and there are many, point toward spirits purportedly exhibiting signs of both intellect and will as evidence that they are something more than the stains left behind by a dying psyche. Spiritualists, those who believe in a metaphysical model for the universe, hold the existence of spirits to be proof of an afterlife. Most of those who adhere to this deistic model are adamant enemies of the scientific approach, deriding the methods of the scientific parapsychologists as crass materialism. They believe these incorporeal agents to be nothing less than human souls making the journey between their earthly life and the hereafter.

## The Mourners' Guild

The Mourners' Guild exists to watch over the bodies of the Neo-Victorian elite before burial. It is customary for wealthy citizens, aristocrats and industrialists alike, to be buried whole rather than suffering the indignities of cremation. These bodies may be embalmed for preservation while they lay in repose, but the brain is never damaged. Instead, a Mourner is hired to sit over the body for three days to ensure the deceased does not rise from the dead.

The Mourner represents a gradual evolution in Neo-Victorian death ritual. Established by the Mortuary Acts of 1967, the Mourners' Guild is the sole institution certified to apprentice Mourners. Traditionally, Mourners are female, though the Guild accepts candidates based on ability rather than sex. However, Mourners never come from the lower classes; in fact, many are members of the class they serve. Young widows have been known to seek their livelihood as Mourners rather than remarry.

The curriculum of the Guild's elite academy focuses on a strict code of conduct and the arts of thanatology, anatomy, and mortuary science. A Mourner must be absolutely comfortable with all aspects of death and be able to lend

support to the bereaved in their time of need.

A Mourner undergoes a rigorous physical regimen designed to endow the student with complete control over her body, teaching her to endure days without rest or sustenance. To facilitate these extraordinary feats of endurance, the would-be Mourner learns to modify her breathing and slow her heartbeat while remaining aware of her surroundings at all times. While on the job, a Mourner is expected to sit and watch over a corpse, motionless, for three days at a time. Should the cadaver move, she must snap to action at blinding speeds, dispatching the fresh animate before it can rise. For this purpose each Mourner carries a razor sharp blade, or Exculpus, beneath her garments. A trained Mourner wields this weapon with a peerless and terrible grace.

During her training, the Mourner remains isolated from the outside world for no less than three years. The only company she can expect during this time is that of other students and the faculty of the academy. Upon graduation, a Mourner takes an oath of celibacy. The Neo-Victorians prefer that those who watch over their dead are embodiments of purity, virtue, and vigilance. While few applicants complete the rigorous apprenticeship, those that do are consummate professionals.

A female Mourner is expected to dress in modified ordinary-mourning wear with her Exculpus concealed beneath the skirt at all times. Hidden slits in the skirt allow the weapon to be drawn quickly. The Mourner's shortened veil often only covers her face. She is so accustomed to this veil that it scarcely hampers her vision. A male Mourner wears a black long coat and a top hat. When on the job, he wears a scarf tied around his mouth.

Most Mourners practice their trade as free agents, though they are expected to pay annual dues of ten pounds to the Mourners' Guild for the rest of their lives. Some Mourners seek employment with individual funeral homes, serving as a house Mourner. Others seek permanent employment with the best Neo-Victorian families. These individuals often go on to become highly paid confidants with access to the deepest family secrets. Guardians in life and death, the Mourner serves the family as a bodyguard when she is not watching over the deceased. It is rumoured that some houses rely on Mourners to cover up scandals, but the Guild strictly denies these allegations. Like their aristocratic employers, the appearance of respectability is of the utmost concern to a Mourner. Should her conduct be called into question, the Mourner would soon find herself out of work.

While it is possible to leave the Quiet Service, most Mourners remain members of the guild for life. Those who leave the organization most often do so because they find the rigorous requirements of membership ill-suited to their temperaments. Even after leaving the guild, these ladies and gentlemen seldom find happiness. A Mourner's demeanour and eerie grace mark her for the rest of her life. Many outside the Guild feel ill at ease in the company of a Mourner, even a lapsed one. Those who leave the Guild often end up working in funerals homes or on the streets as Undertakers.

**Fallen Mourners**

*The Neo-Victorian public has an insatiable appetite for tales of fallen Mourners. Lurid tales of young lamenters falling for wealthy aristocrats constitute a popular genre among penny dreadful readers. Likewise, the jaded adventurers who frequent houses of ill repute seem to have developed a taste for ladies of the evening who dress in mourning. Once again, it is the forbidden fruit which is most appealing.*

# Undertakers & the Office of Urban Defense

*"He who battles monsters must beware, lest a monster he becomes."*

*—Frederick Nietzsche,* Beyond Good and Evil, *1886*

Established by the Domestic Security Act of 1961, the Office of Urban Defence (OUD) is the agency charged with licensing, regulating, and paying freelance operatives, commonly known as Undertakers, to track down and eliminate animates and other abominations. Though the OUD was originally intended as a temporary measure to relieve the beleaguered Deathwatch, the program has grown and expanded over the years, becoming a true institution. The OUD not only pays bounties on animates but also vampires, rampaging thropes, and anything else that threatens the peace and security of the metropolis. Every major city maintains at least one OUD hub open at all hours – day or night. Here Undertakers drop off their grim trophies in exchange for hard currency

Most Undertakers operate outside the metropolis, where they track down and destroy zombies prowling the Wastelands. Here, the Undertaker is left to rely only upon his skill and the strength of his arms. Those Undertakers operating within the confines of the city are more like the vampire hunters of legend than the bounty hunters of the Wastes. Metropolitan Undertakers rely on both the support of the police and networks of agents on the street to conduct their business. They cultivate any source that could bring them word of an outbreak because each outbreak represents opportunity for profit. Those Undertakers that find themselves out of the police's favour soon see their profit potential dry up as they are forced to rely on less accurate or timely sources. Though the majority of Undertakers operate alone, many operate in small teams that support each other in the field. These teams may be organized around shares in the bounties claimed or on a standardized pay structure like any other company.

Undertakers generally agree that the most onerous part of their work is the collection and transportation of trophies. In the case of animates, the Undertaker must sever the heads, which are often covered in flies and reek from putrefaction, and carry them back to town. The odour seeps into the Undertaker's equipment and flesh, where it lingers for days at a time. It is little wonder that Undertakers are shunned by polite society. Once the trophies are delivered to the OUD, a casual inspection is usually enough to confirm whether or not the head indeed belonged to a zombie. The characteristic thickening of the ligaments of the face and the unusual solidity of the jaw-bones in an animate provide sufficient identifying marks; a knife thrust into the ligaments at the juncture of the jaw and skull is generally enough to confirm that the head was that of an animated corpse.

Undertakers must not only be skilled with weapons but also know their prey. Tracking down mindless animates is one thing, but vampires offer a much more dangerous challenge. Vampires not only possess an array of supernatural abilities but also are incredibly strong and inhumanly quick. Though the bounties on vampires are much higher than those on animates, many Undertakers do not believe hunting them is worth their time. Even the least rational vampires have an animalistic cunning that makes them unpredictable and savage adversaries. Those who retain their mental faculties have the experiences of decades of extended unlife to draw from, making them formidable adversaries. Some are even protected by aristocratic and wealthy benefactors. It is worth noting that some enterprising, though callous, Undertakers rely on human bait when hunting vampires. Further adding to the complications of hunting vampires, collecting the bounty on vampires can be exceptionally tricky because they are reduced to ash upon destruction. The Undertaker is often forced to either risk taking the fiend to the OUD alive or spend hours collecting ash. Ash collection involves getting down on one's hands and knees and sweeping up the remains before they scatter to the winds or wash away in the rain. For this reason, it is much easier to collect vampiric ash indoors than to collect ash exposed to the elements. The somewhat comical appearance of heavily armed Undertakers stooped down, brushing vampiric remains into dust bins with tiny brushes, has resulted in the appellation "dust men" being used to describe those Undertakers who make their living hunting vampires. Such trophies do not bear the terrible odours associated with the severed heads of animates, but the tedium involved in sweeping up and separating remains is more than enough to dissuade temperamental Undertakers.

Once the ashes have been carefully gathered, the Undertaker returns them to the OUD, where the remains undergo careful alchemical analysis. An Undertaker must collect at least sixty-five percent of the vampire's remains to be paid his bounty. Any less and the identification cannot be confirmed. While Undertakers are paid upon delivery for animates, they may have to wait up to week for the identification of the ashes of a single vampire. The screening process can separate out vampiric ash from human cremains and dirt. Given enough time, the mixed ashes of multiple vampires can be separately identified. The waiting period increases drastically when the

ashes of multiple vampires are mixed together.

The OUD is only authorized to pay bounties to licensed Undertakers. Anyone showing up to claim a bounty must present their identification card or be escorted away from the premises by armed guards. Getting licensed is a fairly simple matter: an applicant just fills out the necessary paperwork. Bringing along a literate translator is frowned upon, but it is acceptable provided the applicant at least signs with an "X." Licenses must be renewed yearly, but provided the Undertaker has not had his license suspended, all he is required to do is to pay a renewal fee. Undertakers are expected to follow all municipal and national laws while on the job. Any infractions will result in immediate suspension of the Undertaker's license. Undertakers usually tread lightly while in the vicinity of police officers and Deathwatch personnel.

Force of arms is often not enough to defeat more exotic supernatural horrors. More professional Undertakers are scholars of folklore, exhaustively researching the monsters they hunt. The most successful bounty men own scores of specialized tomes or have access to the finest libraries in London.

Grim, quiet, and determined, the Undertaker may be identified by his vestments. Most prefer to wear plates of armour beneath heavy leather coats. Their faces are concealed behind respirators; their hats are pulled low, and their hands are covered in thick leather, rivet-studded gloves. Undertakers commonly carry a doctor's medical bag filled with the tools of the trade: an arsenal of firearms, explosives, and blades. Sometimes the job calls for specialized gear or heavier weapons, such as flamethrowers, military-issue galvanic lightning guns, or gas-powered stake guns.

Despite the obvious success of the program, there have been numerous appeals to shut down the OUD and outlaw the practice of undertaking. Many concerned citizens believe that the program has lived past its usefulness. They point to the role of the Deathwatch in securing the Neo-Victorian streets and claim Undertakers are little better than state-sponsored brigands. Though all attempts to repeal the Domestic Security Act have failed, the call grows louder every year.

Undertakers have captivated the public's imagination in ways the Deathwatch never has, especially among the ranks of the lower classes. Explicit accounts of the exploits of Undertakers, both in fiction and in the broadsheets, have further fuelled the phenomena. Daily, fresh stories of courage circulate through the streets, featuring men and women

of action standing tall in the face of certain death. The limitless variety of Neo-Victorian abominations insures that these tales seldom grow stale.

**BOUNTIES**

Bounties paid are based on the creature eliminated. An Undertaker who brings in "living" specimens that have not been destroyed receives five times the normal bounty. The OUD generally remands such specimens to the care of research facilities.

**ANIMATE: 5S**
**VAMPIRE: £10**
**THROPE: £12**

Bounties on other creatures are paid by the case, depending upon their threat level.

# The Deathwatch

Charged with nothing less than the security of the nation, the Deathwatch must remain ever vigilant, ever ready. The greatest threat to public safety remains the animate dead. The insidious, destructive potential of the Plague can scarcely be overstated. A single animate can spread the Plague to dozens of individuals. Those dozens can spread the infection to hundreds or thousands, and so on until an epidemic runs rampant through a city and tens of thousands more succumb to the predations of the hungry dead.

The Domestic Security Force (DSF), or Deathwatch, was formed in 1960 by the mandate of the Special Powers Act. Then Secretary of State for War, Sir Edward Nelson, established five divisions, mostly made up of veterans of the Reclamation. Tasked with the protection, defence, and reclamation of the cities and urban centres of the United Kingdom, the initial force of seventy thousand proved insufficient. The following year, another four divisions were added to bolster the ranks. In 1964, an additional five divisions were created, bringing the fighting strength of the DSF to over one hundred sixty-five thousand. Today, the Deathwatch is the largest branch of the British Army, with close to two hundred thousand uniformed men and women stationed throughout the UK. No less than forty-five thousand Deathwatch personnel are stationed in the vicinity of the metropolis alone.

Training for new Deathwatch soldiers entails four months of boot camp, after which the soldiers are assigned to units throughout the United Kingdom. Recruits must pass rigorous courses in marksmanship that train them to always aim for the head.

The continuing policy of the Deathwatch centres on three principles: containment, elimination, and reclamation. Following the creation of the DSF, the Deathwatch took control of British reclamation operations duties, and this occasionally takes them to the Continent and beyond.

The Deathwatch maintains barracks and armouries throughout the metropolis as well as the central command centre located in Knightsbridge. The central command centre keeps lines of communication open with the War Office, the Metropolitan Police, and the Home Office. The various Deathwatch checkpoints, guard towers, and barracks keep in constant communication via radio and telephone. The Deathwatch likewise controls heavily guarded training facilities and garrisons both private and state farms outside London's primary defensive walls to ensure a steady supply of fresh food to the city. Though the training facilities are outside the traditional boundaries of the metropolis, they are among the safest locations within the country, boasting thousands of troops, heavy galvanic artillery, Tesla towers, and private crematoria. Most of these facilities date back to the Reclamation and were turned over the Deathwatch after its formation.

Though a strong military tradition is still observed by the upper classes, the aristocracy and their imitators prefer service in other branches of Her Majesty's Armed Forces. In part, this is because the soldiers of the Deathwatch are mostly recruited from the lower classes. Furthermore, unlike most branches of the British Armed Forces, the Deathwatch allows women into its ranks and has done so since its inception. Women made up a considerable proportion of the soldiers serving in Reclamation-era paramilitary units. When the Deathwatch assimilated these organizations, female recruits were accepted as eagerly as their male comrades. The compulsory four-year terms on Deathwatch reclamation teams commonly meted out by Neo-Victorian judges for all manner of petty crimes do little to improve the reputation of the force.

The worst reclamation assignments invariably fall to these recruits remanded to the DSF by the Neo-Victorian courts. Officially known as the Penal Corps, they are referred to as the Suicide Corps by civilians and soldiers alike. The regular soldiers seldom interact with the Penal Corps, upon whom they tend to look down. The Corps has a well-deserved reputation for poor military discipline and

morale. They maintain their own fortified compounds outside the walls of the metropolis. Considerably further from the city than the standard Deathwatch facilities, these places are continually under the threat of assault by hordes of animates. Despite their inauspicious beginnings, many Penal Corps soldiers who survive long enough serve in the Deathwatch long past the terms of their sentence.

Formidable in the extreme, the soldiers of the Deathwatch are encased in protective layers of rigid leather and steel. Each is issued plated full-body armour, including boots, gauntlets, and a helmet. Their faces are hidden behind gas masks worn over a leather cowl. A heavy leather coat adds a final layer of protection. Though Deathwatch troops are not expected to spend prolonged periods of time in the field, each also carries maps of London and the countryside, a medical kit, dehydrated rations, and a canteen of water.

A thoroughly modern fighting force, the Deathwatch is armed with the most advanced weapons known to man. The Deathwatch utilizes a wide variety of primary weaponry including, but not limited to, bolt-action rifles, grenade launchers, shotguns, flame throwers, and devastating galvanic weapons. Soldiers are armed with a combat knife, sidearm, and rifle. Though many Deathwatch personnel carry revolvers as hold-out pistols, the official sidearm of the Deathwatch is the Westgate Executioner 12mm, semi-automatic pistol. The Executioner is as recognizable as the signature Deathwatch gas mask and helmets. The tremendously destructive galvanic weapons utilized by the Deathwatch draw energy directly from the city's Tesla array. Ion pulse cannons can ignite earth and flesh alike, obliterating hordes of animates with a single trigger pull. Lightning guns effortlessly annihilate animates, blasting them apart with terrific displays of force. Galvanic weapons are never issued to the Penal Corps, who have to largely make do with Kramer 2013 bolt-action rifles.

Though the small arms of the Deathwatch are truly impressive, they are nothing compared to the weapons set atop the walls of the metropolis. These weapons are set on pivot mounts that may be turned to open fire on either side of the wall. Heavy weapons are found throughout the interior of the city, not just on the walls that separate London from the Wastelands. Vickers machine guns, heavy incinerators, mass drivers, and ball lightning projectors can rain down firestorms of biblical proportions. The walls are scarred and blasted, a continual reminder of the horrors of the Neo-Victorian world.

The Deathwatch is charged with the reclamation of infested zones within London. Once an area has been secured, the risk of epidemic is evaluated. If the local population is low or the area is reasonably secure, Deathwatch patrols sweep into the contained area to eradicate roaming animates. Locals trapped within locked-down boroughs do their best to hide and wait for operations to come to an end. Few would dare to move about the streets at such times since accidental shootings are commonplace. Deathwatch lockdowns are terrifying events in which the night erupts into blinding flashes of galvanic fury. These sweeps are executed with chilling military precision that leaves the streets clear of any movement.

It is not unknown for whole neighbourhoods overrun with the ambulatory dead to be simply put to the torch. If an area is well and truly lost, the lives of those within are forfeit. Deathwatch operatives detonate incendiaries throughout the contained area, reducing the structures within to ash in a matter of days. Once the fires burn themselves out, the neighbourhood is slated for reclamation, reconstruction, and reoccupation. Such was the case of the epidemic of 2063 that claimed twenty-two thousand lives.

Outside the walls of the metropolis, the Deathwatch is responsible for ongoing reclamation efforts, including the excavation of sepulchres. Should a sizable settlement fall to animate infestation, the Deathwatch is deployed to secure the area and eliminate any animates present. The purpose

of these operations is not merely to reclaim overrun towns and estates but also to keep the countryside free of roaming animates. Left to wander, animates are sometimes organized into hordes by zombie lords. These hordes are capable of threatening the security of even the largest Neo-Victorian cities. Operations within the vicinity of sepulchres are generally conducted for the purpose of engaging and destroying animates or for field research. The most dangerous operations are invariably carried out by the Penal Corps, who are lamentably considered expendable by Neo-Victorian society as a whole. However, the Penal Corps never accompany researchers in the field, though they are often called upon to conduct rescue missions within the Wastelands.

Despite the great importance placed upon containing the animate threat, the creation of the Domestic Security Force was met with widespread public opposition. The presence of thousands of heavily armed troops with the authority to fire at will in the name of public safety was a bit much for many to swallow. The creation of the Deathwatch has turned British cities into *de facto* police states, a point not lost on anarchist propagandists throughout the city. Sensitive to these concerns, Parliament superseded the oversight of the War Office by initiating a number of safeguards to check the potential power of the Deathwatch.

The authority of the Deathwatch is limited to the defence of British cities and the containment and elimination of the animate dead. The Deathwatch has no civilian authority whatsoever and is concerned with neither criminal activity nor civil disobedience. During the food riots and uprisings of the past hundred years, heavily armed Deathwatch forces have been forced to stand down and leave law enforcement to the Metropolitan Police and Life Guard. Aside from manning the walls and checkpoints, the Deathwatch does not guard public or private property with the exception of the major farms that feed the metropolis.

Over time, the majority of the population has grown accustomed to the sight of armed guards manning the walls of the metropolis; however, the Deathwatch is still generally more feared than respected. The zealous brutality employed by the Deathwatch in the line of duty has engendered few accolades from their critics. The upper classes tend to treat Deathwatch personnel as a nuisance and its soldiers as low-class servants. Regardless of the poor treatment, the Deathwatch knows their purpose and their duty. They exist to maintain the integrity of the nation no matter what the cost.

## The Police

The role of the police has changed little over the past two centuries and remains the prevention of crime and protection of the citizenry. Constables still walk their beats in plain sight of the public, reminding honest men that they have protection and criminals that the law is always close at hand. To ensure that the police know the neighbourhood they work in and the faces of the people who live there, every constable has a fixed area that he patrols.

Two separate police departments, the City of London Police and the Metropolitan Police, traditionally serve the metropolis. The City of London Police hold jurisdiction over the City, the Square Mile at the heart of London. The Metropolitan Police are the law throughout the rest of the London. Though separate institutions, both police forces work together closely in times of need. Nearly eighteen thousand uniformed police officers and two thousand plainclothes detectives serve the city. The addition of women to the ranks of the force has been among the most significant changes to the force since the Reclamation, but the grim realities of the Neo-Victorian world have also forced a reevaluation of other antiquated policies.

Though originally the police walked the streets without a weapon more lethal than a truncheon, the existence of animates, vampires, and thropes have mandated stronger measures. A truncheon is simply inadequate to stop a flesh-starved zombie. Each constable is now issued a heavy service revolver, truncheon, and cutlass. Constables are expected to keep their weapons concealed beneath their coats unless they are required in the line of duty. In times of need, such as the attempted apprehension of armed and dangerous criminals, constables may be issued combat shotguns to increase their offensive capabilities. In cases where the police know they will come face to face with extramundane creatures, more specialized weapons may be provided. Holding cells have also been reinforced to handle the potential preternatural strength of perpetrators. Police armouries customarily contain small numbers of syringe guns loaded with powerful sedatives and requieters for encounters with creatures that are less susceptible to conventional firepower.

In addition to his weapons, each constable is issued two uniforms, a heavy leather coat, and an armband to be worn while on the job. Each is also equipped with a gas mask, a whistle, a galvanic torch, and a pair of handcuffs.

Though capable of breaking up food riots, the police remain a lightly armed force, inadequate for the task of serious crowd control in cases of widespread civil disobedience.

At such times, the military is mobilized by Parliament and sent into the streets to quell the trouble. It is worth noting that the Deathwatch never acts in this capacity. Most often, the Life Guard is called into service when a crowd needs to be put down.

The police of the metropolis are overworked and underpaid. They are continually exposed to the elements as they walk their beats, often ten or more hours at a time. They risk their lives daily, confronting both human and inhuman abominations that prey on the population of the city. After even a brief career as a police officer, each man and woman is deeply marked by the experience. They have dull, haunted eyes that reflect fitful sleep and poisoned spirits. Many suffer combat fatigue and malnourishment. All are prematurely aged and weathered, and few remain in the forces long enough to draw a pension.

## City of London Police

The City is an extremely powerful square mile housing some of the metropolis' most influential institutions. At the time the new Metropolitan Police were being established, the City was run by its own local government with a Lord Mayor and Aldermen elected by the merchants and shopkeepers. The City Corporation answered to no one but the Sovereign, who had little interest in their affairs. Eager to retain autonomy, the City Corporation blocked any attempt made by Parliament to infringe on their interests. Instead of allowing the Metropolitan Police to hold jurisdiction over their streets, the City Corporation founded its own police force in 1839.

The City of London Police is based on the structure of the Metropolitan Police and is headed by a Commissioner. The post is presently held by Oliver Tuttle, a middle-aged career veteran of the force. The City of London Police are renowned for their strict discipline and smart uniforms. Though a comparatively small force (fifteen hundred uniformed policemen), the City of London Police perform almost precisely like the Metropolitan Police.

Metropolitan Police

Founded in 1829 to bring order to the city, the Metropolitan Police hold jurisdiction over the greater London area. Previous police forces were woefully small and too disorganized to carry out the task of maintaining order throughout the vast city. Though initially unwelcome by the population, who saw the new police force as a threat to personal liberty,

by the end of the nineteenth century, the presence of the police had become widely accepted.

The Metropolitan Police are divided into divisions. Each division is charged with patrolling a section of the city. Divisions are based out of centrally located police stations that keep in communication by telephone. Each division also serves a number of smaller police stations answering to the central station. The headquarters of the Metropolitan Police, New Scotland Yard, also maintains constant communication with both the Home Office and the Deathwatch.

A commissioner, who answers directly to the Home Secretary, heads the Metropolitan Police, aided by four assistant commissioners. Presently, Sir Robert Mayne is the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. The superintendents of the Metropolitan police are expected to ride into New Scotland Yard daily for a conference with Commissioner Mayne.

## Criminal Investigation Department

Though the uniformed branch may be a deterrent to crime, the police require methods of gathering information in advance to prevent crime. The job of gathering information and tracking the movements of known criminals falls upon plain-clothes detectives. Headquartered at New Scotland Yard, the Criminal Investigation Division of the Metropolitan Police, or CID, was founded in 1877, following the reorganization of the old Detective Department.

Detectives operate throughout the metropolis, sometimes alone and at other times with the assistance of the uniformed branch. Some detectives become as well known in the boroughs as a constable who walks a beat. The detective must know the criminal element better than other policemen. He has to know how criminals think and must come to know the areas where criminals live. Of all policemen, detectives have the best chance of successfully negotiating the hazards of Neo-Victorian rookeries.

Each day, the superintendent of each Metropolitan Police division delivers his crime report to the commissioner at New Scotland Yard. If the skills of a detective are needed, one is sent straight away on "lend" from the Yard. Generally detectives are only sent out to work serious criminal cases, such as a murder or major burglary. Detectives are also occasionally utilized for keeping potentially dangerous criminals under surveillance. Detectives are generally allowed to pursue investigations without interference, but they are never allowed to enter upon an inquiry without the express sanction and authority of the commissioner or assistant commissioner.

Detectives do not always get on well with uniformed policemen. Too often the uniformed men envy the freedom of action possessed by a detective. They also consider detectives to have low affiliations because the detectives are forced to associate with criminals on a regular basis. Many uniformed men look unfavourably on bribes paid to underworld informants and believe criminality rubs off on the detectives. This reputation is utterly undeserved: the CID has proven itself time and time again.

Detectives are recruited exclusively from the ranks of the uniformed branch. Selected for their intelligence and experience, CID detectives have patience, persistence, courage, and cunning. Detectives sometimes work alone, especially while undercover, and with no else to rely on, they learn to keep their wits and weapons about them at all times. Many are able to speak two or more languages, such as cant and rhyming slang, allowing them to blend seamlessly into the population of London's slums. It is a poor detective who does not know how to answer when asked, "Voker Romeny?" Detective work is a work-intensive, high-risk occupation. A detective must get results. They have to work at all hours, in all sorts of environments, often with no help nearby, and are blamed if they fail to achieve results.

New Scotland Yard is a marvel of modern crime detection. CID utilizes both fingerprinting and photography to aid in their work. The detectives of CID have maintained a Rogues' Gallery of captured and convicted criminals since 1889. Some detectives have gone so far as to visit prisons on the day a well-known criminal was set to be released just to take an updated photo of the man to add to the Gallery. When Sir Francis Galton proved that everyone has a unique set of fingerprints, Scotland Yard became very interested. While a man may lie about his name or whereabouts, his fingerprints may tell an entirely different story. By 1901, the first fingerprinting bureau was founded at Scotland Yard.

Today, New Scotland Yard remains a pioneer in crime detection. The procedures for identifying vampiric remains were instituted at CID a decade before the OUD. The Yard has initiated programs to investigate the possible admissibility of evidence provided by spirits and has a number of mediums on the force. Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the CID since the Reclamation has been the foundation of Psi Branch.

## Psi Branch

Psi Branch is an ambitious program to add psychic detectives to CID, which was instituted in 2053. Led by Inspector Jonathan Rathley, a thrice-decorated, twenty-five-

year veteran of the force, Psi Branch is mostly made up of clairvoyants, who are utilized for surveillance, along with several mediums, precogs, and telepaths. The mediums are generally limited to forensics work, though a few detectives have been able to question spirits who were eyewitnesses to crimes.

Telepaths have quietly taken part in police interrogations since Psi Branch was founded. The Gifted detective simply stands in the back of the room and watches while interrogators do their job. After the interrogation, the psi detective and the interrogators compare notes. Attempts were made to add empaths to interrogations as well, but the work proved too stressful. No empath has been recruited by Psi Branch since Detective Nancy Sinclair shot and killed Sergeant Walter Whitmore before turning her weapon on herself on 3 April 2061.

Psi Branch has made a little headway in using precognitives as an early warning system to detect catastrophes before they occur. While the program has not yet met with overwhelming success, results have been encouraging enough to secure more funding from the Home Office. Inspector Rathley hopes to one day have an entire department of precogs monitoring the psychic well-being of the metropolis.

Psi Branch is extremely secretive and takes extraordinary measures to remain out of the press. Even within CID, the program is hotly debated. Despite its many successes over the past fifty years, Psi Branch is greatly distrusted by both the uniformed branch and some detectives inside CID. The nature of the Branch requires it to draw fresh recruits from outside the Metropolitan Police. Many older detectives are prejudiced against what they consider outsiders and charlatans. Outside CID, Psi Branch detectives are treated little differently than traditional detectives.

## Special Branch

The Neo-Victorian public knows very little about the shadowy division of CID known as Special Branch. Originally established to deal with plots against the state, especially political assassinations, the nature of Special Branch's work is such that it operates in near complete secrecy. What is known is that Special Branch is utilized for bodyguard details at all state functions.

Unofficially, Special Branch is currently engaged in a secret war against anarchist cells operating throughout the metropolis. With the stakes escalating on both sides, Special Branch has initiated an assassination campaign against anarchist leaders. In response, anarchist cells have stepped up their bombing campaign throughout the city.

# Crime & Sin

*"I do not at all like that city. All sorts of men crowd together there from every country under the heavens. Each race brings its own vices and its own customs to the city. No one lives in it without falling into some sort of crimes... Whatever evil or malicious thing that can be found in any part of the world, you will find it in that one city."*

*--The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes, c. 1190*

Crime is all too familiar to the Neo-Victorians; after all, not every monster is of supernormal origin. Once criminal behaviour was attributed to mental ailments and deficiencies of character that could be removed through proper treatment; now, virtually all efforts at rehabilitation have been abandoned. The Plague Years forced a stark re-evaluation of human life. Now the criminal is seen as being of a class all his own, having given up his humanity to prey upon his fellow men like any other abomination. The criminal class prides itself on being apart from polite society, and while there may be no honour among thieves, the members of the Family share a curious bond.

Though many criminals prefer to operate solo or in pairs, thieves often organize themselves into gangs or mobs for mutual protection and to pool their resources. Each gang is headquartered at a flash house, where the gang meets and stashes stolen goods. Most flash houses employ a network of lookouts that warn the gang when trouble is on the way, such as a police raid or an attack from a rival gang. Flash houses may also act as centres for training the gang's next generation. Operating as de facto academies for the criminal arts, flash houses churn out ready-made thieves with the skill to go about their chosen profession upon graduation.

The criminal underground operates relatively unhindered throughout the metropolis despite the best efforts of the Metropolitan Police. Outmanned and insufficient to the task of ridding the city of the criminal element, "the Met" has been forced to leave the slums and rookeries of London free from lawful order. So-called "victimless crimes" are generally either overlooked by constables on the beat or are not regarded as crimes at all. Apothecaries dispensing dubious pharmaceuticals are seldom bothered unless their wares prove to be fatal. Prostitutes legally work the streets, though they are subject to summary inspection. Those who are incarcerated are generally picked up for rowdy behaviour induced by excessive drunkenness or for petty theft.

For those convicted of crimes, the punishments are steep. Prison time and forced labour are the most common sentences handed down. Though capital punishment remains

on the books, it is seldom implemented, and then only for murders, reanimators, and traitors. After all, why should society execute healthy and able-bodied citizens if they can be forced to work off their debts? There are no special rights afforded to either women or children. All found guilty are expected to be punished equally. Pregnancy is considered sufficient reason for a stay of sentence, but the reprieve only lasts until the child is born.

Sentencing is based upon both the severity of the crime and the inclinations of the judge. Most non-violent crimes, such as burglary and pick pocketing, earn a fledgling criminal roughly three months in prison. Repeated offences will result in longer prison terms. Occasionally these petty criminals will be remanded to workhouses, especially if there are debts owed by the convicted man. Though the dark, dingy Neo-Victorian prisons are hardly inviting, they are much preferred to serving time in workhouses. In prisons, inmates are separated and an outbreak of spontaneous animation is easy to contain. Outbreaks in workhouses often result in mass exterminations to ensure that none of the infected escape.

More violent or abhorrent crimes, such as body snatching, result in longer and harsher sentences. Assaults and muggings result in sentences of three years or more for the first offence. Extremely violent crimes, including some murders, result in extraordinary punishments. The worst of the lot are sentenced to twenty years of hard labour in the coal mines where they are forced to work for food. Most convicts would prefer to receive the death sentence than be locked up in the darkness where periodic plague outbreaks result in the total loss of the prisoner population.

Judges may also sentence prisoners to mandatory service in the Penal Corp, a division of the Deathwatch. These prisoners are utilized in the most dangerous reclamation efforts. The average life span of a prisoner in the Corp is sixteen months, and most of that time is spent waiting in a cell until called to duty. There have been some noises made in Parliament concerning the possibility of sending these reclamation teams to former colonies to attempt to stabilize conditions there. Thus far, nothing has come of these debates.

Repeat offenders and particularly violent prisoners are occasionally sent to asylums for psychological review. Many simply disappear from official rosters, lost in a mire of

paperwork. Often, the alienists that work in these institutions harbour queer ideas about the plasticity of the human psyche and will attempt to restore the criminal's diseased mind to its natural order by subjecting him to all manner of chemical injections and corrective surgeries. Though there have been some minor successes in chemically rehabilitating criminals, most end their lives as lobotomised medical oddities. Despite setbacks, the popularity of these programs is rumoured to be growing.

## Common Thieves

"These young thieves seldom commit their depredations in the localities where they are known, but prowl in different parts of the metropolis. They are of a wandering character, changing from one district to another, and living in different lodging-houses – often leaving their parents' houses as early as ten years of age."

—John Binny, "Thieves and Swindlers," from Henry Mayhew's London Labour and the London Poor, 1861

Well-organized thieves ply their trade in every corner of the metropolis. The city has been notorious for its structured criminal underground for centuries. The youngest or least talented are called sneaks. Sneaks often operate in groups: several of their number create distractions while others steal from shops, open windows, or costermongers' carts. Sneaks have little future ahead of them and will inevitably end up dead or in prison. The youngest, children below the age of six, rarely face trial, instead being remanded to the custody of some good-works organization in a generally futile attempt to rescue them from a life of crime. As these thieves age, their childhood pranks net them longer and longer sentences until they are removed permanently from the streets of the metropolis as public nuisances.

Next in the order of thieves are the pickpockets, sometimes called dippers or toolers. When taking to the streets, pickpockets may operate alone or in groups. As with sneaks, some members of a gang may be utilized to distract pigeons while other members let their nimble fingers do their work. Most pickpockets content themselves to steal from the coat pockets of those they pass on the streets. A sufficiently bold and dexterous tooler may attempt to snatch a watch from a gentleman's vest pocket while speaking to him.

The majority of pickpockets begin their careers as children, stealing what they cannot afford. Many of these wayward youths apprentice themselves to older thieves, who give them a place to stay and train them in the finer points of the craft. In exchange, the tutor receives a portion of the younger thief's ill-gotten gains. These old thieves have graduated from many gaols and penitentiaries, and as much time has been devoted to their training as is required to master any of the learned professions. Possessing a treasury of criminal knowledge, they even take pride in imparting it to the rising generation of thieves.

Generally the more successful the pickpocket, the better dressed he will be. Fine clothes are not only a sign of status, but a groomed and fashionable appearance also helps in blending into higher-class neighbourhoods where there is more money to be made. Female pickpockets are particularly known for their flashy dress and evening gowns.

Burglars constitute another distinct order of thieves present in all classes, the greater number of them being liberated convicts. Thus, there are those who break into shops and city warehouses and those who receive stolen goods, providing the former with a ready vendor for their plunder. There are those who break into dwelling houses, who conduct their depredations on a regular system, and there are those who break into banks and jewellers' and goldsmiths' shops. These last are the senior wranglers in crime; they are men who will only "go in for a big thing," and they are spoken of in the profession as "tip-toppers" and "first-class cracksmen."

The most abhorrent class of burglar is known by the quaint appellation "tomb robber." These callous ruffians make their livelihood breaking into the homes of the dead or plague stricken. A particularly dangerous field of work, tomb robbers not only expose themselves to all manner of ailments but are also much hated by the communities they prey upon. Angry mobs have been known to take to the streets and beat suspected tomb robbers to death.

## Resurrection Men & the Meat Markets

*"I have made candles of dead man's fat,*
*The Sextons have been my slaves,*
*I have bottled babes unborn, and dried*
*Hearts and livers from rifled graves.*

*And my Prentices now will surely come*
*And carve me bone from bone,*
*And I who have rifled the dead man's grave*
*Shall never have rest of my own."*
*— Robert Southey "The Surgeon's Warning." 1799*

The practice of body snatching is among the vilest crimes commonly perpetrated. Though the trade is familiar

to students of pre-Reclamation crime lore, the new wave of corpse lifting is altogether more horrific than it was during the days of the Anatomy Act. Resurrection men steal bodies, often at great risk to life, limb, and public safety, to sell them at charnel markets, where they may be alchemically reanimated as morbid puppets, or worse, devoured by degenerate ghouls. Morality aside, the practice is particularly dangerous because one never knows when a corpse may spontaneously animate and seek the flesh of the resurrectionist in turn.

Though dangerous and dirty work, body snatching is not without its rewards. Mandatory cremation of the dead coupled with intense demand has steadily driven up prices for corpses at market. Outside the official channels that supply Neo-Victorian medical schools, corpses are hard to come by. Ghouls, amateur anatomists, necrophiles, and renegade reanimators alike are forced to depend on resurrection men for their cadaverous materials. Though in direct competition for the choicest cuts, ghouls willing to settle for "seasoned," or aged, meats tend to find more bargains than reanimators requiring the freshest specimens.

Most of the corpses sold at market are victims of violence or environmental hazards harvested from the streets. Others are taken from orphanages, poor houses, and prisons. Resurrectionists are in a constant race to beat plague carts to the scenes of recent deaths. Many employ networks of informants to alert them to a death in the neighbourhood. Street urchins make excellent lookouts and are often willing to sell out their own family if the price is right. Some resurrectionists attempt to bribe plaguemen to divert a portion of their pick-ups. These attempts most often fail, but enterprising resurrection men keep trying.

Occasionally, particularly unscrupulous resurrectionists have been known to turn to cold-blooded murder to procure corpses. So-called "burking" is the practice of strangling or poisoning victims for the purpose of selling their cadavers at market. Strangulation is the preferred method of burking since poison decreases the value of a corpse substantially. Certain elder ghouls may appreciate the tang of arsenic, but most have no taste for poison and refuse to buy meat tainted with it, claiming it spoils the flavour. Reanimators also have little use for poisoned specimens since toxins tend to interfere with the process of alchemical reanimation. Burking is frowned upon not only by the constabulary but also by large segments of the ghoul and resurrectionist community because it draws a great deal of unwanted attention to the meat market. Often times, murderous resurrection men

become the victims of vigilante justice from within the ranks of their own criminal class.

To buyer and seller alike, corpses are "things," and things are classified by size. The most expensive things are "larges." Larges are male corpses of ordinary size. Next are "mediums," or female corpses. Occasionally shortish men will be sold as mediums. Children are "smalls." Smalls are subdivided into "large small," "small," and "foetus" but are sold by the inch. Ghouls often develop a taste for a particular size of smalls. Foetuses are often devoured as light meals or appetizers.

The butchers who cater to these markets are often legitimate businessmen who sell contraband meat in the back of their shops. Some meat markets are literally underground shops marked by the constant buzzing of corpse flies and the odour of decayed flesh. Thoroughly illegal and subject to sporadic, violent crackdowns, markets tend to pay cash on delivery with no questions asked. Supplied by resurrection men who earn their livelihood gathering the by-products of life for profit, these are not places for the faint of heart.

**PRICES AT MARKET**

The following are the average prices that a buyer may expect to pay at a meat market. Resurrectionists are generally paid half of the going rate.

**LARGE: £1/10S/-**
**MEDIUM: £1**
**SMALL: 3D PER INCH**

Anathemas sell for one-tenth the going rate. Particularly rare or freakish things may sell for a hundred times the going rate or more.

Things of unusual shapes or sizes may fetch higher prices at market. In addition to the usual clientele that frequents meat markets, true oddities may also draw the attention of collectors and medical institutions. Some meat markets specialize in the bizarre and the grotesque. The Anathemas, modified specimens of humanity produced in the laboratories of London, sell for much less than natural things. Anathemas tend to be useless to reanimators, and ghouls complain about the taste and texture. Some ghouls, however, develop a taste for these unusual meats.

Body snatching is considered to be a serious crime; not only is the practice distasteful, but it also jeopardizes public safety. There are cases on record of outbreaks of the Plague originating at meat markets. Additionally, meat markets fuel the outlawed science of reanimation, supplying would-be reanimators with the raw material necessary for their research. Resurrectionists can expect a lengthy prison term of not less than ten years of hard labour if caught.

**Historical Grave Robbing**

*Long ago, grave robbers supplied the medical schools of Britain with corpses for dissection. Until the passage of the Anatomy Act of 1832, few medical schools had access to significant numbers of legally obtained corpses. Without a steady supply of fresh bodies, the thriving schools had to turn to unlawful means of procuring corpses. Some schools required their students to provide their own materials for dissection. However, most schools turned to professional grave robbers because students were viewed as unreliable and medical schools could not afford botched jobs leading angry mobs to their front doors.*

*No shortage of resurrectionists answered the call. The combination of light penalties for those caught and the high demand for fresh materials started a boom in the body-snatching business. Though profitable, it was a dangerous life. Riots and lynching were continual fears of both the grave robbers and the schools that employed them.*

*Once in their possession, students would burn the corpse's clothes, deface the bodies, and cut away scars or identifying marks. Even if caught, anatomists and grave robbers could occasionally count upon some assistance from the local law enforcement even if it only came in the form of a warning of impending vigilante justice. Usually medical students would have time to hide their corpses until the trouble had passed. Some schools used elaborate systems of pulleys to lift corpses out of view during a search.*

# Murder & the New Killers

*"Homicidal lunatics are cunning, deceptive, plausible, and on the surface, to all outward appearances, sane; but there is contained within their innermost nature a dangerous lurking after blood, which, though at times latent, will develop when the opportunity arises. That the murderer of the victims in Whitechapel will prove to be such an individual is the belief of your obedient servant."*

*—L. Forbes Winslow, M.B., LL.M.Camb, D.C.L. Oxon. Letter to the Editors,* The Lancet, *22 September 1888*

Despite the best efforts of the constabulary, homicide rates within the metropolis have soared upwards for decades. This gruesome trend extends beyond class or geographical boundaries. Indeed, many of the most horrific murders in Neo-Victorian history have been committed by the wealthiest members of society. It is of note that despite a stern desire to believe that such violent and despicable crimes are exclusively the province of men, it appears that murder knows no weaker sex: women are just as likely as men to commit these terrible crimes.

Murder for material gain remains woefully common. Should the dailies be believed, the streets of the East End are absolutely crawling with cutthroats and street assassins. Though these reports are clearly exaggerated, the sheer number of violent crimes is so great that a certain number must inevitably result in fatality. Among many aristocratic families, murder has been a practiced art form for centuries. Mothers teach daughters the fine art of poisoning to remove obstacles to their happiness. Second sons gain titles meant for their older siblings after mysterious and unfortunate deaths. Many families still retain the services of food tasters to ensure longevity.

Infanticide accounts for an incredible percentage of known homicide victims; some figures suggest as many as sixty percent of victims are babies. Most of these are cases of abandonment in which the mother leaves her unwanted child to die rather than raising it in shame or in the workhouse. More awful than these are the "baby farmers," who take charge of unwanted infants for a single payment and later allow their adopted wards to perish, pocketing the money that was meant to pay for the child's welfare. Often these children are allowed to starve or die of malnourishment, though opium poisoning may be employed to speed along the process. Not strictly a Neo-Victorian phenomena, an 1860 report stated that almost three hundred infants were murdered in one London district alone. Babies were found dead in the Thames, canals, ponds, under railway arches, on doorsteps, and in cellars. Cases of baby farming have become more sensational since the Victorian Era. Stories of children raised and harvested for either the rarefied tastes of aging ghouls or the special needs of reanimators are horrific beyond belief. It is certain that some reanimators hunt corpses with exceptional or specific qualities, such as limbs of certain length or physical strength. Though little evidence exists to support foul stories, these rumour do fan anti-ghoul sentiments.

The numbers of apprehended murderers that describe a compulsion to kill beyond their control steadily increases each year. When captured alive, these malefactors describe a calling welling up from within, driving them to inflict indescribable atrocities upon their fellow men. The Metropolitan Police has commissioned a number of studies to determine the cause of these abhorrent trends, but the studies have thus far proven inconclusive.

Most alienists cite the pressures of the post-plague world coupled with an increasing and universal sense of dread. Human life, once sacred to civilized men, appears to have lessened in value. There are those that suggest that the cramped conditions and abject poverty suffered by those dwelling in the slums is more than enough to elicit murderous tendencies. Unable to improve their status in life or confront those at the top of the social strata, these disenfranchised lunatics strike out at those closest to them. Though this theory seems to adequately explain the serial killings that are all too common in the East End, they do little to suggest motives for wealthy or aristocratic sport murderers. Some alienists go so far as to suggest that an unseen psychic malady preys on the subconscious of all those residing within the metropolis; it is simply those with the weakest moral fibre who succumb to temptation. Critics of this theory suggest that adherents are simply attempting to explain their own murderous inclinations, and so the debate continues.

Beyond a predilection for murder, these new killers have few traits in common. Each is utterly driven by his own inclinations, and little may be said to generalize their breed. Some of these killers seem driven to commit their crimes to call attention to attention to their very existence. Headlines and written accounts of their exploits provide a lasting record of their existence. It is a dreadful indictment of the human psyche that even as these murderers strive for immortality, they must compete for the lime light with both their contemporaries and all those who have come before them. The increasingly jaded public has an ever-shortening attention span for trivial murders, and those who kill for attention must be showmen and innovators. Others are dominated by a keen sense of ritual that harkens back to the primordial darkness of pre-history, when the world was founded on blood and sacrifice. These visionary killers seek to purify the evils of the world by cleansing the streets with the blood of their victims. Some alienists have suggested that they are not unlike the flagellants of the Middle Ages who sought to satisfy God's bloodlust with their own suffering, though these lunatics prefer to inflict pain rather than endure it.

A frightful number of killers hail from the ranks of the educated. Surgeons, in particular, seem predisposed to crimes of obsession. For many, the drive to refine their anatomical skills proves overwhelming. Though corpses may be available for dissection, it is obvious that the best way to learn the inner workings of the human body is to observe them first hand via the vivisection of living subjects. Until such a time as the proper authorities leave the way clear to making pre-cadaverous material available, these physicians must see to their own supply. Such killers seem perpetually drawn to the exemplary human specimens, whether the targets are in peak physical condition, the picture of beauty, or an aberration of natural law.

It is believed among some at Scotland Yard that there exists a secret society of rogue surgeons who use their influence and wealth to avoid detection and prosecution. This misguided cabal maintains a number of hidden slaughter hospitals among the abandoned warehouses of the East End. Though the existence of such a society has never been proven, a number of surgeons were nearly put on trial for such grotesque crimes in 2069. Charges were dropped after the prosecution's eye witnesses disappeared without a trace. Dailies at the time went so far as to suggest that the missing persons ended up on the dissection table.

**The Ripper Legacy**

*It is widely held that the first of these new killers began their careers after the Ripper slayings of 1888. Indeed, a number of captured killers have expressed a reverent respect for their patriarch, to whom they still pay homage. It is little wonder that the Ripper has become the patron saint of the new killers since his sensational crimes were likewise embraced by the new media, ever ready to supply a public increasingly hungry for lurid tales of blood and atrocity.*

# Dark Addictions

*"The serpent crawled where once were streets and squares;*
*Owls and dull birds sat on mouldering walls*
*Of crumbling buildings, that marked the spot*
*Where England, France, had stood – to utter ruin gone."*
*—Owen Howell,* The Dream of the Opium Eater, *c. 1850*

For many, the legions of horrors plaguing the Neo-Victorian world are simply too much to bear. It is easier for these living ghosts to escape into private dream worlds soaked in laudanum or drowned in the haze of opium smoke. With their senses dulled and memories clouded, they simply wait for life to pass them by. Since the end of the Plague Years, the number of opium addicts has grown steadily. They haunt back alleys, gambling parlours, and decaying manor houses. Each year thousands succumb to this affliction, silently passing from the grim realities that so terrified them.

It can be no wonder that abuse of the substance is so widespread: opium is inexpensive, readily available, and commonly prescribed for all manner of ailments. The seductions of the poppy are one of the few preoccupations available to the Neo-Victorians that transcends social barriers. Vagrants breathe deeply from rags soaked with opium and alcohol while labourers avoid the dreary realities of life by consuming pills by the handful or pouring the stuff into their pints.

Opiates are potent euphorics that ease a user into a sense of well-being and a calm drowsiness or sedation. Breathing slows, potentially to the point of unconsciousness and death with large doses. The after effects include nausea, confusion, and constipation. Opium has been known to trigger vivid hallucinations in some imbibers. Many psychics and mediums find the powerful dream states brought on by opium to be an asset to their work.

Despite the infamy attributed to the opium den, few such receptacles for lost souls actually exist. In truth, opiates are readily available throughout Neo-Victorian cities, and most people prefer to use it in the privacy of their own homes rather than smoke opium in public establishments notorious for rampant criminality.

For centuries physicians have dispensed all manner of opiates to their patients, ensuring that the addiction has spread to the highest levels of society. Alongside morphine and cocaine, pharmacies peddle narcotic medications over the counter to anyone with the money to buy. Commonly available are opium plasters, sleep aids, cough drops, and scores of other applications. These tonics and applications are not only administered to adults but also to infants and toddlers to quiet them or aid them through teething.

Laudanum, a tincture of alcohol and opium extract, is a substance particularly favoured among the upper classes. Its abuse is generally considered more genteel since a physician may recommend its application. In this way, addiction becomes hidden behind the airs of respectability.

Opium never incited the temperance movement in the same fashion that alcohol did because it seldom produces the aggression or violence associated with drunkenness. Despite the dangers inherent in the abuse of opiates, Neo-Victorian

society has graver threats with which to contend. There has been no attempt to curtail the use of the substance since the Pharmacy Act of 1868, which prohibited the sale of narcotics on the street from handcarts. Presently opiates are generally available only through pharmacies and chemist shops.

Though once the majority of opium was imported from India and Turkey, it has been domestically produced since well before the Plague Years. Production is centred around Mitcham, Surrey where white poppies are grown up to six feet in height with bulbs the size of a fist.

Strangely, the impact of the spreading blight has been minimal on the poppy fields. The land where the opium poppies are grown is undeniably tainted. Efforts to grow other crops in these fields to help offset the loss of agricultural land elsewhere have failed abysmally: food grown in this land is inedible, and most plants will not grow at all. Only the poppy, hemp, and wormwood, the traditional harvest of these fields, will grow reliably. The yield from these crops appears to be thus far free of the pollution of the Wastelands, and as the demand is great, the wholesomeness of the supply is not frequently questioned.

# Prostitution

*"The legislature, by refusing to interfere, have tacitly declared the existence of prostitutes to be a necessary evil, the suppression of which would produce alarming and disastrous effects upon the country at large."*

*—Bracebridge Hemyng, "Prostitution in London," from Henry Mayhew's* London Labour and the London Poor, *1861*

Prostitution is legal in Neo-Victorian Britain, and the trade is commonly practiced throughout London. The vast majority of prostitutes come from the lower classes. Workers like any others, prostitutes are simply trying to survive. Many are women turned out to work the streets by their husbands. Others are drunks and drug addicts only looking for enough money to fuel their addictions. To some, prostitution represents a freedom from the confines of Neo-Victorian social demands.

Prostitution is by no means confined to the fairer sex. Young men of the slums, unemployed or employed in low-paying professions, commonly take to the streets as a means of obtaining ready money and other favours. There are places in London where a gentleman of means can, for the price of a few drinks and a good meal, obtain the company of a young man on which to practice

rare vices. There are a small number of brothels featuring male whores and catering almost exclusively to a male clientele; these houses change location regularly to avoid incurring suspicion and probable harassment by neighbours and police.

Despite the dangers of the work, prostitutes who avoid addiction and disease are generally healthier than other lower-class workers, who are forced to toil in miserable conditions for fourteen or more hours a day. There are few brothels in Neo-Victorian London, though most rooming houses tolerate prostitution as long as the whores pay up on time and are not too loud. Whores operating out of a brothel under the relatively benign guidance of a madam are far better off than those working the streets.

Though prostitution is not a crime, sex workers are subject to constant police harassment. The police force regularly inspects prostitutes on the street for signs of sexually transmitted diseases. Those that show signs are held in lock hospitals for up to nine months or until deemed healthy enough to re-enter society. All prostitutes are also required to carry registration cards. Many whores, fearing either the lock house or the summary execution that follows the discovery of vampiric infection, avoid these inspections at all costs, sometimes fleeing the police on sight. Male prostitutes are rarely subject to this harassment; the prejudices of the time are such that men are rarely, if ever, suspected of being "in the trade".

Well known and generally accepted, the adventuress is far removed from the streetwalkers and whores of the slums. She is a high-class paramour courting the continuing patronage and protection of the upper classes or the wealthiest ranks of the middle class. Occasionally such arrangements have been known to end in marriage — and scandal soon after. These women, known for their exceptional beauty, intelligence, and talents, frequent the more fashionable sections of the city. Adventuresses are absolutely free of the police harassment that plagues lower-class streetwalkers. A crusher would never dare stop one of these women out of dire fear of reprisal from her aristocratic lover. Middle-class women often dream of becoming as fortunate as the daring adventuresses, many of whom also enjoy prominent careers in the theatre or opera.

## The Anarchist Conspiracy

*"Rise like Lions after slumber*
*In unvanquishable number –*
*Shake your chains to earth like dew*
*Which in sleep had fallen on you –*
*Ye are many – they are few."*
*—Percy Bysshe Shelley,* The Mask of Anarchy, *1832*

For all the horrors held at bay by the great fortifications surrounding Neo-Victorian cities, there are those who would tear down the walls. These individuals view the state as a faceless instrument of tyranny by which the common man is held in servitude through a class system that raises certain individuals above all others at birth. They not only condemn the state but also the symbols, institutions, and individuals who make up that system. Ultimately they clamour not for a revolution but for nothing less than the total abolition of government.

Neo-Victorian anarchists are violent extremists who rely on terrorism to conduct their private war against the state. Assassination and bombing are their tools of choice. They target public and private property in hopes of generating as much attention to their cause as possible. Though frightfully effective, the anarchist movement is not widely organized. Anarchists tend to be dangerous lone wolves or operate in small, independent cells. Some cells share information and tactics, but they operate autonomously as a rule. If captured, a fanatical anarchist would prefer suicide to giving up even the sparse information he possesses.

The government has declared its own war in response to anarchy. The Special Branch of the Criminal Investigation Division has taken a particular interest in the movement. Leaders on both sides are regularly targeted for assassination. Anarchist leaders in custody are said to endure lengthy and brutal interrogation sessions. As Neo-Victorian prisons and gaols fill with apprehended political dissidents, they, in turn, become recruiting and training grounds for new generations of anarchists.

Though it is certainly possible for an enlightened thinker to understand the root logic of the anarchist's doctrine, their beliefs are tragically naïve. Though Neo-Victorian Britain is a police state absolutely ruled by an elitist minority, the harsh reality is that extreme situations require extreme solutions. It was not so long ago that humanity faced extinction.

## Supermundane Inhabitants

In addition to the many cultures of homo sapiens dwelling within the walls of the metropolis, there are a number of supermundane races sharing the streets of London. Ghouls compete with vampires and other unspeakable horrors for the limited resources of the Underground, the vast labyrinth of abandoned train tunnels, basements, sewers, and forgotten passageways beneath the streets of London. Shape-changing thropes walk undetected among ordinary men until their savage tempers erupt, resulting in death and mass destruction. Dhampiri, the half-vampires, seek their fortunes as monster hunters alongside human Undertakers.

It has been estimated that over fifteen thousand ghouls attempt to make a peaceful living beneath London. Though ghouls attempt to keep a low profile, their peculiar dietary requirements, the consumption of dead human flesh, occasionally makes them a target for public outrage. Barely tolerated in the best of times, most citizens think of ghouls as little more than cannibalistic vermin, no better than vampires or animates. Though ghouls have few qualms about disposing of the bodies of trespassers, most prefer to purchase flesh rather than hunting for it. An entire black-market industry has grown up around the needs of ghouls for victuals that can neither be legally bought nor raised.

The presence of ghouls is generally tolerated by the bureaucracy of the city, provided ghouls do not draw attention to themselves. Most officials are content to ignore their existence, as long as they are not routinely confronted with the horrors of flesh-consuming cannibals living beneath their streets. Understanding this, ghouls keep to themselves and seldom leave the Underground, except to find work, and those that do take precautions to mask their appearance to avoid police harassment.

Dhampiri, on the other hand, are the romanticized tragic heroes of the penny dreadfuls circulated throughout the metropolis. Dhampiri almost universally put their extraordinary physical talents to use seeking employment as Mourners or Undertakers. A small number have risen to become prominent figures within the criminal class of the metropolis. Dhampiri's hatred for their vampire progenitors is well documented, and Dhampiri Undertakers are legendary for their martial prowess. Another reason for their acceptance is that Dhampiri only exist in very small numbers despite their protracted life spans. Furthermore, their lineage is only betrayed by their unnatural grace and lengthened canines; Dhampiri can easily pass for human. Considering their exotic nature, it is little wonder that aristocrats particularly prize Dhampiri paramours.

Thropes constitute a tiny, though infectious, shadow population cloaked in the flesh of men. Within each thrope lurks a ravening monster. When provoked into losing his temper, a thrope undergoes a rapid transmogrification, doubling or tripling in size, and becomes utterly dominated by its primal nature. Worse yet, those who are bitten by a thrope and survive become infected with the same affliction. When they are discovered, every effort is made to capture or destroy these dangerous creatures. Those who are captured are turned over to asylums and research facilities where they spend the remainder of their lives as subjects of ghastly experimentation. Those thropes living in London must take great precautions to avoid detection. Most take drugs to suppress their transformations and do their best to avoid stressful situations.

# Chapter Two - The Formula

This chapter details the rules that provide structure to Unhallowed Metropolis. The rules exist to add an element of risk and dramatic tension to the game. Can the Undertaker survive an encounter with a mass-murdering feral vampire? Will a fall from a third-story window prove fatal, or will he hit the ground running? Can he pick the lock to the old manor house before being torn to shreds by a horde of flesh-eating zombies? All these questions can be answered with a roll of the dice.

Rules provide guidelines for play. When a situation arises during play that is not covered by the rules, it is up to the Narrator to decide on the outcome. Because the role of the Narrator is to adjudicate the rules during the game, he is the ultimate authority on their interpretation.

Unhallowed Metropolis is not intended to be a dice-heavy game. Die rolling should be limited to dramatically appropriate times, such as during the heat of combat when even a minor error or hesitation can prove fatal. Trivial or commonplace actions, or any actions easily within a character's skill, should be executed successfully without resorting to a roll.

## Terminology

The following terms are standardized throughout the text.

**The Narrator** – The Narrator is the individual running the game, telling the story, and setting the scene.

**Player Character or PC** – A player character is a character controlled by a player. PCs are the primary protagonists in an Unhallowed Metropolis game.

**Non-Player Character or NPC** – Non-player characters are the background cast of the game. NPCs include all monsters, antagonists, and allies to the player characters.

**d10** – The Unhallowed Metropolis game system is based on ten-sided dice, abbreviated as "d10" in the rules. When a player makes a die roll for a skill check or combat action, he will roll two d10s, abbreviated as 2d10, and add the results. Occasionally, dice manufacturers print zeros (0) rather than tens (10) on their dice. These rules assume that a roll of "0" always indicates a result of 10.

**d5** – This is an abbreviation for "roll a d10, divide by 2, and round up." For example, when rolling a d5, a roll of 7 is divided by 2 and rounded up to 4.

**Attributes** – The numerical statistics that define a character's raw physical and mental make-up. All characters have the following attributes: Vitality, Coordination, Wit, Intellect, Will, and Charm. Ordinary humans generally have attribute scores of 1 – 5.

**Skills** – Skills express what a character knows. Each skill is ranked 1 - 5.

## Attribute & Skill Rolls

Any time a character attempts a task at which he has a chance of failing, such as scaling a high wall or making a combat action, an attribute roll or skill roll is made to determine whether or not the action was successful. Attribute rolls gauge the character's success when performing an unskilled action based on innate physical or mental capabilities, such as when he has to perform a feat of strength or resist the effects of poison. Skill rolls are made when a character attempts to use a skill to perform an action, such as regaining control of a runaway cab or attempting to fire a Requieter into the heart of a vampire.

As their names imply, attribute rolls are based on a character's attributes and skill rolls are based on a character's skills. If the rules do not explicitly state what attribute or skill should be used for a particular action, the Narrator decides. An attribute or skill roll is named after the attribute or skill being rolled. For example, a Vitality attribute roll is referred to as a Vitality roll.

To make an attribute roll or skill roll, roll 2d10 and add the character's pertinent attribute or skill, as defined by the action attempted. Most rolls are made against a static difficulty rating (DR) assigned by the rules text or the Narrator. If the roll meets or beats the difficulty rating, the action succeeds.

Unless the description of an action includes a formula for determining the difficulty rating of the action, the Narrator determines the DR of a task. Narrators should consider pertinent factors when determining the DR for a given action.

If the character is attempting a reckless stunt in the pouring rain that would be suicidal under optimal conditions, the DR for the stunt is likely to be quite high. Likewise, if the character attempts a complex action like surgery and lacks the appropriate skill for the action attempted, his failure is all but certain, as is the death of his patient.

Even if a character has all the appropriate skills to accomplish a task at hand, there may be plenty of factors limiting his chances for success. A skilled physician lacking clean water, a scalpel, or sterile conditions in the midst of an animate attack may attempt a delicate operation, but under these conditions, there will be considerable potential for mishap.

The difficulty ratings for tasks should be considered as guidelines rather than ironclad rules. The Narrator is the final authority in assigning a task's DR.

**Difficulty Rating**

| Task | Difficulty Rating (DR) |
|---|---|
| Simple | No roll |
| Moderate | 11 |
| Complex | 14 |
| Hard | 16 |
| Virtually Impossible | 20+ |
| Impossible | No roll |

# Simple Tasks

These are tasks so simple that they do not require a die roll. Simple tasks include any the action a character can reasonably make at will, such as soliciting a prostitute with cash in hand, shooting the broadside of a barn, basic math, and so forth. A simple task does not have a DR because success is automatic.

# Moderate Tasks

Moderate tasks are actions that a basically unskilled character can accomplish half the time. Narrators may prefer to allow characters to succeed in some moderate tasks without a die roll. Moderate tasks have a DR of 11.

# Complex Tasks

These are tasks with a reasonable chance of failure. Complex tasks require hands-on experience and, perhaps, a little practice. Treating broken bones, picking a lock in the dark, and discovering obscure information in a good library are complex tasks. Complex tasks have a DR of 14.

# Hard Tasks

It is unlikely that a character lacking substantial skill in the applicable area will be able to accomplish hard tasks. Hard tasks include removing a bullet from a bone, climbing a sheer surface in the rain, and forging government documents. Hard tasks have a DR of 16.

# Virtually Impossible Tasks

Virtually impossible tasks can only be accomplished by the most skilled characters and, even then, not without substantial risk of failure. The flawless alchemical reanimation of life, the creation of a new galvanic weapon, and swimming across the blight-tainted waters of the English Channel are all virtually impossible tasks. Virtually impossible tasks have a DR of 20 or more.

# Impossible Tasks

Some tasks are simply impossible. A character attempting what the Narrator considers an impossible task automatically fails without a die roll.

# Failure

Except in critical situations, a character failing an attribute or skill roll may attempt the action again once the failure is resolved. A researcher may waste hours following false leads and return to work the next day. An alchemical reanimist may be displeased with the fruits of his labours and choose to redouble his efforts to obtain a more perfect result.

Some failures may have immediate and dire results. The poor sod who fails to climb a slippery wall only to slide into the waiting grasp of a horde of animates may not get a chance to attempt another climb. Likewise, a New Scotland Yard detective attempting to disarm an anarchist's bomb may only get a single attempt at success before becoming so many bloody fragments.

In some cases, failing an initial roll may make a character's chances of success more difficult on subsequent attempts. After failing an initial attempt at deception, a swindler may have a hard time getting his mark to believe anything he says. A character that falls and breaks a wrist may find additional attempts at climbing virtually impossible. Under such conditions, the Narrator should modify the DR accordingly.

# Critical Rolls

When making an attribute or skill roll, a roll of double 1s is always a critical failure. A roll of double 10s is always a critical success. The effects of critical die rolls are determined by the Narrator unless described in the rules pertaining to the action attempted. No matter what the outcome of a critical roll, it should always be memorable.

For example, the results of a critical failure on an intimidation roll could cause the interrogator to spill every secret he knows to the subject of his interrogation. A poisoner mixing a lethal concoction could poison himself or accidentally mix a fortifying tonic instead. A theologian puzzling through a complex ecclesiastical concept could unwittingly convince himself that God simply does not exist.

On a critical success, a fiery politician could give the speech of his life, propelling his career to new heights. A painter could create a masterpiece, immortalizing himself for all time.

# Opposed Rolls

If a character is attempting a task that another character directly opposes, both characters make opposed rolls. Opposed rolls do not have difficulty ratings. Instead, the characters involved roll 2d10 and add the pertinent skill or attribute. The character with the highest total succeeds. If both characters have the same result, the roll was a draw and neither succeeds.

# Combat Actions

Combat actions are slightly more complex than standard attribute and skill rolls. Combat actions are explained in greater detail below (see Combat, pages 92 – 108).

## Attributes

Attributes are a method of gauging a character's capabilities and natural aptitudes, and they provide a means of comparing characters' strengths and weaknesses. A physically powerful character has a high Vitality. An exceptionally intelligent character has a high Intellect.

The higher the attribute is, the greater that potential. An attribute score of 1 reflects under-developed or stunted potential, a rating below the human average of 2. An attribute score of 3 is above average. A score of 4 denotes an exceptional aptitude, and an attribute score of 5 marks that aptitude as truly exceptional. A score of 6 is extramundane. An attribute score of 7 or higher marks the character as inhuman.

# Vitality

Vitality measures a character's physical health, strength, stamina, and resistance to physical harm and illness. A character with a high Vitality attribute is well muscled and in excellent physical condition. A character with a low Vitality score is puny or in poor physical condition. If a character's Vitality attribute is ever reduced below 0, he dies.

- Vitality is added to melee and unarmed combat damage rolls.
- When the character is hit by an unarmed combat attack, his Vitality is subtracted from the attacker's damage roll.
- Vitality rolls are made to resist the effects of poison, drugs, and harmful environmental factors.
- Vitality determines how much a character can lift.
- Vitality may determine how long a seriously injured character will live.

# Coordination

Coordination measures the character's natural grace, reaction time, agility, manual dexterity, and hand-eye coordination. When the fighting starts, Coordination can separate the quick from the dead.

- Coordination reduces a character's chances of being hit during combat.
- Coordination helps to determine the number of actions a character can take each turn.
- Coordination helps determine the character's Prowess in combat.
- Coordination determines a character's ability to leap out of the path of oncoming hazards, climb walls, and generally act athletically.

# Wit

Wit gauges the character's perception and mental reaction time. This attribute describes the speed at which the character thinks and his ability to piece together information, to respond in verbal duels, and to assess a situation. A character with a keen wit is observant and calculating.

- Wit helps to determine the number of actions a character can take in a round.
- Wit helps determine the character's Prowess in combat.
- Wit determines the sharpness of a character's senses.
- Wit determines the character's capacity to spot clues and make keen observations.

# Intellect

A character's Intellect is a measure of his raw intelligence. Intellect is a gauge of a character's cognitive resources, ability to learn and discover, and capability to retain information. Intellect is used when drawing conclusions or assimilating data.

- Intellect determines the character's general knowl edge.
- Intellect is used when determining the character's success while researching information.
- A character cannot have an Academic skill higher than his Intellect attribute.

# Will

Will is a measure of the character's strength of mind, focus, and composure. Characters with a high Will are rock solid individuals who never lose their cool. Characters with low Will are uncertain, easily shaken and easily lead.

- Will determines the character's ability to shake off fear and other psychological effects.
- Will determines the character's ability to control himself under stressful situations.
- Will determines the character's ability to resist mind altering effects, such as some drugs and vampiric control.

# Charm

Charm gauges the character's poise and personality. It is a measure of the character's ability to manipulate social situations and draw favourable attention towards himself.

- Charm determines a character's ability to make a favourable impression.
- Charm helps the character talk his way out of dangerous situations.
- Charm determines how well a character can convince other people to believe him, especially while lying

# Prowess

Prowess is a measure of the character's natural skill in combat. It gauges his ability to react and move out of harm's way. Prowess is a calculated, or composite, attribute determined by adding a character's Coordination and Wit.

- Prowess adds to the character's initiative roll to determine his turn order in combat.
- Prowess determines the number of actions a character makes each turn.

# Applied Attributes

The following systems are examples of how a character may use his attributes in the game. These systems are not exhaustive. Players and Narrators will certainly find other uses for attributes during play.

### Vitality – Carrying

A character's Vitality attribute determines how much

weight he can comfortably carry. The higher the character's Vitality attribute, the greater his carrying threshold. A character may exceed his carrying threshold by up to fifty percent, but he is encumbered while doing so. While encumbered, a character suffers –1 Coordination.

Armour does not impact a character's carrying threshold. Armour impacts a character's Coordination separately from these rules (see Armour, Chapter 4, pages 207-211).

Players need not account for every kilogram their characters are carrying. Instead, general rules for encumbrance are listed by Vitality score.

A character with Vitality 1 is unquestionably weak. He can comfortably carry approximately 5 kilograms (11 pounds). He can reasonably carry the clothes on his back, a long coat, a pocket watch, and a small weapon without exerting himself. Heavy books or a medical valise may push his encumbrance into the next weight category.

A character with Vitality 2 can carry approximately 15 kilograms (33 pounds). He can carry a fair assortment of weapons and some fairly bulky equipment without being encumbered.

A character with Vitality 3 is athletic and powerful. The character can carry approximately 35 kilograms (77 pounds) without breaking a sweat. He can carry multiple rifles, a tremendous amount of ammunition, bags of severed animate heads, etc.

A character with Vitality 4 is heavily muscled. He can carry approximately 70 kilograms (154 pounds) without being encumbered. The character can carry very heavy equipment, the wounded body of a mid-weight comrade, or a light machine gun.

A character with Vitality 5 is a true powerhouse. The character can carry approximately 105 kilograms (231 pounds) without being slowed down.

A character with Vitality 6 is superhuman. He can carry weights that would crush a mortal man without even being encumbered. The character can carry approximately 175 kilograms (385 pounds), an astounding amount of weight. He can even carry weapons that are normally mounted on a vehicle. Note that he is not, however, exempt from the laws of physics. Leverage, mass, and the character's arm span should all be taken into account.

A character with Vitality 7 is unquestionably inhuman, a force of nature. He can carry approximately 400 kilograms (880 pounds) without being encumbered!

### Vitality – Feats of Strength

If a character rolls a critical failure on a Vitality – Feat of Strength roll, he pulls a muscle and suffers –1 Vitality for one day. A character cannot reduce his Vitality below 1 as a result of critically failing a lifting check.

Characters with exceptional Vitality scores are capable of even greater feats of strength.

**Dead Lift** -- Motivated characters are capable of amazing feats of strength. With a successful Vitality roll (DR 11), a character can lift up to three times his carrying threshold. With a little more effort (DR 16), the character can lift up to four times his carrying limit. A character making a lifting feat of strength can perform no other action except to move a number of feet equal to his Coordination attribute. Every minute, the character must make a Vitality or Wit roll (whichever is higher) versus the DR of the initial roll. If the roll fails, the character drops what he is carrying.

**Knocking Down Doors** – A character with Vitality 3 or greater can attempt to knock down a sturdy door with a successful Vitality roll (DR 14). If the door is particularly solid or reinforced, the DR could be increased or the task may become impossible. Narrators should take into account the strength of the character when determining whether the task is possible. There are few things a rampaging thrope cannot punch his way through.

**Bending Bars** – A character with Vitality 4 or greater is able to bend bars with a successful Vitality roll. The DR for such a task depends on how solid the bars are. Barred

## Lifting and Feats of Strength Table

| Vitality | Base Carry | Max Encumbered Carry | Base Lift | Max Lift |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 5 kilos | 7 kilos | 15 kilos | 20 kilos |
| 2 | 15 kilos | 22 kilos | 45 kilos | 60 kilos |
| 3 | 35 kilos | 52 kilos | 105 kilos | 140 kilos |
| 4 | 70 kilos | 105 kilos | 210 kilos | 280 kilos |
| 5 | 105 kilos | 157 kilos | 315 kilos | 420 kilos |
| 6 | 175 kilos | 262 kilos | 525 kilos | 700 kilos |
| 7 | 400 kilos | 600 kilos | 1200 kilos | 1600 kilos |

windows may require a roll versus a DR of 14 or 16 while the bars of a jail cell will be 20 or more. If the character has a tool, like a crowbar, that may be used to apply pressure, he may gain a bonus on his Vitality roll.

### Coordination – Climbing

When a character attempts to climb up a sheer surface, he makes a Coordination roll. When determining the DR for a climbing roll, the Narrator should consider the circumstances of the climb, such as footholds and handholds, environmental factors, and possibly the character's mental condition. If the roll is successful, the character makes the climb. If the roll fails, the character may fall or, at the Narrator's discretion, simply fail to make any progress climbing. If the character suffers a fall, see the falling rules below.

For example, Nicky's Undertaker character, Percy, attempts to climb a stone wall surrounding a Necropolis. The Narrator decides it is a moderate task (DR 11) because the wall is not very high and has plenty of handholds. Nicky rolls 2d10 and adds Percy's Coordination 3. Nicky rolls a 4 and a 5 and adds Percy's Coordination for a total of 12. Percy is up and over the wall in a flash.

In a more tragic example, Percy is being chased through a lightless alleyway in the rain by a horde of hungry animates. Nicky decides Percy will attempt to scale the wet, brick exterior wall of a warehouse to effect an escape. This time, the Narrator decides this is a hard task (DR 16) due to the stress of the situation coupled with the rain. Again, Nicky rolls 2d10 and adds Percy's Coordination 3. She rolls a pair of 5s and adds Percy's Coordination for a total 13. Poor Percy fails to escape and slides into the groping clutches of the animates.

A Narrator may require that a player make multiple climbing rolls if the conditions of climbing change for the worse, the character is attacked while climbing, or the character is climbing a long way and grows tired.

### Falling

Provided he is conscious, a character can fall up to his Coordination in meters without risking injury. A character falling up to a meter beyond this distance suffers a damage roll +1 for every meter or partial increment thereof beyond the safe distance. Subtract the character's Vitality from the damage roll.

For example, Nicky's Undertaker Percy fails another Coordination – Climbing roll. This time, instead of falling into the clutches of waiting animates, poor Percy slips off the roof of a two-story building and falls to the street below. The Narrator determines that Percy is falling six meters. With Coordination 3, Percy has fallen three meters beyond his safe falling distance and suffers a +2 damage roll minus Percy's Vitality.

At the Narrator's discretion, a falling damage roll may be further modified depending on what the character lands on. Obviously falling on cobble stones has a much greater chance of inflicting dire injury than falling on a bundle of blankets or dirty clothes.

### Coordination – Leap

A character's Coordination determines the maximum distance a character can easily leap and the DR for leaping a specific distance.

From a standing position, a character can leap up to his Coordination in meters without making a Coordination roll. With a running start, the character can leap up to one and a half times his Coordination in meters without a roll. Leaping longer distances is possible with a successful Coordination roll.

The DR for leaping greater distances is 11 + 3 for each meter, or portion thereof, beyond the character's normal leaping range. For example, a character with Coordination 3 attempting a six-meter running leap rolls versus a DR of 17 (11 + 6 for leaping two meters beyond his normal range of four and one-half meters).

If a character rolls a critical failure on a Coordination – Leaping roll he pulls muscles and suffers –1 Vitality for one day in addition to potentially falling. A character cannot reduce his Vitality below 1 as a result of failing a leaping check.

### Wit – Interrogation

Interrogation is the art of coercing information from a subject that he would otherwise be unwilling to disclose. Unlike torture, the ends of interrogation are not to force a confession but to get the subject to volunteer information willingly. Of course, for some interrogators, the line between the two is thin. Interrogators may utilize sleep deprivation, starvation, or the threat of physical violence to break an individual's will.

When a character attempts to interrogate a subject, he makes a contested Wit roll against the Will of the subject. The Narrator may give a bonus to either the interrogator or his subject based on the information possessed by either, whether or not the subject has been bribed or intimidated, the mental health of the subject, and whether the subject believes the interrogator means him harm.

If the interrogator rolls higher than the subject, he manages to obtain the information sought. If he rolls equal to or lower than the subject, the subject refuses to talk.

### Wit – Perception

A character's Wit determines his ability to spot hidden or obscured objects, details, nuances, and clues. The character may make a Wit–Perception roll to locate an object hidden in a room, to notice a peculiar detail in an individual's appearance or mannerisms, or to spot an assassin lying in wait. A Narrator may also call for a Wit roll but choose not to reveal the reason for the roll unless the character succeeds.

The Narrator determines the DR for perception checks, taking into account the environmental conditions around the character, how obvious a detail is, and whether the character knows what he is looking for. It is much easier to locate a particular large object in the middle of a well-lit room than to notice dried bloodstains beneath a crate in a dark warehouse in the midst of an animate rampage when the only light source is sporadic galvanic fire pouring from the battlements overhead as the Deathwatch attempts to stem the zombie tide.

A character attempting to spot a concealed individual makes a contested Wit roll versus the obfuscated character's Shadow skill.

### Intellect – General Knowledge

The human mind is capable of retaining tremendous amounts of information. General knowledge includes, but is not limited to, information the character has learned throughout his life, the knowledge of the area in which he lives and its inhabitants, and his knowledge of current events.

Whenever a player or the Narrator is uncertain of whether a character knows a certain piece of information, the player should make an Intellect roll. The Narrator determines what constitutes general knowledge and what requires a specific skill roll. A Narrator determining the DR for an Intellect – General Knowledge roll should take into account the obscurity of the subject, the character's familiarity with the subject, and the character's background. For example, a lower-class criminal from the East End is not likely to have information on which aristocratic couples have publicly announced their engagements this season as general knowledge.

A successful roll will provide some information on the topic while a failed roll will provide no information or misleading information.

### Intellect – Research

A character's Intellect determines his ability to find sought after answers when rifling through documents or old books. A Narrator determining the DR for an Intellect – Research roll should consider the obscurity of the information sought, the quality of the library or reference material to which the character has access, the character's familiarity with the subject, and the amount of time the character has to spend researching the subject.

Often, a successful roll will only provide a piece of the desired information, and the character will be forced to conduct further investigation at a later date. A failure provides either no information or misleading information.

### Will – Fear

Occasionally, a character will be confronted by a terrifying creature or a horrific event. At such times, the character must make a Will roll versus a DR determined by the Narrator. When determining the DR for a Will – Fear roll, the Narrator should consider the character's mental state, his proximity to other people, his familiarity with the source of the terror, and how horrific the source of the terror is.

If the character succeeds, he keeps control over himself and nothing happens. If the roll fails, the character is visibly shaken and suffers –1 on skill rolls while he remains in the vicinity of the source of his dread. The character must then immediately make a second Will – Fear roll.

If this roll succeeds, the character remains shaken as described above. If the roll fails, the character runs away from the source of his fear. Once he is at a safe distance, the character may make a Will roll (DR 11) at the start of each of his turns to calm down and regain control over himself. Outside of combat, the character rolls once per minute. If he succeeds, he can stop running. If the roll fails, he keeps running as fast as his legs will carry him.

If either the initial or secondary Will – Fear rolls result in a critical failure, the character is paralyzed with fear. While paralyzed, the character is considered to be an Unaware Target (see page 95) and cannot take any actions. At the start of each of his turns, the character must make a Will roll versus a DR determined by the Narrator. If the roll succeeds, he comes to his senses. If the roll fails, the character remains paralyzed. If the source of the character's fear leaves or the character is removed from the fearsome scene, he comes back to his senses at the beginning of his next turn. Paralytic fear is not necessarily quiet. While the character is insensate, he may be screaming his head off.

### Charm – Credibility

Occasionally even those with impeccable credentials and letters of introduction will have to rely upon their natural grace and bearing to leave a favourable impression.

A character may need to succeed in a Charm – Credibility roll to join a club, successfully propose marriage, seek gainful employment, or attempt to borrow money. A skilled swindler can certainly put on at least as good a show as a rude lord. The Narrator determines the DR for the Charm roll. When determining the difficulty, the Narrator should consider the character's appearance, his known history and reputation, his social class, and the likelihood that he has the proper credentials to actually support his claim.

If the character succeeds, he leaves a favourable impression. If the roll fails, the impression left was either weak or unfavourable. Depending upon how graciously a character accepts such failure, his reaction may become a cautionary tale for others.

### Charm – Guile

Whether a clever deception to save face or a confidence man's rap, eventually, everyone needs to distort the truth. A character's Charm attribute determines his ability to say the things that will get him what he wants.

When a character attempts a deception, he makes a contested Charm roll versus the Intellect of all those within earshot. The roll is based on the character's ability to use charisma to make others believe the conviction they hear in his voice.

The Narrator may give a bonus to either the deceiver or his pigeons based on their knowledge of the subject at hand. The deceiver may base his manipulations in truth, and a listener may know a fallacy when he hears one. Any characters with a total lower than the deceiver's will believe the story. Those who roll equal to or higher than the deceiver will suspect he is lying but may or may not act on their inclinations at their own discretion. If the character rolls a critical success, his stories are believed no matter how ludicrous. If he rolls a critical failure, it is impossible to take him seriously; not only does no one believe his stories but someone is certain to burst out in laughter.

In the case where a character wishes to sway the opinions of a particularly large group of NPCs, the Narrator may choose to have the character roll once versus the group. The result of the die roll determines the general effect of the character's words, though individual opinion may vary. The character may still have to roll versus important characters in the crowd individually, especially those who can have a direct impact on the character's well-being.

### Charm – Intimidation

Intimidation is a direct means of manipulation, the bending of another's will through the sheer force of personality coupled with the threat of imminent violence or retaliation. A character using intimidation threatens another's health, livelihood, or loved one as leverage to get what he wants. While not a way to make friends, it can certainly be effective. Most people cannot be intimidated into doing something that violates their most sacred principles, but then again, most people's principles are not as pristine as they would like to think. The Narrator is the arbiter of what a non-player character's emotional breaking points are and what actions they simply cannot be induced to perform.

When one character attempts to intimidate another, he makes a contested Charm roll versus his subject's Will. If two characters attempt to intimidate each other, each makes a contested roll, adding his Charm and Will.

The Narrator may give a bonus to either the intimidator or the subject based on the intimidator's reputation, his appearance, the willingness of the subject to believe the intimidator will carry out his threats, or whether the subject has suffered at the hands of the intimidator before. A character with an obvious advantage over his subject should receive a corresponding bonus to his Charm –Intimidation roll. Aiming a gun at an unarmed man will generally go a long way toward inducing compliance.

If the intimidator rolls higher than the subject, he coerces the subject into giving him what he asked for. If he rolls equal to or lower than the subject, the subject refuses to give him what he wants, no matter what he threatens.

### Charm – Seduction

Seduction, the ability to foster romantic attachment in another sexually compatible individual, is a valuable talent for aristocrat and whore alike. The target of the character's advances must find the character desirable in some way or the attempt will automatically fail.

When a character attempts to seduce a subject, he makes a contested Charm roll against the Will of the subject. The Narrator is encouraged to assign any bonus or penalty he sees fit based on the character's relative appeal to the tastes, prejudices, morals, or fetishes of the target. The physical attractiveness of the seducer should play no small role as well.

If a character succeeds in seducing another, that person will be favourably disposed toward the character and may even be coerced into assisting the character in endeavours other than those promised in the seduction. The willingness

to help the seducer will vary depending on the nature of what is asked for and the individual involved. The target of a successful seduction will typically remain friendly toward the seducer until mistreated or until he begins to believe that the sweet promises of the seduction are just a ruse.

If the seducer rolls a critical success or the target rolls a critical failure, the target of the seduction falls madly in love with the seducer and will do anything for him. Of course, if the target of the seduction becomes a victim, love will surely turn to hate. If the seducer rolls a critical failure or the target rolls a critical success, the seduction attempt is a disaster. Not only is the seducer made a laughing stock, but any future attempts to seduce the target again are doomed to automatic failure.

# *Corruption*

*"You must suffer me to go my own dark way. I have brought on myself a punishment and a danger that I cannot name. If I am the chief of sinners, I am the chief of sufferers also."*
*--Robert Louis Stevenson, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, 1886*

There is corruption at the very heart of the Unhallowed Metropolis. There is no person so pure that death does not afflict him or sin does not tempt him, no person so clean that he has not stepped down the roads of corruption. Corruption makes the world an easier place in which to live.

These rules are used to understand just how far a character has travelled and what awaits him at the end of that dark road. Should he live that long — should his story be fully told — your character will inevitably become a monster. Not too long after that, your character's story will end, and it'll be time to make a new character.

You can fight this. You have to be careful though. The fastest way to become a monster is by being certain that you won't. It's the people who are most confident in their innocence and purity who wind up ruining the most lives.

So here's how we want you to look at it. Your character is doomed. His corruption is a march towards the death of his soul. But you should get as much out of each step downwards as you can. You want to sell your character's soul dearly. Of course, it's a buyer's market and a rigged game. But the Narrator wants you to be happy, so if you don't get too uptight, you should still be able to get a good price.

## Dealing with the Devil

Corruption represents a Faustian contract between the character and his inner demons. People never tested by the world like to imagine that corruption is easy to resist. They imagine blatantly ridiculous temptations against which they stand firm in the bulwark of their good character, holding out their hand in denial and saying, "No!" But it's not like that.

When corruption beckons, it doesn't offer you what you imagine bad people want. When you compromise your principles, it gives you a better way to get what good people — good people like you, right there, right now — need. This manifests as Second Chances: opportunities to try again when you've failed and can't afford to. Second Chances allow a character to reroll failed skill and attribute rolls. As you become more corrupt, the world becomes an easier place to live in. The number of Second Chances you have is strictly limited and depends on your level of Corruption.

But worry not... You can always get another chance, if you really need it, with another step into the darkness.

## The Paths

In *Unhallowed Metropolis*, a character's moral corruption is represented in three paths: Physical Corruption, Desire Corruption, and Drive Corruption. Physical Corruption is a blight on the character's corporeal form. It may weaken or twist his body, despoil the world around him, or instil a sense of dread or hatred in all who meet him. Desire Corruption measures the strength of a character's obsessions,

### Aggrieved Innocence

*People deny their own corruption. They don't face it head-on. They make excuses. They lie. They rewrite history to make themselves look good. Most of the time, they even believe their own rationalizations. There are a few exceptions. Usually they're people who lie to themselves in a very different way: instead of telling themselves, "I'm not lying," they tell themselves, "It's okay that I'm lying; it's for a good cause."*

*The corruption rules are written to facilitate this kind of aggrieved innocence. Everything that a character does or believes because of his corruption comes with an attached excuse, an attached explanation, an attached reason why it wasn't really his fault.*

the depths of his dark passions, and the uncontrollable side of his nature. A character's Drive Corruption gauges how far he will go and what he is willing to sacrifice to get what he wants. Drive Corruption turns the character's achievements against him, ultimately undoing all that he has achieved.

Each path has a rating from 0 to 5. The higher the rating, the more corrupt your character is and the more corruption dominates his behaviour. A rating of 0 represents an aspect of the character that has not yet been tainted, while a rating of 5 means the character is dangerously close to losing what is left of his humanity. If a character progresses past 5 in any Corruption Path, he either dies or becomes an unplayable monster under the Narrator's control.

Half-lifers can not develop Physical Corruption. Their bodies are as corrupt as they can become, and this corruption is what grants them their strange immortality. The undead are manifestations of corruption wholly separate from the afflictions of half-lifers and the living. Being products of corruption and the Plague already, the undead cannot develop Corruption Paths.

If you approach your character's corruption with moderation, you will have an easier time maintaining your character's humanity. It is only when you progress too far down a path that you risk losing your character's soul. Lower path ratings are far easier to ignore during play than the higher levels that may dictate a character's actions.

### Original Sin

Every character begins with 1 point of Corruption that may be assigned to any path: Physical, Desire, or Drive. This point represents the character's initial corruption and cannot be removed by any means. You can think of initial corruption as the point of relative innocence — the level of corruption that really isn't the character's fault.

### Physical Corruption & Becoming a Half-Lifer

If a character with Physical Corruption becomes a half-lifer, he no longer suffers the effects of Physical Corruption, including his previous affliction, and can no longer raise his Physical Corruption path rating.

## Afflictions

A character with 1 or more points in a path must choose an affliction for that path (see Starting Corruption, Chapter 3, pages 135 – 146). Corruption does not affect everyone identically, and an affliction is the manifestation of the character's corruption. While Physical Corruption may physically deform one man, it may be a life-threatening cancer to another. The greater the character's rating in the path, the greater the effect of the affliction.

A list of example afflictions is provided in Chapter Three. This list is not comprehensive; a player and Narrator may work together to decide on an affliction that is appropriate for a particular character's path.

A rating of 1 represents the beginning of the character's descent into darkness. Though the nascent path produces an affliction, it does little to colour the character's personality. It is a descriptive flourish rather than a defining characteristic. The affliction has little to no effect on game play at this stage, but corruption is insidious.

As the character's corruption grows, his afflictions will take on lives of their own. By the time the character has a rating of 2 in a Corruption Path, the affliction has become an aspect of his personality. Though the character's corruption is still in its infancy, it is harder to ignore.

A character with a rating of 3 has begun to surrender a portion of himself to his corruption. Though buried beneath the surface of the character's personality, his corruption has clearly left its mark. Once or twice per game session, the character's affliction is bound to make his life difficult. He feels a constant struggle to maintain balance between his inner demons and the cruel realities of the Neo-Victorian world.

By the time the character's Corruption Path progresses to 4 points, it will have become a defining aspect of his personality. The character's affliction has begun to consume him; his body may be a vessel for putrescence, his feverish desires unspeakable, or his ambitions twisted to the megalomaniac. Those closest to him will be driven away as his demeanour grows more unwholesome. The character's corruption becomes a maligned animus, a manifestation of the universe's hostility or his own moral failings, that dogs him at every step.

A character with a path rating of 5 teeters at the brink of annihilation. Despite his blindness to his own failings, the character's affliction pushes him to terrible extremes. His actions grow increasingly erratic and desperate as he struggles with the weight of his corruption.

The effects of afflictions are cumulative. Unless noted otherwise, a character suffers the effects of each affliction rating he possesses. A character with both Physical Corruption 2 (Illness) and Desire Corruption 3 (Addiction) will suffer all the effects from both corruptions; the character will be physically weakened by the illness, requiring a full night's sleep to avoid losing Prowess, but compelled to go to extremes to satisfy the addiction. A canny Narrator can play afflictions off one another in this way, requiring sleepless nights in cold

East End vice dens from this ill character once he has failed to quash the urge to satisfy his addiction.

### Going Beyond the Pale

Should a character exceed a rating of 5 in any Corruption Path, the situation is beyond desperate. This is the end. Your character will soon hear the closing measures of his life: one last doom to stand against and then, finally, to fall. Perhaps the police have discovered the bodies in the basement. Perhaps the character finally realizes that all his bones have to come out. Maybe something intolerable pushes the character towards suicide. You can draw out your character's doom for most of the session of play, but even if you manage to find a happy ending, that's it for the character. Soon the Narrator will set the character's final scene. This is it. This is the end. When the character succeeds, fails, or gives up, it's over.

### Physical Afflictions

*Aura of Deformity* – You exude a powerful aura of deformity that incites loathing and hatred in others.

*Cursed* – You are a nexus of corruption. What you touch spoils.

*Illness* – Your corruption gnaws at your body and will someday kill you.

*Monstrous* – Your corruption makes you physically hideous and repellent.

### Desire Afflictions

*Addiction* – You suffer from an overpowering addiction.

*Anhedonia* – You take no joy in life. Pleasure has lost all meaning.

*Defiler* – You are depraved. Unable to stand purity in others, you live to defile innocence.

*Hedonist* – Your life revolves around the pursuit of pleasure.

### Drive Afflictions

*Consumed* – Your life is simply fuel for your obsessions.

*Dissolution* – All your accomplishments will come to naught. Worse yet, the products of your efforts will lead to your destruction.

*Killer Instinct* – People are nothing but obstacles to your ambition. The lives of others are meaningless.

*Twisted* – Your methodology betrays your burgeoning inhmanity.

# Second Chances

A Second Chance is an opportunity to reroll a failed or less than favourable die roll (including damage, skill, and attribute rolls). A character can use a Second Chance to reroll any roll he makes, whatever the initial outcome, using the same DR as the original roll. A character can also use a Second Chance to cause another character to reroll the result of an action that affects him directly. A character may not spend a Second Chance to force a target to reroll die rolls that do not directly affect the character, such as initiative rolls.

For example, if a vampire swings a sabre at the character and succeeds in rolling a virtually impossible to dodge result of 19, the character under attack can use a Second Chance to force the vampire to reroll. Similarly, if a character is bleeding out during a back-alley surgery and the shifty-looking, drunken doctor rolls a 6, the character could use a Second Chance to cause the doc to reroll.

If the Second Chance does not yield a more favourable outcome, the character can continue to use more until either he achieves the result sought or runs out of Second Chances. Each game session, a character may take a number of Second Chances equal to his highest Corruption Path rating. However, if you really need another Second Chance, you can always take another step into the darkness. A character can take up to one Second Chance per game session above his highest Corruption Path rating, but it will cost him. To take the Second Chance, the character must increase one of his Corruption Paths by one point. But just think of it...it's so simple — right here, right now, right when you need it.

### Conflicts of Affliction

*Contradictory afflictions can make a character's life hell. He will be compelled to satisfy all his afflictions if possible. In cases where his afflictions are directly opposed, the character's actions will be guided by the affliction with the higher path rating. If both afflictions have the same path rating, the character will have to choose one but suffers –1 on all skill and attribute rolls until he satisfies the other affliction.*

### The Devil's Luck

Sometimes rerolling the dice will not be enough to save the character's life. The opposition is just too heavy or the odds too stacked against him, or the bullet really does have his name on it. When your character's death is all but assured, either due to lethal die rolls or an overwhelming situation, it is time to call on the Devil's Luck. A player may call upon Devil's Luck after an attack or damage roll, when a situation

looks like it is as bleak as its going to get, or whenever he feels his character is completely out of his depth.

For instance, just as a feral vampire is about to deliver the coup de grace, a player could call upon the Devil's Luck to save his character from certain destruction. Perhaps an unseen observer puts a stake through the vampire's heart just in time, or the masonry beneath the vampire's feet crumbles, sending the vampire tumbling into the abyss below. A Narrator should tailor the effects of Devil's Luck to the style of game he is running.

Devil's Luck has no effect on Plague or vampiric infections. Once a character has been infected, he can use Second Chances to reroll attempts to throw off infection, but he cannot use Devil's Luck to automatically survive the infection.

When a character calls upon the Devil's Luck, the Narrator must engineer some scenario to get him out of his current predicament. He may not get away unscathed, but he should live to fight another day. A character that has run out of Second Chances cannot call upon the Devil's Luck: all his luck is bad.

Devil's Luck comes at a cost. A character can only call upon the Devil's Luck once per game session. After calling upon the Devil's Luck, one of the character's Corruption Paths is increased by 1 point. Additionally, the character cannot use Second Chances for the remainder of the game session.

If a player perceives certain death for his character and calls upon the Devil's Luck, the Narrator is encouraged to play it out even if he had no intention of injuring the character.

### NPCs & Second Chances

While NPCs have Corruption Paths, they cannot take Second Chances or call on the Devil's Luck. Only player characters benefit from these. However, if a Narrator is in a situation in which an important NPC is about to perish before his key part in the story has been resolved, he is encouraged to find a means to effect the NPC's escape.

# Morality Play

### Gaining Corruption

Generally, a character's Corruption only increases by taking additional Second Chances or using Devil's Luck. On occasion, however, a Narrator may believe that a character has committed an act so reprehensible and inhuman that the character has corrupted himself and must increase one of his Corruption Paths. Such increases should be extraordinarily rare and cannot increase a path beyond a rating of 3.

### Redemption

During the course of play, a character may devote himself to redemption and seek to undo some of the corruption that taints his body and soul. A character seeking redemption must begin with his highest Corruption Path rating. Anything else is a meaningless gesture doomed to fail before it begins. Remember that a character is unable to remove his initial point of Corruption even through redemption.

The player controlling the character must declare his intention for his character to seek redemption at the start of a game session. From this point on, the character's controller must role-play this character's redemption. The character must attempt to be a better person and make amends for his crimes if he is ever to be purified.

While attempting to redeem himself, the character cannot take Second Chances, since doing so draws on the corruption the character is attempting to exorcise. If the player manages to role-play his character's redemption for a number of game sessions equal to the Corruption Path rating he is attempting to reduce without taking any Second Chances, the rating is reduced by 1. After a character succeeds in reducing a Corruption Path, he can make Second Chances at will until he attempts to further reduce his Corruption, at which point the process begins anew.

If the character falls off the path of redemption during role-playing or takes a Second Chance, his attempt fails and he must start over again. A single Second Chance is enough to derail the character's best efforts. But don't worry — we won't judge you. It's just the nature of the beast.

### The Wages of Sin

Even in redemption, there is the constant threat of relapse. Purity and vigilance are eternally entwined, and any failure of the spirit will send a redeemed character spiralling toward self-destruction.

Should a character that has succeeded in reducing one of his Corruption Paths through redemption gain another point

#### Not a Matter of Faith

*Purification and redemption are personal, not religious, in nature. While a religious character may seek spiritual guidance within the structure of his faith, the actual act of redemption is not one concerned with divinities.*

of Corruption of that type, the ranks reduced by redemption are immediately returned. The character must then add the additional point of Corruption to this previous total.

For example, Mark's Aristocrat Arthur uses Devil's Luck and gains a point of Corruption. Mark decides to apply the new point to his Desire Corruption path. He has previously role-played Arthur's redemption and reduces his Desire Corruption rating from 3 to 1. Upon adding the new point, Arthur's previous levels of Corruption return and the new pointed is added to them for a total of 4. Poor Arthur goes spiralling away from grace.

We never said this part was easy.

### Redemption & Physical Corruption

A character attempting to purge his body of Physical Corruption must engage in ordinary purifying measures: sobriety, a wholesome and ascetic diet, foul purgatives, exercise, and sleep. Strictly speaking, no single component is necessary: the effect is principally psychological and can be implemented even by an incompetent physician.

For characters who have injected themselves with mad alchemical concoctions or stitched the meat of the dead into their bodies, the matter is more difficult. They need surgery or noxious therapy, conducted by a doctor of substantial skill, and often a non-trivial risk of death is associated with these attempts to purge the body's corruption.

The character must also balance his own attitudes towards his accursed flesh. Once the player has declared the intention to reduce the character's Physical Corruption, this process begins. The character enters a tormented state as he wrestles with the realities of his condition. During this time, the character becomes dependent upon those around him for a sense of balance; if persistently abused by others, this process fails and he must begin again.

### Spontaneous Reanimation

A character with Physical Corruption of 5 or greater will always rise as a zombie within minutes or hours of death (at the Narrator's discretion) regardless of where they died (see Spontaneous Reanimation, Chapter 5, pages 247-248).

### Redemption & Desire Corruption

A character attempting to lower his Desire Corruption must first retreat to conditions of enforced simplicity and balance: a sanatorium, monastery, or some other environment with a firm schedule for each hour in the day.

Then, the character enters an unstable condition. He suffers an exaggerated form of the usual failures: an anhedoniac may enter near-catatonic state oblivious to the outside world, a defiler may claw and spit at anyone in sight, and an addict may engage in whatever acts of dissipation he can manage. Restraints and sedatives may be necessary for those whose corruption involves predatory cruelty. During this period, the character must not receive the coddling of his peers: if thrown too many lifelines, if offered forgiveness and understanding at too cheap a price, he will return to his old habits and it will all be for nothing.

### Redemption & Drive Corruption

A character trying to lower his Drive Corruption must attempt to lead a healthy, ordinary life free of his obsessions. He must keep ordinary hours, sleep regularly, establish friends, and seek to court an ordinary person.

He must also separate himself from his work. During the process of redemption, the character must avoid the work that brought him to the brink of ruin. A doctor must avoid his practice. A scientist cannot enter his lab or contemplate the mysteries that plague his feverish mind.

During this period, the character must receive the support of his peers and family. He must be kept distracted from his work or he will never become healthy. Should the character enter into a conversation about his work, the attempt at redemption fails and must begin anew.

#### A Questionable Therapeutic Methodology?

This approach to Desire Corruption is modelled on fiction and not psychiatry.

## Skills

Skills represent talents and abilities a character has acquired over his life. Skills and their applications are explained in Chapter 3 (see pages 148-167 for details).

## Combat

Violence is an inevitability. With the dead rising in the streets and all manner of inhuman malefactors gathering in the shadows of the metropolis, sooner or later all characters face the necessity of violent conflict. The combat system for Unhallowed Metropolis is unapologetically grim and brutal. Gunshots are fatal. Knife wounds hurt. The claws of a

hulking thrope can rip a man limb from limb. Combat specialists are virtuosos of carnage no less dangerous than the monsters they stalk.

Combat should be more than the sum of dice rolls and modifiers; it should be visceral. Whether playing or narrating, describe the actions of the characters you control in dramatic detail. When a shot hits its mark, embellish the description for dramatic effect. The more damage an attack causes, the graver the injury. A sabre slices through flesh and bone, spraying gore in its wake. The blowback from a thunderous gunshot can cover the attacker's face with gore. A shotgun burst can cut a man in half.

When gunmen square off against inhuman abominations, women and children scream and pistols erupt with a roar, belching smoke and issuing lead. A missed shot whistles through the air before indiscriminately tearing into an unintended victim in its path. Do not shy away from descriptions of the faces of the dead and dying. Be bloody, bold, and resolute...!

# Getting Started

At the start of combat, the Narrator summarizes the immediate situation for the players. Combat itself is divided into rounds. Rounds are the shortest interval of time necessary to give each character in the combat an opportunity to act. Each round, each character involved in the combat gets one turn. During this turn, the character may take one or more actions. Once all characters involved in the combat have taken their turns in initiative order, the round ends and a new round begins.

A round generally lasts for 5-10 seconds.

# Initiative Roll

The initiative roll determines in what order a character takes his turn each round. To determine a character's initiative, the player or Narrator controlling the character rolls 2d10 and adds the character's Prowess. The total is the character's initiative roll.

The character with the highest initiative roll acts first, followed by the character with the next highest total. In case of a tie, the character with the highest Coordination acts first. If two or more tied characters have the same Coordination score, they act simultaneously.

Once determined by the initiative roll, the order in which characters take their turns does not change during the combat, no matter how many rounds it spans.

**Initiative Rolls**

Roll 2d10 + Prowess for each character involved in the combat.

# Surprise Attack

Any time a player or Narrator controlling a character declares an attack before combat breaks out, he is considered to have made a surprise attack. The surprise attack is immediately resolved before initiative is rolled. Once the attack has been resolved, initiative is rolled and combat begins.

# Combat Actions

Each round, a character can take one or more combat actions on his turn. The number of combat actions a character can take depends on his Prowess. On his turn, a character can spend an action to attack with any weapon in his hand. If a character does not have a weapon in his hand, he must first spend an action to draw the weapon. A character can also use an action to switch the hands his weapons are held in, retrieve a weapon from the ground, stand up if knocked down, move a short distance, etc.

Once all one character's actions have been resolved, his turn ends and it is the next character's turn to act.

**Prowess**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 - 4 | = | 1 action |
| 5 - 8 | = | 2 actions |
| 9 - 12 | = | 3 actions |
| 13+ | = | 4 actions |

# Attacks

There are three basic forms of combat: melee, unarmed, and ranged.

Melee combat covers close-quarters fighting with hand-held weapons. This includes anything from a bar-room brawl with broken bottles to a duel with swords and everything in between. The attacker must be within weapon's reach of his target to make a successful melee attack; otherwise, his weapon will slice harmlessly through the air. The Narrator determines if characters are within reach of each other and may require a character to move closer to his intended target before making a melee attack.

Unarmed combat includes all forms of pugilism, wrestling, and martial arts. In short, all forms of combat utilizing the body of the combatant as a weapon. Like melee combat, unarmed combatants can only strike at targets within arm's, leg's, or head butt's reach.

Ranged combat includes any attacks made with a projectile weapon, whether a rifle, pistol, Requieter, lightning gun, or flamethrower. Ranged weapons can be used to attack targets at much greater distances than melee weapons. Often an attacker is only limited by his field of vision. Since ranged attacks occur at a distance, they are subject to modifiers that melee and unarmed attacks are not.

**Making Attacks**

When a player declares his character is making an attack, he makes an attack roll. The player rolls 2d10 and adds the pertinent combat skill to determine the success of the attack. Melee attacks are made using the Melee Weapon skill. Unarmed attacks are made using the Unarmed Combat skill. The skill used for making ranged attacks depends on the weapon with which the character is attacking. Ranged attack skills include Archery, Artillery, Pistol, Rifle, and Thrown Weapons.

The difficulty rating of an attack roll depends on the awareness of the target. If the target is not aware of the attack, the DR is 11. If the target knows that he is under attack, the DR for the attack is 11 + the target's current Coordination. Generally once combat breaks out, all combatants are considered to be aware.

If the attack roll meets or beats the DR, the attack succeeds and the target character is hit.

The DR of an attack may be further modified by taking time to aim or targeting specific body locations. Additionally, outside factors, such as the attacking character's wound level, and environmental circumstances, such as poor visibility, will impact the DR.

For example, Aron's Dhampir character, Balthazar, has been lying in wait for a feral vampire. Once the unsuspecting monstrosity is within striking range, Balthazar lashes out with his blade. Since the feral vampire was unaware of the attack, Balthazar's DR for the melee attack is 11. Aron throws a pair of dice for Balthazar, rolling 3 and 7. Adding Balthazar's Melee skill of 4, he scores a total of 14. Balthazar's blade easily strikes the oblivious vampire.

If the feral vampire had detected Balthazar or known there were vampire hunters in the area, he would have been considered aware. Assuming Balthazar won the initiative roll and attacked first, Balthazar's DR would have been 11 + the feral vampire's Coordination 4 for a total of 15. With the roll above, Balthazar would have swung and missed, opening himself up to a reprisal from the fiend.

| Attack Roll Difficulty Rating (DR) | |
|---|---|
| Unaware Target | 11 |
| Aware Target | 11 + Target's Coordination |
| Target taking Evasive Action | 11 + Target's Coordination x 2 |

### Critical Success and Failures in Combat

When a character makes a critical success on an attack roll, he should do something amazing, such as shoot his target through the heart. The results of a critical success should be appropriate to the action taken – the Narrator is invited to be colourful and imaginative.

If the character rolls a critical failure, he suffers a major and potentially dangerous setback. The character may shoot or stab an ally, drop his weapon, trip and fall prostrate before the intended target of his attack, have his firearm backfire, or any other catastrophe the Narrator can imagine.

### Combat Stunts

A character's skill with a particular weapon increases his ability to hit with the weapon and grants a number of combat stunts, or special abilities, with the weapon. For each level of a skill the character possesses, he gains one stunt. For a complete list of combat stunts and their effects see Combat Skills, Chapter 3, pages 161 – 165.

### Off-Hand Attack Penalty

A character making an attack or parry with his off hand suffers -3 on the skill roll unless he has the Ambidextrous Quality (see Chapter Three, page 180).

## Held Actions

Characters generally take all of their actions on their turn, in initiative order. If a character does not take all of his actions on his turn, the remaining actions are held. If a character is holding an action, he is waiting to see what the other characters involved in the combat do. To hold one or more actions, the controlling player or Narrator declares his character is holding his action during his character's turn to act. If a character has more than one action, he may take one or more of his actions during his turn and hold the rest.

The character can take one or more of his held actions immediately after any character resolves an action but cannot interrupt the acting character's action. If two characters act simultaneously, a character holding his actions must wait to act until both characters have completed their actions.

## Moving

During combat, a character is assumed to be moving about constantly as he sidesteps blows and leans in to cut down enemies. This movement is part of the natural progression of combat. If a player wishes his character to actually cover some distance during his turn, he may spend one or more actions to move. For each action spent, the character moves up to his Coordination in meters.

Instead of spending actions to move, a player can choose to have his character run. The character's controller must declare the character is running during his turn. The character then moves up to his Coordination x 4 meters. A character who runs forfeits all of his actions.

Some wound levels and other effects may restrict a character's ability to move.

## Evasive Action

No one likes to be cut... Or stabbed, shot, mauled, or incinerated... In fact, most people will do just about anything to stay out of harm's way. Though no one can dodge a bullet, they can significantly lower their chances of getting hit by one. Evasive action encompasses a character diving for cover, hitting the floor, or jumping out of the way of oncoming harm.

A player can declare that his character is taking evasive action at the start of the character's turn before declaring any other action. A character taking evasive action forfeits all of his actions that turn. When a character taking evasive action is targeted by an attack, the DR for the attack is 11 + double the target's Coordination.

Once a character takes evasive action, he continues until either combat ends or his controller declares the character is ceasing evasive action at the start of any of the character's subsequent turns.

Characters with Wit 0 can never take evasive action.

### Moving During Evasive Action

A character taking evasive action may move up to his Coordination x 2 meters.

### Parries & Dodges

Immediately after being hit by a melee attack, a character may attempt to parry or dodge. A character can parry or dodge melee attacks, thrown weapons, and unarmed attacks. A character cannot parry or dodge ranged attacks other than thrown weapons. If a character fails a parry or dodge, he cannot make another attempt to parry or dodge the same attack.

When a character parries or dodges, he gives up one of his actions from his next turn, whether that is from this round or the next. A character that has already spent all of his actions for the next round cannot parry or dodge. A character that is holding actions must spend held actions to parry or dodge attacks before spending his next round's actions.

A character cannot parry or dodge while taking evasive action.

Characters with Wit 0 never parry or dodge.

### Parry

The Narrator or player must declare that the character intends to parry immediately after being hit but before damage is rolled. The player makes a Melee Weapon skill roll, rolling 2d10 and adding his character's Melee Weapon skill. A character suffers –3 on an attempt to parry a surprise attack.

If the character's total is higher than the attacker's roll, the attack was parried and the character takes no damage. If his roll is lower or equal to the attacker's roll, he was hit and takes damage from the attack normally.

Generally only a character armed with a melee weapon can parry an attack. Some melee weapons have parry modifiers that must be taken into account when parrying with the weapon.

### Dodge

The Narrator or player must declare that the character intends to dodge an attack immediately after being hit but before damage is rolled. The player makes a Coordination roll, rolling 2d10 and adding his character's Coordination attribute. A character suffers –3 on an attempt to dodge a surprise attack.

If his total is higher than the attacker's roll, the attack was dodged and the character takes no damage. If his roll is lower or equal to the attacker's roll, he was hit and takes damage from the attack normally.

### Helpless Victims

Whether tied up, unconscious, sleeping, or drugged into an opium haze, a helpless character is a victim in the making. When a Helpless Victim is targeted with an attack, the helpless character is automatically hit. Furthermore, the attacker can simply kill the Helpless Victim at will, placing a revolver to the temple or blade to the throat.

## Melee Combat

Melee combat covers all attacks made with a melee weapon. Melee attacks can be dodged and parried.

When a character hits his target with a melee attack, he rolls 2d10 and adds his Vitality and the Damage Modifier of his weapon. The target's armour in the location hit is then subtracted from this total. The total is then applied to the Wound Table below (see page 101) to determine the wound inflicted by the attack. Damage rolls may be further modified by the area of the target's body hit by the attack.

### Improvised Melee Weapons

When in need, just about any solid object can be used as an improvised weapon. A character fighting with an improvised weapon suffers –2 on attack rolls. Improvised weapons can be used to parry attacks but the wielder suffers –2 on parry rolls. The Damage Modifier for improvised weapons is generally +0, but the Narrator can assign a higher or lower rating at his discretion. When an armoured character is hit with an improvised weapon, double the value of the armour.

Anytime an improvised melee attack to the head with a blunt instrument results in a Serious Wound or greater, the target has a chance of suffering knockout (see below, page 108).

## Unarmed Combat

The unarmed combat rules cover attacks made without the use of a weapon. Sometimes a character will be caught off guard without a weapon at the ready and will be forced to rely on his hands and feet. Some creatures, such as animates, rely exclusively on unarmed combat since they lack the intelligence to use even the simplest tools.

A character making a combat attack must declare the form of the attack when it is made. Possible attack forms

include Bites, Kicks, Punches, and Grapples. Each attack form has separate rules detailing the attack's resolution.

When a character hits his target with an unarmed attack that inflicts damage, he rolls 2d10 and adds his Vitality. Subtract the target's Vitality from the damage roll, and double the value of the target's armour in the location hit. The total is then applied to the Wound Table below (see page 101) to determine the wound inflicted by the attack. Unarmed combat damage rolls are not modified by hit location.

### Bites

Animates, vampires, wild animals, excitable ghouls, and the criminally insane are all known to use their teeth or fangs to inflict savage wounds on the bodies of their victims. While bites can cause terrible damage, the attack is awkward and hard to execute. Human-like creatures that use bite attacks generally grapple their prey before attempting to bite. Unless the target of the attack has first been grappled, the bite attack roll suffers a –5 modifier.

The location of a bite attack is determined by the Narrator based on his understanding of the combat. For example, if an animate wraps its arms around the torso of a victim, it will likely bite the victim's neck, face or shoulder. If an animate seizes a victim's leg, it will likely bite the leg.

Bite attack rolls are not modified by the location the attack targets.

### Kicks

A kick attack utilizes the attacker's legs, feet, or knees to inflict harm on a target.

A character targeting an opponent's legs with a kick gains a +3 bonus to hit.

A kick attack targeting a victim's head suffers a –8 penalty to hit and a –3 penalty to the damage roll unless the target has been knocked down. In this case, attacks targeting the head suffer neither attack nor damage penalties. Anytime a kick attack to the head results in a Serious Wound or greater, the target has a chance of suffering a knockout (see page 108).

### Punches

A punch is a blow utilizing a character's fists or elbows.

A punch attack targeting the head does not suffer the attack roll penalty for targeting the head. Any time a punch attack to the head results in a Serious Wound or greater, the target has a chance of suffering Knockout (see page 108 below).

### Grapple

A grapple is an attempt to grab and hold a target. Animates and vampires rely on grapples to keep their victims in place while they sink their teeth into them. Those with nobler intentions may use grapples to harmlessly restrain individuals so that they cannot harm themselves or others. A single character cannot be attacked by more than five grappling characters during a single round.

A grappling character first makes an Unarmed Combat roll to grab his target. If the attack succeeds, the attacker succeeds in grabbing his target but inflicts no damage.

Once a character has successfully grappled another, the held character is grappled and cannot move away from the attacker until he is released or he escapes. The grappler does not need to spend actions to maintain the grapple once established. The grappler may release the target from a successful grapple at any time during his turn. An attacker with multiple actions can take actions after a successful grapple. Grappling characters can spend actions to punch, stab, bite, shoot, or make just about any other kind of attack the Narrator deems plausible targeting the grappled character.

A character cannot parry, dodge, or take evasive manoeuvres while being grappled or while grappling. The DR to hit a character engaged in a grapple is 11. Do not add a grappled or grappling character's Coordination to the DR. Attacks made by characters engaged in a grapple targeting those not engaged suffer a -3 penalty to hit. Attacks made by a character engaged in a grapple targeting a character he is grappling or grappled by do not suffer this penalty.

### *Pinning Arms*

After a successful grapple attack, the attacker may attempt to pin the target's arms, keeping him from performing any actions until the grapple is broken. The grappler must spend an action to attempt to pin his target's arms. The characters then make a contested Coordination + Unarmed Combat roll. If the attacker gets the higher total, the target's arms are pinned. If the attacker does not get the higher total, he does not succeed in pinning his target's arms though the target remains grappled.

Once the target's arms are pinned, the target cannot use his arms to take any action until the grapple is broken. An attacker who pins his target's arms cannot make additional attacks with his hands or arms until he releases the target's arms.

### *Strangulation*

After a successful grapple attack, an attacker can attempt to strangle the life out of his victim, but he must first use an action to improve his hold. The characters make a contested Coordination + Unarmed Combat roll. If the attacker gets the higher total, he gets a stranglehold on his victim. If the defender gets a higher total, the attacker has failed to get a stranglehold, though the defender is still grappled.

Once the stranglehold has been established, the attacker can begin to choke his victim. The attacker must forfeit all his actions during each of his turns to choke his victim. The victim can be choked for a number of rounds equal to his Vitality score before suffering long-term effects from the strangulation. If the victim has not broken away by this time, he is in serious trouble. During subsequent turns, each time the attacker chokes his victim, the characters make a contested Coordination + Unarmed Combat roll. If the attacker gets the higher total, the victim suffers -1 Vitality. If the defender gets a higher total, his Vitality is not reduced, but he is still being strangled.

If the victim is reduced to 0 Vitality, he falls unconscious. If the attacker spends one more turn strangling the victim, no die roll is made — the victim's Vitality simply drops to –1, and he dies.

If the strangled character goes unconscious but is not killed, he can make a Vitality roll (DR 14) each minute to determine if he regains consciousness. If the roll succeeds, the character becomes conscious. If the roll fails, the character can roll again after another minute.

Vitality lost from strangulation returns at a rate of 1 point per hour. If the victim survives the strangulation attempt, his neck will be covered in dark painful bruises for d10 + 5 days.

### *Breaking Free*

During his turn, a grappled character can spend an action to break free of a grapple, even if his arms are pinned or he is being strangled. When the grappled character spends an action to break free, the characters engaged in the grapple make a contested Vitality + Unarmed Combat roll. If the target of the grapple rolls a higher total than the attacker, he has broken free; otherwise, he remains held. If an attempt to break free from a grapple fails, the defender may spend additional actions to make more attempts to break free. If the grappled character is held by multiple attackers, he makes one die roll when he attempts to break free. Each of the grapplers makes an individual roll. If the character attempting to break free rolls higher than a grappler, he breaks free of that grappler, but he may still be held by other grapplers.

For example, Nicky's Undertaker, Percy, has been grappled by three animates. On Percy's turn, he spends his first action to attempt to break free of the animates. Nicky rolls a 4 and 7 for Percy and add his Vitality attribute of 3 and his Unarmed Combat skill of 3 for a total of 17. The Narrator makes three rolls for the animates and adds the animate's Vitality of 4 to each. The Narrator would add the animates' Unarmed Combat skill totals to the roll as well, but animates have no skills. The totals for the animates are 9, 15, and 18. Percy breaks away from two animates but is still held by the third. Percy could now spend another action to attack or make another attempt to break away from the third animate.

### *Human Shield*

If both the grappler and the grappled character are standing, the grappler can use the grappled character as a human shield against ranged attacks. A character targeting the grappler with a ranged attack suffers a –4 penalty to his ranged attack roll if the grappled character is between the attacker and the grappler. If an attack misses its target but the roll is 11 or higher, the grappled character is hit by the attack instead.

# Ranged Combat

Ranged attacks include, but are not limited to, attacks made with firearms, galvanic weapons, bows, crossbows, and thrown weapons – anything that can be aimed and fired or thrown.

Most ranged attacks, except thrown weapons, cannot be parried or dodged.

When a character hits his target with a ranged attack, he rolls 2d10 and adds the weapon's Damage Modifier. If the damage roll was for a thrown weapon, the attacking character also adds his Vitality to the damage roll. The target's armour is subtracted from this total. The total is then applied to the Wound Table below (see page 101) to determine the wound inflicted by the attack. Damage rolls may be further modified by the area of the target's body hit by the attack.

## Ranged Attack Modifiers

Ranged combat must take into account a number of factors that are unnecessary for melee combat, such as the attacker's distance from target and conditions of visibility. The following modifiers are applied to ranged attack rolls.

Range modifiers are cumulative, so a character shooting at a target that is nearly fully obscured by cover (-4) on a foggy night (-1) at long range (-2) would suffer –7 to his attack roll.

### Ranged Attack Modifiers

| | |
|---|---|
| Attacker Aiming | +5 |
| Off Hand Penalty | -3 |
| Attacker Moving | -2 |
| Poor Visibility | -1 to -3 |
| Long Range | -2 |
| Extreme Range | -4 |
| Target Partially Obscured by Cover | -2 |
| Target Mostly Obscured by Cover | -4 |

*Aiming*

A character can forfeit his turn to take aim with a ranged weapon in his hand. The character gains a +5 bonus to his ranged attack roll on his first action of the next round against the target at which he aimed.

*Attacker Moving*

A character that makes a ranged attack while moving suffers a –2 penalty on the attack roll.

*Poor Visibility*

Many environmental circumstances can reduce a gunman's visibility and make it harder for him to see his target. Darkness, smog, and dense tree cover can contribute to poor visibility. At the Narrator's discretion, a character may suffer an attack penalty of -1 to -3 for poor visibility.

*Range*

A ranged attack targeting a character further than six meters from the attacker but less than thirty meters is considered to be made at long range. An attacker suffers –2 on attack rolls made versus targets at long range.

If the target is greater than thirty meters away but within the effective range of the weapon, the target is at extreme range. An attacker suffers –4 on attack rolls made at extreme range. Range penalties are not cumulative with each other.

*Cover*

A ranged attacker suffers -2 on attack rolls when firing at a target with at least half his body obscured by an object solid enough to stop a bullet. The attacker suffers -4 if the target is nearly entirely obscured. In order to gain the benefit from cover, a character must declare that he is attempting to use a solid object as such.

## Thrown Weapons

Thrown weapons are effective short-range weapons. Thrown weapons come in two classifications: balanced and unbalanced. A balanced throwing weapon is a device intended to be accurately thrown. An unbalanced thrown weapon represents anything else the character cares to pick up and throw.

A character can throw a balanced throwing weapon up to his Vitality x 3 meters. At the Narrator's discretion, a character can throw an unbalanced weapon up to his Vitality x 2 meters. A character throwing an unbalanced weapon suffers –2 on the attack roll. Use the character's Thrown Weapon skill to resolve the attack. An attack made with a thrown weapon is subject to most ranged attack modifiers described above, but they do not suffer range penalties.

If the attack hits its target, make a damage roll, adding the character's Vitality and the Damage Modifier of the weapon to the total. The target's armour in the location hit is then subtracted from this. The total is then applied to the Wound Table (see page 101) to determine the wound inflicted by the attack. Damage rolls may be further modified by the area of the target's body hit.

### Firing into Crowds or Melee Combat

When a character makes a ranged attack targeting a character in a crowd or a character who is engaged in melee combat, there is a chance the attacker will hit a bystander. If the attacker missed his target, but his attack roll was 11 or greater, there is a chance he hit an unintended target. Any character in the crowd or engaged in the melee has a chance to be hit; the character actually hit should be determined randomly. The attacker then rerolls his attack, targeting this character. If the attack misses, nothing happens. If the attack hits, randomize the location hit (see below).

# Hit Locations

When a character makes an attack, he declares which, if any, portion of his target's body he is aiming at. Targeting some locations modifies the DR of the attack. There is no modifier to target the legs or torso.

If a character makes a successful attack but did not specify what part of the target he was aiming at, the Narrator can either assume the character was firing at the target's torso or roll a random hit location. Random hit location rolls can also be useful for determining where a character is hit in cases of damage that do not result from a targeted attack, such as from falling debris or shrapnel.

At the Narrator's discretion, it may be impossible to hit certain locations of the body if the target is partially concealed behind cover. When the result indicates an area that should be impossible to hit, reroll the result.

### Random Hit Location

If a character succeeds in an attack but did not declare what portion of his target's body he was aiming at, the Narrator may either assume he hit his target's torso or roll 2d10 and consult the following table to determine the hit location randomly.

| Random Location | |
|---|---|
| 2 | Head or Throat |
| 3 – 4 | Left Arm |
| 5 – 7 | Left Leg |
| 8 – 14 | Torso |
| 15 – 17 | Right Leg |
| 18 – 19 | Right Arm |
| 20 | Head or Throat |

# Damage Rolls

When a character is hit by an attack, his attacker makes a damage roll. Damage rolls are resolved differently based on the type of attack made and are modified by the type of attack made, the weapon used, the location of the body hit, and the armour worn by the target in the location hit. Once the total of the modified damage roll has been determined, compare the result to the Wound Table (below) to determine the severity of the wound inflicted by the attack.

*Melee Damage Rolls* – When resolving damage for a melee attack, roll 2d10 and add the attacker's Vitality attribute, the Damage Modifier for the location hit, and the weapon's Damage Modifier, and then subtract any points of armour covering the location hit. The Damage Modifier for most improvised thrown weapons is +0, though the Narrator may assign any appropriate rating. When an armoured character is hit by an improvised thrown weapon, double the value of the armour.

*Unarmed Combat Damage Rolls* – When resolving damage for an unarmed attack, roll 2d10 and add the attacker's Vitality attribute. Then subtract the Vitality of the character hit and double the value of any armour covering the location hit. Note unarmed combat damage rolls are not modified by hit location.

## Attack Roll Modifiers by Location

When a character aims at a specific portion of his target's body, he suffers a penalty to his attack roll based on the location targeted.

| Location | Attack Roll Modifier | Damage Modifier |
|---|---|---|
| Arm | -3 | 0 |
| Leg | 0 | 0 |
| Hand or Foot | -3 | -3 |
| Head or Throat | -3 | +3 |
| Torso | 0 | 0 |
| Vital Location (Heart) | -5 | +5 |

*Ranged Damage Rolls* – When resolving damage for a ranged attack, roll 2d10 and add the weapon's Damage Modifier and the Damage Modifier for the location hit. Then subtract any points of armour covering the location hit.

*Thrown Weapon Damage Rolls* – When resolving damage for a ranged attack made with a thrown weapon, roll 2d10 and add the attacker's Vitality attribute, the Damage Modifier for the location hit, and the weapon's Damage Modifier. Then subtract any points of armour covering the location hit.

### Damage Modifiers by Location

Some parts of the body are more sensitive to damage than others. A hit to the heart, for instance, is much more likely to prove fatal than a hit to the arm. To reflect the weaknesses and strengths of human anatomy, some hit locations modify the Damage Roll.

*Heart or Vitals:* A damage roll for a hit targeting the heart or another vital location, such as a major artery, is rolled at +5.

*Head:* A head shot adds +3 to the damage roll.

*Hands or Feet:* Attacks hitting a character's hands or feet suffer a –3 modifier to the damage roll.

*Arms, Leg, Torso:* There is no modifier to the damage roll for attacks hitting the arms, legs, or, torso.

# Wounds

Combat in Unhallowed Metropolis is swift and brutal. Attacks cause horrific wounds that can kill a character outright or leave him broken on the ground, sucking for air. Even those attacks that do not result in immediate death or dismemberment take their toll.

Wounds are a method of tracking the damage a character has sustained. The more grievous the injury, the greater the impact the wound will have on the character's performance. Wounds may inflict negative skill roll modifiers and temporary attribute reductions. Incapacitating Wounds leave the character with potentially life-threatening Complications that must be treated before the character expires.

A player tracks his character's worst wounds in each body location and the number of Incapacitating Wounds he has received. A character only suffers penalties from his greatest wound, and wound penalties are not cumulative. For example, a character that has sustained two Flesh Wounds and two Serious Wounds only suffers the effects of one Serious Wound.

A living or half-lifer character will die if he suffers a Fatal Wound, sustains a number of untreated Incapacitating Wounds equal to his unmodified Vitality attribute, or has his Vitality reduced below 0.

Once the damage roll has been determined, compare the result to the table below to determine the severity of the wound inflicted by the attack.

**Wound Table**

| | |
|---|---|
| 11 or Less | Flesh Wound |
| 12 - 16 | Serious Wound |
| 17 - 20 | Incapacitating Wound |
| 21+ | Fatal Wound |

### Scratches

Scratches are light cuts, bruises, and abrasions. Scratches have no game effect and heal quickly without medical attention. If a damage roll does not exceed double the target's Vitality attribute, the damage roll results in a Scratch.

### Flesh Wounds

Flesh Wounds represent deep gashes or severe bruises. A character suffering a Flesh Wound to his hand or arm must

make a successful Coordination roll (DR 11) or drop anything held in that hand.

A character with one or more Flesh Wounds suffers –1 on skill rolls until the wound has been treated. There are no long term effects of Flesh Wounds after they have been treated.

### Serious Wounds

Serious Wounds represent substantial damage to the body that may include deep cuts or perforations, internal injury, and the loss of a great deal of blood.

A character suffering a Serious Wound to his hand or arm must make a successful Coordination roll (DR 14) or drop anything held in that hand. A character suffering a Serious Wound to his leg must pass a successful Coordination roll (DR 11) or be knocked down (see page 108 below).

Serious Wounds greatly impact the normal functioning of the body. A character with one or more Serious Wounds suffers –2 Coordination and –2 to skill rolls until the wound has been treated. A character cannot have his Coordination reduced to less than 1 as a result of wound penalties. A character suffering reduced Coordination also suffers reduced Prowess and may lose actions as a result of his wounds.

After his wounds are treated, a character with one or more treated Serious Wounds suffers –1 Prowess until his wounds have fully healed.

### Incapacitating Wounds

Incapacitating Wounds are immediately life threatening and may be accompanied by heavy bleeding. Upon suffering an Incapacitating Wound, a living character or half-lifer must make a Vitality roll (DR 11). If he fails, the character succumbs to his injuries and falls unconscious or goes into shock for the remainder of the combat. In this state, the character is a Helpless Victim. If his injuries permit it, the character will regain his senses shortly after combat ends. If he succeeds, his adrenaline keeps him conscious, at least for the time being.

A character than has sustained one or more untreated Incapacitating Wounds suffers –3 Coordination and –3 on skill rolls until the wound has been treated. A character cannot have his Coordination reduced to less than 1 as a result of wound penalties. A character suffering reduced Coordination also suffers reduced Prowess and may lose actions as a result of his wounds.

A character suffering an Incapacitating Wound to his hand or arm immediately drops anything held in that hand. A character suffering an Incapacitating Wound to the leg is knocked down.

In addition to the wound penalties described above, the injured character also suffers a randomly determined Complication. Complications determine the long-term effects of the character's Incapacitating Wound. The Complication is rolled either after combat is resolved or when the character's wounds are inspected. See Complications below.

A living or half-lifer character that suffers a number of untreated Incapacitating Wounds equal to his Vitality attribute dies.

### Fatal Wounds

Fatal Wounds are immediately lethal to anything vaguely human. At the Narrator's discretion, a character suffering a lethal wound may speak a few last words before succumbing to his injuries.

#### Minor Characters & Incapacitating Wounds

*When a character of minor significance to the story suffers an Incapacitating Wound he may be considered out of the action at the Narrator's discretion. He either bleeds to death, falls unconscious, or manages to quietly crawl away.*

# Complications

Complications determine the long term effects of Incapacitating Wounds. A Complication can take the form of shattered bones, cut arteries, or crudely amputated limbs. These are the sorts of wounds that turn the stomachs of hardened veterans and send surgeons into fits.

A character suffers one Complication each time he suffers an Incapacitating Wound. Complications are not rolled when the character is wounded but are instead rolled when the wound is inspected or when combat ends. Whether or not a character's wounds are inspected, the Narrator should determine the effects of the Complication at the end of combat.

To determine the Complication inflicted, roll 2d10 and consult the Complication Table appropriate for the location of the character's body hit by the attack. The Narrator may alter the exact description to make sense in the context of the attack being resolved. Complications do not take effect until after combat ends. If the wounded character stays conscious, his adrenaline keeps him from realizing the extent of his wounds until the immediate danger is past.

### Anatomy Lessons

*The human body is a marvellously complex machine and is subject to a virtually endless array of torments, even if one never considers blunt trauma, bone sand, or muzzle velocity. While the authors have done their best to provide a detailed combat system rife with grisly wounds and grotesque injures, a comprehensive guide to corporeal deconstruction is beyond the scope of this text. That said, we most sincerely hope that creative Narrators will use these rules in the spirit they were intended—as the jumping off point towards ever greater atrocity. Please feel free to elaborate upon our rudimentary efforts. In our experience, medical texts provide a wealth of personal horror that players will find irresistible.*

### Inspecting the Wound

A character must inspect an Incapacitating Wound before he can treat the resulting Complication.

While in combat, inspecting an Incapacitating Wound requires both the inspecting and the wounded character to forfeit their actions on the turn the wound is inspected. After combat, inspecting a wound takes five minutes. A character can inspect his own wound if he can see it.

Ideally, the inspecting character has the Medicine skill. If not, he will have to rely on his Intellect and hope for the best. When a character inspects a wound, he makes either a Medicine or Intellect (DR 11) roll. If a character with the Medicine skill succeeds, he immediately diagnoses the extent of the character's injuries. If a character without the Medicine skill succeeds in this roll, he only approximately determines the extent of the injuries. He can determine if the wound is immediately life threatening, whether it looks like the injured character can be moved, and any obvious details, such as bone fragments protruding from the character's flesh. If the roll fails, the character cannot determine the extent of the injuries and must try again.

Complications generate a keen sense of mortality and helplessness in players but also cause the most delightful suspense. Don't let the player know the severity of his character's wounds until a surgeon has had time to inspect his injuries. A character's ignorance of a potentially life-threatening Complication will not save his life.

### Complication & Wound Penalties

Once a character's Complication has been determined, he no longer suffers the penalties from the Incapacitating Wound and instead suffers the penalties dictated by the Complication. Complications are cumulative with themselves and other wound penalties; a character may suffer attribute and skill roll penalties from both wounds and Complications.

### Automatic Complications

On occasion, a character will be subject to the sort of physical duress that leaves little question of the sort of complications suffered. If a nobbler pays the character a visit and breaks his fingers one by one, the character will obviously have broken fingers. A character that gets his throat slit will suffer a severed artery. All automatic complications are at the Narrator's discretion.

**Complications – Arm**

| Roll | Effect |
|---|---|

**2 Severed Artery**

The attack severs the character's artery. See Massive Blood Loss below (page 108).

Treating the wound requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 16). If the character treating the wound fails a roll, the wounded character must be stabilized again (see pages 109 - 110). Each attempt to treat this complication takes twenty-five minutes.

After receiving medical attention, the character will require round-the-clock care as he recovers from his wounds. Recovery will take three months.

**3-4 Amputated Hand**

The attack virtually amputated the character's hand. The character cannot use his hand for anything unless it is reattached or replaced. See Massive Blood Loss, page 108 and Severed Limb, page 108.

The character's arm will heal over six weeks if the hand is not reattached, and the character will be left without the use of that hand. If the hand is reattached, the character's arm takes two months to heal, and the character can take no action with it until it has healed.

**5-6 Severed or Destroyed Fingers**

The character's hand is badly mangled by the attack. Several fingers on his hand are severed or crushed beyond recognition.

Until his hand has healed, the character suffers –2 on skill rolls to resolve action taken with the hand in addition to any other penalties. When resolving melee or unarmed attacks made with the arm, the character suffers –2 on his damage rolls until his hand is healed.

Treating this complication requires a successful Medicine skill (DR 11). Each attempt at treating this complication takes twenty minutes.

Once successfully treated, a surgeon may or may not be able to reattach the fingers, depending on the nature of the attack. The character performing the operation must succeed in a Medicine skill roll (DR 14) to reattach the fingers. A patient is generally sedated before his fingers are reattached. If the patient is not sedated, the DR for reattaching his fingers is increased to 16. Each attempt at reattaching the fingers takes thirty minutes.

The hand will heal over four weeks if the fingers are not reattached, though the character will lose considerable functionality in the injured hand. If the fingers are reattached, the character's hand will heal in six weeks, and the character can take no action with his hand until it has healed.

**7-9 Broken Fingers**

A number of fingers on the character's hand are broken by the attack. Until his hand is healed, the character suffers –2 on skill rolls to resolve actions taken with the hand in addition to any other penalties. When resolving melee or unarmed attacks made with the arm, the character suffers –2 on his damage rolls until his fingers are healed.

Treating the broken fingers requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 11). Each attempt at setting the fingers takes twenty minutes. Once it has been successfully treated, the hand will require one month to heal.

If the hand is not treated, it will take six weeks to mend, and the character will lose considerable functionality in the injured hand.

**10-13 Torn Muscle**

The attack damages the muscles in the character's arm.

The character suffers –3 on skill rolls to resolve actions taken with the arm until the wound is fully healed. When resolving melee or unarmed attacks made with the arm, the character suffers –3 on his damage rolls until his arm is healed.

The torn muscles do not require medical attention and will heal normally over the next two weeks if the character keeps the arm in a sling and does not use it. If he chooses to not take it easy with his arm, it will heal over four weeks.

**14-16 Broken Arm**

The attack breaks the character's arm. The character cannot use the arm until it is fully healed.

Treating the arm requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 11). A patient is generally sedated before his arm is set. If the patient is not sedated, the DR for setting the arm is increased to 14. Each attempt at setting the arm takes twenty-five minutes. Once it has been successfully treated, the arm will require two months to heal.

If the arm is not treated, it will heal over two months, but will remain permanently weak. When resolving actions made with the arm, such as melee damage rolls or heavy lifting, treat the character's Vitality as 2 lower.

**17-18 Compound Fracture**

The blow messily breaks the character's arm, leaving a bone fragment jutting from the torn flesh. The character cannot use the arm until it is fully healed.

Treating the arm requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 14). A patient is generally sedated before his arm is set. If the patient is not sedated, the DR for setting the arm is increased to 16. Each attempt at setting the arm takes forty minutes. Once it has been successfully treated, the arm will require two months to heal.

If the arm is not treated within one day, it will become infected. Each additional day the character's arm goes untreated, he must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If he fails a roll, sepsis progresses and he suffers –1 Vitality. If the character's Vitality is reduced to less than 0, he dies.

Once the wound has been treated, the character has the chance to recover from the infection. He continues to make Vitality rolls each day. If the roll succeeds, he regains 1 Vitality lost due to the septic wound. If he fails, he suffers an additional –1 Vitality. If he regains all Vitality lost due to the septic wound, the infection clears.

**19-20 Amputated Arm**

The force of the blow nearly amputates the character's arm. What remains is a mass of shattered bone and torn flesh. See Massive Blood Loss, page 108 and Severed Limb, page 108.

The wound will heal over two months if the arm is not reattached. If the arm is reattached, the character's wound takes three months to heal. If the arm is reattached, the character can take no action with it until it has healed.

**Complications – Head**

Roll Effect

**2 Severed Artery**

The attack severs the character's artery. See Massive Blood Loss, page 108.

Treating the wound requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 16). If the character treating the wound fails a roll, the wounded character must be stabilized again (see pages 109 – 110). Each attempt to treat this complication takes twenty-five minutes.

After receiving medical attention, the character will require round-the-clock care as he recovers from his wounds. Recovery will take three months.

**3-4 Destroyed Jaw**

The character's jaw is ripped off or totally destroyed.

Until the character's jaw has been reattached and fully healed, the character suffers –2 Charm, cannot speak, and can only feed himself with great difficulty. If this condition is permanent, the character should consider learning sign language. A character's Charm cannot be reduced to below 1 as a result of this Complication.

Treating this Complication requires a successful Medicine skill (DR 11). Each attempt at treating this Complication takes twenty-five minutes.

Depending on the nature of the attack, a surgeon may be able to reattach the jaw after successfully treating the wound. An operation to reattach the jaw must be performed before the jaw deteriorates too far to be replaced. Reattaching the jaw requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 14). If the patient is not sedated, the DR for reattaching his jaw is increased to 16. Each attempt to reattach the character's jaw takes one hour. Once the character's jaw has been successfully reattached, it heals over two months.

**5-7 Dislocated Jaw**

The blow dislocates the character's jaw. The character cannot speak or bite until medical attention is received.

The Complication may be treated with a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 11). Each attempt to treat this Complication takes five minutes.

This injury takes two weeks to heal once the jaw has been relocated.

**8-12 Concussed**

The character is concussed by the force of the blow (see page 108).

**13-15 Disfiguring Scar**

The attack severely disfigures the character, possibly knocking out teeth or destroying his ear or nose. Though the wound heals normally over the next three weeks, the character permanently suffers –2 on Charm rolls not for Intimidation but gains +1 on Charm – Intimidation rolls. These modifiers are not cumulative with additional disfiguring wounds, afflictions, or impediments.

Treating this Complication requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 14). If the wound is successfully treated, the character only suffers –1 on Charm rolls not based on Intimidation but does not gain a bonus on Charm – Intimidation rolls. Each attempt to treat this complication takes forty minutes.

**16-17 Disoculated**

One of the character's eyes is damaged or disoculated. Determine which eye randomly. The eye requires medical attention within two days or the character will go permanently blind in the eye.

The character suffers –2 on Wit and skill rolls for actions requiring vision until the wound has been treated. Once the wound has been treated, the character permanently suffers –1 on Wit and skill rolls for actions requiring vision, such as ranged combat rolls, until the character's eye has been replaced.

Treating the eye requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 14). Each attempt to treat the eye takes thirty minutes.

Whether the eye is treated or not, the injury heals over three weeks.

**18-19 Lost Eye**

One of the character's eyes has been destroyed by the attack. Determine which eye at random.

Until this wound has been successfully treated, the character suffers –3 Coordination, -3 on sight-based Wit and skill rolls, and automatically fails ranged attack rolls. A character's Coordination cannot be reduced below 1 as a result of this Complication.

Once the wound has been treated, the character permanently suffers –1 on Wit and skill rolls for actions requiring vision, such as ranged combat rolls, until the character's eye has been replaced.

Treating this Complication requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 11). Each attempt at treating this Complication takes thirty minutes.

**20 Shattered Skull**

The blow shatters the character's skull. After combat, the character falls unconscious and cannot wake up until this wound has been successfully treated.

Treating this Complication requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 16). The surgeon may reroll failed Medicine rolls, but the character loses 1 attribute point due to permanent brain damage each time a roll is failed. The player controlling the character may decide which attribute is reduced. Each attempt at treating this Complication takes thirty minutes.

The character wakes up within two hours of being treated successfully, but will remain weak for some time. For the next two months, the character suffers –1 Vitality. The character's Vitality cannot be reduced to less than 1 as a result of this penalty. If the character exerts himself and does not remain in bed, his Vitality is reduced to 1 until he is fully healed. Recovering from a shattered skull takes two months.

Complications – Leg

Roll Effect

2-3 Severed Artery

The attack severs the character's artery. See Massive Blood Loss below (see page 108).

Treating the wound requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 16). If the character treating the wound fails a roll, the wounded character must be stabilized again (see pages 109 – 110). Each attempt to treat this Complication takes twenty-five minutes.

After receiving medical attention, the character will require round-the-clock care as he recovers from his wounds. Recovery will take three months.

4-5 Amputated Foot

The attack virtually amputates the character's foot. See Massive Blood Loss, page 108 and Severed Limb, page 108.

Until his foot has been reattached or replaced, the character suffers -2 Coordination and cannot kick, run, or dodge. A character cannot have his Coordination reduced to less than 1 as a result of this injury.

The leg will heal over six weeks if the foot is not reattached. If the foot is reattached, the character's leg takes two months to heal, during which time the character has to stay off his leg.

6-9 Broken Foot

The force of the attack breaks the character's foot.

Until his foot is healed, the character suffers -2 Coordination and cannot kick, run, or dodge, in addition to any penalties from wounds. A character cannot have his Coordination reduced to less than 1 as a result of this injury.

Treating the foot requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 11). A patient is generally sedated before his foot is set. If the patient is not sedated, the DR for setting the foot is increased to 14. Each attempt at setting the foot takes twenty minutes. After receiving medical attention, the foot will heal over the next four weeks.

If the character's foot is not treated, it will heal over six weeks of limited use. If the leg is allowed to heal without medical attention, the character permanently suffers –1 Prowess.

10-13 Torn Muscle

The blow tears through the muscle of the character's leg, greatly limiting his mobility.

The character suffers –1 Coordination and cannot run, kick, or dodge until the wound has healed. A character cannot have his Coordination reduced to less than 1 as a result of this injury.

The torn muscles do not require medical attention and will heal normally over the next two weeks if the character keeps off his leg. If he chooses to not take it easy, it will heal over four weeks.

14-16 Broken Leg

The force of the attack breaks the character's leg. Until his leg has healed, the character suffers -2 Coordination and cannot kick, run, or dodge. A character cannot have his Coordination reduced to less than 1 as a result of this injury.

Treating the leg requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 11). A patient is generally sedated before his leg is set. If the patient is not sedated, the DR for setting the leg is increased to 14. Each attempt at setting the leg takes thirty minutes. Once it has been successfully treated, the leg will require two months to heal.

If the character's leg is not treated, it will heal over three months of limited use, but will remain permanently weak. If the leg is allowed to heal without medical attention, the character permanently suffers –1 Coordination. A character's Coordination can not be reduced to less than 1 as a result of this injury.

17-18 Compound Fracture

The blow messily breaks the character's leg, leaving a bone fragment jetting from the torn flesh. Until his leg has healed, the character suffers -3 Coordination and cannot kick, run, or dodge. A character cannot have his Coordination reduced to less than 1 as a result of this injury.

Treating the leg requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 14). A patient is generally sedated before his leg is set. If the patient is not sedated, the DR is increased to 16. Each attempt at setting the leg takes forty minutes. Once it has been successfully treated, the leg will require two months to heal.

If the leg is not treated within one day, it will become infected. Each additional day the character's leg goes untreated, he must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If he fails a roll, wound sepsis progresses and he suffers –1 Vitality. If the character's Vitality is reduced to less than 0, he dies.

Once the wound has been treated, the character has the chance to recover from the infection. He continues to make Vitality rolls each day. If the roll succeeds, he regains 1 Vitality lost due to the septic wound. If he fails, he suffers an additional –1 Vitality. If he regains all Vitality lost due to the septic wound, the infection clears.

19-20 Amputated Leg

The force of the attack nearly amputates the character's leg. What remains is a mass of shattered bone and torn flesh. See Massive Blood Loss, page 108 and Severed Limb, page 108. Until his leg has been reattached or replaced, the character suffers -4 Coordination and cannot kick, run, take evasive action, or dodge. A character cannot have his Coordination reduced to less than 1 as a result of this injury.

The wound will heal over two month's time if the leg is not reattached. If the leg is reattached, the character's wound takes three months to heal, during which time the character must stay off of his leg.

Complications – Torso

Roll Effect

2-3 Damaged Heart

The attack causes severe damage to the character's heart. See Massive Blood Loss below (page 108).

Treating the wound requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 16). Each time the character treating the wound fails a roll, the wounded character must be stabilized again (see pages 109 – 110). Each attempt to treat this complication takes twenty-five minutes.

After receiving medical attention, the character will require round-the-clock care as he recovers from his wounds. Recovery will take three months.

4-5 Spinal Damage

The character's spine is seriously damaged by the force of the attack, and he may suffer permanent paralysis. The character can take no actions until the damage to his spine has been treated.

Treating this Complication requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 16). Each time the character treating the Complication fails an attempt to treat the wound, the wounded character permanently loses 1 point of Coordination or Vitality. The player controlling the character decides which attribute is reduced. If the character's Coordination or Vitality is reduced to 0, he is permanently paralyzed. A character's attributes cannot be reduced to below 0 as a result of this Complication. Each attempt to treat this Complication takes thirty minutes.

After receiving medical attention, the character will require round-the-clock care as he recovers from his wounds. Spinal damage heals over two months.

6-7 Fractured Hip

The force of the attack fractures the character's hip. The character cannot stand up unassisted until the wound has been treated. The character suffers –4 Coordination until the wound has fully healed. The character's Coordination cannot be reduced to below 1 as a result of this Complication.

Treating this Complication requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 14). A patient is generally sedated before the complication is treated. If the patient is not sedated, the DR for treatment is increased to 16. Each attempt at setting the hip takes one hour. Once it has been successfully treated, the hip will require two months to heal.

If the character's hip is not treated, it will heal over three months of limited use, but will remain permanently weak. If the hip is allowed to heal without medical attention, the character permanently suffers –1 Coordination. A character's Coordination can not be reduced to less than 1 as a result of this injury.

8-13 Broken Ribs

The attack breaks a number of the target's ribs. The character suffers –1 Vitality until the wound is fully healed. A character cannot have his Vitality reduced to less than 1 as a result of this injury.

This Complication may be treated by any character with the Medicine skill without a skill roll. Treating this Complication takes ten minutes. After receiving medical attention, the ribs will heal over six weeks.

If the character does not receive medical attention and the wound is left to heal naturally, it will take eight weeks to heal.

14 – 16 Major Organ Damage

The attack badly damaged one or more of the character's internal organs. He may have been gut shot or stabbed in the bowels. Whatever the case, he will be spending much of the near future doubled over in excruciating pain. The wound, though indescribably painful, is a slow killer.

After combat, the character must pass a Will roll (DR 14) to take any action.

The wounded character loses 1 point of Vitality every two hours until he has been stabilized (see pages 109 – 110). If the character is reduced to 0 Vitality, he falls unconscious and will die the next time his Vitality is reduced. An unconscious character awakens within twenty minutes of receiving medical attention unless sedated. A character recovers Vitality lost from major organ damage at a rate of 1 per week.

Treating the complication requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 16). The patient must be sedated during the operation. If the roll fails, the character must be stabilized again. Each attempt to treat the wound takes thirty minutes.

Once the complication has been treated, the character must keep off his feet while the wound heals over four weeks. If the character defies doctor's orders and exerts himself, the wound opens back up and he must be treated once more.

17-18 Collapsed Lung

The attack pierced the target's lung, causing it to collapse. After combat, the character falls to the ground sucking for air and can do nothing until his wound has been treated. Without medical attention, the character will soon die. See Massive Blood Loss, page 108.

Treating a collapsed lung requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 16). The patient must be sedated during the operation. If the roll fails, the character must be stabilized again (see pages 109 – 110). Each attempt to treat the wound takes thirty minutes.

Once the complication has been treated, the character must keep off his feet while the wound heals over four weeks. If the character defies doctor's orders and exerts himself, the wound opens back up and he must be treated once more.

19 - 20 Disemboweled

The blow tears open the target's abdominal cavity, spilling out his entrails. The character can do nothing else but attempt to stuff his guts back in. Without immediate medical attention he is certain to die. See Massive Blood Loss, page 108.

Treating massive internal injuries requires a successful Medicine Skill roll (DR 16). If the roll fails the character must be stabilized again (see pages 109 – 110). The character must be sedated while the wound is being treated. Each attempt to treat the wound takes thirty minutes.

Once the complication has been treated, the character must keep off his feet for four weeks. If the character defies doctor's orders and exerts himself, the wound opens back up and he must be treated once more.

If the character survives, he permanently suffers –1 Vitality. A character cannot have his Vitality reduced to less than 1 as a result of this injury.

# Trauma

Trauma represents the secondary effects of wounds such as shock and blood loss.

## Concussed

Some forms of attack, such as explosions, render a character concussed. While the concussed character is technically conscious and not a Helpless Victim, he is considered unaware, and the DR for ranged attacks targeting him are reduced to 11. The character must make a Will roll (DR 11) at the start of each of his turns. If the character succeeds, he regains his senses and shakes off the effect of the concussion. If the roll fails, the character does not act this turn and must roll again next turn.

The undead do not suffer concussions.

## Knocked Down

There are a number of attacks and situations that may result in a character being knocked down, including, but not limited to, wounds, stunts, and falls. A character on the ground is an easy target. The DR to attack a knocked down target is reduced to 11, regardless of the target's level of awareness. A knocked-down character must spend an action to stand up during his turn.

## Knockout

Some forms of attack, when directed to the head of a living or half-lifer character, have a chance to knock out the character. Resisting a knockout from an unarmed attack requires the target character to make a Vitality roll versus a DR equal to 11 + the Vitality of an unarmed attacker. Resisting a knockout from an armed attacker requires the target character to make a Vitality roll versus a DR equal to 11 + the Vitality of the attacker plus the Damage Modifier of the weapon. If the character makes the roll, nothing happens. If he fails the roll, he is knocked unconscious and can do nothing until he regains consciousness. A knocked out character is a Helpless Victim (see page 96).

During combat, the character can make a Vitality roll (DR 14) each turn to regain consciousness. If the roll succeeds, the character becomes conscious but can take no action that turn. If the character is not in combat, he may roll to regain consciousness every five minutes. The difficulty of the roll decreases by 2 for every five minutes the character spends unconscious. The character must spend an action to stand up during his next turn.

## Massive Blood Loss

In addition to any other wound penalties suffered, a character suffering Massive Blood Loss goes into shock as he rapidly bleeds out. The character must make a Vitality roll (DR 14) every five minutes until stabilized (see below). If the roll fails, the character suffers –1 Vitality. When the character's Vitality attribute is reduced to 0, he loses consciousness. The character will die the next time his Vitality is reduced. An unconscious character is a Helpless Victim (see page 96).

Once stabilized, the character regains 1 Vitality point. An unconscious but stabilized character awakens within twenty minutes of receiving medical attention. The character recovers lost Vitality at a rate of 1 point per week.

## Severed Limbs

A number of gruesome complications can result in a character losing hands, feet, or whole limbs. Severed limbs are among the most horrific wounds that can be endured, but miracles of modern medical science can be utilized to reattach or replace lost limbs.

Even if a character permanently loses a treasured body part, there is no need to despair. Neo-Victorian science has evolved to the point that a body part lost to circumstance can be replaced as fast as a willing – or unwilling – donor can be found (see Medical Procedures, Chapter 6, page 307). Often, a Neo-Victorian surgeon will prefer to simply amputate a badly damaged limb and replace it at his leisure rather than attempting to save it.

A character tending to someone who has suffered a severed limb must first stabilize (see below) the character to halt the Massive Blood Loss (see above).

Once the character has been stabilized, the character treating the wounded makes a Medicine roll (DR 14) to treat the wound. If a treatment roll fails, the character must be restabilized. Each attempt to treat this Complication takes fifteen minutes.

The attending character may attempt to reattach the severed limb only after the wound has been successfully treated. At the Narrator's discretion, if the limb has been completely destroyed, devoured, or left to deteriorate, it will be impossible to reattach it. To have any chance of being reattached, the severed limb must be very fresh or have been properly preserved to slow the process of decay.

Once the wound has been successfully treated, the limb may be reattached with a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 14). The patient must be sedated before the limb can be reattached. If a roll to reattach a limb fails, the limb cannot be reattached. The attempt at treatment takes thirty minutes.

# Treating Wounds

Some wounds heal naturally over time while others are severe enough to require immediate medical attention. Even injuries that are not life threatening may cause considerable debility until treated and healed.

To treat a wound, a character must have the Medicine skill. Flesh Wounds and Serious Wounds may be treated without a die roll. Treating one or more Flesh Wounds requires fifteen minutes. Treating a character with one or more Serious Wounds takes thirty minutes. If a character has both Flesh Wounds and Serious Wounds, both can be treated in thirty minutes. Incapacitating Wounds must be treated individually according to the Complication suffered. Treating a Complication also treats the Incapacitating Wound.

Fatal Wounds cannot be treated.

## Imperfect Operating Conditions

A character treating a wound or Complication requires proper medical tools, a sanitary place to work, access to clean water, and time to operate. If the character lacks any of these necessities, he suffers –3 on treatment rolls.

## Failed Rolls

If a character treating a wound or Complication fails his skill roll, he may immediately try again, presuming his patient has not expired. The effects of failing a roll are described along with the wound or Complication being treated. If no effects are listed, the character attempting treatment can try again without penalty.

## Stabilizing Wounds

A character with particularly grievous injuries resulting from complications must be stabilized before his wounds can be treated. Stabilizing a wound generally entails stopping the flow of blood and keeping the wounded character from going into shock. Each attempt to stabilize a wound takes five minutes.

Stabilizing a wound requires a character to make a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 14). The difficulty should be increased if the character treating the wound lacks

bandages to stop the bleeding. Remember that a wounded character may still be losing Vitality while his wounds are being treated.

Once stabilized, a character can be carefully moved to another location for treatment. Should the character suffer any additional wounds before his previous wounds are treated, he is no longer stable. He begins to lose blood again and goes back into shock.

## Removing Bullets

Any time a character is shot and suffers a wound, roll a d10. On a roll of 1 or 10, the bullet passed completely through the character's body. On any other result, the bullet is lodged in his flesh. Bullets and other foreign materials lodged in a character's body must be removed before sepsis sets in, leading to septic shock and an ultimately death.

Removing a bullet or other foreign object requires a Medicine skill roll (DR 11). A patient is generally sedated before a bullet is removed. If the patient is not sedated, the DR for treating his wounds is increased to 14. Each attempt to remove a foreign object takes five minutes.

Each day a foreign object is left in a character's body, he must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If he fails a roll, the sepsis becomes more aggressive and he suffers –1 Vitality. If the character's Vitality is reduced to less than 0, he dies. The wound the character suffered will not begin to heal while it remains septic.

Once the foreign object has been removed, a character has the chance to recover from his infection. He continues to make Vitality rolls each day. If the roll succeeds, he regains 1 Vitality lost due to the septic wound. If he fails, he suffers an additional –1 Vitality. If the character regains all Vitality lost due to the septic wound, he succeeds in fighting off the infection.

## *Destroying the Undead*

The undead lack many of the frailties that plague living organisms. When cut, the dead bleed little, if at all. Most undead organs are atrophied and useless, lacking purpose. A collapsed lung means little to those who do not draw breath.

The head is generally the most vulnerable part of an undead creature. In virtually all instances, should the head or brain be destroyed or removed, the monster is extinguished. Some abominations, like vampires, are also vulnerable to attacks targeting the heart of the beast. The destruction of an undead creature's limbs will greatly hamper its mobility. Without legs, an animate cannot walk to pursue its victims. Without arms, it cannot grasp its victim, but it can still bite.

The effects of wounds on an undead creature depend on the severity and location of the wound. As with the living, the greater the wound, the more damage inflicted. However, undead creatures do not suffer wound penalties in the same fashion as living and half-living creatures.

## Flesh and Serious Wounds

Flesh Wounds and Serious Wounds inflict trivial damage to an undead creature that can be ignored. Such wounds may destroy clothing and cause cosmetic damage. However, they will not slow the creature down and have no in-game effect.

## Incapacitating Wounds

While an Incapacitating Wound would leave a living creature close to death, often these wounds only stagger the undead. If an undead creature suffers an Incapacitating Wound, it loses one of its next actions during its next turn. An undead creature is not destroyed when it suffers a number of Incapacitating Wounds equal to its Vitality attribute.

*Incapacitating Wound to the Arm* – If an undead creature sustains an Incapacitating Wound to the arm, it must make a Coordination roll (DR 14) to hold on to anything in its hand. Until healed, the creature suffers –2 on rolls to resolve actions taken with that arm.

*Incapacitating Wound to the Leg* – For each destroyed or incapacitated leg an undead creature has, it suffers -2 Coordination and cannot parry or kick. The creature's Coordination cannot be reduced to less than 1 as a result of damaged limbs.

## Fatal Wounds

Fatal Wounds represent substantial structural damage inflicted to the body of an undead creature. Though the attack may not actually destroy the creature, it can destroy large portions of the body and inflict permanent damage that can never be restored.

If an undead creature suffers a Fatal Wound and is not destroyed as a result, it loses one of its next actions during its next turn.

*Fatal Head Wound* – A Fatal Wound to the head of all known undead creatures results in its immediate destruction.

*Fatal Torso Wound* – A Fatal Wound to the torso of an undead creature causes it to suffer –1 Vitality. Some undead

creatures have the ability to regenerate lost Vitality; for others, the damage is permanent. If the creature sustains a number of fatal wounds to its torso equal to its unmodified Vitality, it is destroyed.

A Fatal Wound to the heart of a vampire destroys it.

*Fatal Arm or Leg Wound* – A fatal wound to a limb of an undead creature destroys the limb. Depending on the source of the damage, the limb could have been severed, torn off, or crushed. Few undead creatures are capable of regenerating lost limbs. Further attacks that hit a destroyed arm or leg are applied to the torso.

A creature with a destroyed arm loses the use of that arm.

For each destroyed or incapacitated leg an undead creature has, it suffers -2 Coordination and cannot parry or kick. The creature's Coordination cannot be reduced to less than 1 as a result of damaged limbs.

# Extraordinary Circumstances

In addition to combat, there are a number of other potentially threatening situations that can jeopardize life and limb. Within the confines of the metropolis, even the outside air is hazardous to one's health.

## Electrical Shock

Fuelled by the city's Tesla array, galvanic weapons have been a mainstay of modern warfare for the past fifty years. Though the most powerful weapons are only available to the military, there are numerous electrical weapons marketed to civilians. These weapons are generally intended to pacify rather than kill their targets.

When a character is hit by a weapon that causes an electrical shock, he suffers a wound roll. As usual, subtract the target's Vitality from the total, but ignore any armour worn by the target. Electrical shocks do not damage armour, but characters suffer additional effects when their wounds are caused by electricity (see below).

Undead creatures are susceptible to the effects of electrical shocks, though they do not suffer wound penalties.

## Shock Damage

A character suffering shock damage is subject to additional effects beyond normal damage. The character still suffers normal damage.

### Scratches

The character experiences moderate discomfort from the shock but suffers no other effects.

### Flesh Wound

Though relatively mild, the shock causes minor damage to the character's muscles. The character drops or releases anything held in his hands, or mouth in the case of animates or vampires, regardless of what part of the body was hit by the attack.

### Serious Wound

This is a serious shock that may cause internal injury or burn the character. The character drops or releases anything held in his hands, or mouth in the case of animates or vampires, and is knocked down (see page 108) regardless of what part of the body was hit by the attack. Living characters are also concussed by the shock (see page 108).

### Incapacitating Wounds

Incapacitating Wounds represent severe shocks verging on electrocution. The character releases anything held in his hand or mouth, is knocked down (see page 108), and loses control of his bodily functions. Living characters are also concussed by the shock (see page 108).

### Fatal Wounds

The character is electrocuted. His organs are completely destroyed and are of no use to anyone.

## Explosives

Despite being outlawed within the confines of the metropolis, explosives are a favoured weapon of Neo-Victorian extortionists and anarchists. Particularly radical vampire hunters have found explosive devices useful to counter the speed and mobility of their prey by literally blowing their legs out from under them. No matter whose hands they are in, explosives can be incredibly dangerous and unpredictable weapons.

Only those characters within two meters of the explosive when it goes off suffer the full effects of the blast. These characters will certainly be knocked down (see page 108) by the force of the blast and may be thrown some distance at the Narrator's discretion. A character suffering a Serious Wound or greater will also have shrapnel imbedded in his flesh (see Removing Bullets, page 110).

In addition to his wounds, the character will be covered in scratches and his clothes will be shredded.

If a character is further than two meters away from the blast, the damage roll is modified by –1 for every additional full meter the character is from its epicentre. A character that suffers a Serious Wound or greater will be knocked down by the force of the blast and may be thrown some distance at the Narrator's discretion. In addition to his wounds, the character will be covered in scratches and his clothes will be shredded.

A character that that suffers a Flesh Wound or greater from an explosion is concussed by the blast (see page 108).

### Blowing Up Buildings

Though any two-bit terrorist with a bomb can blow out the interior of a building, bringing down the walls requires either a professional or a tremendous volume of explosives. When a demolitions expert attempts to destroy a building, the Narrator should determine the DR for the Demolition skill roll based on the quantity of explosives used, where they are placed, the exact effect the character is attempting to achieve, and the amount of time the character spent placing them. If the roll succeeds, the building comes down as planned. If the roll fails, the charges go off, damaging the building rather than destroying it. On a critical failure, either the explosives do not go off or they go off prematurely, likely killing the bomber.

In lieu of a demolitions expert, anyone with enough explosives can attempt to bring down a building. Under these circumstances, the Narrator determines the outcome of the bombing. Even if a building does not immediately come down, it is likely to be set ablaze.

### Enclosed Spaces

Explosives are even more devastating inside confined areas. If an explosion inside a confined area does not blow out the walls of the structure, all characters within the enclosed space suffer the full effects of the explosion as if they were within two meters of the epicentre of the blast. At the Narrator's discretion, if the blast was not catastrophic and the area is very large, the effects of the explosion can be determined as described above.

## Hand Grenades

Though generally only available to military personnel operating outside the metropolis, hand grenades are very popular among Undertakers. Grenades are generally explosive devices, though other varieties, including smoke, gas, irritant, and incendiary, exist.

Grenades typically have a handle that is locked in place by a removable safety pin. To use the grenade, the character pulls the pin out and throws it, releasing the handle. When the handle is released, a fuse ignites, and after burning for two to five seconds, explodes the grenade.

Using a grenade requires two actions. The first action is spent pulling the pin and the second action is spent to throw the grenade. A character can throw a grenade a distance equal to his Vitality x 3 meters. Dropping the grenade on a target requires a Thrown Weapon attack roll to hit the target. Grenades cannot be used to make called shots. Grenades are considered to be balanced throwing weapons (see Thrown Weapons, page 99).

On a critical failure, the thrower either drops the grenade at his own feet or the grenade goes off in his hand.

### Bomb Factories

*Many of the explosives in the possession of criminals and anarchists are manufactured by rogue alchemists working in hidden bomb factories. These mercenaries sell their wares for a premium since explosives can be hard to come by within the metropolis. Those bombs produced by alchemists can be especially dangerous, as they often contain unpredictable alchemical agents that can make the explosive unstable and dangerous to defuse. Some alchemical explosives also contain incendiary or gas components that are released upon detonation.*

*While lucrative, this line of work is not without inherent risks. Special Branch takes great pains to locate and shut down bomb factories. Once discovered, the proprietors seldom see trial. Most either suffer fatal accidents or simply disappear without a trace. Despite the best efforts of Special Branch, as many factories are discovered through accidental explosions resulting in the death of the bomb maker as through methodical police work."*

In either case, the thrower will certainly be the epicentre of the blast.

Resolve explosive grenades as any other explosive (see above).

## Defensive Actions

Characters who realize that a grenade has been thrown can either move away, go prone in an attempt to escape the full brunt of the blast, or leap on the grenade. In any case, a character must give up a held action or one of his actions from his next turn to take a defensive action. A character's controller must decide his character's course of action before a damage roll is made.

A character that moves away immediately moves 2 meters from the blast and will suffer less damage accordingly.

A character who goes prone throws himself facedown on the ground in an attempt to lessen his exposure to the blast. Explosive damage rolls against a prone character are made at –3.

A character committing the selfless act of leaping on a grenade completely shields all other characters from the blast but suffers a damage roll with a modifier equal to double the listed Damage Modifier for the grenade.

## Cooking Off a Grenade

Once a character has spent an action pulling the pin on a grenade, he may spend an additional action to release the handle, allowing the fuse to burn down. When he throws it, the grenade will go off in a deadly and inescapable airburst.

To cook off a grenade, the character must succeed in a Will roll (DR 11). If the roll succeeds, when the character throws the grenade on his next action, no one within the blast of the grenade will be able to take a defensive action before the grenade explodes. If the roll fails, the character loses his action, but cannot will himself to release the handle. He can try again with his next action. If the character rolls a critical failure, he misjudges the timing of the blast and the grenade goes off in his hand. He is the epicentre of the blast.

# Fire

In addition to the initial damage suffered, some weapons, such as flamethrowers, can set a character on fire. A character on fire continues to take damage each turn until the fire goes out or the character dies from his injuries.

After being set on fire, a living character must make a Will roll (DR 14) on his next turn. If he succeeds, he retains control over himself and may act normally. If the roll fails, he loses control and can take no action as he runs around flailing and screaming, fanning the flames. The character must make Will rolls each subsequent turn until he regains control over himself or is burned alive.

While on fire a character suffers a +3 damage roll at the start of each of his turns. If the character has armour covering the portion of his body that is burning, subtract the character's armour from the damage roll. If the character is wearing leather armour, double the value of the armour in the location. If the damage roll results in a Flesh Wound, the fire goes out.

The character can also attempt to put the fire out by shedding burning armour and clothing, rolling on the ground, or being submerged or doused in water. If the character is wearing armour on a burning location, he can spend an entire turn removing the burning portion of armour. The armour may be ruined, but the character is no longer burning.

The character can also spend a turn diving to the ground and rolling to put out the flames. While the character is rolling, fire damage rolls at the start of the character's turns are made at -2 (instead of the normal +3). If the character can be drenched or leap into water, the flames immediately go out unless the flaming agent burning the character is water resistant. In such a case, further rolls for burning are reduced to +0, rather than +3.

# Smog

The smog is an omnipresent reminder of the corruption that hangs over Neo-Victorian London. Even on the days when the sun's pale light falls on the streets of the metropolis, the smog is never far from the minds of the city's inhabitants. Those clear days are made all the more dreadful by the dire certainty that the choking, chilling, and killing fogs will return.

A living character venturing outdoors without some form of protection on an average smoggy day suffers –1 Prowess and –1 on all skill rolls, as well as quickly becoming covered in ash and grime. After a number of hours equal to the character's current Vitality, he suffers –1 Vitality. A character that has his Vitality reduced to 0 falls unconscious. After another thirty minutes of exposure, he dies.

If his exposure to the smog ends, an unconscious character wakes up within twenty minutes. A character regains Vitality lost due to smog at a rate of 1 point every full twenty-four hours he avoids unprotected exposure.

For example, Nicky's Undertaker character Percy has Vitality 3. After three hours of unprotected exposure to the smog, Percy suffers –1 Vitality. His Vitality now reduced to 2, Percy can endure another two hours of exposure before his Vitality is further reduced to 1. After another hour, Percy's Vitality would be reduced to 0 and he would fall unconscious.

A character with his face wrapped in heavy cloth can endure exposure twice as long as described above without suffering the effects of the smogs. This primitive protection will prevent the character's Vitality from falling below 1 regardless of length of exposure. Only full respirators or gas masks offer long term protection.

Half-lifers and the undead are not affected by the smog.

### Lost Days

The smogs are at their worst during the winter months when the inhabitants of the metropolis burn greater and greater amounts of coal in a futile attempt to stay warm. The resulting smogs are so dense they blot out the sun for a week or more at a time, plunging the city into complete darkness. These are the Lost Days when the city grinds to a halt and no one dares step outside their homes for fear of the strangling mists and worse.

The effects of venturing outdoors on Lost Days are more severe than those described above. Those who do so unprotected suffer –2 Prowess and –2 on all skill rolls. After five minutes times the character's current Vitality, he suffers –1 Vitality and so on until the exposure ends or the character dies.

# Chapter Three - Playing God

## Character Creation

*"When I found so astonishing a power placed within my hands, I hesitated a long time concerning the manner in which I should employ it. Although I possessed the capacity of bestowing animation, yet to prepare a frame for the reception of it, with all its intricacies of fibers, muscles, and veins, still remained a work of inconceivable difficulty and labour. I doubted at first whether I should attempt the creation of a being like myself, or one of simpler organisation; but my imagination was too much exalted by my first success to permit me to doubt of my ability to give life to an animal as complex and wonderful as man."*

*—Mary Shelley,* Frankenstein, *1818*

To participate in an Unhallowed Metropolis game, a player must begin by creating a character. A character is the player's persona in the game. As the player's character interacts with the story, the player will make all his character's decisions during play and give the character a voice.

Before a player can create a character, he must first have some idea of what he wishes to create. Only after a player is able to visualize his character should he move on to filling in the nuts and bolts aspects of character creation, such as filling in attribute ranks and choosing skills. The best characters are born directly from the imagination of the player, not extrapolated backwards from a set of numbers describing the character's prowess in combat. The game mechanics have many different ways of defining aspects of this personage, but these mechanics require a developed personality and background to provide a framework for them.

Everything that follows from this initial point will reinforce this concept, personalizing it and thereby adding depth to the character. Though the rules provide virtually limitless combinations of abilities, skills, and attributes, it is a character's background and personality that will make him unique. Players are urged to create characters they can empathize with and will enjoy playing. Of course, playing a character that is one's complete opposite can provide a cathartic release in its own right.

A player should consider his character's appearance, his occupation, and his personal history when coming up with a concept. Perusing Qualities and Impediments below (see pages 167 – 194) can be invaluable in generating facets of a character's background. Characters do not have to be incredibly complex, but the more fully realized a character is, the more interesting he will be to play. Some players prefer to create detailed backgrounds for their characters, beginning with early childhood and ending with recent history.

To begin character creation, a player must first choose his character's Calling. Callings, part archetype and part career, provide a springboard for the rest of the character creation process.

Once a player decides on his character's Calling and has created his character's background, he will be ready to choose his character's attributes (see Attributes, Chapter 2, pages 81 – 87). Attributes quantify a character's basic mental and physical capabilities. For example, a strong, athletic character will have a high Vitality attribute while an academic character will require a high Intellect score. Each character has a pool of points for the player to spend on attributes.

After deciding on his character's attributes, a player will be ready to choose his character's skills. Skills are talents and abilities the character has developed throughout his life. Each character has an allotment of points for the player to spend on skills.

Then, the player chooses the character's starting Corruption Path (see Corruption, below). A character's Corruption Path represents the influence of the character's inner demons. Each character begins with one point of Physical, Desire, or Drive Corruption. (Note that half-lifer characters cannot begin with Physical Corruption). After selecting a starting Corruption Path, the character must select an Affliction in that path (see Afflictions, below). An Affliction decides the form the character's Corruption takes.

Next a player may further customize his character by selecting Qualities and Impediments. Impediments may add to a character's Custom Points while Qualities may be purchased in several ways.

Finally, the player spends his Custom Points. Custom Points are bonus points intended to help a player fill out and refine his character. They may be spent on addition skills and Qualities or in increasing the value of attributes and skills the character already possesses.

## History

A player should have some idea of his character's personal background. The more detailed a character's background, the more a player will have to draw on during play. A player is not required to generate a year-by-year breakdown of his character's past, but a few key details will be helpful. The character's age is an important consideration because older characters will have had a chance to accumulate more life experience. The barest outline of a character's history would include his place and date of birth, family members, general upbringing, schooling, apprenticeships, and any previous occupational undertakings.

## Personality

The character's personality is comprised of his social and cultural upbringing, as well as his thoughts, feelings, hopes, dreams, fears, addictions, relative sanity, and the like. Creating a character with an interesting personality is of primary importance in a role-playing game because a two-dimensional and stereotypical character will quickly lose any appeal it may initially hold.

## Appearance

A player needs to decide upon his character's mode of dress, personal hygiene, and mannerisms in addition to his physical appearance. Gender is also an important consideration because, while it has no effect on attributes, it may affect the character's social life.

## Calling

The next step in creating a character is choosing a Calling. A Calling may represent a character's background, upbringing, or even race. For example, an aristocratic character may pursue any interest that catches his fancy; however, he is expected to live a pampered life, free of the rigors of an actual occupation. Likewise, the unnatural origins of the Dhampir are not merely superficial details; they are defining traits, complete with their own unique advantages and stigmas.

A Calling is a general way of determining the character's role during game play as well as his place in society. Once a player has chosen his character's Calling, it will

### Character Creation Overview

**Step One: Character Concept**

Decide what sort of character you would like to play. Make some notes on your character's background. Determine the fundamental aspects of the character's personality. Choose a Calling (see above).

**Step Two: Select Starting Attributes**

Characters begin with 1 in each attribute. You have 25 attribute points to spend to increase your character's attributes (see pages 134 – 135). Unspent attribute points are doubled and added to the character's Custom Point total. Determine the character's Prowess by adding together his Coordination and Wits.

**Step Three: Select Skills**

A character's Calling gives him a list of starting skills. You have 25 skill points to spend on increasing skills or purchasing new skills (see page 135). Skill points not spent are lost.

**Step Four: Corruption**

Choose your character's starting Corruption Path and Affliction (see pages 135 – 146)

**Step Five: Select Qualities and Impediments**

The player can further personalize his character by selecting Qualities and Impediments. Qualities may be purchased with Custom Points or offset with points from Impediments. A character may take as many Qualities as he can afford. Impediment points in excess of the character's Qualities are added to the character's Custom Points. A character may offset up to 10 points of Qualities with Impediments. In addition, a character may gain up to 10 Custom Points from Impediments.

**Step Six: Spend Custom Points**

You have 5 Custom Points plus any gained by a disparity between Qualities and Impediments and any gained in return for unspent attribute points to spend on increasing or purchasing attributes, skills, or Qualities (see page 146).

**Step Seven: Finishing Touches**

Buy equipment and weapons (see Chapter 4, pages 197-233). Detail the character's appearance, and finish customizing the character's backstory.

not change during play. Though the character may evolve and change occupations, his Calling remains the same. For instance, a character may begin play as a Mourner only to find her true calling as an Undertaker. Rather than changing the character's Calling to Undertaker, she simply changes occupations and refers to herself as an Undertaker instead of a Mourner. A change in occupation has no immediate influence on a character's capabilities, but there may be social consequences that come out through role-playing.

### Descriptions

Each Calling includes a description explaining how the Calling fits into the Unhallowed Metropolis setting. Callings also provide tips on playing the character. These tips are intended to help new players get a grasp on the game setting.

A Calling lists the character's starting skills. These skills represent the most basic education and experience the character has received and act as a spring board for further development. Skills bought with the character's points are cumulative with the skills given by the choice of a Calling. Callings do not receive skills equally because less skill-heavy Callings have more Features and Assets (see below).

Starting Qualities detail the advantages the character begins with (see Qualities and Impediments, page 146). Though these Qualities will be open to characters with other Callings, the Qualities provided by the character's Calling are in addition to any Qualities purchased with Custom Points or offset with Impediments.

Callings also detail unique strengths and weaknesses called Features. These are specific to individual Callings.

Assets describe the character's financial state and starting funds for purchasing gear, clothing, and weapons. Assets also determine the character's starting Wealth Rating (see pages 146 - 148).

### Narrators & Character Creation

*Narrators should take an active role in the character creation process, aiding their players in creating well-rounded characters that are appropriate for the scenarios they intend to tell (see Chapter 7, pages 367 – 370). The character creation process was written to allow as much personalization to go into each character as possible. A Narrator should be prepared to aid players in detailing their characters' backgrounds to ensure they make sense in the context of the Narrator's story. A Narrator that allows a player to create an illiterate ten-year-old lower-class Dhampir boy-genius with twenty years of combat experience in the Deathwatch has no one but himself to blame.*

*The Narrator has total authority to refuse players the choice of certain options during character creation. Narrators are advised to think out these prohibitions in advance. The more information a player has, the easier time he will have in conforming to the Narrator's wishes.*

# Aristocrat

The aristocratic families of Britain are ancient lineages, names that form the history of the kingdom itself. It is these lines that have forged the Empire through their will and obligations for generations immemorial. Though fortunes may falter and tides change, blood and titles are forever. For the Neo-Victorian aristocrat, history is not an abstract concept; it is a living force that constantly surrounds him, a tangible reminder that he is not like common men.

The aristocracy includes not only the titled nobility but also all the blooded members of the noble families. Most are sons, daughters, and cousins who will never inherit a title, but appreciate an elevated station in life none the less. Despite their aristocratic airs, very few members of the gentry are actually peers and fewer still maintain ancestral holdings.

Aristocrats are among the best-educated members of Neo-Victorian society. A classical education is expected of all young men and women of breeding. Even those whose families can no longer afford the luxury of private schooling will see to it that their children receive a thorough, if eclectic, education from tutors and the family libraries. Though they are expected to live lives of leisure, a great number of doors may be opened to any aristocrat who chooses to make a way for himself in the world. A good name can get a prospective student into the finest universities and grant entrance into the most exclusive circles of commerce.

Many of the great houses have faded away since the Plague, their titles extinct and their lands claimed by the Wastes. With the diminution of contact with the Continent, aristocratic families have intermarried to dreadful extents, resulting in the bloodlines growing thin. Fewer children are born to these families, and those that are have a strangeness that does not bode well for the lines. Dilution of the blood with lower-class stock, though tolerated in some of the lesser houses, is looked upon with horror by the oldest families. Many of the aristocratic houses are growing increasingly

desperate to secure a strong heir, and there are rumours that some of these families have retained the services of biological engineers to ensure suitably perfect child is born.

An unfortunate number of aristocratic families are destitute, living off the scant remains of family holdings. All that remains of many old fortunes is a crumbling family manor populated by portraits and ghosts. Despite such hardships, appearances must be maintained. Aristocrats of destitute houses frequently make their way in the world by taking a profession but upholding the illusion that their employment is a matter of choice to avoid losing face. Others maintain the required standards of luxury by borrowing against a good name and selling off heirlooms when they must.

Members of the great families in good standing can generally expect preferential treatment, not just from other aristocrats but also from society at large. They may expect to be treated with deference by the lower classes partly out of respect and partly out of fear. The police are accustomed to hushing up scandals and often do so without the slightest prompting because they know embarrassing their betters will result in unemployment. There is, in fact, very little that a member of the Quality can do that the authorities cannot be persuaded to ignore. Even the dailies may be readily bribed or intimidated into dropping a story that would prove embarrassing to one of the powerful families.

The lower classes are not unaware of the devices employed by the aristocracy to maintain its coveted privacy. In the penny dreadfuls and public entertainments, aristocrats are depicted as rapacious, conscienceless predators above the law. The habit of young aristocrats of "slumming" in the poorer districts does nothing to repair this reputation.

## Playing an Aristocrat

As a member of an aristocratic house, you are one of the Quality of Britain. There is a social order in the world, and you occupy a position at the top of that order. This is the natural way of things, and you are as accustomed to it as you are the solidness of the walls of your family estate.

The life of an aristocrat, though rich in privilege, is often limiting. It is the role of the aristocrat to uphold the laws of the social order, maintain the rules of civilized conduct, and avoid scandal at all costs (see Scandals, Chapter 7, pages 380 – 385). A certain amount of latitude is permitted in minor indiscretions, particularly to the young men of the upper classes, but serious scandal must be avoided at all costs lest the name of one's family be tarnished. An aristocrat must adhere to many convoluted rules of conduct in his public life, and the restrictions of society life are often too much for him to bear. Many young aristocrats resort to maintaining a double life.

Embarrassment to family or friends will be met with a serious response from one's peers. A scandalous aristocrat may find old friends turning their backs on him, his assets cut off, and regular interventions from close family associates. If the character persists in embarrassing his family, he may find himself disowned, exiled from the public life, or even locked in a sanatorium until his unacceptable behaviour can be curbed. Aristocratic characters have to closely watch with whom they associate in public. Low associations can bring shame onto a family as easily as public drunkenness or insulting behaviour.

## Features

**Blue Blood** – Aristocrats exist in a world of unbelievable privilege. Scions of the best families attend the most exclusive schools and spend their insular existence with the luminaries of Neo-Victorian society. Not only will an aristocrat's family name open a great number of doors, he will not even

have to knock. The character is most likely related to at least one MP and may have attended school with the son of an admiral or general or once courted the daughter of a Duke. Aristocratic characters may reasonably know people in any aspect of government, business, or high society.

The character can likely get an audience with any personage in the realm. Those he cannot see in person he can certainly reach with a letter or by means of an ally. Though the character may receive an introduction to virtually any member of the upper class, the response he receives will be based on his reputation and that of his family. If the character is tainted with scandal, he will receive polite but curt refusals for an audience. If his reputation is spotless, an aristocrat is a true force to be reckoned with. The Narrator determines how long it takes to get an audience and what form the meeting takes. For example, a low-ranking aristocrat could expect to wait years to receive even a brief meeting with the Sovereign.

**Deference** – Neo-Victorian society recognizes that the gentry are above lesser men. Provided he has identified himself as an aristocrat, the character can reasonably expect deference from the lower classes. Should an Aristocrat fail a Charm roll when dealing with a member of a lower class, he may re-roll the results. The results of any Charm roll can only be re-rolled once due to Deference.

The constabulary will turn a blind eye to all but the greatest transgressions, such as murder or assaulting another member of his own class, an aristocrat commits. Furthermore, the police will take the word of a gentleman over any commoner. If anyone of the lower classes should lay a hand on the aristocrat, the police would be on him in a flash.

**Intrigant** – Masters of social deception, protocol, and court politics, aristocrats are the exemplars of etiquette and decorum. Manners, wit, and good breeding are the marks of a true Neo-Victorian social predator, a creature with a presence so palpable he can silence a room with a gaze or bend hearts with a phrase. For each level of the Etiquette skill the Aristocrat possesses, he may take one of the following stunts instead of selecting a common specialty.

- *Allegiance* – The Aristocrat naturally arouses sentiments of loyalty and devotion in others. Those in his service would never intentionally betray the character for any reason. Anyone in his employ or owing deference to the character will go to great lengths to please him by any means possible.
- *Casanova* – The character has an natural gift for seduction. He may reroll failed Charm – Seduction rolls. A failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Casanova. Additionally, after consummating a love affair, his paramour will be permanently enthralled with him, unable to relieve herself of thoughts of the character. The Casanova gains a +1 bonus on contested Charm rolls versus any character he has previously seduced..
- *Gossip* – An aristocrat must pay careful attention to current events to maintain his interests and avoid unintended insults or missteps that can mar his reputation. What may seem like a preoccupation with trivial gossip to the uninitiated is the life's blood of an aristocrat. Aristocrats gather information through varied means, including witnessing important events first hand, paying off informants, bending an ear to rumour-mongers, casual conversation, and eavesdropping. A character with access to newspapers or a telegraph may be able to apply this ability to distant areas, as will someone receiving regular letters or dispatches from family or compatriots far away. The Aristocrat can add his Etiquette skill to Intellect – General Knowledge rolls pertaining to current events.
- *Innuendo* – The character is a master of innuendo and doublespeak. He can convey a threat, message, or seduction with such subtlety that only his intended listener(s) understands the full meaning of his remarks. Another listener may attempt to decipher the character's innuendos by succeeding in a contested Charm + Etiquette roll against the speaker.
- *Personage of Distinction* – The character's natural grace and noble bearing denote a person of distinction. While the character could never hope to pass for anything other than an aristocrat, few would dare assault such an individual for fear of the whole of Neo-Victorian society coming down upon them. Only the desperate, fanatical, or insane would attack the character. Any lower-class or middle-class person intending to do harm to the Aristocrat's person must first pass a Will roll versus a DR equal to 11 + the Aristocrat's Etiquette skill. If the roll succeeds, the character may carry out his intended action. If he fails, the malefactor will lose his nerve and quickly leave the Aristocrat's presence. The dead, insane, and insensate are not required to make this roll.
- *Social Predator* – The character's carefully cultivated demeanour is charming at the best of times and frightful in its intensity at the worst. The character is clearly a man to avoid crossing. With a glance, the character can silence an offending speaker or rout an angry mob. The character can reroll failed Wit – Interrogation and Charm – Intimidation rolls. Each failed roll may be rerolled once due to Social Predator.

- *Stirring Speech* – The character speaks so naturally and passionately that anyone who hears him is moved by the conviction of his words. If the character gets the chance to personally present his case, he can reroll failed Charm – Credibility rolls. Each failed roll may be rerolled once due to Stirring Speech.
- *Untouchable* – The character has a knack for avoiding scandal through shrewd manipulation, careful machinations, and sheer luck. Perhaps the character's family employs an extensive network of agents to keep their skeletons in the closet, or perhaps he is a dark horse who never draws overt attention to himself. The character may be something of a legend, having dodged countless scandals or duels that would have laid others low. Whatever the case, all but the most dire breaches of etiquette are quickly forgotten. The character can only be marred by scandal if he is caught red handed in the most foul of acts and even then only if news of his malfeasance reaches a broad audience (see Scandals, Chapter 7, pages 380-385).
- *Vogue* – The character is a trend setter renowned for his elegance and sense of style. Invited to all the best parties, the character can make or break a social occasion depending upon whether or not he deigns to attend. After any public appearance, his dress and mannerisms are certain to be affected by scores of imitators. The character can reroll any failed Charm roll when dealing with fashionable young Aristocrats. Each failed roll may be rerolled once due to Vogue.
- *Viper* – The character is a more convincing liar than the devil himself. Even those who know his true nature will be tempted to believe his words. The character can reroll failed Charm – Guile rolls. Each failed roll may be rerolled once due to Viper.

### Starting Qualities

None

### Starting Skills

Etiquette 2, History 2, Languages (any two) 2

**Choose five of the following skills:** Art 2, Gambling 2, Languages (any) 2, Law 2, Melee Weapon 2, Performance 2, Pistol 2, Riding 2, Rifle 2.

### Assets

A starting Aristocrat begins the game with a comfortable West End home, likely a small manor that has been in his family for generations. The house itself will be furnished with exquisite decorations and family heirlooms. The estate is staffed by a modest number of servants including a cook, a driver with carriage and horses, and a maid or valet. The character may have established additional lodgings throughout the city, but these will have to be paid for out of his monthly stipend.

The character owns a fine wardrobe suitable for leisure as well as state occasions. He likewise possesses a number of fine brass or silver-plated respirators.

Should the character need more funds, he can easily borrow the money from a relative or friend of the family, provided that the character remains in good standing. If the character takes action that leads to scandal, the first place his family will take retribution is his pocket book. Debtors will suddenly call in old debts and his trust fund will dry up to a pittance.

Note that the aristocrat is expected to be a man of leisure. Though he may have hobbies, dabble in business, engage himself in philosophy or the natural sciences, or be a patron of the arts, he is not expected to dirty his hands with an actual occupation. The Quality are above such mundane pursuits.

An Aristocrat begins the game with Wealth 7. He also begins with £40 that may be spent on weapons, armour, and equipment. Up to £10 may be kept as savings.

Note that while aristocrats generally have a great deal of wealth at their disposal, most of this is in the form of material assets passed down through the family, rather than liquid assets. The Aristocrat's ready cash comes from the monthly stipend paid by his family.

## Criminal

The harsh conditions and crippling poverty present in Neo-Victorian cities make crime inevitable. The slums are haunted by a multitude of beggars, tramps, match-sellers, crossing-sweepers, rag-pickers, organ-grinders, prostitutes, and others who hang on to the outskirts of society. Mingling with them are the burglars, pimps, and resurrectionists who operate under the cover of darkness and the pickpockets and petty thieves who work the streets day and night. Collectively known as the Family, the criminal class includes not only thieves, paid murders, confidence men, and racketeers but also the lookouts, spies, informers, associates, and business owners who cater to them. The activities of the criminal underground are so varied and extensive as to defy categorization. The only thing the members of the criminal fraternity have in common is that they operate outside the law.

Most criminals get their start early. Born into grinding poverty among the criminal elements of the slums, these fledgling malefactors learn to live by stealing anything they can get their hands on. Those with particularly nimble fingers may graduate to picking pockets or any one of the countless other criminal crafts practiced throughout the city.

Not even the upper classes are free from the taint of criminal malfeasance. Many jaded young aristocrats are drawn to the excitement of theft, seeing stealing as just another form of amusement. Even those who are not directly involved in illegal activities often court criminal associations in private for vicarious thrills.

The lower classes are largely free from the constraints of reputation except within their criminal circles. Having a reputation as a stone cracksman may not get a thief invited to many West End dinner parties, but it will certainly aid him in getting work on the street. On the other hand, being known as snitch is a sure way to get one's throat slit.

A professional criminal can seldom rely on the police for protection. Such men and women can only count on themselves and the goodwill of confederates who are fully capable of selling them out for less than the cost of a loaf of stale bread. Instead of police protection, the character will be continually subject to police harassment, especially after a major crime has been committed. Police detectives will dog his steps, constantly questioning his friends and associates about his whereabouts. Occasionally he may be leaned on for information and may be subject to unlawful arrests or interrogations.

A life of crime is not for the faint of heart. Even those who survive living on the streets of the metropolis alongside deranged lunatics and undead horrors can, as easily as not, end up serving lengthy prison terms or, worse yet, be forced into the ranks of the Penal Corps.

## Playing a Criminal

Criminal characters are best for players looking for a challenge. While they lack the combat abilities of Undertakers and Mourners or the wealth and status of Aristocrats, Criminals offer a diverse role-playing experience because they tend to be specialists with large numbers of associations. The character will be able to move through underground social circles that are dangerous to outsiders.

Players are particularly encouraged to take their time creating as rich a character background for their Criminal as possible. If you are going to play a Criminal character, it is best to play it up to the hilt. Learn a little thieves' cant and confuse the hell out of your gaming group.

## Features

**Flash Thief** – The criminals of the metropolis are skilled professionals who largely ply their trade under the harshest conditions possible. Talent is not enough: the prisons and gutters are full of thieves who lacked the proper combination of skill, imagination, and determination to succeed. A flash thief has every angle figured and is always ready for a quick score. For each level of the Streetwise skill the Criminal possesses, he may take one of the following stunts instead of selecting a common specialty.

- *Alibi* – The character always has a story ready to tell that can be corroborated by "eye witnesses." Though the integrity of these witnesses is likely to be questioned, the character has no shortage of friends who will stand up and tell any story required convincingly.
- *Broadsman* – The character is a card sharper. He has perfected the art of cheating at cards and can reroll failed Gambling rolls. Each failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Broadsman. There is also little to no chance the character will be caught cheating – he is simply that good. Of course, plenty of good cheats have been killed without ever having been caught...
- *Cant* – The character is particularly well versed in the language of the streets and begins the game with Language 5 in Thieves' Cant and Rhyming Slang. The character gains +1 on all Charm rolls when dealing with lower-class characters. A character cannot gain this stunt after character creation.
- *Confidence Man* – The character is a swindler, cheat, and master manipulator. He knows all the scams and angles. There is virtually nothing he cannot sell with a good pitch. The character can reroll failed Charm – Guile rolls. Each failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Confidence Man.
- *Cracksman* – The character is a skilled safe cracker. Between his sensitive fingers and keen hearing, he can crack most safes in no time. Cracksmen are hard to come by, so the character is certain to be regularly propositioned with jobs. The character can reroll failed Safe Cracking rolls. Each failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Cracksman.
- *Escapist* – The character is a skilled escape artist. Slipping off hand cuffs and dislocating limbs comes naturally to him. If his criminal activities did not pay so well, he might consider a life on the stage. The character can reroll failed Escapology rolls. Each failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Escapist.
- *Ghost* – When the character goes to ground, he simply vanishes. Once the word is out, a network of friends and criminal associations ensure the character is well fed and can move around undetected, albeit with greatly reduced mobility. Those who know him suddenly suffer a limited amnesia in regards to the character's appearance, last known location, and likely whereabouts. Even the character's own mother suddenly has trouble identifying him when the wrong people are asking. It may be possible to locate the character but not without a great deal of effort, many hours of foot work, and prolonged interrogations or torture. The character also begins with the Safe House Quality (see page 173).
- *Man of a Thousand Faces* – The character is a master of disguise. He will have several well-developed personas that may be used to avoid detection on the streets. The character seldom appears in public without some kind of disguise. The character can reroll failed Disguise rolls. Each failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Man of a Thousand Faces.
- *Mobsman* – The character is part of a criminal gang, and can rely on the other members of his gang when he is in trouble or needs a place to lay low. The gang maintains a flash house, or headquarters, where members can be found at all hours. The character is expected to regularly take part in the gang's activities, share information, and spend some time in the company of other members. The player and the Narrator should work together to flesh out the gang before the game begins, including notes on the members, the neighbourhood in which the gang operates, the character's position in the gang, and the gang's activities.
- *Negotiator* – The character is used to delicate negotiations. He has made a career of dealing with other criminals, honest men, and the police. Planning crimes is no simple matter, and the character has learned to get people thinking his way. When negotiating, the character can reroll failed Charm – Credibility rolls. Each failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Negotiator.
- *Phantom* – The character knows the streets of the metropolis like the back of his hand. He knows all the shadows, shortcuts, and hidden passages. He also instinctively blends into crowds, effectively becoming invisible. The character is never lost and can reasonably identify his surrounds with a quick look around. The character can reroll failed Shadow rolls. Each failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Phantom.
- *Procurer* – The character is a professional black marketeer and can find both goods and buyers. He can procure illicit alchemical solutions, drugs, hardware, weapons, or whores at any hour of the day. The character can find items in half the usual time and can reroll failed Streetwise rolls when attempting to locate illegal and highly illegal goods (see The Black Market, Chapter 4, pages 197 – 198). Each

failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Procurer.

- *Rothschild* – The character is skilled at impersonating the upper classes. He has an assumed identity that allows him some access to the aristocracy, though in a limited capacity. Anyone conducting any real research into the character's background will quickly find him out as an impostor. The character has a fine wardrobe set aside for times when he needs to blend in at society functions and has access to other thieves who are willing to pretend to be servants. The character can use his Streetwise skill in place of Etiquette when making Etiquette rolls.
- *Screwsman* – The character has a gift for picking locks. He also has a collection of skeleton keys that could open most of the doors in London. The character does not require lock picks to go about his work and can pick a lock with just about anything. The character can reroll failed Lock Picking rolls. Each failed roll may be rerolled once as a result of Screwsman.
- *Tooler* – The character is an exceptionally talented pick pocket. The character can reroll failed Pickpocket rolls. Each failed roll may only be rerolled once as a result of Tooler.

### Starting Qualities

Criminals begin with the Criminal Associations, Murder of Crows, and Reputation – Street Qualities.

### Starting Skills

Language (Thieves' Cant or Rhyming Slang) 2, Streetwise 2

**Choose three Criminal skills.** These skills begin at 2.

**Choose three of the following skills:** Acting 2, Appraise 2, Forgery 2, Gambling 2, Melee Weapon 2, Pistol 2, Trade 2, Unarmed Combat 2.

### Assets

The Criminal has a number of inexpensive residences throughout the slums of the metropolis. These may be rented flats, abandoned buildings, or spare rooms. Most criminals tend to move around frequently, trusting neither their associates nor the police. Criminals tend to live a feast or famine existence, living it up while flush and starving during the lean times.

Criminals begin with Wealth 2 which can be supplemented with particularly large scores. The Criminal begins with £6 that may be spent on weapons, armour, and equipment. Up to £2 may be kept as savings.

# Dhampir

The Dhampiri are half-vampire and half-human, doomed to live their lives stained by the vampiric taint and to rise from the grave as an undead abomination. Most are survivors of the vampiric infection, but a small number are born of an undead parent. Dhampiri, while not nearly as unstable as true vampires, are incredibly passionate creatures, prone to terrifying fits of rage. Dhampiri fall in love and develop permanent animosities at first sight.

Though a half-lifer, the physiology of the Dhampir is much closer to that of a human than a vampire. Like a mortal man, the Dhampir must draw breath, sleep, and eat for sustenance. The Dhampiri also age and grow old, but at a much slower pace than the wholly living. Dhampiri age normally for the first sixteen years of life. After this age, the Dhampir physically ages one year for every five years that pass. Dhampiri are immune to all known diseases, including the Plague. They can even weather London's smogs unprotected, though most prefer to wear some covering to avoid being stained by the foul air.

Dhampiri tend to be taller and thinner than humans, with striking eyes and a gaze that is difficult to meet. Their faces, while indescribably alluring by human standards, are none the less subtly alien. Their lithe frames conceal an incredible reserve of strength and inhuman grace. Marked by their vampiric heritage, the Dhampiri have slightly elongated canines, though not as pronounced as those possessed by a true vampire. Though a Dhampir does not have to drink blood for sustenance, doing so greatly heightens his preternatural strength and speed.

Touched by undeath, the Dhampiri are possessed by an absolute hatred of the walking dead, especially vampires. When confronted by a vampire, a Dhampir immediately enters a virtually irresistible bloodlust that drives him to immediately destroy the creature at any and all costs. Naturally able to sense the presence of the undead, the Dhampiri make the most efficient vampire hunters the world has ever known.

Dhampiri tend to have a romantic flare for the dramatic. When possible, they are at the height of fashion, even when they expect conflict. Most prefer to carry swords and pistols over the heavier weapons favoured by Undertakers. Dhampiri prefer black leather armour that acts as much as a statement as it does as protection.

### Playing a Dhampir

The Dhampiri are tragic anti-heroes. Daily, they do battle with the most terrifying creatures of the Neo-Victorian

world, knowing all the while that upon their deaths they will rise again in the form of an inhuman monster. Though a Dhampir is likely to fall in love, truly and completely, many times during his long life, he is unable to have a child of his own. Doomed to watch lovers come and go, either driven from him by his unnatural passions or taken by age, the Dhampir can never establish a true legacy.

Realizing their lot in life, most Dhampiri seek employment as either vampire hunters or Undertakers. Though Dhampiri have the potential to become natural Mourners, they lack the temperament to complete the required training, and the Guild would never knowingly admit such a tainted creature into the organization. Dhampiri also make excellent bodyguards, criminals, and assassins. Dhampiri prostitutes are among the highest paid in the metropolis, not only for their exotic airs but also because they are certainly free of the diseases that run rampant through such circles. Few, if any, seek employment behind a desk or in the factories; these creatures are destined for less mundane exploits.

### Features

**Alien Grace** – Dhampiri gain +1 on Charm – Intimidation and Seduction rolls.

**Blood Drinker** – Though a Dhampir does not have to drink blood for sustenance, consuming human blood drastically accelerates the Dhampir's recovery from wounds and makes the Dhampir immensely, if temporarily, physically powerful. For the mechanics of feeding, see Chapter 5, page 272 -273.

For each Vitality point ingested, the Dhampir may reduce an Incapacitating Wound to a Serious Wound, a Serious Wound to a Flesh Wound, or simply remove a Scratch or Flesh Wound. It takes ten minutes to reduce an Incapacitating Wound, five minutes to reduce a Serious Wound, and one minute to reduce a Flesh Wound or Scratch. An ingested Vitality point can also be spent to reduce the healing time of a Complication by one week. The Narrator chooses the order in which the Dhampir's wounds are healed.

The Dhampir gains +1 Vitality and Coordination for one hour after feeding.

**Half-Lifer** – The Dhampir is neither dead nor wholly living. He must eat, sleep, and breathe like a mortal man, but he is tainted by the energies of the grave. A Dhampir ages at one-fifth the rate of mortal men. He is virtually immune to all known diseases, including the Plague. The Dhampir is not affected by London's smogs. He can never develop

Physical Corruption. Half-lifers cannot be detected by an animate's prey sense.

**Hatred of Vampires**– Anytime the Dhampir is confronted by a vampire, he must make a Will roll (DR 14). If the roll fails, the Dhampir is overwhelmed with hatred and charges the vampire. While in this state, the Dhampir cannot parry or dodge. The Dhampir gains +2 on melee damage rolls versus vampires but suffers –4 on all ranged attack rolls until he has regained control over himself or the vampire is destroyed or flees.

The Dhampir cannot make another roll to regain control over himself unless a third party, such as another player character, intervenes. If another party intervenes, the Dhampir can make another Will roll (DR 14) to overcome his emotions. Even if the Dhampir maintains his temper or regains control over himself, he will have to make further Will rolls if the vampire insults him or takes any hostile action.

**Heightened Vision** – Dhampiri can see much better in low light than mortal men. They never suffer ranged attack penalties for poor visibility due to low light. The Dhampir gains +1 on Wit – Perception rolls involving eyesight.

**Immune to Vampiric Mind Control** – The Dhampir is immune to vampiric mind control.

**Sense Undead** – The Dhampir's strange connection to death allows him to sense the presence of undead, whether he can see them or not. When an undead creature is within a range equal to the Dhampir's Wit x 10', he will immediately sense the presence of the creature. If the Dhampir senses a creature, he will know instantly if it is a vampire, though he cannot discern between other undead types. After sensing the undead creature, the Dhampir must make a Wit roll (DR 16) to know the location of the creature. If the roll fails, the Dhampir can roll again at the beginning of his next turn before taking any actions. Once the Dhampir discovers the creature's location, he can track its movements while it remains within a range equal to the Dhampir's Wit x 10'.

If there are two or more undead creatures within range, the Dhampir will not be able to pinpoint the creatures' whereabouts, but will be able to determine their general locations.

Detecting a vampire is enough to trigger a Hatred of Vampires roll.

**Unnatural Passions** – The Dhampiri are prone to exaggerated fits of emotion, especially rage. Any time the Dhampir is subject to a strong emotional response, he runs the risk of losing control. When the Dhampir is at risk of being overwhelmed by his emotions, he must make a Will roll (DR 11). If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the character explodes into an uncontrollable fit.

**Vampiric Transformation** – When a Dhampir dies, he rises from the dead a vampire. When this happens, the Narrator rolls a d10. Regardless of whether or not the vampire responsible for his initial infection was a sentient vampire or not, the Dhampir is only sentient on a roll of 1.

### Starting Qualities

A Dhampir begins with the Resolve Quality.

### Starting Skills

Melee Weapon 2, Occult Lore 2, Unarmed Combat 2
**Any two other skills at 2**

### Assets

The Dhampir is likely to have amassed quite a lot of money from his exploits. Though most of his funds will be squandered on his lavish lifestyle as soon as they are earned, the character should be able to live comfortably and begins with a luxurious flat anywhere in the city. The flat will be small, but well decorated, and may include a practice room.

Though Dhampiri are accustomed to the finer things in life, these creatures rarely have the patience to plan for the distant future. However, a Dhampir will have to work for a living to keep up the lifestyle to which he has become accustomed. The rent on his flat will depend on its whereabouts. The Dhampiri does not receive a stable monthly income unless employed.

Dhampiri have approximately Wealth 4 supplemented by any work available. The Dhampir begins with £30 that may be spent on weapons, armour, and equipment. Up to £5 may be kept as savings.

## Doctor

Doctors are more than merely men of medical science; they are pioneers into the secrets of life and death. Doctors have never been well trusted by the common folk, and that includes the simpletons of all social classes. There are those who would separate true visionaries from their peers based upon nothing more than class association or schools attended. It is neither the degree nor the honours which make the physician but rather his dedication to the craft and a true familiarity with the flesh. Some works are simply too complicated for the uninitiated to comprehend.

Some doctors are surgeons, technicians well versed in the functioning principles of the human body. These are the physicians who combat death in its common forms, dealing with the sick and the wounded and seeking cures for the maladies of daily life. Some are philanthropists, seeking to reduce the sum of human suffering in a city where the depth of misery is not easy to comprehend. Others are men of action, trauma surgeons who share the front lines with Undertakers and the Deathwatch, repairing the bodies of the city's monster hunters and disassembling the monsters to discover their secrets and weaknesses.

Still others are physicians of a more philosophical bent, using medicine to gain access to the secrets of human nature. These men subordinate treatment and medical care to the needs of experimentation. Why limit one's self to simple maintenance of the human clay when there are such discoveries to be made? Many of these doctors who attempt to refine the living clay cannot resist the temptation to seek the knowledge to create new men, Anathema created in their likeness, and Alchemical reanimators seek nothing less than to banish death. Galvanic animation provides another road to perfection made flesh. Rather than artificially creating life, the galvanists seek to harvest the best parts and restore them with the animating spark.

The philosophical physician must hide his aspirations behind a façade of morality, tending to the sick and injured while concealing his true investigations from the eyes of common men. Those lacking sufficient cognitive faculties and a scientific disposition would simply never understand the scope of such great works.

## Playing a Doctor

For the physician of the Unhallowed Metropolis, medical knowledge intermingles with alchemical lore and the metaphysical realities of the Neo-Victorian world. Of course, maybe you chose this Calling because your intentions are altruistic. Perhaps, you have no intention of calling down fire from the heavens to give birth to a new race of Promethean demigods. Maybe, you are really just interested in treating wounds and making sure other player characters make a speedy recovery. Just remember to hide your smirk every time the apes think they have discovered a piece of the puzzle.

## Features

**Black Bag** – The Doctor is no mere physic. He is a cognoscenti of medical science adept in the secrets of life and death. For each level of the Medicine skill the Doctor possesses, he may take one of the following stunts instead of

selecting a common specialty.

- *Credentials* – The character is a well-respected man of science. He can expect to be permitted entrance to any hospital, school, library, or research facility he deigns to visit – day or night. Few men in his field would refuse to meet him in person, and his correspondence will never go unanswered. He can count on receiving advice or opinions from his peers if requested. Should the character maintain his good name, his reputation will draw wealthy patients to him. Of course if the character involves himself in scandal, his credentials will be worthless. When dealing with his peers, the Doctor can add his Medicine skill to Charm – Credibility rolls.
- *Euthanasia* – The Doctor is a master of enacting painless human destruction. He can quickly kill anyone in his care with practiced ease. The Doctor can euthanize an unconscious character or one who allows the Doctor to treat his wounds. Instead of making a Medicine roll to treat a wound or complication, the Doctor may simply extinguish the individual's life. With a successful Medicine roll (DR 14), the Doctor leaves physical evidence consistent with the injuries the character had already suffered, providing little room for allegations of foul play.

A character with the Forensic Pathology stunt can attempt to discover the true cause of death by making a Medicine skill roll with a DR equal to the Doctor's roll to conceal the killing.

- *Field Medic* – The character has a knack for successfully treating others in the field. The Doctor has the capacity to operate with the pragmatic skill of an army surgeon under the worst possible conditions. The character suffers no penalties for Imperfect Operating Conditions (see Chapter 2, page 109).
- *Forensic Pathology* – With a cursory examination of a corpse, the Doctor will be able to determine the likely cause and time of death as well as the likelihood its demise was ushered along by malicious intent or natural causes. With a more thorough autopsy, the Doctor will be able to begin to reconstruct the likely chain of events that lead to the cessation of life, including, but not limited to, signs of physical trauma, cellular damage, disease, the presence of toxins in the blood, the deceased's last meal, and evidence of recent sexual contact. In the case of foul play, the Doctor may begin to put together a picture of the perpetrator based on physical evidence left on the body, including height, hand size, mouth shape, blood type, gender, hair colour, etc.
- *Healer* – The Doctor has a gift for remedial surgery. A convalescing character who has suffered a wound or Complication recovers in half the normal time if attended to by the Doctor for at least one hour per day.
- *Heal Thyself* – The Doctor possesses the capability to treat his own wounds. The character never falls unconscious as a result of his wounds, though he will still die if his Vitality is reduced below 0. The Doctor is capable of remaining conscious through the most painful medical procedures and does not suffer wound penalties while treating himself.
- *Life Bringer* – The Doctor is adept at the creation of life itself, having acquired considerable skill in the creation of all manner of Anathema and perverse Homunculi. The doctor may reroll failed Manufacturing Life rolls (see Chapter 6, *Manufacturing Life*, pages 317 – 324). Failed rolls may only be rerolled once due to Life Bringer.
- *Plague Doctor* –The Doctor is able to influence an infected character's chances of throwing off the Plague or vampiric infection. If a character is treated by the Doctor soon after being bitten by an animate, he can re-roll a failed attempt to shake of the infection. If the Doctor treats the character throughout his infection, the patient may also reroll a failed attempt to throw off the infection at hour 8. If a character is treated by the Doctor soon after being exposed to vampiric infection from either a bite or through the exchange of bodily fluids, he can reroll a failed attempt to shake off the infection. If the Doctor treats the character throughout his infection, the patient may also reroll a failed attempt to throw off the infection after the third week. Failed rolls may only be rerolled once due to Plague Doctor.
- *Reanimist* – In addition to his keen knowledge of medicine and anatomy, the character has an instinctual proficiency for alchemical reanimation that borders on the supernatural. Corpses seem to call to him, revealing their secrets to him while longing for his ministrations. The character can reroll alchemical reanimation rolls (see Chapter 6, *Mercurial Reanimation*, pages 334 – 339). Failed rolls may only be rerolled once due to Reanimist.
- *Street Doc* – The Doctor is well known on the streets of the metropolis as a man who will help those in need. He may barter his skills for various services rendered or simply operate a free clinic for those who could not afford medical attention otherwise. Regardless of the nature of the character's dealings with his lower class patients, he is viewed as an asset to the neighbourhood in which he operates and is owed a great number of favours. The denizens of the street will come to his defence in a time of need, watch over his office, and generally keep him apprised of curious happenings. They will never betray the Doctor's confidence or speak to outsiders or the authorities about the character.

• *Peerless Surgeon* – The character possesses one of the foremost medical minds of his era. He is a gifted genius adept at working flesh like another might work clay. Should the character fail a Medicine skill roll to treat or stabilize a wound, he may reroll the results. Failed rolls may only be rerolled once as a result of Peerless Surgeon.

### Starting Qualities

The Doctor begins with the Resolve Quality.

### Starting Skills

Alchemy 2, Etiquette 2, Language – Latin 2, Medicine 2, Occult Lore 2

**Any three other Academic skills at 2**

### Assets

The Doctor begins with a medical valise containing the tools of his craft, a small wardrobe of respectable clothes, including at least one fine suit of clothes and one fine brass respirator. He also begins with a modest home, possibly even in the vicinity of Kensington if he is particularly well off. The house will be staffed by one or two nervous servants who do their best to keep their minds on their work.

Doctors begin with Wealth 7. The Doctor begins with £40 that may be spent on weapons, armour, and equipment. Up to £10 may be kept as savings.

# Mourner

While the vast majority of Neo-Victorian dead are cremated without ceremony, the bereaved survivors of those with wealth and distinction may employ a Mourner, or professional watcher of the dead, to sit over the remains. A Mourner keeps a silent vigil over the corpse for the three days preceding the funeral, ensuring that the corpse does not rise as an animate. During this time, the Mourner is expected to sit deathly still, never sleeping or speaking a word. Should the corpse move, the Mourner must be prepared to spring into action, decapitating the animate in a blink of an eye.

The Quiet Service is not one to be undertaken lightly. Each Mourner is a member of the Mourner's Guild, an organization which exists solely to train and preside over Mourners. Though a small number of men complete the rigorous training required to become a Mourner, the vast majority are women. Mourners are invariably of the middle and upper classes. The sensitivity of the Mourner's position precludes the possibility of the low born ever being accepted among their number. Many young widows enter the Guild during the process of mourning, hoping to turn their sorrow to a benevolent pursuit. A prospective Mourner must be at least seventeen years of age and possess a spotless reputation.

A Mourner must develop physical endurance bordering on the supernatural. While sitting vigil over a body, the

Mourner must go without food and sleep for days at a time while maintaining complete awareness of her surroundings. Her limbs must remain ready for use, even as she remains rigid and unmoving over the body. She must also be a skilled combatant, capable of decapitating a rising animate at a blinding speed. Each Mourner is a master with the Exculpus, the trademark weapon of the Mourner. The Exculpus is a heavy, long, and razor-sharp knife. In the hands of a trained Mourner, the weapon can be far deadlier than any firearm.

Mourners are likewise keen students of thanatology, anatomy, and mortuary lore. Before taking her place over a corpse, the Mourner is expected to offer comfort to the bereaved. Not only must a Mourner be capable of seeing to her duties, but she must be able to sell her services on the personal level.

Though well paid and comfortable, Mourners live distant, lonely lives. Each is marked by her characteristic full-mourning wear and by the impenetrable reserve instilled by their training. Deathly silent in all movements, a Mourner is sombre to a fault. They seldom speak, and when they do, it is in measured tones. Shrouded in mystery and superstition, Mourners are often avoided by those that find their eerie silence disquieting. A Mourner's clients expect her to remain an exemplar of purity, and thus, each Mourner must take an oath of celibacy that she is expected to follow to her dying day. Those submitting to carnality are cast out of the Guild.

Though lonely and occasionally shunned, Mourners are also highly respected members of society. Their profession is viewed as a noble one, and they are renowned for their lethal skill with the Exculpus. Despite the harsh expectations placed on Mourners, few leave the Quiet Service.

## Playing a Mourner

A Mourner can offer a player some interesting challenges. Though a deadly combatant, a Mourner is also subtle and complex. By her nature, a Mourner is quiet and subdued to the point of unsettling those around her. A Mourner seldom speaks, but when she does, she should be listened to. The Mourner's cultural role is tied deeply to the concepts of ritual and status. A Mourner must always be attentive to her reputation. Avoiding scandal can add some humorous role-playing opportunities for Mourners in mixed play groups who are forced to associate with low-lifes and degenerates.

## Features

**Exculpus Mastery** – Having spent countless hours practicing with the signature weapon of the Guild, the Mourner is an expert with the Exculpus. For each level of the Melee Combat skill, the Mourner can take one of the following stunts instead of a standard Melee Combat stunt.

- *Decapitate* – When attacking with an Exculpus, any attack to the head of a target that inflicts an Incapacitating Wound or greater results in the decapitation of the target.
- *Head Taker* – When attacking with an Exculpus, the Mourner suffers no penalties when targeting the head.
- *Preferred Weapon: Exculpus* – Only a Mourner can benefit from the preferred weapon stunt while using an Exculpus.

**Familiarity: Animate** – A Mourner never makes a Will – Fear roll due to being in the presence of an animate.

**Guild Training** – The character is a graduate of the Mourner's Guild. Her training sets her forever apart from her fellow men. Her deathly silence and fluidity of motion make her a spectacle to be feared. Few would dare make eye contact with a Mourner, but all eyes turn to her when she enters a room. The Mourner gains +1 on Initiative, dodge, and Charm – Intimidation rolls.

**Meditations** – The Mourner is able to enter a meditative state in which her breathing slows to a death-like stillness. In this state, the Mourner is fully aware of her surroundings but can sit rigid and silent for up to three days at a time without any ill effects, though afterward she falls into a deep torpor for at least ten hours. While in this meditative state, the Mourner requires no nourishment. The Mourner may voluntarily end her meditations at any time, fully ready for action.

## Starting Qualities

A Mourner begins with the Quiet and Resolve Qualities.

## Starting Skills

Concentration 2, Etiquette 2, Melee Weapon 2, Shadow 2, Thanatology 2, Theology 2

## Assets

The Mourner begins with an Exculpus and a leather armoured corset that were both custom made for her. She will possess a large wardrobe of mourning clothes custom made for the concealment of her Exculpus. The Mourner has a matte-black respirator that will generally be worn beneath a veil while she is outdoors.

The Mourner owns a comfortable, spacious flat, perhaps in the West End. The grounds surrounding the flat are luxurious and well maintained. The flat is cleaned weekly.

Though the doorman will be used to the Mourner's comings and goings, he will not allow gentlemen callers into the building after sundown even if they are in the Mourner's company.

Mourners begin with Wealth 4 which may be supplemented by taking mourning jobs. The Mourner begins with £8 that may be spent on weapons, armour, and equipment. Up to £3 may be kept as savings.

# Undertaker

Undertakers are freelance bounty hunters licensed by the Office of Urban Defence to track down and exterminate animates and other extramundane threats to the populace. Accustomed to staring death in the face on a daily basis, Undertakers are solemn individuals hardened by the rigors of their profession. Though the work is not pleasant, it is not without its rewards. Those bounty hunters who survive to retirement can amass small fortunes from their grim harvests.

A wide variety of types take up this dangerous but profitable profession. Most come from the lower classes and find the work a simple, if distasteful, means of making money. Others, however, are a bit more high-minded, preferring to see themselves as intrepid monster hunters doing their part to keep the world safe. Many are former Deathwatch personnel seeking their livelihood as private citizens after a stint in the military. Some are plaguemen looking to make more scratch than they can driving a plague cart. Others are outcast members of the Mourner's Guild who found celibacy and the quiet life not to their liking.

Depending on their strengths, Undertakers tend to specialize in one of two hunting methods. Some Undertakers are marksmen, preferring to practice their trade from a safe distance, reaping the rewards of the battlefield once the shooting is done. Others, so-called "Headsmen," get in close and dirty with bladed implements, collecting their trophies as they fall. At the bottom of the heap are scalp hunters, individuals who cannot get licenses or who have had their licenses suspended for "conduct unbecoming." Scalp hunters are forced to sell their kills to licensed Undertakers at a loss. The Undertaker then takes the trophy in and collects the bounty.

There are Undertakers who make their living hunting animates and wild thropes in the Wastes, but many operate exclusively within the metropolis, chasing bounties and hunting undead in the "hot zones" of the city. Urban Undertakers can make an excellent livelihood tracking down vampires and rampaging thropes or Anathema, these horrors being somewhat rarer than the ordinary animate dead but considerably more dangerous and therefore commanding a higher bounty. Many have established relationships

with either the Metropolitan Police or private concerns who call them to service when their skills are required. When hunting such powerful prey, force of arms is seldom enough. Urban Undertakers must rely on an encyclopaedic knowledge of folk and mortuary lore.

## Playing an Undertaker

Undertakers are larger-than-life characters tailor-made for the penny dreadfuls. Each is armed with an arsenal of weapons to do battle with the monsters plaguing the Neo-Victorian world.

While many Undertakers may see themselves as simply doing a job, others may view their work as having far greater significance. An aristocrat turning to the pursuit of demonian horrors may see himself as a reincarnated St. George out to slay the dragon. A clergyman turned Undertaker may believe the Lord guides his hand and whispers to him in his sleep.

## Features

**Familiarity: Animate** – An Undertaker never makes a Will – Fear roll due to being in the presence of an animate.

**Monster Hunter** – Undertakers routinely face the most dangerous horrors known to man. Along the way, they accumulate a vast amount of knowledge about their supernatural enemies from a combination of experience and research. For each level of the Occult Lore skill the Undertaker possesses, he may take one of the following stunts instead of selecting a standard specialty.

- *Deadeye* – The Undertaker's trained eyes can recognize the undead on sight, regardless of distance. Animates are fairly easy to pick out among the lurkers and lepers on the street, but identifying vampires is slightly more difficult. The Undertaker can add his Occult Lore skill to Wit – Perception rolls to identify zombies, vampires, and ghouls.
- *Dustman* – The Undertaker is an expert vampire hunter. He has become accustomed to going for the heart. He now suffers a –3 penalty, rather than –5, when targeting the heart.
- *Eviscerator* – The Undertaker's knowledge of animate physiology has become so refined that he can effectively destroy the creature's mobility by inflicting a Fatal Wound to the creature's torso. After receiving a single Fatal Wound, the animate will be unable to move, except to feebly snap its jaws. Though still moderately dangerous, it is a simple matter to dispatch an animate in this state. Eviscerator has no effect on modular zombies.
- *Huntsman* – The Undertaker is an expert tracker specialized in hunting down animates, ghouls, and thropes. When tracking one of these creatures, the Undertaker can reroll failed Tracking rolls. A failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Huntsman.
- *Jury-Rig* – The character is a master of all trades, able to make minor alterations to his weapons, repair armour, and set traps. He gains a +2 bonus on Trade – Tinker rolls.
- *Lore Master* – The Undertaker is exceptionally well versed in folk and occult lore pertaining to the monsters he hunts. He can reroll failed Occult Lore rolls pertaining to extramundane creatures. A failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Lore Master.
- *Mortifier* – Through means no one in their right mind can comprehend, the Undertaker has learned to impersonate animates. He covers himself in their scent and feigns their movements to avoid detection. Those unaware of the masquerade may mistake the character for the genuine article. Add the character's Occult Lore skill to the DR of zombies attempting to locate him with Prey Sense.
- *Wastelander* – The character is familiar with the Wastes. He has likely travelled extensively outside the walls of the metropolis while hunting zombies, and may have even ventured into a sepulchre. The character is likely to have made contact with one or more ghoul or thrope tribes. The Undertaker can generally survive in the Wastes with little trouble, finding edible, if poor tasting, food and water. He also knows a number of relatively safe places to stay the night.

**Tough** – Undertakers are notoriously hard to kill. Regularly pitting their talents against the abominations of the Neo-Victorian world, those Undertakers who live long enough have learned to keep moving even after sustaining injuries that would fell a lesser man. The Undertaker does not suffer skill roll, Coordination, or Prowess penalties from Serious Wounds. When an Undertaker suffers an Incapacitating Wound, he automatically remains conscious.

## Starting Qualities

Undertakers begin with the Resolve Quality.

## Starting Skills

Occult Lore 2, Tracking 2
**Any three Combat skills at 2**
**Any two Criminal skills at 2**

## Assets

The Undertaker begins with a modest flat outside the West End. Most Undertakers tend to dwell on the outskirts

of slums where they can rely on low rents and plenty of action. Though it is hard to generalize the sort of habitations Undertakers choose, most feature hidden arms caches and secret doors for rapid escape in case the constabulary comes calling. Many Undertakers keep houses throughout the city. They never know where an outbreak will strike next or when they will be too exhausted or drunk to make their way cross town to a favoured residence.

In any case, the cost of the Undertaker's lodgings is minimal. Most landlords assume it would be too much trouble to evict a potentially deranged – and clearly armed to the teeth – Undertaker anyway. The Undertaker does not receive a regular monthly income and does not have a Wealth level.

An Undertaker begins with £50 that may be spent on weapons, armour, and equipment. The character's starting possessions are worn from use. Up to £3 may be kept as savings.

# Custom Characters

While the Callings described above represent a good selection of potential characters that may be adapted to fit a wide variety of character concepts, some players may want the freedom to create characters that do not fit easily into one of the established Callings. Such players may wish to customize a Calling for their character with the Narrator's approval. By their nature, custom characters are generally more skill and Quality reliant than those made with established Callings. Established Callings benefit from the unique Features that are unavailable to characters with Custom Callings. For this reason, Custom Callings are generally suited to more mundane characters, such as police officers, former Deathwatch personnel, and industrialists.

Players who do not want to give up Features integral to a particular Calling may consider stretching their concept slightly. For example, Nicky wishes to create a character that is an ex-Mourner turned consulting detective. Rather than create a custom character, she decides to use the Mourner Calling as a base and then spends her skill points to fill out the skills required for her character's present occupation. The character may not be the best detective to ever walk the streets of the metropolis, but after a little experience, she'll be cracking cases with the best of them.

### Features

Custom characters generally do not receive features. However, with the Narrator's approval, a custom character may begin with stunts that are generally only available as Features of a Calling. If approved, each of these stunts takes the place of a starting skill option (see below). The purpose of this privilege is to realize a player's concept, not optimize a character by selecting the most potent stunts available. Narrators should think long and hard before approving Calling stunts for custom characters.

For example, Brad creates an industrialist custom character. His character concept is a labour boss made good. He suggests to his Narrator that his character should have the Aristocrat's Intrigant – Stirring Speech stunt. If Brad's Narrator sees the logic of his request and does not believe it will unbalance the game, he should agree. Brad spends one of his twelve starting skills to take the stunt.

### Starting Qualities

Custom characters begin with 10 points of Qualities in addition to those offset by Impediments or purchased with Custom Points.

### Starting Skills

Custom characters have any twelve skills at 2. Remember, a character cannot have an Academic skill higher than his Intellect.

### Assets

Custom characters begin with a modest habitation, a small wardrobe, and a serviceable respirator.

Custom characters begin with Wealth 5. A custom character begins with £40 that may be spent on weapons, armour, and equipment. Up to £5 may be kept as savings.

# Starting Attributes

Characters begin with a 1 in each of their primary attributes, including Vitality, Coordination, Wit, Intellect, Will, and Charm. For an explanation of attributes, see Chapter 2 pages 81 - 87.

Starting characters begin with 25 attribute points to spend on raising starting attributes. The cost of raising attributes is cumulative, and each increase costs a number of points equal to the attribute's new value. For example, a player who wishes to raise his character's Vitality from 1 to 2 spends 2 attribute points. Further raising the attribute from 2 to 3 costs an additional 3 attribute points, for a total of 5 attribute points.

The normal attribute limit for human characters is 5. Some Qualities allow characters to have attributes above 5.

If the character ends up with unspent attribute points, these points are doubled and added to his Custom Points (see below).

**Cumulative Attribute Point Costs**

| New Attribute Value | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Point Cost | 2 | 5 | 9 | 14 | 20 |

### Prowess

Prowess, unlike other attributes, may not be increased with attribute points because it is determined by adding together his Coordination and Wits.

# Starting Skills

In addition to skills granted by a character's Calling, starting characters begin with 25 points to increase starting skills or to purchase new skills. Skill points are spent in the same fashion as attribute points. The cost of skills is cumulative and each rank costs a number of points equal to its new value. A new skill costs a single skill point since its new rank is 1. Increasing a new skill from 1 to 2 costs an additional 2 skill points for a total of 3 points. Further raising the skill from 2 to 3 costs an additional 3 attribute points for a total of 6 skill points.

**Cumulative Skill Point Costs for New Skills**

| Skill Rank | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Point Cost | 1 | 3 | 6 | 10 | 15 | 21 |

If a player wants to increase the rank of one of his characters starting skills, he pays points only for the added ranks. For instance, Aron wants to increase his Dhampir's Occult Lore score to 4. As a Dhampir, the character begins with an Occult Lore of 2. Increasing the rank of the skill from 2 to 3 costs 3 points. Increasing it from 3 to 4 costs an additional 4 points. Aron spends a total of 7 skill points to increase his Occult Lore from 2 to 4.

The normal skill limit is 5. Some Qualities allow characters to have skills above 5.

A character's Academic skills are limited by his Intellect. A character with an Intellect of 3 can have Academic skills up to rank 3. A character with an Intellect of 6 can have Academic skills up to 6.

Unspent skill points are lost and are not added to the character's Custom Points.

Skills are described on pages 148 – 167 below.

# Age and Aging

The following rules apply only to living humans, not to half-lifers. These rules are optional and should only be used with Narrator approval. Should the Narrator prefer not to use these rules, a character may be any acceptable age, but his age will not affect his attributes or skills.

The age of the character will impact his range of characteristics and skills; a young character will have had less time to acquire skills, for example, while an older character may have lost some of his raw physical prowess but has had many years in which to study the world and improve his abilities. Note that the attribute limitations given for the age-ranges are based on effective age; a denizen of the slums may have an effective age far higher than their chronological age, and an individual who has undergone anti-agapics may have the physiology of a person years or centuries younger than his true age. Skill limitations are based on chronological age. The 18-55 range is the human standard; most characters are assumed to begin in this age range.

Young characters (less than 15 years) will heal more rapidly than adult characters: all times for recovery rolls are halved. Older characters (greater than 55 years) heal more slowly: recovery times are doubled.

# Starting Corruption

Characters begin with one point of Corruption in any path, Physical, Desire, or Drive (see Chapter 2, pages 87–

| Age Range | Max Vitality | Max Coordination | Skill Points | Max Academic Skill |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5-10 years | 3 | 4 | 10 | 2 |
| 11-15 years | 4 | 5 | 15 | 3 |
| 15-18 years | 5 | 5 | 20 | 4 |
| 18-55 years | 5 | 5 | 25 | 5 |
| 56-65 years | 4 | 4 | 30 | 5 |
| 65+ years | 3 | 3 | 35 | 5 |

92). Remember, a Dhampir or other half-lifer cannot take Physical Corruption. After choosing a starting path, select an Affliction for your character. A character's Afflictions represent the effects of the character's internal Corruption.

# Physical Corruption

When a character is afflicted with Physical Corruption, his body is an insufficient vessel to hold his internalized malignancy. His flesh may erupt with tumours and cancerous growths. The blight from which his spirit suffers may spill into the physical world, despoiling all he touches. Unnameable diseases may ravage even those who appear whole and hale, infecting the body with foul humours for which there can be no corporeal remedy.

# Afflictions

A character with one or more ranks of Physical Corruption must choose one of the following afflictions. Once a character chooses his affliction, it will not change even if he reduces his Physical Corruption path rating to 0.

### Aura of Deformity

*"I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point."*

*—Robert Louis Stevenson,* Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, *1886*

There is an unpleasantness to your aspect not explainable by any single gross deformity but, nevertheless, perceptible and inescapable. Animals have a deep and abiding hatred for you, and you inspire an instantaneous and unreasoning loathing in all men. This places you at a disadvantage in social situations. However, the unwholesome and menacing characteristics of your person give you an advantage in situations involving intimidation or violence.

A character that begins the game with this affliction cannot take the Animal Empathy Quality.

**Rating 1:** You stand out in a crowd as not quite right. Animals are nervous around you and don't like to be touched by you.

If the character has the Animal Empathy Quality, he now loses it.

**Rating 2:** You are seldom given the benefit of the doubt. Children refuse to be alone with you. Dogs bark and snap;

cats hiss, and rats bite. It is best for you to stick with a goldfish, and even it will keep a suspicious eye on you. It is unwise to venture far into the Wastelands; who knows how the thropes will react to you...

**Rating 3:** Those less corrupt than you find your presence troublesome. Few strangers would ever approach you.

When dealing with characters without at least one Corruption Path rating as high as the character's Physical Corruption, the character suffers –1 on non-Intimidation Charm rolls for each rank of his Physical Corruption over the other character's highest corruption rating. Conversely, the character gains +1 on Charm – Intimidation rolls for each rank of his Physical Corruption over the other character's highest Corruption rating.

*For example, Jason's character, Mr. Marrow, has Physical Corruption 3 and the Aura of Deformity affliction. Mr. Marrow is questioned on the street by a pair of constables about a rash of recent murders. Not wishing to implicate himself in the affair, Mr. Marrow lies to the police. Now Jason must make a Charm – Guile roll to see if the police believe his story. One constable has Desire Corruption 2 and the other has Physical Corruption 1 and Drive Corruption 4. Mr. Marrow suffers –1 on his Charm roll to convince the first cop since his Physical Corruption 3 is one higher than the cop's Desire Corruption 2. Mr. Marrow suffers no penalty against the other cop because the cop's Drive Corruption of 4 is higher than Mr. Marrow's Physical Corruption.*

**Rating 4:** Most folk cross the street to avoid you, and few dare to make eye contact with you. Animals flee your presence. No one will willingly go out of their way to help you for any reason.

**Rating 5:** You have a visceral impact on those less corrupt than you. Even your closest friends have begun to find all manner of excuses to escape your company.

Anyone whose highest Corruption Path rating is lower than the character's will begin to feel unsettled and unwell after spending a few moments in the character's presence. This sensation will be identifiable as emanating from the character. The character automatically fails any non-Intimidation Charm rolls versus other characters in his presence.

**Beyond the Pale:** A character with this affliction that advances his Physical Corruption rating beyond 5 is an abomination. The character is doomed to live the rest of his life in complete isolation. Many who lose themselves on this path flee to the Wastes once their bodies are entirely claimed by corruption. There they live out the rest of their unnatural existence in the company of other monsters. Some characters going beyond the pale retain a faint spark of humanity and destroy themselves rather than succumb entirely to their corrupted nature.

## Cursed

What you touch, spoils. In your presence, milk sours, mothers miscarry, and happy families are torn to sticky bits by rampaging thropes. To touch your hand is to invite sickness and infection. Those closest to you are doomed to misfortune. You are a harbinger of ruin.

A character that begins the game with this affliction cannot take the Good Luck Quality.

**Rating 1:** You always seem to be in the right place at the wrong time. Once every few weeks, you observe a tragic accident that coincidently happens in your presence. These accidents seldom, if ever, happen to anyone you know.

If the character has the Good Luck Quality, he now loses it.

**Rating 2:** Mishaps regularly happen around you.

Once or twice per game session, something should unexpectedly go wrong for someone in the character's vicinity. This could be another player character or simply someone the afflicted character passes by on the street. Except in the most dire circumstances, these minor accidents should be more amusing or troublesome than harmful.

Corpses are more prone to spontaneous animation in the character's presence. Add the character's current Physical Corruption rating to rolls to determine if a corpse spontaneously animates while the character is nearby.

**Rating 3:** Your luck has turned bad; you never seem to catch a break. If you are investigating a crime, your key witness is suddenly run over by a cart in the street. If you purchase a rare and hard to obtain chemical, it will contain some impurity. All of your undertakings will go suddenly and subtly awry.

Once or twice per game session, the character suffers an accidental setback. These accidents should work against the character's purposes but will rarely directly threaten his physical health. The character suffers a critical failure on a roll of double 2s as well as double 1s, and he never scores critical successes. Treat critical successes as normal successes. If the character is a surgeon, his patients require double the amount of time listed to recover from his ministrations.

**Rating 4:** You live in a state of perpetual anxiety, never knowing what will go wrong next. You've come to believe that someone, or something, must be out to get you, and you have begun to try to counter this curse through a variety of personal rituals designed to stave off what must be your inevitable, final misfortune.

The accidents around the character intensify and seem to dog his every move. Once per game session, the character now suffers a die roll penalty equal to his current Physical

Corruption path rating. This modifier should be applied after the roll is made to ensure failure. This penalty should be applied when resolving an action of great importance to the character. There should be an in-game explanation for the failure, some sudden and unexpected variable or an unlikely accident.

When the character makes an attack and misses in combat, he is certain to hit a friendly character or an innocent bystander.

Those around the character are dragged down as well. Anyone spending time with the character is bound to get ill. Characters whose highest Corruption Path rating is lower than the character Physical Corruption rating suffer –3 on Vitality rolls to avoid illness or infection or to treat wounds while in the accursed character's presence.

**Rating 5:** Everyone and everything is out to get you. It isn't safe to leave the house, and you dare not open you mail or take visitors; they will both only be the source of more terrible news. Even your immediate surroundings seem bent on your destruction: the straight razor in the bathroom and the kitchen fire are just accidents waiting to happen.

The character must succeed in a Will roll (DR 16) to leave his home. He can make the roll once per day.

**Beyond the Pale:** Should a character with this affliction ever take his Physical Corruption rating beyond 5, he is certain to be at the epicentre of a horrific calamity that will take his life as well as the lives of anyone around him.

## Illness

Your impending death has been a constant companion since the day you were born. Something moves in your veins, and someday it will kill you. If you're lucky, it's something mundane — a cancer, a poison, a wasting disease. You may keep a stiff upper lip and appear healthy, calm, and collected, but it is an illusion. When they aren't looking, you spit up blood or are wracked with uncontrollable tremors that can leave you weak and bedridden for days at a time. In your desire to leave a legacy or just to survive, you can make things worse. You can exhaust the reserves you need to fight the mundane sickness inside you.

A character that begins the game with this affliction cannot take the Able Bodied or Long Lived Qualities.

**Rating 1:** You are prone to bouts of illness. Despite dressing as warmly as possible, you often complain of chills.

If the character has either the Able Bodied or Long Lived Quality, he now loses it.

**Rating 2:** You have grown pale and ashen in appearance. You catch cold easily and require ample sleep to keep healthy.

After a night of interrupted sleep, the character suffers –1 Prowess the next day.

**Rating 3:** You have begun to show the signs of a long-term illness, though its cause is impossible to discern. You suffer symptoms such as coughing up blood, terrible fevers, and pain in your back and joints.

Anyone attending to the character will be dumbfounded regardless of Medical skill roll successes. Though the cause of the character's affliction will remain in question, its dire implications will be clear. The best and only advice that can be given is for the character to put his affairs in order. The player controlling the character should detail the symptoms of his character's affliction.

**Rating 4:** Your illness has taken a turn for the worst. Your movements have slowed, and your countenance has turned ashen. Your breathing is slow and pained, accompanied always by an ominous rasping cough. Your illness is immediately apparent to anyone who sees you.

Unless the character remains bedridden for twelve or more hours a day, he suffers –2 Vitality and Prowess. A character's Vitality and Prowess cannot be reduced below 1 as a result of this penalty.

**Rating 5:** You are at death's door. Your good days are fewer and farther between; your strength is slipping away from you. The cough that labours your breathing is ever-present now, worsening into fits that leave you doubled over in breathless agony. The physicians are baffled; they shake their heads and none of them will meet your eyes.

The character must succeed in a Vitality roll (DR 14) to rise each morning. If he succeeds, it is a good day. If he fails, he lacks the strength to contend with the world and hovers at the brink of unconsciousness.

**Beyond the Pale:** A character with Physical Corruption beyond 5 soon expires from his illness and shortly rises as an animate.

## Monstrous

*"Tis true my form is something odd,*
*but blaming me is blaming God;*
*Could I create myself anew*
*I would not fail in pleasing you."*
*— Joseph Merrick, aka the Elephant Man*

Horrific in the extreme, you draw unwanted attention wherever you go. Perhaps your body is a mass of misshapen tumours and bloated flesh, or perhaps terrible burns cover your body. In any case, your affliction despoils your appearance and may also hinder movement and make meaningful

communication difficult. Whatever the cause of your deformities, you are a ghastly apparition, a living reflection of the Corruption at the heart of the Neo-Victorian world.

A character that begins the game with this affliction cannot take the Haunting Beauty Quality or the Defects or Ugly Impediments.

**Rating 1:** You are unmistakably ugly. Your appearance may be slightly alien or deformed, but as of yet the deformities are minor, difficult to place at a glance. Your features reveal little of the horrors your affliction has in store.

If the character has the Haunting Beauty Quality, he now loses it.

**Rating 2:** Your appearance takes a turn for the worse. Perhaps your flesh becomes covered in small warty growths, turns scaly, or simply hangs limp. You may begin to lose your hair or teeth. Perhaps your eyes bulge unnaturally or you sweat constantly.

The player should detail his character's physical aberrations. Though the character now stands out in a crowd, he is still far from monstrous.

**Rating 3:** Your physical malformations worsen. Your bones may grow painfully distended. Your spine may slightly curl, giving you a slight hunch. You may begin to drag a leg slightly or suffer from a twitch. Whether cracked, wizened, or distorted by bulbous tumours, your face is grotesque.

The character suffers –1 on all appearance-based Charm rolls.

**Rating 4:** Your pronounced physical abnormalities are a constant hindrance. You draw stares on the street. Your voice changes, becoming harsh and rasping, or sickly and full of fluid, or simply utterly alien. Deformities in your limbs hobble you and leave you with a poor range of motion. Your bones and muscles seem continually at war: Bone spurs threaten to tear flesh.

The character now automatically fails any Charm roll in which a pleasing appearance is a factor. Likewise, he now suffers –2 on non-Intimidation Charm rolls if he can be seen.

The character also suffers –1 Prowess.

**Rating 5:** You have become truly monstrous. You are in constant agony from the countless complaints inflicted by your rebellious flesh. Your breath has grown laboured and painful, and your speech is limited to a whisper. To look upon you is a harrowing ordeal, and even those who believe themselves prepared to meet your gaze are stricken with stunned revulsion.

The character automatically fails any non-Intimidation Charm rolls when dealing with anyone who can see him.

**Beyond the Pale:** Should the character ever go past 5 in his Physical Corruption, his body comes apart under its own weight. The character may die peacefully in his sleep or suffer massive organ failure; his end may, however, be rather more dramatic. The Narrator is encouraged to make some effort to construct an appropriate death. If there is enough of the character's body intact, it will reanimate after death.

# Desire Corruption

*"I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine."*
— *Robert Louis Stevenson,* Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, *1886*

The stress and misery of the world have tainted the character's unconscious mind, filling him with unnatural hungers and dangerous predilections. Left clawing at the darkness, every desperate act plunges him deeper into the abysses of the soul. Inevitably, this spiritual atrophy will grow so complete as to preclude the possibility of escape.

# Afflictions

A character with one or more ranks of Desire Corruption must choose one of the following afflictions. Once a character chooses his affliction, it never changes, even if he reduces his Desire Corruption path rating to 0.

## Addiction

You are plagued with addictions. In a vain attempt to escape misery, you discovered dependence.

Addiction itself is particularly abhorrent to Neo-Victorians, who view all loss of self-control as a dire weakness. Despite this cultural bias, some addictions are more socially acceptable than others. You should decide on the nature of your character's addiction before the start of the game or when this affliction is acquired. The character may be addicted to opium, alcohol, morphine, sex, or just about anything else.

**Rating 1:** You partake in your would-be addiction regularly, but not overly frequently. You show no overt signs of dependence or addiction, but if you are denied access to your favoured vice, you become short-tempered and irritable.

If the character has not indulged in several days, he must make a Will roll (DR 11) to resist an opportunity to do so, unless indulgence would require commission of an act repellent to the character.

**Rating 2:** You partake in your addiction with greater and greater frequency but seem to be completely immune

to the negative aspects of addiction. As far as the external world is concerned, you have your life completely under control. You are able to function normally, and only your closest friends and loved ones may begin to see the warning signs of addiction.

If the character has not indulged in one or two days, he must pass a Will roll (DR 14) to resist an opportunity to do so, unless indulgence would require commission of an act profoundly repellent to the character.

**Rating 3:** You have succumbed to addiction. With some effort, you are able to function normally, but only while you are able to feed your addiction.

The character must pass a Will roll (DR 14) to resist any opportunity for feeding his vice; if indulgence would require commission of an act profoundly repellent to the character, the DR is 11.

The precise effects of the character's addiction depend on what he is addicted to. If the character is addicted to something not covered by the rules (see The Catalogue, Chapter 6, pages 292-305), default to the following guidelines: if the character goes twenty-four hours without feeding his addiction, it will begin to get the better of him. Withdrawal sets in and the character experiences muscle and nervous tension, insomnia, anxiety, irritability, depression, headaches, and sweating. The character suffers –2 Vitality, Wit, Will, Intellect, and Charm and –1 on skill rolls until either he satisfies his addiction or he detoxes over a week. A character cannot have an attribute reduced below 1 as a result of withdrawal. Once the character satisfies his addiction, this penalty is immediately removed.

If the character detoxes without proceeding through the redemption process to purge the addiction, it is only a matter of time before he returns to his vice.

**Rating 4:** You are enslaved by your addiction, and it has taken its toll. Even those untrained to notice such things can see the signs of your addiction. You have grown unhealthy-looking, your complexion sallow and covered with a perpetual sheen of sweat. Your eyes have taken on a haunted and desperate look. No matter how long you endure the pain of withdrawal, you will never be free of the hold of the addiction until you come to terms with your horrible affliction.

The character is likely to be a social pariah, having lost most friends, family, and contacts. Even the character's closest friends will distance themselves from him to avoid scandal. Unless independently wealthy, the character will soon find himself unemployed and at the brink of financial ruin. An aristocratic family would sooner lock the character away in a sanatorium than allow him to wander the streets.

The withdrawal process now continues indefinitely rather than terminating after a week.

The character loses all benefit from the Concentration skill.

The character must pass a Will roll (DR 14) to resist any opportunity for feeding his vice.

**Rating 5:** You are a shell of your former self, living only to feed your addiction. There is little that you still find too repulsive or degrading to do to fund your habit.

The character cannot refuse any opportunity to feed his addiction, provided that doing so does not require commission of any acts that are offensive even to his jaded sensibilities. If offered a payment for a task he does not wish to perform, the character must make a Will roll versus a DR of 16. If the roll succeeds, the character manages to maintain some shred of human dignity and refuse the proposition. If the roll fails, he performs the task no matter how amoral, depraved, disgusting, or illegal.

The character begins to suffer the effects of withdrawal d5 hours after his last indulgence in his addiction.

**Beyond the Pale:** Should the character ever go past 5 in his Desire Corruption, he quietly fades away into the metropolis, never to be seen again.

### Anhedonia

Anhedonia represents the death of desire, surrender to the spiritual miasma that plagues the soul. You have lost the capacity to experience joy in life. Life itself has become an endless tedium in which you persist out of habit or dread of the alternative.

**Rating 1:** You are perpetually bored and restless. The things that formerly gave you happiness or at least provided some distraction have gradually ceased to do so.

This stage of the affliction may drive the character to experience all facets of life in hopes of finding something that can hold his attention.

**Rating 2:** You have grown increasingly morose. No activity holds interest to you. You find you have little to say to even your close friends. Only rarely do you genuinely enjoy yourself.

**Rating 3:** Your friends have begun to tire of your dispassionate demeanour, and it is rare that you receive a social invitation. You have little interest in social interaction in any case; the company of others makes you bored and tired.

The character must pass a Will roll (DR 11) to engage actively in any social situation.

**Rating 4:** You no longer experience pleasure in any form. Activities that once provided you with a modicum of pleasure, such as eating, sex, or artistic pursuits, are now trials. You are depressed and restless for days on end.

Ordinary people find the character melancholic and tiresome to be around. The character suffers –1 on Charm rolls. Additionally, the character must pass a Will roll (DR 14) to engage actively in any social situation.

**Rating 5:** You have become a hollow man, a dysthymic automaton, a machine of flesh and blood. Neither fear nor hatred nor sorrow has meaning any longer. Love, friendship, and desire have become merely words.

The character's corruption is so complete that he has lost the capacity to feel anything or to understand those who do. Sympathy and empathy are foreign concepts. The character suffers –1 on Charm rolls and –3 on Wit rolls to understand human behaviour or the human mind. Additionally, the character must pass a Will roll (DR 16) to engage actively in any social situation.

**Beyond the Pale:** If the character ever advances beyond 5 in his Desire Corruption, he will either commit suicide or enter a permanent catatonic state.

## Defiler

You are a predator. Nothing brings you so much pleasure as the corruption of innocence. Though in your heart you may deny the truth, having once been the victim, your corruption now drives you to become the abuser. Had you the strength, you could have been a great man, instead you are a villain. Perhaps you prey on young love or ambition, promising the world to those who will listen to your lies. Some would call you a Casanova, others a mad dog.

**Rating 1:** You are drawn to the young, innocent, and noble, but those lacking the vibrant spark fail to excite your interest. Your exuberance for youth means that you seldom act your age.

The character must succeed at a Will roll (DR 11) to force himself to participate in any tedious happening (formal events, negotiations, etc) without betraying impatience.

**Rating 2:** Your attraction to innocence has led to a few eyebrow-raising indiscretions. However, as long as you are careful, you can keep your reputation clean.

The character must succeed at a Will roll (DR 11) to refrain from making an attempt at taking the innocence of an individual who has attracted his attention.

**Rating 3:** Your have become obsessed with introducing new experiences to your lovers and closest associates. Innocence has come to represent weakness, and you seek to remedy it wherever it is found. Despite your unwholesome predilections, you still maintain some sense of restraint. However, the astute guardian locks up his wife, daughters, and sons around a villain such as you.

This degree of affliction represents intellectual evil rather than a total lack of control. However, the character may have already ruined the reputation of more than one young man or woman and may have acquired some enemies during his self-exploration. Perhaps he has a seasoned second accustomed to the sight of pistols at dawn. The character must pass a Will roll (DR 14) to resist the temptation to perpetrate progressively worse outrages on those with whom he is intimate.

**Rating 4:** Once beauty is in your grasp, you will stop at nothing to debase it. Affection is a snare and love is a surgical instrument. All your affairs end in bitter dissolutions.

Anytime the character meets a prospective candidate for his affections, he must make a Will roll versus a DR of 11 + the candidate's Charm. If the roll succeeds, he retains complete control over himself and may act in the callous manner to which he is accustomed. If the roll fails, the character will do anything to acquire the object of his fascination. On a critical failure, the character will be unable to think about anything else other than his newfound love and suffers –1 on all skill rolls until his attentions are returned.

Once the character enters a reciprocal relationship, he loses his former infatuation with his lover and reverts to his loathsome tendencies. Every time the character believes he has found true love, true love fails him, and he turns his disappointment outward.

**Rating 5:** You are monstrous even in your own eyes. You are disgusted by your need to destroy the pure and beautiful but unwholesomely proud of your ability to conquer and defile. It has become obvious that anyone who could love you is as sick and depraved as you are. Your lovers have become twisted accomplices, drawing others into your web of abuse, or they have grown violent, taking their own lives or making an attempt on yours.

The character can no longer take Second Chances when rerolling would save his life. The character also continues to suffer the effects described under Rating 4.

**Beyond the Pale:** Should the character ever go past 5 in his Desire Corruption, he becomes the sort of monster brave and honest folk run to ground with torches and pitchforks. His impending destruction is certain to be the stuff of cautionary tales for generations to come.

## Hedonist

You have no higher calling in life than the pursuit of pleasure. In the eyes of others, you are a depraved coward without the moral fortitude to face the pain and misery of the world. Instead, you lose yourself in a blur of debauchery

and thrill seeking. You will follow any dark and perverted path to seek out unique pleasures. You are easily distracted, consistently late, and can never be bothered to hurry. You cannot abide drudgery and avoid it all costs, especially in the company you keep. You live for adventure, sexual escapades, and sensual pleasure at the cost of all else. Temptation will be your ruin.

**Rating 1:** You are free of the sexual repression that largely dominates in Neo-Victorian society. You are open to new experiences and have an irrepressible desire to experiment sexually. In polite company, they call you liberated, but when your back is turned, they change the appellation to "libertine."

The character suffers –1 to Charm rolls in conservative company.

**Rating 2:** You grow bored easily and tire quickly of lovers and activities. You require the stimulus of novelty; once the thrill has faded, so does you interest. Sexual partners are discarded after a few enjoyments; new pastimes pall in a matter of days or weeks. It is difficult for you to focus on work for any length of time.

The character suffers –1 on skill and attribute rolls while bored due to his constant distraction.

**Rating 3:** You have great difficulty turning away pleasurable experiences or new partners. Work has become a constant tedium to be avoided whenever possible. Worse yet, people have begun to talk. Your reputation as a libertine is growing. Though you may still be a favourite in the jaded circles of the Neo-Victorian social elite, you are shunned by polite company.

Any time the character has the opportunity to engage in an activity more pleasurable than the one he is currently engaged in, he must make a Will roll (DR 11). The character cannot add his Concentration skill to this roll. If the roll succeeds, the character manages to fight off temptation. If the roll fails, he must take part in the activity no matter what the cost to him or those around him.

**Rating 4:** The pursuit of pleasure has become your primary occupation. If you have not secured a means of providing for yourself, you may soon become a homeless drifter or a prostitute moving from the home of one lover to another. Worse yet, you can no longer experience enjoyment from pleasures in which you have previously partaken.

For each day the character spends without satisfying his appetite for new experiences, he suffers a cumulative –1 on Will rolls. If the character does not satisfy his urges before his Will is reduced to 0, he will be compelled to engage in some novel act of extraordinary dissipation.

**Rating 5:** You are a slave to your desires. You are intolerably superficial and care only for your own amusement. You are jaded and will, if able, devote all your waking hours to the pursuit of ever more exotic or perverse experiences. You may become morbidly obese from overfeeding your appetites. You very likely expose yourself to debilitating ailments and sexual diseases.

The character must now pass a Will roll (DR 16) to avoid take part in an activity more pleasurable than the one he is currently engaged in, no matter what the cost to himself or those around him. He also continues to have his Will reduced as described in Rating 4.

**Beyond the Pale:** Should the character ever go past 5 in his Desire Corruption, he becomes a victim of his debauchery and soon expires as a result. Perhaps he is killed by a jealous lover or succumbs to advanced syphilis.

## Drive Corruption

*"I do not think there is any thrill that can go through the human heart like that felt by the inventor as he sees some creation of the brain unfolding to success... Such emotions make a man forget food, sleep, friends, love, everything."*

*—Nikola Tesla, Interview with the New York Herald, 1896*

The character has pushed himself to desperate extremes in the pursuit of great works. Despite his best intentions, his twisted obsessions blind him to the cruelty of his actions. Unimpeded by conscience, compassion, or morality, the character is driven beyond the threshold of health or sanity. Perhaps, the corruption inherent in his designs sows the seeds of his ruination or invites him to spiritual decay.

The effects of Drive Corruption are more obvious in some characters than others. The mad scientist, greed-twisted industrialist, or inhuman physician is an easy archetype, but Drive Corruption can affect anyone. An artist or musician can pursue his muse to the brink of insanity. An Undertaker can devote himself to tirelessly purifying the city of its corporeal corruption, even at the cost of succumbing to his own internal afflictions.

# Afflictions

A character with one or more ranks of Drive Corruption must choose one of the following afflictions. Once a character chooses his affliction, it never changes, even if he reduces his Drive Corruption path rating to 0.

## Consumed

*"The candle that burns twice as bright burns half as long."*
*—Anonymous*

Sleep is a distant memory, hunger a weakness of the flesh, and human companionship a decadent luxury for those with time to kill. You work tirelessly toward your goals, losing track of days and nights at a stretch. Your body is merely a vessel for your ideas, a machine to carry out your works. Your obsessions demand a terrible toll and will one day devour you – body and soul. Before then, you may accomplish incredible things if your vision and talent match your drive.

**Rating 1:** Your are accustomed to working late and skipping meals. People find it hard to get in contact with you for weeks at a time.

The character must pass a Will roll (DR 11) to leave his work behind for any business that is not immediately important, such as social occasions.

**Rating 2:** You spend most of your life in pursuit of your work. You regularly forget names, dates, and times that do not affect your work. You become snappish if interrupted while working and avail yourself of the first opportunity to resume. Your friends and family have learned to be patient and to leave you alone.

The character must make a Will roll (DR 11) to focus on anything not directly related to his work, even when not immediately engaged with it.

**Rating 3:** You spend most of your waking hours and resources on furthering your work. Others find you tedious because you are unwilling or unable to discuss anything but your work. You likely sleep in your office or laboratory.

The character suffers –1 on Charm rolls that do not involve his work in some way.

**Rating 4:** You exist in a perpetually manic state, working for up to a solid week at a time. Food and sleep are only distractions from the task at hand. You lack any semblance of passion unless you are actively engaged in discussing your work.

The character will not willingly abandon his work for any reason. Any time another character attempts to convince the afflicted character to interrupt his work, the afflicted character must make a Will roll versus a DR of 14. If the roll succeeds, the character is able to break away from his work for d5 hours without any complications. If the roll fails, the character will absolutely refuse to abandon his work even for a short time. The character can reroll this Will check once per hour if another character persistently tries to get him to leave his work.

If the character is unable to return to his work or if he is interrupted by conditions beyond his control, he turns despondent and suffers –1 on skill and attribute rolls until he is able to return to his work.

**Rating 5:** Your obsession has clearly taken a toll. You have grown gaunt and ashen. Your eyes appear tortured and feverish, the spark of life barely evident unless you are speaking of your work, at which time they burn with a strange savagery. You now work to exhaustion, falling into slumber only when your body refuses to go on any longer. You lose track of whole weeks at a time. The only thing that brings even a fleeting moment of happiness is achieving a milestone.

The character is unable to sleep unless he works himself to the point of exhaustion. Every twenty-four-hour period the character is awake, he suffers –1 Vitality, Wit, and Intellect. If any of these attributes are reduced to 0, the character passes into unconsciousness for 5 + d10 hours. During this time, nothing can awaken him.

**Beyond the Pale:** Should the character ever go past 5 in his Drive Corruption, he expires, having worked himself to death.

## Dissolution

Despite all your hard work, effort, and genius, all your accomplishments will come to naught. Your enterprises will meet with ruin, your partners abandon you, your children – born or created – will turn on you. The fruits of your labour

are poison to you. The obsessions that drive you toward greatness will be your undoing.

**Rating 1:** You have a tendency to make little mistakes in your work even when you double- and triple-check. While nothing disastrous has happened yet, these errors are a constant source of embarrassment and may be holding you back professionally.

These errors have little in-game effect, but the Narrator determines their nature.

**Rating 2:** Your work is constantly riddled with imperfections. Though the problems are simple and can be easily remedied by others with the proper ability, you seem unable to avoid making these elementary mistakes. As soon as you fix one problem, another crops up in its place. You must now rely on others finishing what you begin or else expend your energies fruitlessly fine tuning your work or just learn to accept the flaws.

The character suffers –1 on Charm – Credibility rolls.

**Rating 3:** Anything you touch is doomed to fail, not with a bang but a whimper. Your alchemical solutions quickly lose potency. The wounds you treat become infected. Your financial dealings suffer the disastrous hand of fate. The only question is how long it will take you to fail. Some men of enterprise may make a career betting on your failure, investing in your pursuits only to cut and run at the last moment, leaving others to clean up the mess.

Unless the character spends twice the amount of time generally required to perform a non-combat related task, he adds +1 to the DR of his skill roll.

**Rating 4:** You are doomed to perpetual failure. Even your successes are marred with the taste of ashes as your work will fail at the worst time possible. Devices break down; companies implode, leaving messy legal problems; alchemical solutions have dangerous and unforeseen side effects; Mercurials you create have a taste for your blood, and so on. You are, in short, unemployable. Simply too much goes wrong when you are around, and your bosses have tired of your excuses.

Once per game session, at the Narrator's discretion, the character suffers a failure even if he succeeds in a roll. The roll should appear to be a success but be accompanied by a hidden failure that soon manifests. The character may believe he has solved a part of a complex problem only to later learn his findings were utterly flawed. He may seem to have created a perfect solution only to learn of a crucial flaw in the production process upon consuming it.

The failures are always to the detriment of the character.

The character may work again, but only temporarily. His days of gainful employment are over.

**Rating 5:** You are at the brink of ruin. You are constantly on edge, always looking over your shoulder and avoiding eye contact with strangers. Anything you touch takes on a life of its own — a life devoted to your destruction. You imagine that if you created a galvanic reanimate, that reanimate would make it his life's duty to destroy you and those closest to you, and you are correct. Any financial enterprises will either put you in touch with dangerous men that mean you harm or turn against you, sucking you dry. Even previously successful alchemical experiments will suddenly exhibit potentially lethal side effects that have gone undetected for years.

The Narrator should work to undo the character's accomplishments in an entertaining but systematic fashion. The character is unlikely to be directly killed as a result, but certainly those closest to him will be endangered.

**Beyond the Pale:** Should the character ever go past 5 in his Drive Corruption, something goes tragically and spectacularly wrong, resulting in the death of the character.

## Killer Instinct

Your overpowering ambition or obsession has rendered you inhumanly callous. Life has lost all value to you. People are merely obstacles to your ambition or raw material for your experiments. You may feign interest for short periods of time to satisfy your physical needs, but life is cheap and you can always find another pawn. Freed of the constraints of conscience and morality by the overwhelming importance of your work, you sacrifice the lives of others with reckless abandon. If you are crossed, you are compelled to destroy the offending party. Though killing may be distasteful, it is often the most expedient means to your ends.

**Rating 1:** You appear calm and cool. You seldom do favours for others unless asked, and then not without a small personal effort. Though you are viewed as a consummate professional by your superiors, your co-workers find you callous.

**Rating 2:** You have lost all affection for those in your life, and as a result, you keep more and more to yourself and are continually selfish in all your interactions. You are extremely reluctant to endanger yourself for another unless you are certain of a substantial reward for your actions.

If the character had the Love Quality, he loses it now.

**Rating 3:** You have grown even colder; your eyes are either chillingly emotionless or filled with a sourceless malice. You cannot form lasting relationships with others because you constantly drive friends and loved ones from you.

If the character was married, his spouse leaves him if possible. A character with this affliction must pass a Will roll (DR 11) to take an action that does not directly benefit him.

**Rating 4:** You are no longer above murder for the sole purpose of getting ahead in the world. Man, woman, child – they are all the same: just more bodies in your way.

The character may have begun to build a reputation as being someone not to cross. The character must succeed at a Will roll (DR 11) to avoid harming anyone who threatens him or his work. When confronted with violence, he will always respond with deadly force. If attacked, the character must succeed at a Will roll (DR 16) to stop before killing his attacker.

**Rating 5:** You are plagued with murderous instincts and have trouble stopping yourself when faced with a convenient opportunity to make a problem "disappear."

Any time the character is angered or confronted with a situation where a convenient disappearance would make his life easier, the character must make a Will roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds, the character is able to resist the urge to kill. If the roll fails, the character will attempt to kill his victim without another thought. If the character is restrained, he can make another Wit roll to regain control over himself.

**Beyond the Pale:** Should the character ever go past 5 in his Drive Corruption, he becomes an inhuman killing machine under the Narrator's control. The character may go on a murderous rampage or become another East End serial murderer. It is certain he will either be killed by the police or another Neo-Victorian monster before too long.

## Twisted

Your work is more art than science. Like a modern haruspex, nothing speaks to you like living flesh and blood and never louder than when you are wrist deep in it. Under your careful ministrations, the secrets of the flesh become transcendent. The act becomes as important as the observation, a ritual you alone understand. There is certainly something malignant in your unconventional methodology: what others call atrocity, you call research. Your experiments are misguided, ill conceived, mad. Ultimately, everything you touch is left broken and blasted.

**Rating 1:** You have a profound interest in scientific observation, especially in matters of anatomy. You are a keen student of the human form and can be transfixed by a human body, in any state of repair, for hours.

A character with this affliction must pass a Will roll (DR 11) to break away from the study of anatomic specimens. The DR is raised to 14 if the specimens are particularly unusual or gruesome.

**Rating 2:** There is something subtly distasteful in your ideas and methods, and your understanding of medical and scientific principles slightly different from that of others. You are always the first to suggest drastic measures or invasive surgery – even if you lack a medical background.

The character begins to feel alienated from his fellow man. He can only truly understand another person if he has seen them in extremis. The character suffers –1 on Charm rolls involving a person he has not either operated on or witnessed suffering from an Incapacitating Wound.

**Rating 3:** Your fascination with the human body has become acute. You stare at people you pass on the street, reaching out to those who appear particularly healthy or uniquely deformed. You have begun to frighten others and may begin to lose patients and friends. Some think you are a sexual predator, but the truth is far less mundane.

When the character sees an astonishing specimen of any sort, he must succeed at a Will roll (DR 14) to avoid trying to examine it.

The character never passes up the opportunity to leave his mark. When operating or duelling, he is sure to leave a scar. If he conducts an experiment, the result is certain to bear a maker's mark.

**Rating 4:** You have begun to act irrationally, and some aspect of your work is always based on fantastical. While performing an autopsy, for example, you may cut open a cadaver's eye to see if it holds its killer's image. When treating wounds or Complications, you might be compelled to make impromptu improvements, or, perhaps, simply refuse to stop operating.

This affliction should alter the character's behaviour once or twice per session at dramatically appropriate times.

When treating the wounds of a living subject, the character must make a Will roll (DR 14). If he succeeds, he keeps control. If he fails, he increases one of the character's wounds by one level. If this causes the other character to suffer an Incapacitating Wound, the player controlling the twisted character chooses the Complication.

If the character is in the presence of an unconscious living subject, he must make a Will roll (DR 11). If the roll fails, the character will first touch the subject, and then begin to cut into it. If he is not stopped quickly, he will begin his own brand of invasive surgery.

**Rating 5:** They call what you do murder, but you just need to observe the secrets of the inner workings of the body during their catastrophic failure.

Though his victims will always be vivisected, the character may also take on some particularly horrifying delusions. He may believe that by consuming the flesh of others he will

attain a sort of apotheosis. Perhaps he believes his victims are corrupt spirits that can only leave their earthy purgatory through his deadly touch.

If the character goes a month without taking the life of a living victim, his compulsion will begin to get the better of him. All he can think about is finding a new victim. Soon he will begin to lose sleep. At the end of each week the character must make a Will roll (DR 16). If he fails the roll, his Will is reduced by one point. Once the character is reduced to 1 Will, he will be incapable of doing anything but seeking a victim. If the character's Will is reduced to 0, he will go berserk and kill the next victim that crosses his path. The character's Will is only restored once he has vivisected a victim.

**Beyond the Pale:** Should the character ever go past 5 in his Drive Corruption, he literally becomes the victim of his own inquisitive mind and suffers a very messy end at his own hands.

# Qualities & Impediments

Qualities and Impediments are an optional facet of character creation. Players may opt to ignore them completely, preferring instead to let their detailed character history and attributes speak for themselves, or they can delve into the sordid splendour that constitutes Qualities and Impediments. Qualities and Impediments are described on pages 167 – 194.

Qualities may be granted by a character's Calling, purchased with Custom Points, or off-set with Impediment points. A character may have as many Qualities as he can afford.

Impediment points add to a character's Custom Points or may be used to offset the cost of Qualities on a one-for-one basis. Impediment points in excess of the character's Qualities are added to the character's Custom Points. A character may off-set up to 10 points worth of Qualities with Impediments and may gain up to 10 Custom Points from Impediments. A character can have any number of Impediments but can only derive benefits for up to 20 points worth.

For example, Brad creates an aristocrat character. He selects the Estate (6) and Savant (4) Qualities for a total of 10 points of Qualities. Offsetting these Qualities, Brad selects the Accelerated Decrepitude (6), Debt (3), Haemophilia (7), and Night Terrors (2) Impediments, totalling 18 points. Because Brad's character has 8 more points of Impediments than Qualities, his character gains 8 Custom Points. If Brad only selected the Estate Quality, worth 6 points, there would be a 12 point disparity between his Impediments and Flaws, but he would only gain 10 Custom Points from this difference. He can take the additional points of Impediments, but they do not add to his Custom Points.

Some Qualities and Impediments may only be taken by a character of a particular type. For example, only Aristocrats can select the Estate or Title Qualities. Other Qualities and Impediments are unavailable to certain Callings or social classes or to living or half-lifer characters. For example, Aristocrats and Doctors cannot take the Illiterate Impediment. Qualities and Impediments that are limited to a Calling or character type specify this limitation in the title of the trait. If a Quality or Impediment is unavailable to specific Callings or character types this information is specified in the description of the trait.

# Custom Points

A starting character begins with 5 Custom Points that may be spent on additional attributes, skills, or Qualities. Up to 10 additional Custom Points may be gained from Impediments (see above). A character cannot exceed his attribute or skill limits by spending Custom Points.

The Custom Point cost of increasing an attribute by 1 point is double the new attribute total.

Increasing a skill by one point or buying a new skill costs a number of Custom Points equal to the skill's new value.

## Wealth

Wealth is an abstract method of determining the character's financial status. Some characters are much more financially secure than others, but Wealth is not likely to be an accurate gauge of the character's social standing. There are many aristocratic families that hover on the verge of complete financial ruin. At the same time, some extremely wealthy industrialists will never rise above their middle-class beginnings.

Most Aristocrats live off family trust funds that enable them to live extravagant lifestyles free of the petty concerns of the lower classes. Doctors and Mourners may both have lively practices that keep them quite comfortable. Undertakers, on the other hand, may live hand to mouth, feast or

famine depending on the week's hunting. Though an Undertaker may have managed to put some money away, his modest fortunes may turn at any moment; months without a Plague outbreak can take their toll. An ill or injured Undertaker may find it impossible to work until he fully recovers.

Each character begins with a Wealth rating determined by his Calling. A player may raise his Wealth rating through the Wealth Quality. Likewise, a character can reduce his wealth with the Poor Impediment.

Players are not expected to account for every shilling in their character's pocket, unless of course they enjoy that kind of accounting. It is more important that the player and Narrator have an understanding of the character's basic living standard, his residence, and the sort of items he can afford.

## Wealth Ranks

**Wealth 0** – The character is a member of the surplus population. Poor beyond rational belief, the only upside to his miserable existence is that in all likelihood his suffering will be short lived and he will soon find his death on the unforgiving streets of the metropolis. He has no home and cannot afford to feed himself. Forced to live off the charity of others, the character begins with only the rags he wears. The character makes less than 2s per week, all of which goes to paying for food.

Characters that start with Wealth 0 lose all starting Assets.

**Wealth 1** – The character is soul-crushingly poor, even by the standards of the denizens of the East End. He lives a hand-to-mouth existence, though he is lucky enough to be able to afford food. The character is forced to sleep outdoors as often as he finds a roof over his head. He often must perform the most demeaning acts or labours to eke out his meagre living. The character makes around 6s per week, all of which goes to paying for food and shelter.

Characters that start with Wealth 1 lose all starting Assets.

**Wealth 2** – The character belongs to the bottom half of the working-class poor. Whether legal or otherwise, the character has some sort of income that pays for his food and lodging. Though he is one bad cough away from lean times, the character is much better off than those living on the streets. The character may even be able to support a small family on the pittance he pulls down. The majority of the inhabitants of the East End have Wealth 2. The character makes around 12s per week, most of which goes to paying for food and shelter.

Any equipment the character possesses will be second-hand and of the lowest quality possible. Most Ghouls have Wealth 2.

**Wealth 3** – Though the character is unquestionably poor, he has managed to find steady employment, at least for the time being. He may be a costermonger, shop keeper, servant in a poorer household, or a factory worker. The character makes 25s per week, most of which goes to pay for food and shelter.

Any equipment the character possesses will be second-hand and of the lowest quality possible.

**Wealth 4** – Thought the character is a member of the lower classes, he has managed some degree of success. Perhaps he is a talented criminal or semi-skilled labourer. Whatever the case, the character may have aspirations toward improving his life and rising above his humble beginnings. The character makes 40s per week, of which approximately 30s goes to food and shelter.

**Wealth 5** – Though the character is by no stretch wealthy, he can afford a decent living. The character is likely to be a skilled labourer, a starting clerk, or journeyman craftsman. Given time, he may improve his fortunes, but he is at least comfortable for the time being. Though he may not live in the best area, his home is at least warm and clean. The character makes 60s per week, most of which is spent on expenses.

**Wealth 6** – The character has a respectable income. He may be a starting professional or an experienced artisan with a good reputation. The character is likely to own a modest home that is kept clean and warm. The character makes 80s per week, most of which is spent on living expenses.

**Wealth 7** – The character is quite successful in his chosen field. While not wealthy by Neo-Victorian standards, the character can still afford a few luxuries, such as a maid or driver. The character makes 120s (£6) per week, of which 75s – 100s goes to living expenses.

**Wealth 8** – The character may be an aspiring industrialist or very successful professional with a substantial number of clients. The character likely owns a good-sized home that is attended to by a maid, valet, and driver. The character is very well off by most standards, though aristocrats may scoff at his small staff of servants. The character makes no less than 200s (£10) per week, of which 140s – 180s goes to expenses.

**Wealth 9** – The character is unquestionably well off. He may have inherited the money, earned it over decades of mind-numbing labour, or made his fortune through skilful stock manipulation. Whatever the source of the character's wealth, he no longer needs to work to support himself; he is a

man leisure. He may own multiple homes staffed by a retinue of servants. Though the character is able to live in comfort, his fortunes are likely to draw unwanted attention from the metropolis' criminal element. The character makes no less than 500s (£25) per week. Between 300s and 420s must be spent on expenses, servant's wages, and the upkeep on the character's property.

**Wealth 10** – The character is fabulously wealthy. He can afford to squander vast sums of money with little risk. His fortunes are so large that it is unlikely that he amassed his wealth in his own lifetime. The character undoubtedly owns a great manor with a manicured lawn and large staff of servants. He may own additional homes within or outside the metropolis. The majority of the character's wealth is tied up in investments and property, but he still makes no less than 1000s (£50) per week. Approximately 750s must be spent on keeping up the character's ample lifestyle.

Wealth 10 is the highest level possible for starting characters.

# Skills

Skills represent the character's abilities, areas of expertise, and fields of study. The higher the character's skill level is, the greater is his proficiency. For each level of a skill the character takes, he also gets a Specialty or Stunt in that skill.

Specialties represent specific areas on which the character has concentrated. When the character takes an action that specifically applies to one or more of his Specialties, he gains a +1 bonus on his skill roll. A character may only gain +1 regardless of the number of Specialties that seem applicable.

For instance, Aron's Dhampir character Balthazar is researching cabalistic lore in hopes of shedding light on a particularly gruesome series of murders. Balthazar has the Occult Lore 3 and is specialized in Cabalistic Lore, Folk Lore, and Research. While both Cabalistic Lore and Research would seem to apply to his action, his bonus is still +1.

With the exception of combat skills, most skills include a sample list of Specialties. These lists are far from exhaustive, and players and Narrators are invited to create their own Specialties.

Stunts are special proficiencies that give characters the edge in some situations or allow them to take actions they could not otherwise. For example, a character with the Riposte stunt can make a melee weapon attack out of turn against anyone who swings at him and misses. Only Combat skills, generally, have Stunts, but some Callings allow characters to choose a Stunt instead of a Specialty.

Skills may be used in a wide variety of ways, and each skill below includes some suggested uses as well as sample DRs for various skill rolls. It would be impossible to list all possible uses for skills, so this is an area where the players and Narrator can be very creative. The Narrator sets the DR for all skill rolls.

## Academic Skills

Academic skills represent fields of knowledge that require a great deal of study and practical experience to master. A character cannot have an academic skill higher than his Intellect.

### Alchemy

*"All things are poison and nothing is without poison. It is the dose only that makes a thing poisonous."*

— *Paracelsus,* Von der Besucht, *1567*

Neo-Victorian alchemy has subsumed both chemistry and pharmacology. A character with the Alchemy skill possesses a background in chemical science and philosophy. He has the knowledge necessary to equip an alchemical laboratory, distil alchemical compounds using known formulae, and generate and test new alchemical formulae.

The character is knowledgeable about the uses and interactions of drugs. He is familiar with the various families of chemicals, naturally occurring and synthetic, and their efficacy for the treatment of disease or the corruption of health. He will know the doses at which drugs may be used to good effect and the doses at which compounds are poisonous. Furthermore, he will be able to identify unknown drugs based on their characteristics; some may be identifiable by colour, smell, or taste, while positive identification of others may require the use of specialized equipment.

The difficulty rating for Alchemy rolls depends on the complexity of the action attempted. Determining the qualities of a relatively common drug or alchemical solution requires a successful roll versus a DR of 11. Identifying a rarer drug or synthesizing a simple life extending anti-agapic drug requires a successful roll versus a DR of 14. Identifying the properties of obscure alchemical compounds requires a successful Alchemy roll versus a DR of 16 or more. For the DR of creating a specific alchemical solution, see The Neo-Victorian Apothecary, Chapter 6, pages 287 – 292.

Specialties: Anti-Agapics, Drug Design, Identification, Manufacture, Reanimation, Teaching, Thropes, Toxicology, Transmutation, Veneficium.

## Cryptography

A character with the Cryptography skill is knowledgeable in the use, design, and deciphering of codes.

The Narrator should determine the DR of a Cryptography roll based on the complexity of the code, whether or not a coded document was written in the character's native language, and the amount of time the character takes attempting to crack the code. In most cases, attempts at cracking a code in a language the character does not know are doomed to failure. Simple or common ciphers, like Morse code, can be cracked with a successful skill roll (DR 14). A character wishing to design his own code makes a Cryptography skill roll versus a DR pre-selected by the player. If he succeeds, the DR for breaking the code is the DR of the skill roll + his Cryptography skill level.

Specialties: Asymmetric Codes, Cracking, Creation, Industrial Codes, Military Codes, Symmetric Codes, Teaching.

## Forensic Science

Forensic science is the application of deductive reasoning and scientific principles to solve crimes. Forensics can be used to establish a likely sequence of events, give clues to the identity of the perpetrator, and to gather physical evidence. Forensic science includes the analysis of handwriting, fingerprints, and human physical attributes. Forensics is the stock and trade of CID detectives who make masterful use of this art.

A character with this skill has been trained in careful observation of detail and in interpretation of the aftermaths of human activity. He is able to observe with a trained eye the physical evidence at a scene and make use of this information to determine what has transpired at the location. The character can add his Forensic Science skill to Wit – Perception rolls involving event reconstruction at a scene or analysis of physical evidence left behind after an event.

Specialties: Ballistics, Biological Evidence, Fingerprints, Forensic Psychology, Teaching, Toxicology, Trace Evidence.

## Galvanics

Galvanics is the science of electricity and its applications. Modern Neo-Victorian industry is thoroughly galvanic; the Tesla network is the lifeblood of London, providing energy to the whole of that vast city and setting afire the galvanic moats that protect the walls from incursion. Powerful galvanic devices sit atop the walls, menacing the streets below with contained lightning, and the forces patrolling the streets hold devices designed to call forth streams of electrical fire. Even the stuff of life is subject to galvanic command: physicians make use of electricity to tune the magnetisms of the body, doctors of the mind employ the spark to interrupt the diseased processes of the psyche, and reanimists call lightning from the sky to strike a spark of life in the dead frame.

A character with this skill is able to design, construct, repair, and disassemble galvanic devices, working from the basic principles of galvanic construction. Even in the absence of proper equipment, he is capable of building or making modifications to a galvanic device and jury-rigging repairs or improvements. This skill is required to make use of complex galvanic devices such as modern galvanic weapons. Possession of this skill does not, however, imply any skill in the use of galvanic weaponry. Each galvanic weapon is covered by a corresponding combat skill.

The DR for Galvanics skill rolls depends on the task attempted. Simply cleaning and maintaining a galvanic device does not require a skill roll. Replacing parts or

repairing general wear on the device requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 11. Building or modifying a relatively simplistic galvanic device requires a successful roll versus a DR of 14. Creating more complex galvanic devices requires a successful roll versus a DR of 16 or more. A novel and cutting-edge galvanic weapon would require months of labour and experimentation and a successful roll (DR 20+).

If the character succeeds in the Galvanics skill roll, his device functions as planned. If he fails, the device will not function and may overload, burning out expensive parts.

Note that in order to operate galvanic weapons, a character must have Galvanics 1.

Specialties: Design, Galvanic Reanimation, Repair, Teaching, Tesla Array, Weapon Systems.

### History

This skill imparts a general knowledge of history. The character has learned the fundamentals of historical knowledge including names, places, dates, and other solid facts. The character also will have studied cultural and historical trends which give meaning to, and a deeper understanding of, these aforementioned facts.

When determining the DR for History rolls, the Narrator should take into account the obscurity of the information sought, the character's knowledge on the topic based on his specialties, the reference materials available, and the amount of time the character spends studying. A character with the History skill does not need to make a roll to recall well-known incidents in world history or those that relate to his specialty. Thoroughly researching the documented history of a well-known family line or landmark requires a successful roll versus a DR of 11. Researching a poorly documented historical figure requires a successful roll versus a DR of 14. Piecing together the history of a virtually unknown secret society would require a great deal of time and a successful roll versus a DR of 20 or more.

If the character succeeds in the roll, he discovers the available information on the topic. If he fails he learns little new information or learns misleading information.

Specialties: Archaeology, Art History, Genealogy, Historical Anthropology, Historical Era, Military History, Palaeography, Political History, Prehistory, Social History, Teaching, Theology, World History.

### Hypnosis

Hypnosis, or mesmerism, is the dubious art that allows a practitioner to induce a trance state in others. This practice is common among psychologists and parapsychologists because the trance state is thought to permit access to the memories and potentials of the unconscious mind, allowing therapies to act directly on that hidden machinery. Psychologists make use of mesmeric therapy to reveal, modify, or implant memories and unconscious impulses in their patients. The mechanics of basic memory modification are relatively simple and the results generally good, but revelation of a true repressed memory using hypnotic techniques requires a highly skilled practitioner due to the malleable and receptive nature of the unconscious mind.

Mesmerism has applications outside the purely scientific. Stage hypnotism is practiced by carnies and con men from one end of Britain to the other in cheap circus shows designed for the amusement of the masses. The hypnotist or stage-magician will select members of the audience as hypnotic subjects, generally seeding the crowd with actors under his employ to ensure an impressive show. He then places each willing subject into a trance and requires him to perform a variety of tricks for the amusement of the audience. It is well known that a hypnotic subject cannot be made to do anything to which he would be firmly opposed in a conscious state – a well-bred and modest woman cannot, for example, be made to disrobe in front of an audience, but she can be convinced that she is suddenly without clothing and made to flee the stage in a flurry of embarrassment.

This skill permits a character to place another person into a trance state. The hypnotic subject must be willing to subject himself to the mesmerist's skill or be drugged past the ability to resist; an unwilling subject cannot be hypnotized. Establishing a trance requires several minutes, during which total concentration is required on the part of the hypnotist. The presence of distractions, such as loud noises or nearby violence, will increase the difficulty of establishing the hypnotic state. Neither the hypnotist nor the subject can take any other actions while establishing the trance. During the trance, the hypnotist must devote his attention to the subject and the subject is capable of acting only under the direction of the hypnotist.

Placing a willing subject into a trance does not require a skill roll, unless there are mitigating environmental circumstances to overcome. In such a case, the Narrator may wish to impose a DR of 11 or 14. Placing an unwilling but captive subject into a trance requires the hypnotist to make a contested skill roll versus the Will + Concentration of his subject. If the hypnotist wins, the subject enters a trance. If the subject wins or the result of the roll is a tie, the subject does not enter a trance. The Narrator determines what drugged states are conducive to hypnotism. In case of a failure, the attempt may be repeated after five minutes.

Once the subject is in a trance, causing him to perform simple parlour tricks does not require a die roll. Having a subject recall memories that are not especially traumatic requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 11. Forcing a subject to recall traumatic memories requires a successful Hypnosis roll versus a DR of 16. Implanting or editing simple memories requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 14. Implanting or editing more complex memories requires a successful roll versus a DR of 20 or more.

If the hypnotist succeeds, he induces the intended effect, at least temporarily. The hypnosis can wear off or it can be conclusively proven an implanted memory is false. If the hypnotist fails, nothing happens. On a critical success, the subject internalizes the effects in spectacular fashion. Implanted memories become absolutely and permanently real. On a critical failure, the hypnotist either causes permanent damage to his subjects psyche or elicits a catastrophic response; the exact results are in the hands of the Narrator.

Specialties: History, Hypnotherapy, Stage Hypnosis, Trance Induction, Teaching.

### Law

Though he may not practice it, the character is familiar with the intricacies of Neo-Victorian law. The character may be a solicitor or barrister.

A character with the Law skill is able to give simple legal advice without a die roll. Putting together a simple legal case requires a successful roll versus a DR of 11. Putting together a more serious case requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 14. Correctly interpreting an obscure law pivotal to a complex defence or prosecution could require a successful skill roll versus a DR of 16 or more.

Presenting the case in court is a complex matter. In addition to the strength of the character's argument, the Narrator must also weigh the strength of the evidence presented, the quality of the witnesses, the severity of the crime, whose interests are at stake, etc. Deciding who has the best argument may be decided by having both characters arguing the case make a contested Charm + Law roll. The character with the highest total makes the best case.

Specialties: Artificial Life, Business Law, Common Law, Criminal Law, Family Law, Foreign Laws, Malpractice, Maritime Law, Mortuary Law, Property Law, Religious Law, Teaching, Trial, Vampire Laws.

### Medicine

Medicine is the science of the human body, in sickness and in health. A character with this skill is able to repair wounds and perform operations on the human body. He is, at least, conversant with the proper structure and functioning of the body and thus able to diagnose wounds and illnesses and perform the necessary operations to restore the body to health.

The character will be able to observe the physiological responses of his companions and assess their condition even without the opportunity for a complete physical examination. The physician may be able to ascribe sinister causes to symptoms of which the sufferer himself is barely aware. If a medically trained character is given the opportunity to examine a wound, he will be able to determine the nature and severity of the injury and to prescribe a treatment (see Inspecting the Wound and Treating Wounds, Chapter 2, page 103 and pages 104 - 110).

A character with this skill is familiar with the gross anatomical arrangements of the human body and the peculiarities of the various unliving and half-living forms. Anatomical medicine is part of the curriculum in a medical college, as it is thought that a doctor should practice cutting a dead body before being allowed to cut into a live one. Thus, the character is able to determine whether a body is human, making judgments on the living or unliving nature of a specimen; a skilled physician can work from very fragmentary materials.

The character is able to diagnose the severity of obvious wounds and common ailments without a die roll. To prescribe a helpful treatment for a common ailment, the character must succeed in a Medicine skill roll versus a DR of 11. With a thorough medical examination and a successful Medicine skill roll versus a DR of 14, the character is able to diagnose internal injuries and more obscure ailments.

A character with the Medicine skill can also perform autopsies. When determining the DR for an autopsy roll, the Narrator should consider whether the subject deviates from standard anatomy, how complete the corpse is, and how much deterioration has occurred. Determining whether a corpse was an animate is a relatively simple task (DR 11). Conducting a complete anatomical study of a particularly degenerated Thrope for the purpose of identifying its next of kin would require a successful roll versus a DR of 16 or more.

Specialties: Alchemy, Anathema, Anatomy, Animate Anatomy, Anaesthesiology, Combat Surgery, Complications, Cosmetic Surgery, Dermatology, Dhampir Anatomy, Emergency Medicine, Galvanic Reanimation, Galvanic Therapy, Ghoul Anatomy, Gunshots, Gynaecology, History, Internal Medicine, Necrology, Neurology, Obstetrics, Paediatrics, Preventive Medicine, Promethean Anatomy, Radiation

Therapy, Rehabilitation, Surgery, Teaching, Thrope Anatomy, Vampire Anatomy.

## Natural Science

Natural science is the rational study of the laws governing the universe. The field subsumes astronomy, biology, earth science, and physics. Though most up-and-coming Neo-Victorian scientists prefer to study the rapidly growing fields of alchemy, galvanics, and nonhuman pathology, natural science remains extremely important to the Empire.

Geologists routinely venture into the Wastelands of the Continent as well as Britain, searching for new locations to mine. Botanists are struggling to increase agricultural production in the post-plague world. It is hoped that through the diligent efforts of scientists, a method may be found to increase food production before the modern food shortage grows further out of control.

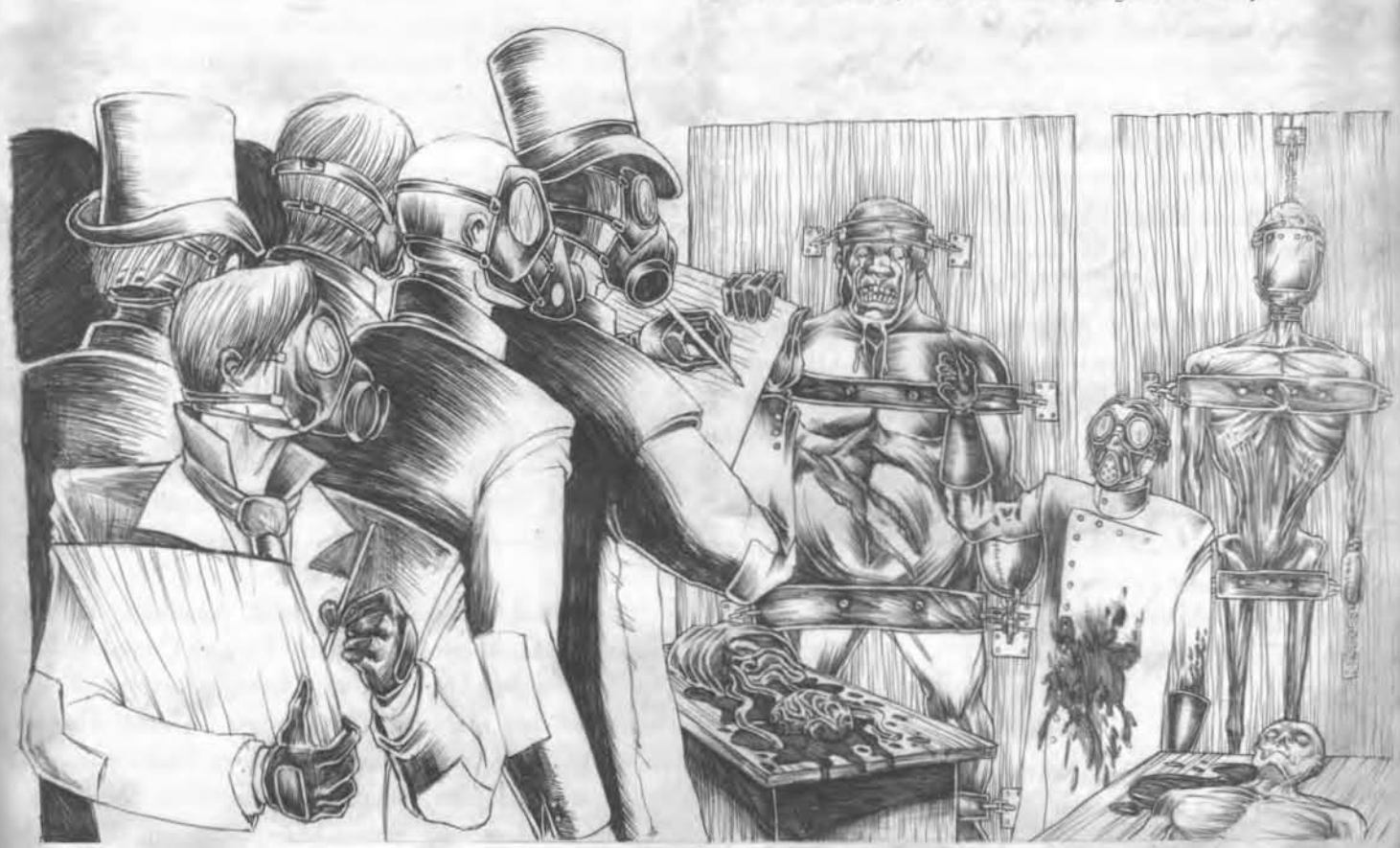
Natural science may be thought of as a catch-all science skill for any action not covered under Alchemy, Galvanics, or Medicine. Identifying minerals in their natural form requires a successful roll versus a DR of 11. Determining the qualities of a newly discovered plant requires a successful roll versus a DR of 14. Creating a new food source could require months or years of work and skill rolls versus a DR of 20 or more.

Specialties: Agriculture, Astronomy, Biology, Botany Ecology, Geology, Identification, Local, Medicinal, Mining, Physics, Structure, Teaching, Wasteland.

## Occult Lore

Drawing heavily on esoteric science, folklore, astrology, and Eastern mysticism, Neo-Victorian occult lore is a desperate attempt to reconcile the industrial age with the grim realities of the post-plague world. Forced to contend with the existence of ghosts, vampires, and the animate dead as well as the virtually limitless possibilities of alchemy, students of the occult make use of any resources available to them in their investigations.

Occultists verse themselves in matters mystic for a number of reasons. The search for perfection of the human condition is a profitable one — the financiers of the city are investing heavily in new research, fuelling a boom in the alchemical industry and attracting many young scholars interested in lucrative careers. Some believe that salvation from the Plague lies buried in the puzzles and dust of long-dead cultures. Additionally, there is a certain amount of potentially dangerous obsession inherent in studying mankind's deepest secrets; thrill seekers are as attracted to the study of dark secrets as those with a genuine curiosity to uncover the common threads in human consciousness. For many Undertakers, occult research is common sense, a means of knowing one's enemy.



While some occultists choose to operate independently, others dabble in secret societies. These societies may open new doors to success for their members. A society can provide resources and stores of knowledge as well as useful contacts. Those with an occult background who are also possessed of a level head and enough cleverness may become masters at manipulating other people to their own ends. A charismatic occultist styling himself as a black magician easily attracts the bored and beautiful children of the upper class, making it easy for him to engage in numerous dalliances with whomever he desires. He has no difficulty taking money from other folk who want to learn the "magical powers" by which he achieves such hedonism. In more practical matters, though practicing the black arts seldom comes to any direct fruition, occult lore can be invaluable when researching supernormal activity.

A character with the Occult Lore skill can make a roll to discover information about any mystical and esoteric subject. When determining the DR for Occult rolls, the Narrator should take into account the obscurity of the information sought, the character's knowledge on the topic based on his specialties, the research materials available, and the amount of time the character spends studying. Relatively accessible knowledge, such as the documented weaknesses of a vampire, requires a skill roll versus a DR of 11. Researching the history of a secret arcane order may require a skill roll versus a DR of 14 or more. Determining the origin of a newly discovered vampiric species found only in a particular province of Southern Italy requires a skill check versus a DR of 16. Should the roll fail, the character does not discover the information sought or discovers misleading and potentially dangerous information.

Specialties: Astrology, Cabala, Cult Leader, Eastern Mysticism, History, Numerology, Organizations, a specific culture's Folk Lore, Spiritualism, Teaching, Vampire Lore.

## Psychology

Psychology is the science of the human mind. During the Victorian Era psychology in Britain came to be a respectable field of study firmly under the aegis of medicine, and thus, the notion of curing the mentally afflicted began to receive serious attention as well. Psychoanalysis, an infant discipline at the start of the Plague Years, came to prominence before the Reclamation was complete due to the catastrophic effects on the populace of the constant undead threat.

In modern Neo-Victorian London, psychology is a diverse and widely practiced science. The common asylums of London, full to their limits with human debris brought to ruin by the horrors of the metropolis, are run to great profit by ambitious men of the medical establishment. A busy and lucrative practice is to be had in providing mental health services to the moneyed, providing psychoanalytic services on a private basis and maintaining sanatoria for the benefit of the hopeless cases, the exhausted, and inconvenient relations. Scotland Yard maintains a division devoted to inquiry into the criminal mind: profilers provide valuable insight into the patterns of murder and analysts assist in designing and executing the interrogations.

The rules for treating Mental Disorders may be found below (see pages 189 – 194).

A character with this skill will have insight into the mental patterns of those with whom he interacts. After interacting with another character, a character with this skill will be able to diagnose Mental Qualities, Impediments, and Disorders by succeeding in a Psychology skill roll versus a DR of 11 + the character's Will. Do not add the Concentration of the target to this roll. If the character fails the roll, he misdiagnoses his subject.

The character will be able to calm another character who has succumbed to fear or another nervous symptom with a successful contested Psychology roll versus the target's Will. Do not add the target's Concentration to this roll.

A character with the Psychology skill can determine the mental weak points of others, giving him an edge in social interactions. After observing a subject for a short time, the character may make a contested Psychology roll versus the target's Will. Do not add the target's Concentration to this roll. If the psychologist wins, he gains 1 on contested Charm or Torture rolls against his subject.

Specialties: Abnormal, Applied, Clinical, Comparative, Convulsive-Shock Therapy, Counselling, Deprivation Therapy, Development, Experimental Treatments, Forensic, Psychoactive Drugs, Psychics, Psychological Warfare, Psychotherapy, Social, Teaching.

## Thanatology

Thanatology is the academic study of death and dying. Besieged by the walking dead and legions of discarnate spirits, the subject is of keen interest to the Neo-Victorians. It is concerned with the circumstances surrounding death, the effects of death on those left behind, and social attitudes towards death. Thanatologists are legal experts in matters of post-mortem law and are often consulted when wills are contested by the family of the deceased. Many who choose to study Thanatology do so because they want to ease the process of death for both the dying and the living. The Mourner's Guild is a leading institution in the study of death, and it

works to develop guidelines to help its members cope with their chosen profession and give some solace to those they serve.

While thanatology did not originally seek to explore the meaning of death, many modern practitioners seek direct applications for their discipline. Neo-Victorian thanatologists hope to discover new methods of putting the dead to final rest. Natural science failed to adequately combat, or even explain the Plague. Many thanatologists believe that a cure to the Plague lies in unravelling the secrets of death lore.

When determining the DR for Thanatology skill rolls, the Narrator should take into account the obscurity of the information sought, the references available, and the amount of time the character spends studying. Outlining the preparations for a state funeral requires a successful Thanatology roll versus a DR of 11. Researching the intricacies of Neo-Victorian post-mortem law as they relate to the long-lived Dhampir requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 14. Determining the best way to lay a potentially psychotic spirit to rest could require a successful skill roll versus a DR of 16 or more as well as a great deal of hands-on research.

The Thanatology skill may not be used in place of Anthropology, Law, or Theology, but may add a +1 bonus to relevant skill checks in these areas at the Narrator's discretion.

Specialties: Death Science, Ghosts, Grief Counselling, History, Mortuary Law, Philosophy, Teaching.

## Theology

Theology studies the nature of the divine and its relationship to man. In the Neo-Victorian Age, theologians have been busy trying to come to an agreement on the meaning and implications of the Plague and the fate of the souls of the undead.

Theology is a skill that can be used as a means to an end. It can be a pathway to political power. It can be used to secure a wealthy and attentive patron who can give the theologian access to a world and resources they would have not otherwise known. It can be used for obtaining followers from other walks of life who need someone to consult on the spiritual matters of life. It can be used in the battle against spirits, the occult, and superstition. And lastly it can supply a good foundation for investigating the unnatural and uncovering the works of cults.

A character with the Theology skill is able to write simple sermons and competently debate general theological topics without a die roll. Preparing for a more complex sermon or debate requires a skill roll with a DR dependent on the obscurity of the topic researched.

Specialties: Exegetical Theology, Historical Theology, Practical Theology, a Specific Era, a Specific Religion, Systematic Theology, Teaching.

# Basic Skills

Basic skills are available to characters of any background or social class.

### Acrobatics

Acrobats have remained a staple of entertainment since the great Blondin first amazed crowds with his death-defying stunts nearly two hundred and fifty years ago. An acrobat is capable of extraordinary feats of dexterity, including hand stands, back flips, and the like. He is also able to walk tightropes and navigate the trapeze.

In addition to performing stunts, an acrobat also knows how to take a fall, enabling him to walk away from spills that would kill or incapacitate the uninitiated. Acrobats are also able to weave through combat, making themselves incredibly difficult to hit with their unpredictable movements. Some of the most skilled Neo-Victorian thieves are believed to be acrobats capable of dancing from rooftop to rooftop to avoid detection.

The success of an acrobatic manoeuvre is determined by making a Coordination + Acrobatics roll versus the difficulty of the stunt. A simple hand stand or back flip requires a successful roll versus a DR of 11. More complex stunts, such as walking a tightrope or performing a series of back flips, have a DR of 14. Adding a blindfold, high winds, chains, running water, or other complications further increases the difficulty rating for the stunt. A truly astounding feat that will be talked about for years to come would have a DR of no less than 20.

Note that acrobatic stunts require a great deal of practice. Though a character may have a high Coordination, without the Acrobatics skill, his attempts are doomed to automatic failure.

An acrobat can add his Acrobatics skill to his Coordination when climbing, leaping, or falling.

Specialties: Aerial Acrobatics, Climbing, Coaching, Falling, Flips, Leaping, Tightrope Walking.

### Acting

Acting is the art of portraying oneself as another person entirely. A skilled actor uses this skill to affect different emotional states and mannerisms and to suppress his own while doing so.

Putting on a good show requires a successful Acting roll versus a DR of 11. If the audience has particularly low standards (due to being drunk or easily amused) or are distracted by other aspects of the performance (such as nude dancers or mutant animals), the actor may pass the skill roll automatically. If the audience is particularly sceptical or refined, the DR could be raised up to 16 at the Narrator's discretion. A very high roll or critical success results in a breathtaking performance, moving the audience to tears or wild applause, as appropriate, and a standing ovation will commonly follow. A very low roll or critical failure will clear the house early and may subject the performer to boos, jeers, and possibly a barrage of rotten vegetables.

Acting may also be used to feign emotions and employ mannerisms offstage, all of which will appear genuine to onlookers. If the onlookers have reason to mistrust the character or are just naturally suspicious, the character must make an Acting skill roll opposed by a Wit roll made by each onlooker. If an onlooker rolls higher than the character, he does not believe the performance; otherwise, he is completely taken in.

Note that while many Aristocrats are patrons of the theatre or keep actors as paramours, few could weather the scandal of being caught on the stage.

Specialties: Character Acting, Comedy, Director, Expressions, Impersonations, Improvisation, Mask Theatre, Melodrama, Realism, Shakespearean Drama, Stage History, Tragedy.

### Appraise

The character possesses a fine eye for discerning between objects of value and trash. An expert appraiser could make a living strolling through the junk shops of the East End and purchasing antiques for a pittance to resell across town for a tremendous profit. Costermongers, jewellers, auctioneers, and criminals all make use of this skill.

Common items may be reliably appraised with a successful skill roll (DR 11). Rare or unique objects could require additional research and a successful skill roll (DR 16). Should the character fail an appraisal roll, he could either be baffled by the value of the object or simply make a drastic mistake at the Narrator's discretion.

Specialties: Antiques, Books, China, Clothes, Devices, Furniture, General Knowledge, Jewels, Metals.

## Arts

*"The only difference between an artist and a lunatic is, perhaps, that the artist has the restraint or courtesy [...] to conceal the intensity of his obsession from all except those similarly afflicted."*
*—Osbert Sitwell, "A Short Character of Walter Richard Sickert," 1947*

The character is an artist. He may practice painting, sculpting, illustration, or some other art form. The works the character makes are saleable and with a high enough skill level would provide a fine living.

Creating a good amateur work requires a successful skill roll versus a difficulty rating of 11. A work saleable at a living wage requires a successful roll versus a DR of 14. A masterpiece capable of drawing attention from art critics requires a successful roll versus a DR of 20. A critical success results in a work of immortal beauty that will make the character's name renowned in art circles for years to come. Critical failure may well end the character's career, but could result in a new movement after his death.

Specialties: Anatomical Illustration, Art History, Art Vocabulary, Character Study, Illuminated Manuscripts, Landscape Oils, Painter, Portrait Painting, Sculpting, Still Life, Teaching, Technical Illustration, Water Colours, Wood Cuts.

## Concentration

The Concentration skill represents a character's mastery over his mind and body. Concentration enables a character to control his physical urges, numb his body to physical sensations such as pain or hunger, and reduce his need for sleep. The character learns to focus his will, tune out the distractions of the outside world, summon reserves of mental energy, and shield his thoughts from the prying minds of others.

The character may add his Concentration to any Will roll.

For each level of Concentration the character possesses, he may take one of the following stunts.

- *Compress Sleep* – The character has learned to compress an entire night's sleep into four hours of meditation.
- *Dull Pain* – The wound penalties to a character's skill rolls are reduced by one. For example, Nicci's Undertaker Percy suffers a Serious Wound but has the Dull Pain stunt. Percy would ordinarily suffer –2 on his skill roll, but because he has the Dull Pain stunt, this penalty is reduced to –1.
- *Focused Healing* – The character has learned to either enter a meditative state that greatly accelerates the healing process or to channel his will to the same end. The character recovers from his wounds and Complications one week faster than normal.
- *Suppression* – The character is capable of going for extended periods deprived of food or sleep without suffering the normal detrimental effects. Though his physical needs have been suppressed, they are not satisfied. A character can starve himself to death for lack of sustenance or tear his mind apart from lack of sleep.
- *Thought Mask* – The character may reroll failed contested Will rolls to resist external mental influence. A failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Thought Mask.
- *Willpower* – The character has incredible willpower and is able to avoid most temptations. He eats well and leads a healthy lifestyle. The character may reroll failed Will rolls to avoid addiction. A failed roll may only be rerolled once due to Willpower.

## Demolitions

Demolition is the intentional destruction of a building, generally by the use of explosives. A character with this skill has a broad knowledge of available explosives as well as their use in compromising the structural integrity of buildings. Rules for explosives and demolishing buildings are detailed in Chapter 2 (see page 113).

A character with the Demolitions skill can also identify explosives on sight. Identifying relatively common explosives requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 11. Less common explosives could require a successful roll versus a DR of 14 or more. Note that while the character may have a great knowledge of explosives, he is not a chemist. He cannot identify explosive compounds that are not available on the market and certainly cannot create his own explosives without the Alchemy skill.

Specialties: Collateral Damage, Concealment, Explosive Type, Fuses, Shaped Explosives, Structure Type, Timers.

## Disguise

The character is skilled in the use of disguises. He knows how to create disguises that will enable him to pass for someone else, and he is an expert with the use of make-up and prosthetics. This skill is used by stage performers and criminals and is commonly taught to undercover CID detectives.

The art of disguise is not easy or quick. To effect a proper disguise, a character will require make-up, costumes, wigs, and other accessories. Depending on the purpose of the disguise, the character may also have to research the background of the individual or sort of person he is portraying to avoid detection.

The simplest disguise simply alters a character's appearance in some way. To achieve this, the character must succeed in a skill roll (DR 11). More complex alterations will require a successful skill roll versus a higher difficulty rating. If the roll fails, the disguise is obviously faked. If the character succeeds, record the total of the result of the die roll. Anyone who knows the character or specifically looks him over will make a Wit roll versus a difficulty rating equal to the character's disguise roll. If the suspicious character meets or beats this roll, he sees through the character's disguise. If he fails, he is fooled by the disguise.

The most complex disguises are those that make a character look like another individual. The DR for a disguise that allows a character to impersonate another is 14. If the character attempting to create the disguise lacks either good photographs or first-hand knowledge of the subject, the DR is increased by 2. Likewise, if the disguised character looks nothing like the subject being impersonated, increase the DR by 2. If the Disguise roll fails, the character simply looks nothing like the individual he is trying to impersonate. If the roll succeeds, record the total as above. Anyone who knows the character or specifically looks him over will make a Wit roll versus a difficulty rating equal to the character's disguise roll. Anyone who knows the individual being impersonated personally gains 3 on their roll.

Specialties: Dramatic, Facial Hair, Impersonation, Make Up, Nondescript, Wigs.

## Drive Carriage

The character has learned to drive horse-drawn cabs, carriages, and carts. The character does not generally need to make a check to use this skill. However, the character can make a Drive Carriage roll to reach a location in a hurry (DR 11). The character may even be able to make it to a location in half the time expected with a successful skill roll (DR 14).

The character may have to make additional rolls when extraordinary circumstances arise, such as racing, driving on a rough road at high speeds, or driving in dense fogs. If the animals pulling the cart panic, the character will have to make a successful Drive Carriage roll to bring them back under control. A particularly dangerous or desperate action could require a successful skill roll versus a DR of 14 or more

Racing other drivers requires the participants make contested Drive skill rolls. In the case of a tie, the top-rolling players roll off to determine the winner. The DR for all other Drive Carriage skill rolls is determined by the Narrator..

Specialties: Chase, Avoiding Pedestrians, Poor Visibility, Professionalism, Stunt Driving.

## Etiquette

Etiquette is the knowledge of how to comport oneself in Neo-Victorian society. Etiquette transcends social boundaries; however, it is only the upper classes that have refined it to an art form. Every young aristocrat and aspiring clerk in England is expected to be versed in the proper forms of address for various titled officials and nobles, which fork to use for each course, etc.

Generally an Etiquette roll is only required when a character attempts to operate outside his social class, cover up a public gaffe, perform a complex or uncommon ritual, or deal graciously with foreigners. The DR for an Etiquette roll is determined by the situation at hand. If a character should reasonably have a good chance at success, his DR is 11. If he is completely out of his depth, his DR could be 16 or more.

A failed Etiquette roll causes those observing the character to regard him as a fool at best and a fake or impostor at worst. In the wrong circumstances, a failed Etiquette roll can have dire long-term repercussions leading to a scandal (see Chapter 7, pages 380 – 385). A character botching a social roll can easily find doors slammed in his face and employment options cut off.

Specialties: Customs, Decorum, Diplomatic, Manners, Titles, Tradition.

## Gambling

Gambling measures a character's ability to calculate odds and count cards. A character possessing this skill is adept at many games of chance. The character knows the strategies of the game and how to use them to win big. Failing that, the character may also use this skill to cheat.

If the character is wagering on a game of chance in which the skill of the other players involved has no impact on the outcome of the game, he must succeed in a skill roll versus a DR of 14. The roll represents the character's ability to efficiently gauge his odds of winning and respond accordingly.

In games of sport in which the skill of the other participants is a factor, all parties involved make contested Gambling skill rolls. The highest roller wins. In case of a tie, the top-rolling players roll again to determine the winner.

A gambler may also decide to cheat, provided he can explain his actions to the Narrator. A character with a viable method of cheating doubles his Gambling skill when making skill rolls; however, in addition to the Gambling skill roll, all participants in and observers of the game may make a Wit + Gambling roll to spot the character cheating. If any characters

roll a higher result than the cheat, they spot his chicanery and may reveal the malfeasance to their confederates, likely resulting in grievous personal injury to the offending party.

Whether one is cheating or playing fair, winning too much too often can be dangerous to one's health. A character with the gambling skill can lose games at will, no roll required.

Specialties: Bluffing, Cards, Cheating, Dice, Odds, Roulette.

### Language

The ability to speak and read a language is imparted by the Language skill. The skill must be taken once for each language the character wishes to know. Basic fluency in a language is represented by a Language skill of 3. This allows a character to converse well enough to take part in most normal conversations. At Language 4, the character has a wider vocabulary and may communicate more eloquently, although he will still speak with an obvious accent. At Language 5, the character's speech can barely be distinguished from that of a native speaker.

A character is assumed to speak his native language fluently and begins with a 5 in his native language.

A character with a Language skill at 3 or greater will seldom have to make a language roll for basic communication, unless in circumstances where misunderstandings and confusion are highly probable. A roll is usually required when encountering dialects and archaic versions of a familiar language.

When speaking in a non-native language, the Acting, Etiquette, and Trade – Writing skills may only be used at a maximum level equal to the character's language proficiency. These skills all require conscious thought on the part of the character, and any hesitations or confusion will detract from their effectiveness. The skill level is unaffected if it is lower than the character's Language skill. Rolls such as Intimidation and Seduction are unaffected unless the character is relying solely on his words. Of course, individual circumstances may contradict this interplay of skills, but the details of exceptional cases are at the Narrator's discretion.

Specialties: Conversation, Insults, Obfuscation (Legalize), Slang, Teaching, Speech Writing, Technical Vocabulary, Writing.

#### Sign Language

Instead of taking a spoken language, the character can learn sign language instead. Hand talk is not only used by the deaf but also by the criminals of the metropolis, who have their own variant.

## Performance

The character is a performer. He may be a dancer, singer, or musician. The character may have been professionally trained or may simply be naturally talented. He could earn a living busking on the streets of the metropolis or performing in a legitimate theatre or opera company. The character will have a repertoire of practiced and polished song or dances.

This skill also includes ballroom dancing, which is particularly important among the aristocracy, who consider social events a responsibility. Poor dancing may be seen as a sign of poor breeding.

Performing at a professional level requires a successful skill roll (DR 11). Failure indicates that the character fell short of the mark, not necessarily that he made a fool of himself. The success of the performance is reflected in the character's skill check. A high roll or critical success results in a breathtaking performance. A very low roll or critical failure indicates the character has embarrassed himself by stepping on his partners' toes or missing the high note.

Specialties: Ballroom, Choreography, Classical Dance, Classical Music, Composition, Competitive Dance, Conductor, Erotic Dance, Ethnic Style, Folk Music, Improvisation, Instrument Type, Modern Music, Musician, Reading Music, Singing, Soloist, Song Writer, Street Performance, Tap Dancing, Teaching.

### The Language of the Streets

*Neo-Victorian London is a truly worldly city. London has always benefited from a broad multicultural population. Even before the deluge of Plague refugees, immigrants came to London from across the world. Walking through the streets of the city, one hears a potpourri of languages spoken. The centuries of cultural fusion have left an indelible mark on the metropolis.*

*Such pseudo-languages as Thieves' Cant and Rhyming slang have coloured criminal circles for centuries. Thieves' Cant is a thick mixture of English regional dialects, Gaelic, Romany, and words with their origin in the slang of the Middle Ages. Cockney Rhyming Slang has been employed by criminal and costermongers for centuries to confuse police and outsiders. When creating a character, especially a lower class character, consider spending some skill points on the languages of the street: Yiddish, Romany, Rhyming Slang, Thieves' Cant, etc.*

## Photography

The character understands composition, operation of photographic equipment, and development of images. A skilled character could easily make a living selling his work as a middle-class portrait photographer. While colour film exists, it is used for mainly industrial purposes, and black and white photography remains wildly popular among Neo-Victorian audiences. A number of companies also produce film especially processed to photograph spirits. This technology has led to the foundation of a new artistic movement.

Taking a crisp, clean image requires a successful skill roll (DR 11). A professional portrait or truly artistic work requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 14. Taking a photo that will be remembered for a lifetime requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 20 or more.

Specialties: Action Photography, Developing, Focus, General Knowledge, Portrait Photography, Trick Photography.

## Ride

Though few outside the upper classes can afford to keep a horse, equestrianism remains both a popular sport and source of transportation. The Metropolitan Police can be seen riding their respirator-clad horses throughout the city. The wealthy enjoy Sunday morning jaunts through Hyde Park as they have for centuries. Even the grim soldiers of the Deathwatch utilize horsemen to deliver important dispatches from various commands.

In addition to being able to ride a horse, the character with this skill is knowledgeable in the basic care and feeding of the animal.

While riding, the character is not required to make a check to use this skill unless extraordinary circumstances arise, such as racing, leaping over obstacles, or riding in dense fogs. The DR for all other Ride skill rolls is determined by the Narrator. A particularly dangerous or desperate stunt could require a successful skill roll versus a DR of 14 or more. On a very low roll or critical failure, the character is thrown from his horse and suffers a damage roll at +3. Racing other riders requires the participants make contested skill rolls. In the case of a tie, the top rolling players roll off to determine the winner. This roll may be modified by the conditions of the horses ridden.

Specialties: Care, Chase, Country Riding, Racer, Show Riding, Trick Riding, Urban Riding.

### Swim

Swimming has become a very rare skill among the Neo-Victorians. Few would risk swimming in either still or moving water, whether near a city or no. It is common knowledge that strange creatures dwell below the surface of the oceans and lakes, not to mention the tainted waters of the Thames. Those who can swim are a minority even among sailors.

The DR for Swim skill rolls depends on the circumstances involved. No roll is required under the best possible conditions, such as a leisurely swim in a private swimming pool on a secluded estate, but such idyllic scenes are few and far between. Swimming a great distance or attempting to elude pursuers by diving beneath the water requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 11 and, possibly, a Vitality roll as well at the Narrator's discretion. Swimming to safety after falling into the Thames requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 16. Crossing the Channel without being devoured requires several successful skill and Vitality rolls versus a DR of 20 or more.

A character without the Swim skill who is caught in a situation in which drowning is a very real possibility rolls 2d10 versus a DR determined by the Narrator. If the character fails a roll, he temporarily goes under, suffers –1 Vitality, and must make the roll again. A character who is reduced to 0 Vitality goes unconscious and will drown soon after unless he is removed from the water. Once removed from the water, the character instantly regains 1 Vitality point and will awaken within ten minutes. The character recovers additional lost Vitality at a rate of 1 point per week. On a critical failure the character drowns unless immediately rescued.

Specialties: Cold Water, Distance, Life Saving, Rough Water.

### Torture

Any sick bastard can cause pain to his fellow men when he wants something from them, but only a character with the Torture skill has actually studied the applied science of causing pain for the purpose of extracting information. These characters are more likely to be creative in their approach to the situation and to find the answers they seek than is someone relying solely on their innate powers of intimidation. In fact, characters employing torture are often able to extract the information they seek regardless of whether or not it is actually true.

Torture can be quick and brutal or slow and methodical. Brutal techniques, while fast, can make a mess of the victim and often result in premature death or incomplete information. A methodical professional who takes his time at his work will be able to wring more information or a more complete confession from his subject. In either case, the torturer requires a victim who is powerless to halt the physical duress he endures when put to the question. The player controlling the torturer should begin by describing his demeanour, the punishment inflicted on the victim, and the questions asked or comments made.

In the case of a quick and brutal torture session, after listening to the player describe the actions taken, the Narrator decides when the victim has had enough and could potentially crack. If the torture involved genuine physical brutality, the victim suffers an unmodified (2d10) damage roll. Next the torturer makes a contested Torture roll versus his victim's Will. If the torturer's total is higher than the victim's, the victim starts blubbering and tells the torturer what he wants to hear. Information exchanged under such duress is notoriously faulty since the victim is likely to say anything to make the pain end. If the roll fails, the victim keeps his mouth shut.

If the roll fails, the torturer may attempt a new form of torture, but the old methods will not yield success. More likely than not, subjecting a victim to repeated forms of brutal torture will simply result in his death before any information is gained.

In the case of the methodical application of torture, the torturer may make one contested Torture roll versus his victim's Will each day the victim is tortured. If the roll succeeds, the victim suffers –1 Will. If the roll fails, nothing happens. If the torturer rolls a critical success, the victim cracks and tells him everything he wants to know. On a critical failure, the victim dies. If the victim is reduced to 0 Will, he answers every one of his torturer's questions as truthfully as possible, though the victim will volunteer false information if the torturer insists on a particular point about which the victim has no real knowledge.

Regardless of the outcome, after being tortured for a day, the victim must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds nothing happens. If the roll fails, he suffers –1 Vitality. If his Vitality is reduced to less than 0, he dies.

A character regains Will and Vitality lost due to Torture at a rate of one point per week. Characters surviving lengthy torture sessions often develop permanent psychological damage.

In addition to getting the answers to his questions, a torturer may also inflict precise wounds on a helpless victim with a successful Torture roll versus a DR of 11 + the victim's Vitality. With a successful roll, the torturer can inflict a Flesh Wound, Serious Wound, Incapacitating Wound, or, at the Narrator's discretion, his choice of Complications. On a failed roll the victim suffers a lesser wound than intended or a Flesh Wound in the case of an attempted Complication.

Specialties: Bare Hands, Blunt Trauma, Electricity, Knives, No Marks, Psychology.

### Tracking

The character is a skilled tracker able to pursue prey over land. The character may be able to tell how old tracks are, what sort of animal made them, and the status of its health. This skill is more common among the inhabitants of the farms than those dwelling within the confines of the city walls, though some Undertakers will have considerable practice with the skill.

When determining the DR for a Tracking skill roll, the Narrator should consider how fresh the tracks are, what sort of ground they cover, how familiar the tracker is with the animal, and how trafficked the area is. If the character fails the roll, he loses the trail but could find it again with another successful roll. On a critical failure, the character follows the wrong trail. The Narrator may require the tracking character to make several rolls if the trail is particularly long. The character should be expected to make one Tracking roll for every hour of game time that passes while he is tracking.

Specialties: Identify Tracks, Long Distance, Man Hunter, Particular Prey, Particular Terrain, Prey Condition.

### Trade

The character is a skilled tradesman. He may have developed his craft through natural aptitude or apprenticeship. Depending upon his skill level, the character may have even completed his journey-work or gone on to master his trade. A skilled tradesman practicing his craft can make a comfortable living for himself while supporting a family. Most player characters will not be able to put in the ten- to twelve-hour workdays expected of a tradesman and will likely have to find other avenues to establish their livelihoods.

A character may take this skill multiple times, and each time he must select a particular craft he is developing. Options for a trade include, but are not limited to, accounting, animal husbandry, blacksmithing, brewing, carpentry, cooking, embalming, glass blowing, gunsmithing, navigation, sailing, sign painting, stone masonry, tailoring, telegraph operation, and writing.

Creating quality work or executing the advanced aspects of the trade requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 11. More complex works that tax the character's abilities require a successful roll versus a DR of 14. A masterpiece or an extremely difficult work involving complex schematics could require a successful roll versus a DR of 20 or more. Along with determining the DR, the Narrator also determines how long a particular work will take to complete as well as any special or rare ingredients required for its creation. If the character attempts to complete the job in a rush, add +2 to the DR.

Specialties: Artistic Finish, Management, Negotiation, Production, Sales, Style, Teaching.

## Combat Skills

Combat skills dictate the character's skill in battle. The skill required to use a given weapon is designated in the weapon's description (see Chapter 4). A character lacking a skill may still attempt to use a weapon with the Narrator's approval. Generally, a character should be able to make basic use of any weapon that he can reasonably figure out how to operate. However, to use a galvanic weapon, the character must have both the appropriate combat skill and Galvanics 1 or higher.

## Stunts

In addition to increasing his ability, each skill level also gives the character a stunt. Stunts, which represent the character's signature fighting style, allow players to tailor their characters by modifying the character's performance in combat. The explanation of each skill lists which of the following stunts are available for that weapon type.

**Bell Ringer** – The character is adept at striking with the flat of the blade or the hilt of his weapon to knock targets unconscious rather than killing them. After succeeding in an attack targeting a living or half-lifer target's head, the attacker makes a damage roll, adding his Vitality but not the weapon's damage bonus. If the damage roll results in a Serious Wound or greater, the target has a chance of being knocked out (see Knockout, Chapter 2, page 108).

**Breakout** – The character may attempt to break free from a grapple once per turn without spending an action.

**Brutality** – Armour is not doubled against the character's Unarmed Combat attacks.

**Deadly Skill** – When making Melee Weapon damage rolls, the character can use his Melee Weapon skill rank in place of his Vitality attribute. If the character's Vitality is equal to or higher than the character's Melee Weapon skill, instead of using the Melee Weapon skill rank, add 1 to the damage roll in addition to the character's Vitality.

**Disarm** – The character has become skilled in disarming combatants. After succeeding in hitting an opponent's arm, the attacker makes a contested Melee Weapon roll versus his target's Coordination. If the attacker wins, his target's weapon flies from his hand. If the target wins, he keeps his weapon. An attempt to disarm does not inflict damage on the target. If the target also has the Disarm stunt and is armed with a melee weapon, both characters make a contested Coordination + Melee roll. The character that rolls the lowest is disarmed. In the case of a tie, neither character is disarmed.

**Duellist** – The character gains +3 on parry rolls (see Chapter 2, page 96).

**Extended Range** – Add 3 to the character's Vitality when determining his Thrown Weapon attack range (see Chapter 2, page 94).

**Fast Aim** – A character with this skill may forfeit a single action to receive an aiming bonus instead of forfeiting his entire turn (see Aiming, Chapter 2, page 99).

**Fast Draw** – The character can draw a weapon governed by this skill without spending an action. If the character uses Fast Draw to pull a weapon during the first round of combat, he gains a +3 bonus to his initiative roll (see Chapter 2, page 94).

**Foot Work** – The character gains +3 on dodge rolls (see Chapter 2, page 96).

**Free Dodge** – The character can make one dodge each round without spending a combat action (see Dodge, Chapter 2, page 96). After making a free dodge, the character cannot make another until after his next turn.

**Free Parry** – The character may make one parry each round without spending a combat action (see Parry, Chapter 2, page 96). After making a free parry, the character cannot make another until after his next turn.

**Ground Fighting** – The DR of attacks targeting the character while he is knocked down is not reduced to 11. If the character is aware of combat, the DR for attacks targeting him remains 11 + his Coordination.

**Hardened Strike** – When making unarmed combat damage rolls, the character can use his Unarmed Combat skill rank in place of his Vitality attribute. If the character's Vitality is equal to or higher than the character's Unarmed Combat skill, instead of using the Unarmed Combat skill, add 1 to the roll in addition to the character's Vitality.

**Headhunter** – If the character with this stunt makes an attack and does not specify the part of his opponent's body he is targeting but rolls a 10 on either die and hits the target, he may chose to hit his opponent's arm, head, leg, or torso after the roll is made.

**High Kick** – The penalty for kicks to the head is reduced to –3 to hit (see Kicks, Chapter 2, page 97). If the kick hits, it gains the standard +3 bonus on the damage roll for hitting a target in the head.

**Improved Knockout** – Add 3 to the DR of a target resisting a knockout caused by an unarmed attack made by this character (see Knockout, Chapter 2, page 108).

**Improvisation** – The character does not suffer –2 on attack rolls when throwing unbalanced objects (see Chapter 2, page 99).

**Iron Palm** – The character can parry even while unarmed (see Parry, Chapter 2, page 96).

**Long Shot** – The effective ranges of weapons covered by this stunt are increased by the number in parenthesis next to the stunt under each skill (see Range, Chapter 2, page 99).

**Night Fighter** – Ignore attack penalties for poor visibility when making attacks with this skill (see Chapter 2, page 99).

**Pistol Whip** – The character can use his firearm as an improvised melee weapon and does not suffer a –2 penalty

on attacks rolls when doing so (see Improvised Weapons, Chapter 2, page 96). Use the character's Melee Weapon skill when making improvised melee attacks.

**Preferred Weapon** – The character may choose a specific weapon covered by this skill to be his preferred weapon. When attacking with a preferred weapon, the character gets +1 on attack rolls and +1 on parry rolls, if applicable.

Potential preferred weapons are listed in parenthesis next to the stunt under each skill. This list of preferred weapons is not exhaustive, and players may select weapons not listed with the Narrator's consent.

**Pull Punch** – The character can reduce the damage he inflicts with unarmed attacks without reducing the chances for a knockout (see Chapter 2, page 108).

**Riposte** – Immediately after the character has been attacked and missed by a melee attack, he may make one attack targeting the failed attacker that uses a weapon in his hand covered by this skill. This attack is in addition to his normal actions. A character may also make a Riposte attack after a successful parry but not after a successful dodge. A character that has been grappled cannot make Riposte attacks. A character can only make one Riposte attack per round. After making a Riposte attack, the character cannot make another until after his next turn.

**Snap Reaction** – If the character has a held action he can pre-empt an action made by a character with a lower initiative score to make an attack with a weapon using this skill. Once a slower character declares an intended action, the character with Snap Reaction can make one attack before the slower character acts. The character with Snap Reaction must have his weapon drawn to use this stunt.

**Sniper** – The character ignores range penalties when making an attack with this skill (see Chapter 2, page 99). The maximum range of a weapon is unaffected.

**Spit Fire** – The character can make one additional Unarmed Combat attack each turn. This attack suffers a –3 penalty on the attack roll. This attack is in addition to the character's actions. The character cannot make this attack if he takes evasive action. The character cannot benefit from Spit Fire and Two-Weapon Fighting during the same round.

**Trick Shot** – When making an attack with a weapon covered by this skill, the character ignores penalties for targeting an opponent with cover (see Chapter 2, page 99).

**Trip** – The character knows how to kick the legs out from under an opponent. If the character kicks a target in the legs and the attack inflicts a Flesh Wound or greater, the target has a chance of being knocked down. The attacker makes a contested Unarmed Combat roll versus his opponent's Coordination. If the attacker wins, his opponent is knocked down. If the result is a tie or the opponent wins, nothing happens.

**Two-Weapon Fighting** – The character can fight with a weapon covered by this skill in his off hand. He can make one additional attack with the second weapon on each of his turns in addition to his normal actions. The character cannot make this attack if he takes evasive action. The character cannot benefit from Spit Fire and Two-Weapon Fighting in the same round.

**Wrestler** – The character may use his Unarmed Combat skill in place of Vitality when making contested grapple rolls. If the character's Vitality is equal to or higher than his Unarmed Combat skill, instead of using his Unarmed Combat skill add one to the roll in addition to the character's Vitality.

### Artillery

The character is skilled in the use of large military weapons including, but not limited to, field guns, machine guns, and mortars. Artillery weapons are incredibly powerful and expensive. They are seldom if ever found outside the hands of the military. Characters without the Artillery skill are unable to operate this class of weapon. Even with the skill, specialties are required to actually crew the weapon. Often, artillery men work in teams with each man assigned to a different duty.

The Deathwatch utilizes a number of galvanic artillery weapons. Note that in order to operate galvanic artillery, the character must have at least Galvanics 1.

Only characters with a military background can take the Artillery skill.

Note that unlike other Combat skills, Artillery utilizes specialties rather than stunts.

Specialties: Corrective Firing, Firing Coordinates, Galvanic Weapons, Loading, Machine Guns, Maintenance, Mortars.

### Melee Weapon

This skill covers the use of all melee weapons including, but not limited to, swords, knives, and truncheons. Since the outbreak of the Plague, there has been a renaissance of interest in melee weapons. Duelling clubs and societies have sprung up across the metropolis. Mourners are living proof that melee weapons have a respected place beside modern ballistic and galvanic firearms.

Note that in order to operate a galvanic melee weapon, the character must have at least Galvanics 1.

**Stunts**

- Bell Ringer
- Deadly Skill
- Disarm
- Duellist
- Fast Draw
- Free Parry
- Headhunter
- Preferred Weapon (Axe, Club, Fencing Sword, Knife, Long Sword, Pole Arm, Two Handed Sword)*
- Riposte
- Snap Reaction
- Two-Weapon Fighting
- Preferred Weapon – Exculpus is only available to Mourners as a Feature of that Calling.

## Pistol

The character knows how to load, fire, and maintain pistols. Firearms have been increasingly common since the outbreak of the Plague. In the Neo-Victorian Era, virtually all homes contain at least one firearm, and many citizens refuse to go anywhere unarmed. Pistols are the most commonly carried firearms due to the ease of concealment.

Note that in order to operate a galvanic pistol, the character must have at least Galvanics 1.

**Stunts**

- Fast Aim
- Fast Draw
- Headhunter
- Long Shot (+50')
- Night Fighter
- Pistol Whip
- Preferred Weapon (Automatic Pistol, Galvanic Pistol, Revolver)
- Riposte
- Snap Reaction
- Trick Shot
- Two-Weapon Fighting

## Rifle

Though rifles are a less common sight on the streets of the metropolis than pistols, they remain the weapon of choice for both home defence and journeys beyond the walls of London. A character with this skill knows how to load, fire, and maintain rifles.

Note that in order to operate a galvanic rifle, the character must have at least Galvanics 1.

**Stunts**

- Fast Aim
- Headhunter
- Long Shot (+100')
- Night Fighter
- Pistol Whip
- Preferred Weapon (Black Powder, Bolt-Action Rifle, Elephant Gun, GalvanicRifle, Semi-Automatic, Shotgun)
- Snap Reaction
- Sniper
- Trick Shot

### Thrown Weapon

Though most Neo-Victorians would prefer to carry a pistol, thrown weapons have remained relatively popular. Thrown weapons have the advantage of being silent and easily concealed.

**Stunts**

- Extended Range
- Fast Draw
- Headhunter
- Improvisation
- Night Fighter
- Preferred Weapon (Knife, etc)
- Snap Reaction
- Trick Shot
- Two-Weapon Fighting

### Unarmed Combat

The character is skilled in the fine art of hand-to-hand combat. He may be a boxer, street brawler, or martial artist. Whatever the source of his training, he can hold his own in a fight without a weapon. The method in which the character fights will be based on his social class and personal disposition. A gentleman is not likely to engage in the biting, trips, or below-the-belt punches that a street brawler will resort to.

**Stunts**

- Breakout
- Brutality
- Foot Work
- Free Dodge
- Ground Fighting
- Hardened Strike
- High Kick
- Improved Knockout
- Iron Palm
- Pull Punch
- Snap Reaction
- Spit Fire
- Trip
- Wrestler

## Criminal Skills

### Escapology

A character skilled in this art may be able to effect seeming miraculous escapes from handcuffs, straightjackets, and even steel boxes, sometimes all at once. The escape artist is familiar with all manner of knots and rope work. With practice, the character becomes adept at dislocating joints and bending limbs to slip free of his bonds. Most escape artists also learn something of lock picking. Escapology is as likely to be found among stage magicians as among the criminal class.

Slipping out of a pair of handcuffs is a relatively simple task requiring a couple minutes and a successful Escapology roll versus a DR of 11. More restrictive bonds or very tight restraints require even more time to escape as well as a successful skill roll versus a DR of 16. Attempting such staged tomfoolery as escaping a chained barrel submerged in a tank of sharks may well require a successful skill roll versus a DR of 20 or more... And then the escapologist must deal with the sharks.

Specialties: Chains, Handcuffs, Ropes, Stage, Straitjackets, Underwater.

### Forgery

Forgery is a time-consuming and laborious process requiring specialized tools and supplies. A character with this skill has the keen eyes and powerful attention span required to forge documents, cheques, currency, and seals. The forger also knows the best places to pass off fake currency and cheques to avoid detection. A character skilled in forgery is able to examine documents and compare handwriting to determine if they are legitimate. It is, of course, easier to forge a document if the character has an original to work from. Otherwise, he will have to work from memory.

Forging a seal or reproducing a letter or note requires the proper materials, an hour or more of time, and a successful Forgery roll versus a DR of 11. Forging handwriting requires a sample of the individual's writing and a successful skill roll versus a DR of 14. The forgery may also require specific ink, wax, or paper stock. Forging documents requires days of effort and a successful skill roll versus a DR of 16 or

more depending on the complexity of the document forged. Forging Neo-Victorian currency by hand requires no less than three days per bill, a sample of the bill to be forged, extremely specialized and potentially illegal materials, and a skill roll versus a DR of 20.

Forgers are adept at the production of their own currency and can counterfeit both printed bills and coin. Paper money is easiest to print but requires a plate and knowledge of paper, presses, and inks. Bit fakers, or coiners, require raw materials, moulds, and smelting equipment to manufacture coins. Though a character with this skill is familiar with the material make-up of coins, that is the extent of his metallurgical knowledge. It is possible to make both moulds and plates from scratch, but the process is extremely time consuming, labour intensive, and requires additional knowledge in metal working. Even the best fakes seldom stand up to careful inspection.

Printing passable paper money with a plate and printing press requires the proper materials and a successful Forgery roll versus a DR of 11. Manufacturing passable coins with a die, raw materials, and smelting equipment also requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 11. Fabricating a mould or plate requires months of labour, a successful Forgery skill roll versus a DR of 16, and a successful Trade – Metal Working roll versus a DR of 16. If either roll fails, the process must begin anew. A counterfeiter can solicit the aid of another to work the metal.

A character intentionally examining a document, bill, or coin to determine its authenticity must make a Wit or Forgery roll, whichever is higher, versus a DR of 11 + the Forgery skill of the character that created the counterfeit item.

Specialties: Coins, Details, Legal Documents, Printing Paper Currency, Signatures, Spurious Currency.

### Lock Picking

The character is a locksmith or a screwsman and is proficient at the use of lock picks and the fabrication of keys.

The DR for lock picking depends on the complexity of the lock, the tools the character has at hand, and the amount of time he has to work the lock. With a set of lock picks, a skilled screwsman can open a simple locked door in less than a minute (DR 11). A more complex lock could take five minutes or more (DR 14). State of the art locks may require a little more effort and hardware (DR 16). The fabrication of a key is a relatively simple matter, requiring a successful skill roll versus a DR of 11, and a copy of the key that is to be reproduced.

Specialties: Detection, Manufacturing Keys, New Locks, Old Locks, Picks.

### Pickpocket

*"They have in most cases been thieves from their cradle; others are tradesmen's sons and young men from the provinces, who have gone into dissipated life and adopted this infamous course."*
*—John Binny, "Thieves and Swindlers," from Henry Mayhew's* London Labour and the London Poor, *1861*

The character is a dipper or tooler, a graduate of the fingersmith's art. Pickpockets operate throughout the metropolis. The most accomplished are specialists that hone their techniques over a lifetime. A tooler may have developed his talents alone on the street or through apprenticeship to a senior thief. Pickpockets may operate alone or in teams. Most move frequently to avoid detection and rely on duffers, or fences, to sell the goods in order to avoid arousing the suspicion of pawning the items personally.

Picking a pocket requires a contested Coordination + Pickpocket roll versus 11 + (2 x the mark's Wit). If the Pickpocket succeeds, he makes off with the mark's valuables undetected. If he fails, the pickpocket is caught red-handed. The Narrator may choose to add modifiers based on the measures the mark has taken to secure his valuables, the mark's mental state, etc.

Specialties: Crowds, Drunks, Organization, Sharp Dresser, Teaching, Vaudeville, Wallets, Watches.

### Safecracking

Safecracking is the process of opening a safe without the combination, generally via a careful manipulation of the lock. There are three primary approaches to safecracking. First, a talented character may be able to crack a lock by sound or feel. Should a would-be thief lack the time, inclination, or talent to attempt to crack the combination in this manner, he may turn his attention to the structural integrity of the safe itself. A knowledgeable safecracker will know where he can safely drill to both observe the inner mechanisms of the lock and, alternatively, manipulate the locking mechanism manually. If driven to desperate measures, a character can also attempt to do enough physical damage to the safe to force it open. This approach is risky, as the method used to breach the safe may also destroy its contents. The DR for cracking a safe depends on the sophistication of the combination lock or the structural integrity of the safe, depending on which approach the character takes. A very cheap combination lock can be cracked after two minutes of work (DR 11). A typical lock can be manipulated in twenty minutes (DR 14). A good-quality lock requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 16. A state-of-the-art combination lock could require an hour or more to crack and a successful skill roll versus a DR of 20 or more.

Drilling a hole for observation requires a drill, twenty minutes and a successful Safecracking skill roll versus a DR of 11. Should the cracker succeed, he gains +2 on his skill roll to manipulate the lock. Bypassing the lock with a drill requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 14 for the average safe and a DR of 16+ for state-of-the-art safes with hardened walls. Drilling through a safe could take thirty minutes or more. On a failed skill roll, the bit breaks and must be replaced before the safe cracker makes another attempt.

Blowing a safe open with explosives is a fairly quick solution, but requires a great deal of care and skill to keep from destroying the contents of the safe. Determining where to place the explosives to avoid damaging the contents requires a successful Safecracking roll versus a DR of 14 followed by a successful Demolitions roll versus a DR of 16. If either roll fails, the explosion either does not open the safe or obliterates its contents.

Specialties: By Ear, Demolitions, Drilling, a specific safe, Teaching.

### Shadow

The character knows how to make his way through the streets of the metropolis without calling attention to himself. He knows how to observe a subject while on the move, stick to the shadows to avoid detection, utilize probable short cuts, and keep a safe distance to avoid suspicion. Undertakers, criminals, police detectives, and serial killers all make use of this valuable skill.

A character with the Shadow skill will know how to make the best use of available cover. The success of this skill is always dependant on the character's surroundings. Without at least enough cover to completely obscure the character's body, hiding will be impossible.

When a character first begins to follow his prey, the shadowing character makes a skill roll versus a DR of 11. If the roll succeeds, the character can follow his prey undetected. If the roll fails, the character slips up and calls attention to himself in some way. At the Narrator's discretion, the roll may be modified based on environmental factors such as the number of people on the street, the time of day, the shadowing character or his prey's knowledge of the area, or if the prey has reason to suspect he is being followed.

After a successful Shadow roll, the Narrator may require the Shadowing character to make additional rolls if he pursues his prey for a substantial length of time. One roll every twenty minutes of game time is appropriate.

If the character being pursued looks around to see if he is being followed, he makes a contested Wit roll versus his stalker's Shadow skill. If the pursued character wins, he spots his pursuer. If the stalker wins or draws, he goes undetected. At the Narrator's discretion, this roll may be modified based on the same conditions as those described above.

Specialties: Chase, Crowds, Hide, Menace, Night, Plain Sight.

### Streetwise

Streetwise determines the character's knowledge of the traditions, customs, and etiquette of the criminal class. The denizens of the streets, whether criminals or not, tend to be clannish, tight-lipped, and suspicious of strangers. Without some degree of Streetwise, a character is completely lost on the streets, an outsider unable to recognize the most obvious signs of trouble. Streetwise informs a character of which neighbourhoods to avoid and when, how to avoid becoming a victim, what the proper etiquette is for fencing stolen goods, what topics to avoid in conversation, where to hire the right man for the wrong job, etc.

Generally a Streetwise roll is only required when a character attempts to operate outside his element, orchestrate a crime, avoid trouble, or find a piece of information pertaining to the criminal class. The DR for a Streetwise roll is determined by the situation at hand. If a character should reasonably have a good chance at success, his DR is 11. If he is completely out of his depth, his DR could be 16 or more.

A failed Streetwise roll while the character is in public causes him to stand out as a mark, an outsider. In the wrong circumstances, a failed Streetwise roll can result in an angry silence, threats, theft and a brutal beating, or worse. A character could quickly be made to know where he is not wanted.

Specialties: Bosses, Crimes, Fence, Gangs, Hang Outs, Informants, Lore, a particular criminal class, a particular neighbourhood, Police, Scrounge.

## Quality and Impediment Descriptions

Qualities and Impediments represent aspects of a character that are not covered by his Calling, attributes, or skills. These traits may be used to further personalize a character, to explore his background, or to give him added depth in the setting. These traits are optional. Players are not required to take Qualities and Impediments for their characters if they do not wish to. The rules for selecting Qualities and Impediments

may be found in Character Creation above (see page 146).

Qualities and Impediments can grow, change, be added, or be removed over time. If a character's business fails, he will no longer have a business. If he does something to undermine his Street Reputation, such as publicly snitching to the police, he will soon lose the goodwill of the criminal class. If the character inherits a manor, he will suddenly have assets that were unavailable at the time of his creation. The Narrator determines when a Quality or Impediment is gained, lost, or altered.

Both Qualities and Impediments have obvious intrinsic benefits and penalties, but there are a number of less obvious effects that may only come out during role-playing. For instance, a Social Quality may grant a character access into social settings he may not have otherwise, but at the same time place a number of prohibitions on the actions the character can take and still remain in the good graces of his associations.

Narrators should remember to take Qualities and Impediments into account when running the game. These traits are intended to enrich the player's experience, not to provide free points to players. Players are likewise reminded that Narrators will be working their characters' flaws into play. Don't take any Impediments that you are unwilling to role-play; after all, you never know when they will come back to haunt you.

For example, if a player has a younger sister as a Ward and he never mentions her or his arrangements for feeding her or clothing her, the Metropolitan Police may suddenly show up on his doorstep investigating her death from neglect. Though such abuses go unreported and unprotected all the time in the cruel city, this is one time the cops want to make an example of the malefactor. Maybe she reminds one of the cops of his own little girl, and his normally stone cold, vicious demeanour melts for a moment into a boiling torrent of "I can't wait to get you alone in a cell where I will work you like a piece of raw meat..." Well, you get the idea.

# Social

Social Qualities and Impediments represent a character's connection to his community. They are his net of contacts, friends, and family. Social Impediments represent his negative social dealings, such as enemies and runs in with the law.

# Social Qualities

### Animal Empathy, 2 Point Quality

The character exudes a calming influence on animals. He is seldom bitten or snarled at and animals immediately like him. If he abuses an animal, it will act confused before becoming aggressive.

The character gains +1 Trade – Animal Husbandry rolls.

### Believed Dead, 3 Point Quality

Despite being very much alive, the character is believed to be dead. Perhaps he disappeared outside the walls of the metropolis and was presumed devoured by animates or ghouls. He may have feigned his own death at great difficulty and expense. He could have even been the victim of a conspiracy that sought to erase his existence. Whatever the case, the world at large believes the character to be dead.

While on the surface, this Quality certainly has its advantages, it is a mixed blessing. The character's enemies and creditors will certainly not be looking for him, but his material possessions may have been scattered to the wind. Regaining control of his holdings can be very difficult between the legal difficulties pertaining to Neo-Victorian mortuary laws and the potential for science to produce

biological doppelgangers. The character would have to go through a battery of tests to prove that he is not an anathema. Even then, the court battles could drag on for years if the character is a man of consequence. All and all, it should make for some interesting role-playing.

## Business, Variable Point Quality (3-10)

The character owns and operates a business. He could own a shop or pub, an artisan's workshop, or a factory. Depending on the sort of business the character owns, he could have property, a sizable work force, access to wholesale goods, or just about anything else that comes along with owning a business. The business also gives the character a base of operations and the airs of legitimacy.

A character running a business should take steps to ensure his business is running smoothly. If the character neglects his business, it will certainly fail. If the character devotes his energy to overseeing his business and improving it, it may flourish over time. The success and growth of a business is determined by the Narrator based on the character's actions and the events that occur within the game.

This is a Variable Point Quality. The more points spent, the larger the character's operation.

**3 point Quality** - The character either owns a small shop in a relatively good neighbourhood or a larger operation in a slum. The character rents his location rather than owns it and may share the building with other tenants. The character may have one or two employees. The operation generally pulls in enough income to pay for materials, worker wages, and rent. The character makes 5 x d10s per month.

**5 point Quality** - The character runs a slightly larger operation, perhaps a pub or small distillery. Depending on his wealth, the character may own the building his business occupies or he may rent. The character employs between four and ten employees. After expenses, the business pulls in £1 x d10 per month.

**7 point Quality** - The character runs a large business with twenty or more employees. His business occupies a space the size of a small warehouse. Depending on his wealth, the character may own the building his business occupies or he may rent. After expenses, the business pulls in £4 x d5 per month.

**10 point Quality** - The character owns a large company with a healthy work force. The character is likely a manufacturer selling his goods to smaller enterprises. He employs over fifty people and is seen as a leader in his community. He can reasonably expect favours in exchange for employment. The character owns or rents several buildings, including a warehouse and office space. After expenses, the business pulls in £6 x d10 per month or more.

Though the character owns a business, he is not necessarily wealthy. Wealth is determined by another Quality. If the character owns a large business but lacks any personal assets, it means his business is struggling or has serious debts that must be paid off. The business and the character's personal fortunes can grow during play or shrink considerably depending on the vicissitudes of life.

The player and the Narrator should work out the details of the character's business before play begins. The more thought and detail put into the business, the more real it will seem during play. As always, the Narrator has final say on what will and will not be accepted in his game.

## Club Membership, 3 Point Quality

The character is a member of an exclusive club. The club could be a gentleman's gambling hall, a philosophical society, or something entirely more nefarious. Through club membership, the character has access to a society of individuals who will generally be inclined to aid him in his endeavours, provided that the help comes at little risk to themselves. The nature of the club and the character's relationship with its patrons should be determined by the player and the Narrator before the start of the game.

Clubs take their membership requirements very seriously, and if the character does not live up to the code of conduct, he will be asked to leave before having his membership rescinded. Characters will invariably belong to clubs that suit their social class. A middle-class character is never a member of an upper-class club or vice versa.

## Connections, Variable Point Quality (2-6)

The character has contacts who may act as sources of information or assistance from time to time. The number of contacts and their value depend on the cost of the Quality. The character may know City bankers, gypsy mediums, vampire prostitutes, clerks at the Office of Urban Defence, Deathwatch personnel, costermongers, physicians, health inspectors, or just about anyone else he can get the Narrator to agree to. These contacts can provide the character with information and a limited degree of assistance, but their help is seldom cheap.

A specialized connection that can provide general information but little assistance, such as a bar tender, cab driver, or prostitute, is a 2 point Quality. A connection in a position to give the character a great deal of information, such as a police detective or an aide to a Member of Parliament is a 4 point Quality. A contact that is capable of giving information as well as direct assistance, such as an Undertaker knowledgeable in the Wastelands or a street doctor is a 6 point Quality.

The information or assistance provided will be determined by the Narrator. A Narrator is advised to severely punish players who abuse his generosity. Characters in trouble could quickly find their contacts want nothing to do with them, or worse yet, have come to the point of selling them out to the highest bidder. Likewise, just as a character may go to his contacts in times of need, those contacts will come to him as well.

Though the character's contacts are generally favourably inclined toward him, they may not be willing to put themselves at risk for the character's sake. If the character requests information or services that could endanger the livelihood (or life) of a contact, he had better be willing to back it up with a bribe or Charm roll. Intimidation and Torture are also powerful motivators, but the character is likely to lose his contact once he gains the information he seeks.

The Narrator and player should work together to establish a character's contacts before the game begins. Players are urged to choose their character's associations carefully. If a character has nothing but low-life drug addicts as contacts, it should be no surprise when they sell him out to the constabulary. Likewise, a lower-class character with aristocratic contacts should not be surprised when his upper-class friends refuse to acknowledge his existence in public or admit him entrance to their homes.

## Credentials, 2 Point Quality

The character has impeccable credentials that are of great use when opening up doors to Neo-Victorian society. Perhaps he has a signed recommendation from a well-known Member of Parliament, a high-ranking associate in Her Majesty's Armed Forces, or an uncle with prominent ties among medical circles. In short, the character will seldom want for employment and can get admission into the best private schools and exclusive clubs. He will be able to obtain audiences and even favours from individuals who would otherwise be disinclined to hear him out. However, if the character abuses this ability, he may find that his credentials are no longer as sterling as they once were.

The character gains +1 on Charm – Credibility rolls if he can present a signed letter of recommendation. The character must ask for the letter to be written at least two weeks in advance of presenting it to ensure that it is written in time.

## Creditor, Variable Point Quality (1-5)

The character is owed a debt. The nature of this debt could be monetary or it could be a favour or a debt of honour. The character can use the debt as leverage against the debtor to gather information or minor services. Should the debt ever be repaid, the debtor may hold any poor treatment he has received against the character. The player and the Narrator should work together to determine the nature of the debt and who owes it.

This is a Variable Point Quality. The more Quality points spent, the greater the debt owed to the character.

**1 Point Quality** - The character is owed a few pounds by an individual of little consequence, such as a private in the Deathwatch or a local pub owner.

**2 Point Quality** - The character is either owed a large debt by a lower-class character or a minor favour by an upper-class character.

**3 Point Quality** - The character either holds a poor man in bondage or is owed a significant favour or sum of money from someone who has a reasonable chance of repaying him. The cash value of the debt should be proportionate to the character owed the debt. A very poor character should not be owed hundreds of pounds, but may be owed what amounts to a small fortune by his standards.

**4 Point Quality** - The character is owed a substantial favour. The scale of the favour could ruin the debtor if it is ever asked to be paid in full. The character gains +1 on any Charm rolls dealing with his debtor.

**5 Point Quality** - The debtor owes the character his life. The debt may be held over an individual of virtually any class. While it may be immensely useful to hold such a debt over the head of a major industrialist family, the creditor must take care that those vast resources he seeks to exploit are not turned against him. If he should prove too forward or abusive, he may find himself weighted with chains at the bottom of the Thames for his trouble, and the debt thus cancelled if not paid.

### Criminal Associations, 3 Point Quality

The character is well known throughout London's underworld. He may be a high-profile thief with a vast network of contacts, a CID man familiar with local snitches and informants, or an aristocrat with shady contacts who cater to his particular tastes. Regardless of the particulars, the character is a man who can get things done. These connections can be used to track criminals on the run, procure illegal goods, or gather information. Of course, information and services come at a price.

Though the character's associations are generally favourably inclined toward him, they may not be willing to put themselves at risk for the character's sake. If the character requests information or services that could endanger the livelihood (or life) of a contact, he had better be willing to back it up with a bribe or Charm roll. Intimidation and Torture are also powerful motivators, but associates thus mistreated will be much less favourably inclined toward the character in the future. Likewise, if the character himself becomes an informant and speaks to the police about his criminal associations, his former friends will quickly turn to dire enemies.

Criminal associations are not without their complications. Some associates may come to the character when they need something. A gang of toughs showing up on a young gentlewoman's doorstep and demanding a warm meal and place to sleep could cause all manner of scandal. The character may be subject to police harassment or investigation. The character may also be witness, willing or not, to the sort of spontaneous violence that breaks out around that sort of element.

### Estate (Aristocrat Only), 6 Point Quality

The character or his family owns a vast estate. The estate could be a manor within the city or an ancestral, walled compound outside the metropolis. The player and the Narrator should work out the details of the estate before the start of the game. The estate itself is in fine repair and may even have a small amount of farmable land. A possessor of an ancient estate may be beholden to the Sovereign to perform some yearly duty, or sergeanty. Most of these tasks are simple, such as serving as Grand Carver at coronations. Sergeanty is more of an honour granted to the holder of the estate than a hardship.

The estate itself includes an ample parcel of land and a stately manor filled with antiques and family heirlooms dating back generations. Of course, if any of these artefacts were ever sold, it would amount to a grave scandal. The Narrator and player should determine the size of the estate, its condition, location, and its contents before the start of the game.

Only characters with the Aristocrat Calling can take the Estate Quality.

### Expressive Eyes, 3 Point Quality

The character has learned to communicate with his exceptionally expressive eyes. He may wordlessly relate a short message to anyone who meets his gaze. Though these messages are never complex, they are unmistakable. These messages are limited to short phrases that generally convey emotional or mental state. Expressive eyes cannot be used to convey complex thoughts.

To successfully convey a message with Expressive Eyes, a character must succeed in a Charm roll versus a DR of 14. A character who fails an Expressive Eyes roll may try again after a minute.

Expressive Eyes are common among Dhampiri but may be taken by any character.

### Love, Variable Point Quality (1-6)

The character has a true love who will do anything for him. The love could be a wealthy paramour, a talented boy prostitute, a content housewife, or a vengeful psychotic in and out of the lock-hospital. Your lover may be put in harm's way from time to time or may come to your rescue in a time of need. The player and Narrator should determine the nature of this lover's identity before the start of the game.

Though the character's lover may delight in his company, the lover's family and associates may not be so favourably disposed. Should a player select a lover for his character that is clearly beyond his means or social class, he should expect all manner of strife to befall his character. If the character's lover is ignored or mistreated, love can, and will, sour. While lovers can make trusted allies, they can also be dangerous enemies should love turn to hate.

**1 Point Quality** - The character's lover is poor and unskilled, but honest. The lover can offer little in the way of financial support but will do anything to protect or help the character.

**3 Point Quality** – The character's lover is either from a good family or is successful in a profession. When in need, the character's lover can provide some financial assistance and may have valuable skills or useful connections.

**6 Point Quality** - The character's lover has a great deal of wealth, incredibly useful talents, or is obscenely well established in Neo-Victorian society. He or she may be the scion of an aristocratic family, a well-known doctor, a notorious thief, a powerful psychic, a renowned vampire hunter, etc. Whatever the case, the character's association with such a lover should have obvious benefits.

### Murder of Crows, 3 Point Quality

The character has a large network of friends and associates that keep an eye out for him wherever he goes. Any time the character is in apparent danger or likely to be apprehended, a crow, or lookout, will approach him and give the word. Obviously there are limits to the reach of the character's network, but he will generally receive ample warning while around the slums, streets, and rookeries of the metropolis.

### Nondescript, 2 Point Quality

The character is naturally difficult to pick out of a crowd. Those who meet him in person are seldom left with a strong impression. If someone bothers to get his name, they soon forget it. The character must go to outlandish extremes or commit spectacular acts to be remembered. Anyone making a Wit or Intellect roll to recall anything about the character suffers a –2 penalty to the roll.

### Patron, Variable Point Quality (2-6)

The character has a powerful or wealthy patron. The patron looks out for the character's well being and may provide information, services, or monetary funds in times of need. The extent and type of help that can be obtained from the patron depends on the cost of the Quality. A character's patron could be an elderly relative, an old lover, or a former school chum. The player and the Narrator should work together to determine the nature of the character's relationship with his patron.

If the character abuses the patron's generosity, he may find himself temporarily cut off as the patron seeks to teach the character a lesson in thriftiness and gratitude. If the character's patron is not shown proper respect or if his association with the character leads to scandal, the patron will withdraw all support from the character. Doors that were once open will be barred, and even an audience with the former patron may be too much to ask.

The character's patron will also have an agenda of his own that may or may not directly involve the character.

**2 Point Quality** - The character's patron may be wealthy and well known but is not very powerful within Neo-Victorian society. The patron could be a cantankerous shut-in, an aristocratic bon vivant who spends his days throwing one lavish party after another, or an obsessive yet successful inventor who never leaves his lab. Whatever the case, the patron is very slow to act on the character's behalf and can generally only be bothered to give advice.

**4 Point Quality** - The patron may be very wealthy or influential and can certainly help the character. The patron could be a noble, an industrialist backed by a large corporation, a ranking member of Her Majesty's government, the dean of an important medical school, etc. While the patron can unquestionably be useful to the character, such an individual may be very hard to reach.

**6 Point Quality** - The character's patron occupies a position at the height of Neo-Victorian society. The patron could be the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, a Member of Parliament, a ranking officer of the Deathwatch, etc. In addition to other support provided, the character's patron will be able to provide valuable information from time to time. Such patrons have a great deal to lose and little time to spend assisting player characters, but when they do grant aid, it should be spectacular.

### Private Anatomy Theatre, 2 Point Quality

The character owns or has access to a private, fully supplied anatomy theatre. The character must spend time and money maintaining his anatomy theatre or it will fall into disrepair. Maintenance may include periodically purchasing corpses from vendors, lawful and otherwise. The player and the Narrator should determine the specifics of the character's private anatomy theatre prior to the start of the game.

### Private Laboratory, 3 Point Quality

The character owns or has access to a private laboratory. Though the lab comes fully equipped, the character will have to purchase chemicals and supplies. The player and the Narrator should determine the specifics of the character's private laboratory prior to the start of the game.

### Private Library, Variable Point Quality (2-8)

The character owns or has access to a private library, the quality and extensiveness of which is determined by the cost of the Quality. The player and Narrator should determine the nature of the character's private library prior to the start of the game.

**2 Point Quality** - The character owns a research library narrowly focused on a single topic of interest. The books in the library are commonly available throughout the metropolis. When researching a topic related to the library's focus, a character with access to the library gains +2 on his Intellect – Research or skill rolls.

**4 Point Quality** - The character possesses a small general-purpose library covering a wide range of topics. He owns the classics as well as prominent textbooks and scientific journals of the era. When performing research, a character with access to the library gains +2 on his Intellect – Research or skill rolls.

**6 Point Quality** - The character possesses a sizable library that is largely focused on a single subject. The collection is very thorough and includes a number of very rare and hard to replace volumes. When researching a topic related to the library's focus, a character with access to the library gains +4 on his Intellect – Research or skill rolls.

**8 Point Quality** - The character possesses a vast library that can rival those collections owned by smaller universities. When performing research, a character with access to the library gains +4 on his Intellect – Research or skill rolls.

### Reputation – Street, 3 Point Quality

The character is well-known and respected figure on the streets of the metropolis. He may be known as a killer not to be crossed, an honest costermonger, or a likable thief. In any case, the character is generally regarded as a member of the Family in good standing. The character may be sought out for jobs or information. He can find information, weapons, pharmaceuticals, and inexpensive stolen goods with little trouble. If he is holding misappropriated property, he will have no trouble finding a fence to move the goods. When in need, he can find a safe house in which to hide until trouble passes.

A character with the Aristocrat Quality must be very careful if he has this Quality. An assumed identity is all but necessary. If the character's criminal associations become public knowledge, he will be ruined.

### Reputation – Underground, 3 Point Quality

The character is well known to the denizens of the Underground. Provided he does not make trouble, he can generally make his way among the humans and ghoul tribes that call the tunnels home. Dealing with the feral vampires and animates that call the Underground home is an entirely different matter, however.

### Safe House, 4 Point Quality

The character owns or has access to a safe house. This can be a run down flat in the East End, a hidden room in the back of a house, or just about anything else the player and Narrator can dream up. When the character is in danger, he can retire to the safe house and expect to remain reasonably safe and undisturbed. Of course, the safety of this sanctuary is dependent on the character's actions. Should he reveal the safe house to his associates, the place could easily be compromised.

### Savings, Variable Point Quality (1-5)

The character has put away a substantial amount of money. The character may spend up to 5 Quality points on Savings. For each point spent, the character begins with £5 in addition to the assets dictated by his Calling. This money may be spent on weapons, armour, and equipment, or it can be left in savings against some future need.

### Title (Aristocrat Only), Variable Point Quality (2-12)

The character possesses a title. Players should not take titles for their characters hastily. Titled characters will be under even more pressure to avoid scandal than other aristocrats. The higher the characters rank, the greater the scrutiny.

Player characters cannot have a rank higher than marquis.

**2 Point Quality** - The character has been knighted. Knighthoods are for life and are not hereditary titles. A knight belongs to one of the knightly orders of the realm and has the title "Sir" prefixing his name. A female knight or the wife of a knight is referred to as "Dame." The orders of knighthood include the Knights of the Garter (K.G.), the highest order in the Empire and the Knights of the Bath (K.B.).

**3 Point Quality** - The character is a baronet. Baronets are hereditary titles though baronets are not among the peerage. The name of a baronet, like a knight, is prefixed with "Sir." A female baronet or the wife of a baronet is a Lady.

**5 Point Quality** - The character is a baron. Baron is the lowest rank of the hereditary nobility in the peerage. A baron is properly referred to as "Lord." A baroness or the wife of a baron is referred to as "Lady." The children of a baron are granted the courtesy title "Honourable" before their names. A baron has the right to vote in the House of Lords.

**7 Point Quality** - The character is a viscount. A viscount is referred to as "Your Lordship" or "My Lord." A female viscount or the wife of a viscount is referred to as "Your Ladyship" or "My Lady." The children of a viscount are granted the courtesy title "Honourable" before their names. A viscount has the right to vote in the House of Lords.

**9 Point Quality** - The character is an earl. An earl is referred to as "Your Lordship" or "My Lord." A female earl or the wife of an earl is a countess and is referred to as "Your Ladyship" or "My Lady." The eldest child of an earl is granted the courtesy title "Lord" or "Lady." The younger children of an earl are granted the title "Honourable" before their names. An earl has the right to vote in the House of Lords.

**12 Point Quality** - The character is a marquis, the second highest rank of peerage. A marquis is referred to as "Your Lordship" or "My Lord." A female marchioness or the wife of a marquis is referred to as "Your Ladyship" or "My Lady." The children of a marquis are granted the courtesy title "Lord" or "Lady." A marquis has the right to vote in the House of Lords.

The highest rank, unattainable by player characters, is duke.

Only characters with the Aristocrat Calling can take the Title Quality.

### Trusted Servant, 3 Point Quality

The character has a trusted servant in his employ. The servant is loyal to a fault and will do anything for his master. The servant will accompany the character anywhere and see to his needs, prepare his food, carry messages, etc. The exact details of the servant's background should be determined by the player and Narrator before the game begins.

Only character with Wealth 6 or more can take this Quality.

### Upper Class, 6 Point Quality

Though not truly an aristocrat, the character is a member of the upper class. The character may have been adopted into an aristocratic house or attended one of the best schools in the Empire. He may be a celebrity of some status, whose popularity among the Quality excuses his lack of breeding; opera singers and other entertainers at the top of their field commonly have this Quality. He may be a member of an aristocratic family that has fallen on hard times due to a well-publicized scandal or lack or resources. The character may have been disowned or dissociated himself from his family to pursue a career. The character may be an industrialist rather than being a true member of the gentry. Alternately, the character could have been given some honorific title that has elevated his position in the world.

The character has access to the world of the upper class. He can gain entrance to the best clubs, arrange introductions to the best people, even marry into an aristocratic family. Of course, the character will still be looked down upon by true aristocrats, but such is the privilege of good blood.

### Veteran, 2 Point Quality

The character was once a member of the Deathwatch or another branch of the military. While no longer serving in the military, the character can expect some preferential treatment from Deathwatch soldiers. He may even receive restricted information from time to time.

### Wealth, Variable Point Quality

The character has a greater income than most characters with his Calling and may increase his starting wealth. He may have a spouse that brings in added money, some savings, or an excellent job. Each point spent on this Quality raises the character's fortune by one Wealth Rank (see Wealth, pages 146 – 148).

Undertakers cannot take the Wealth Quality.

# Social Impediments

## Criminal Record, 4 Point Impediment

The character has been convicted of a crime and has spent time in prison. The police know the character on sight, and he may be rounded up from time to time and questioned about various crimes. Most legitimate employers who discover his secret will not retain his services.

The character suffers a –1 penalty on all non-Intimidation Charm rolls involving any law-abiding citizen who knows about the character's criminal record. Aristocrats that take this Impediment will be black sheep at best and the subjects of major scandals at worst (see Scandals, Chapter 7, pages 380 – 385).

## Debt, 3 Point Impediment

The character owes a soul-crushing debt. Perhaps he owes a vast sum of money to creditors or a huge favour to a degenerate aristocrat with a mean streak and too much free time on his hands. Whatever the case, the character owes someone big and one day they will call in the debt, but until then, his debtors will leverage it for everything it is worth. If the character is lucky, he will only lose everything he owns and be forced out into the streets. If the debt is of a more sinister nature, he may be asked to commit deeds from which there is no redemption. Whatever the case, the player and Narrator should determine the details of the debt before the start of the game. If the debt is financial in nature, it should be several times what the character can reasonably expect to make in one year.

The character automatically fails any Charm roll when dealing with his creditor.

## Disowned (Aristocrat Only), 4 Point Impediment

For one reason or another, the character has been cast out of his family and can no longer count on his family's support or reputation. Though a character has been cast out, his family's enemies will still look to injure him if possible. The character may also still have powerful friends and be well established away from his family's influence. The player and the Narrator should work together to determine why the character was disowned before the start of the game.

It is possible that the character could be forgiven and allowed to retake his place in the family, but this should not be an easy process and can only be accomplished through significant role playing.

The character suffers –2 on all Charm rolls when dealing with members of the upper class. The character's starting Wealth Rank is also reduced by two (see Wealth, pages 146 – 148.)

## Immigrant, 2 Point Impediment

Whether the character moved to the metropolis from a foreign land or was born to poor immigrant parents, he is a second-class citizen. Immigrants lack the established credentials relied upon in Neo-Victorian society. They will find it hard to locate work and will be generally treated with suspicion. The player and the Narrator should determine the character's origin before the start of the game.

The immigrant character begins with 1 rank of Wealth lower than normal for his Calling. The character also suffers a –1 penalty on all non-Intimidation Charm rolls involving any character who is not partial to his county of origin.

Aristocrats cannot take this Impediment. A character can only benefit from taking either the Immigrant or the Nomad Impediment but not from both.

## Nemesis, Variable Point Impediment (2-6)

The character has an archenemy that lives to torment him. His nemesis may be a rival, the relative of a jilted lover, someone wronged by the character, etc. Whatever the case, the character's nemesis will not rest until the character is dead or ruined. The point value for this Impediment depends on the power of the nemesis and how far he is willing to go to carry out his vendetta against the character.

**2 Point Impediment** - The character's nemesis is well connected and can make his professional or social life difficult. However, this nemesis will not break the law or physically harm the character. The character's nemesis will wait until the character gets himself into trouble and then do his best to make matters worse for him. The nemesis may leak information to the press, make sure the character is passed over for promotions, or publicly discredit his work.

**4 Point Impediment** - The character has crossed the wrong man. His nemesis is not only rich and powerful but also ruthless. The character must constantly look over his shoulder for his enemy's agents. Though his nemesis may or may not wish him physical harm, he certainly keeps careful tabs on the character's whereabouts and is not above tipping off the character's other enemies or the police if the character steps out of line. If the character finds himself in a helpless position, his nemesis is certain to capitalize on the situation. The key difference between this enemy and the one above is that this nemesis is willing to circumvent the law in the name of vengeance.

**6 Point Impediment** - The character is living on borrowed time. His enemy wishes nothing less than his complete destruction. The nemesis has a powerful personal organization behind him. He may be a criminal mastermind, a fantastically wealthy industrialist, a member of the titled nobility, etc. Not only is the character hunted through the streets of the metropolis, but his family and friends may be harmed or threatened in the process. The only reason the character is currently alive is that his nemesis wants him to suffer a little longer. Killing the character's nemesis may not be an option for the character. If the nemesis is sufficiently powerful, his plans may yet bring about the character's destruction, even in death.

### Nomad, 3 Point Impediment

*"To them the future is almost as uncertain, and as far beyond their control, as the changes of wind and weather."*
*—John Thomson,* Street Life in London, *1877.*

The character lacks both a permanent residence and an established family. He is persona non grata to much of Neo-Victorian society. Hassled by the law and subject to the many dangers of the road, the life of a nomad is dangerous and often rife with sorrow. The character may be a destitute street vagrant, a Wastelander seeking a better life behind the fortified walls of the metropolis, or a full-blooded gypsy prince.

Still, many suffer a wanderlust which not even animate-infested Wastelands can abate. These vagabonds prefer life on the road with like-minded individuals. Many move from market to market hawking their wares while others travel with roving carnivals. If one knows where to look, he may find all manner of nomad signs carved into trees or by the side of the road describing which places are most infested with animates and which areas may be foraged for food.

London supports a large number of gypsy nomads who can trace their lineage back to old Romany stock. These nomads form a tight-knit class that shuns the company of outsiders. Though despised by the population at large, they constitute a sort of aristocracy among the Neo-Victorian nomads. A fair number are also rumoured to be mediums.

The nomad character begins with 1 rank of Wealth lower than normal for his Calling. The character also suffers a –1 penalty on all non-Intimidation Charm rolls involving character's that are not vagabonds, exiles, or outsiders.

Aristocrats cannot take this Impediment. A character can only benefit from taking either the Immigrant or Nomad Impediment but not from both.

### Notoriety, 3 Point Impediment

The character is notorious throughout the metropolis. Rumours about the character circulate throughout the city especially in the social circles he frequents. Notorious characters will be constantly harassed. Aristocrats may find themselves refused service or entry into exclusive clubs, and lower-class characters may be threatened on sight or shunned completely. Notorious criminals will certainly come face-to-face with the Metropolitan Police from time to time.

Notoriety is not without its benefits, however. The notoriously violent, for example, may cause fear wherever he goes, making intimidation and waiting in queues easy. Notorious characters will also attract a certain desperate element who are anxious to learn what makes them tick.

At the time the character is created, the player and Narrator should determine for what reason his character is notorious. The character may be the subject of a scandal (see Chapter 7, pages 380 – 385).

The character suffers –2 on non-Intimidation Charm rolls.

### Poor, Variable Point Impediment

The character begins the game less economically secure than most characters with his Calling. Each decrease in a character's Wealth Rank is worth 2 Impediment Points (see pages 146 – 148). A character cannot reduce his Wealth Level below 0.

Undertakers cannot take this Impediment.

### Secret, 2 Point Impediment

The character possesses a dark secret that would destroy his life if it were revealed. For example, the character may have been an anarchist or embezzled a vast sum of money from a firm he works for; he may harbour a family secret that has haunted him since childhood. Whatever the nature of his secret, the character must go to great lengths to protect it. Should the character's secret be revealed, the resulting scandal will irrevocably alter his life for the worse (see Scandals, Chapter 7, pages 380 – 385).

The player and the Narrator should determine the character's secret before the start of the game. If the character's secret gets out, it should ruin some aspect of his life. His Wealth may be reduced by 3 or more levels, he may go to prison, lose Qualities, automatically fail Charm rolls, etc.

### Thick Accent, 1 Point Impediment

The character has an accent so thick that listeners that have a hard time understanding him. The character's accent may be Cockney, Scottish, Welsh, etc. When dealing with another who does not speak the character's native language and dialect, the character suffers –1 on Charm, Etiquette, and Language rolls when resolving actions involving speech.

### Unlicensed (Undertaker Only), 3 Point Impediment

The character is an unlicensed Undertaker. Perhaps his license was revoked or he failed the psychological examination. Whatever the case, the character has no license and is unable to get one. The character is subject to added police harassment and must go through intermediaries to get paid by the Office of Urban Defence.

Among other Undertakers, the character is a known scalp hunter. The character suffers –1 on all Charm rolls involving another Undertaker.

With a Herculean effort stretched over several game sessions and the Narrator's approval, the character may be able to overcome this Impediment and get licensed.

### Wanted, 4 Point Impediment

The character is a wanted criminal on the run. Whether or not he has committed a crime is incidental, something for the courts to decide once he is apprehended. What is important is that the Metropolitan Police, CID, and perhaps a small number of consulting detectives are looking to drag him into custody. If the character is captured, he will be held for some time, perhaps permanently, depending on the nature of the crime he is believed to have committed.

The player and the Narrator should decide why the character is wanted before the start of the game.

### Ward, 2 Point Impediment

The character is responsible for the life of another. The ward could be a sick relative, an infant, an aging friend who completely relies on the character for his welfare, etc. The player and the Narrator should work together to determine the details regarding the character's ward. The character cannot willingly get rid of his ward without dire consequences, such as psychological breakdown, a lengthy prison term, permanent haunting, etc.

Each game session, the character should take some action to care for his ward or else suffer some repercussion. If the character goes multiple sessions without taking care of his ward, the repercussions should be grave.

# Supermundane

## Supermundane Qualities

### Bad Tasting, 3 Point Quality

There is something about the character that is unappealing to animates and vampires. An animate will always go after some other nearby target first, but if the character is the only living creature in the vicinity, animates will grudgingly attack him. Sentient vampires would never deign to feed on the character, but feral vampires may just kill him to avoid his stench in the future.

Bad Tasting cannot be taken by half-lifers.

### Dreamer, 6 Point Quality

The character has a strange and uncontrollable oracular ability which manifests in dreams. This talent may be attributed to latent psychic abilities, a weird reaction to opiates, or another cause altogether. Whatever the case, from time to time, the character dreams of the near future, catching glimpses of events before they occur. These events always relate to the character or those closest to him.

The character is only able to glean snippets from his dreams. These visions are heavily symbolic and vague; the future is never spelled out. Narrators should weave the character's dreams into their storytelling, allowing the dream to assist in the unfolding action. These dreams never occur intentionally, though the character may attempt to induce a dream state. The character also has no control over the content of the dream. The Narrator always determines what is revealed.

Though the Dreamer Quality is a clearly a precognitive ability, the character's talent should be nowhere near as powerful as a true psychic's.

### Incorruptible, 6 Point Quality

The character possesses a mysterious factor that keeps him from getting ill, literally rendering him immune to all known pathogens, including the Plague and vampirism. If the character is bitten by an animate, the worst he can expect is a bad bite followed by some potentially worse chewing. When an incorruptible character dies, he never spontaneously animates. Incorruptibles can never become half-lifers.

Incorruptibles are much sought after by alchemists searching for the Elixir Vitae. Unscrupulous alchemists will go to great lengths to get body parts from incorruptibles. Samples of incorruptible flesh sell for extremely high prices at meat markets.

A character with the Incorruptible Quality cannot begin with and never develops Physical Corruption (see pages 136 – 139).

Incorruptible cannot be taken by half-lifers.

### Poison Blood, 3 Point Quality

The character has internalized the corruption that plagues the world around him. His breath reeks of decay and can kill insects and small birds with an exhalation. More unsettling, his foul blood has turned to a sickly green-black ichor that burns when exposed to direct light. The substance is deadly if consumed or otherwise internalized by another. No vampire would ever feed upon the character, and he is dangerous to friends and lovers alike. However, animates, lacking a discriminating palate, mind the flavour not at all. Should his bodily fluids enter the body of another, they will act as a powerful and fast-acting toxin. Finally, and perhaps mercifully, the character is sterile.

Anyone suffering the effects of the poison will be seized by a tightness in his limbs and stomach. In seconds, the victim will be in excruciating pain, suffering –2 to all skill rolls. The character must make a Vitality roll each minute versus a DR of 11 + the Vitality of the character with Poison Blood. If the roll succeeds, the pain subsides and the character begins to recover. If the roll fails, the character suffers –1 Vitality. A character that has his Vitality reduced to less than 0 dies. Vitality lost due to Poison Blood is recovered at a rate of one point per week. Half-lifers are immune to the effects of Poison Blood.

### Quiet, 3 Point Quality

The character can become deathly silent when he wishes to be. Though this silence has no effect on the prey sense of an animate, nothing human can hear the character coming. Even vampires will have trouble hearing the character's movement. A character with Quiet gains +2 on Shadow rolls.

#### Dream Interpretation

When describing a dream, the Narrator may wish to consult a book on dream interpretation. Not only will this give the narrator a great tool box to work from, but it can also be useful in indirectly giving information rather than spoon-feeding it to the player.

# Supermundane Impediments

### Dark Inheritance (Aristocrats Only), 3 Point Impediment

*"I looked upon the scene before me – upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain – upon the bleak walls – upon the vacant eye-like windows – upon a few rank sedges – and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees – with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium – the bitter lapse into every-day life – the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart – an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime."*

*—Edgar Allen Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," 1839*

Many great and old aristocratic families have fallen on hard times since the Plague Years. Not only have many bloodlines been extinguished in the chaos, but the ground itself has turned to poison. The gentry, forever connected to the lands and titles they hold, have been keenly affected by these dark transformations.

The character has inherited or will inherit his family's land – a despoiled, forlorn manor reeking of death and ravaged by the passage of time. The walls of the estate crumble. A cold draught which cannot be chased away by any fire, save the one that will consume the accursed place, haunts the chambers within. The land is barren, incapable of sustaining crops or grass. Animals dwelling here are sickly and unnatural. The place is rife with sickness and putrescence. The withering blight is undeniable. Anyone who ventures to the place will feel a great void tugging at their spirit. Those dwelling on the estate for too long will develop morbid sensitivities and a predilection for melancholy and fugue, culminating in catatonia. Finally, if any should die within the confines of such an accursed demesne, it is certain their earthly remains will rise and seek to consume the flesh of the living.

The inhabitants of such forlorn estates live by strict traditions and may seem mad to visitors. Each estate certainly has a codified set of rules for the dispensation of the dead. Some may inter the animate dead in sealed coffins from which terrific noises issue for years to come. Others may set great funeral pyres ablaze or simply decapitate the dead before burial. Estates outside the metropolis almost certainly have small armouries full of antiquated weapons that may be utilized to defend the manor in case of Plague outbreak.

Such blasted estates are generally located in the Wastelands, miles outside the metropolis. However, a small number exist on the fringes of London. These antediluvian structures, dilapidated and mouldering within plain sight of anyone who cares to look, are a continual stain upon their owner's good name.

The player and the Narrator should work together to determine the details concerning the Dark Inheritance before the start of the game. The place should be a continual hardship the character must endure. It will continue to be an albatross pulling him down until it is inevitably consumed in a conflagration with the remainder of the family line trapped inside. Whether that happens during the character's lifetime or in the future remains for the Narrator to determine.

The character must spend at least one week at the manor each year or his fortunes turn against him. If the character spends less time at the manor, he suffers –1 on all skill and attribute rolls until he makes his pilgrimage.

### Good Tasting, 4 Point Impediment

Something about the character draws the attention of the undead. Animates will attack the character even if there are multiple victims nearby. Vampires can pick the character out of a crowd merely by scent. The taste of the character's blood is pure ecstasy to a vampire. Unless interrupted, a vampire will drain the character dry.

Double the character's highest Corruption Path rating when rolling for an animate's Prey Sense (see Chapter 5, page 246).

Half-lifers cannot take this Impediment nor can characters with the Bad Tasting Quality.

### Malignity, 3 Point Impediment

The character begins with 1 additional point of Corruption that may be put in any Path. If the character begins with 1 point in two separate paths, his controlling player must select an Affliction for each. Remember some character, such as half-lifers, do not develop Physical Corruption (see pages 136 – 139).

### Plague Kissed, 2 Point Impediment

Though the character shows no outward signs of infection, he has been touched by the Plague. The character is doomed to rise from the dead as an animate d5 minutes following the death of the body unless the body is decapitated or the brain severely damaged.

Half-lifers and characters with the Incorruptible Quality cannot take Plague Kissed.

# Physical
## Physical Qualities
### Able Bodied, 4 Point Quality

The character is in excellent physical shape. He heals quickly and is seldom ill. The character recovers lost Vitality at double the normal rate. Additionally, he gains +2 on Vitality rolls to avoid contracting diseases and other ailments.

### Ambidextrous, 4 Point Quality

The character is equally adept at using either hand. Although ambidexterity is rare at birth, it can be learned. Most duellists spend their whole lives refining this talent. The character does not suffer offhand attack penalties when using two weapons in combat (see Chapter 2, page 95).

### Disease Resistance, 2 Point Quality

The character is naturally very resistant to the normal zymotics of the Neo-Victorian world. The character receives a +4 on Vitality rolls to avoid infection by normal diseases. Supernormal infections, such as vampirism and the Plague, are not affected by this Quality. This Quality may be taken in addition to the Able Bodied Quality.

### Gigantism, 5 Point Quality

Standing well over seven feet tall, the character is a giant. His huge, powerful frame is source of awe among his fellow men, who pause to stare as they pass him on the street. Though very strong, the wear on his body will certainly age him unnaturally and his life span is half what it would be normally. Furthermore, the character must eat twice as much as men of lesser stature and will also have a hard time finding clothes that fit him without the services of a skilled tailor.

The character is a prime target for dissection and/or resurrection. Upon the character's death, medical men, freak show promoters, and amateur anatomists will take great interest in his bones. The corpses of giants have a strange way of avoiding the incinerating flames that claim less-interesting human specimens.

The character can have Vitality 6. Anti-agapic drugs have no effect on the character.

### Haunting Beauty, 5 Point Quality

Some people are so achingly beautiful that they can stop traffic with a smile or strike a viewer dumb with a glance. The character is one such individual. The character always stands out in a crowd, and no one will ever forget his face. Upon first meeting, every detail of the character is etched into the mind of the observer: the character's name, what he wore, what he smelled like, etc. In years to come, old men and woman will fondly remember just staring at the character... Of course they will not remember a single word he spoke. Those eyes were just too lovely.

The character gains +2 on non-Intimidation Charm rolls versus sexually compatible characters.

### Immunity – Smogs, 3 Point Quality

The character, for whatever reason, suffers no ill effects from exposure to London's choking smogs. He may remain in the worst of smogs indefinitely without protection. Most characters with this Quality prefer to wear gas masks to both keep themselves clean and for appearance's sake. Immunity to the smogs is characteristic of half-lifers and the undead, and in the dark of London's streets, an Undertaker on the hunt is unlikely to stop to ask questions.

### Immunity – Toxins, 3 or 5 Point Quality

The character is immune to the effects of toxic substances. For 3 points, the character is immune to the effects of any ordinary toxins: ordinary chemical preparations, metals, and plant- and animal-derived drugs. For 5 points, the character is unaffected even by alchemical preparations.

### Light Sleeper, 3 Point Quality

The character is very light sleeper. Any noise at all will instantly awaken him to a state of full alert. The character is no easier to sneak up on while asleep than he is when he is awake.

### Long Lived, 3 Point Quality

The character has an unnaturally long lifespan and may live to be two hundred or more. This lifespan could be due to extremely good health, anti-agapic drugs, or through another supermundane agent. Long-lived characters seldom look their age. A long-lived man of a hundred and fifty years may not look a day over fifty.

Half-lifers and characters with the Gigantism Quality or Accelerated Decrepitude Impediment cannot take Long Lived.

### Strong Man, 3 Point Quality

The character is well muscled and capable of amazing feats of strength. When performing a feat of strength or bearing weight, the character is considered to have a Vital-

ity 1 greater than his attribute rating (See Vitality, Carrying and Vitality, and Feat of Strength, Chapter 2, pages 83 - 84).

# Physical Impediments

### Accelerated Decrepitude, 6 Point Impediment

For reasons not yet determined by modern medical science, a growing number of citizens of the metropolis age at an accelerated rate. Aging three or four times the normal rate in adulthood, these individuals seldom live to see their fortieth birthday. More disturbing still, anti-agapic drugs have no effect on them. Though accelerated decrepitude crosses class barriers, it is most pronounced among the poor of the slums. Those who succumb to this debilitating complaint invariably spontaneously animate within an hour of death.

The character cannot have a Vitality higher than 4. Once the character reaches thirty years his maximum Vitality is reduced to 3. Every 5 + d10 years later the character suffers an additional –1 to his max Vitality until his Vitality reaches 0, at which point he becomes comatose and soon dies.

Half-lifers cannot take this impediment.

### Albinism, 6 Point Impediment

Possessing white hair, milky skin, and pink or blue eyes with a deep-red pupil, albinos are woefully common by-products of the environmental hazards plaguing the metropolis. Genetic aberrations, albinos have been the subjects of public curiosity, purported to be harbingers of ill omen, and accused of witchcraft over the centuries. Though albinos are less rare than they once were, they remain a centre of public spectacle and are well-paid attractions at both sideshows and brothels throughout the Neo-Victorian world.

Albinos tend to have poor eyesight and are prone to illness. Physically, they tend to be more frail than other men. The character will likely develop all manner of health problems over time. Many albinos are also haemophiliacs.

The character cannot have a Vitality higher than 3. The character also suffers –1 on ranged attacks and Wit rolls based on vision.

### Allergy, Variable Point Impediment (1-5)

When exposed to dust, animal dander, pollen, or certain foods, the character has an allergic response. The value of this Impediment is determined by the severity of the character's allergic reactions.

Narrators should approve a player's choice of allergens. The character should at least have the threat of exposure to an allergen every couple of play sessions regardless of how exotic the allergen.

**1 Point Impediment** - The character suffers a mild allergic reaction to certain stimuli. When exposed to dust or pollen, for example, his eyes may redden and he may sneeze uncontrollably. Aside from the discomfort, an allergy at this level is generally harmless, assuming the character does not have a pressing need to remain quiet. If the character selects a food allergen, his skin painfully reddens and swells whenever he ingests a specific food.

**3 Point Impediment** - The character suffers major reactions to airborne allergens, bee stings, or certain foods. When exposed to an allergen the character breaks out in a rash. Breathing may become laboured as air passages swell. When the character is exposed to the allergen, he suffers –1 Vitality for one hour. If the character's Vitality is reduced to less than 0, he dies.

**5 point Impediment** - The character suffers a lethal allergy to a particular stimulus. Should the character be exposed to the specific allergen, he immediately enters anaphylactic shock and suffers –1 Vitality. Every ten minutes afterward, he must make Vitality roll versus DR 14 or suffer an additional –1 Vitality. The character continues making rolls until he is reduced to below 0 Vitality and dies or receives medical attention or anti-agapic drugs. A character with the Medicine skill may treat the character if he still has Vitality 1 or higher with a skill roll (DR 11). If the roll is successful, the character immediately regains 1 Vitality. If the roll fails, a character must receive an emergency tracheotomy. A character with the Medicine skill may perform a tracheotomy by succeeding in a Medicine roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds, the character will have to remain in bed healing for three weeks, but will live. If that roll fails, the character dies.

Vitality lost due to allergies is restored at a rate of 1 Vitality per day.

Half-lifers and characters with the Incorruptible Quality cannot take this Impediment.

### Amputee, Variable Point Impediment (3-5)

The character is missing a body part. This could be the result of an accident or a natural birth defect. The player and Narrator should decide upon the circumstances that resulted

in the missing part before the start of the game. The value of this Impediment depends on what is missing.

**3 point Impediment** - The character has lost a foot. He cannot dodge, kick, or run. A character with missing feet has his maximum possible Coordination reduced by 2. This penalty is not cumulative with a missing leg.

**3 point Impediment** - The character has lost a hand.

**4 point Impediment** - The character has lost an arm.

**5 point Impediment** - The character is missing a leg. He cannot dodge, kick, or run. A character with one or missing legs has his maximum possible Coordination reduced by 4. This penalty is not cumulative with a missing foot.

A character may take this Impediment several times, but a character with a missing leg will not also get Impediment points for a missing foot on the same leg (nor will a character missing an arm get points for the missing hand). A character with one or more missing legs as a result of Amputee cannot take the Lame Impediment.

## Asthma, 2 or 4 Point Impediment

Asthma is a potentially deadly disease of the respiratory system which causes the airways to narrow in response to physical stress, such as an allergen, or emotional stress. As the airways tighten, the character will be short of breath or begin coughing. Asthma is extremely common throughout the metropolis, especially among the lower classes who are unable to afford effective respirators and are thus are constantly exposed to the worst quality of air.

A character may have either Minor or Severe Asthma. A character with Minor Asthma must make a Vitality roll (DR 11) any time he is exposed to an allergen, exerts himself, or is put in a stressful situation. If he passes the roll, nothing happens. If he fails the roll, he suffers –1 Vitality for an hour or until he receives medication, such as from an inhaler. The character's Vitality cannot be reduced to less than 1 as a result of Minor Asthma. Minor Asthma is a 2 Point Impediment.

Severe Asthma is triggered by the same causes as Minor Asthma. Once triggered, the character must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If the roll fails, the character suffers a life-threatening asthma attack. During the attack, the character suffers –3 on skill rolls. Every minute he must make an additional Vitality roll (DR 14) until either he succeeds in a roll or receives medication. If he succeeds the attack ends. If the roll fails, the character suffers –1 Vitality.

If the character's Vitality is reduced to 0, he passes out and will die in d10 minutes unless he receives medical attention. Anyone treating the character must succeed in a Medicine skill roll (DR 11) to return the character to consciousness. When the character comes around he immediately regains 1 Vitality point.

Vitality lost due to Severe Asthma returns to the character at a rate of 1 point per day.

Severe Asthma is a 4 Point Impediment.

## Blind, 8 Point Impediment

The character is completely blind. He may have been blind since birth or suffered some tragic event which took his sight. The player and Narrator should determine the cause of blindness before the start of the game.

A blind character automatically fails Wit – Perception and skill rolls related to vision, including ranged attacks, dodge, and parry rolls. The character suffers –6 on melee and unarmed combat attack rolls.

## Colour Blindness, 1 Point Impediment

Something of a misnomer, most colour-blind characters simply cannot distinguish between either red and green or blue and yellow. True colour blindness, when the sufferer sees the world only in shades of gray, is extremely rare.

## Consumptive, 8 Point Impediment

The character suffers from tuberculosis, the dreaded "wasting disease" or "White Plague," so-called because of the paleness of the flesh it causes. The disease has had time to take hold of the character's body and is too advanced to treat; he will certainly die before the year is out. The character's body is wracked by prolonged bloody coughing fits and chest pain.

The character must make a Vitality roll (DR 11) any time he exerts himself. If he passes the roll, nothing happens. If the character fails the roll, he suffers a life-threatening fit. During the fit, the character suffers –3 on skill rolls. Each turn he must make an additional Vitality roll (DR 11) until he succeeds in a roll. If he succeeds, the fit ends. If the roll fails, the character suffers –1 Vitality.

If his Vitality is reduced to 0, he passes out and will die in d10 minutes unless he receives medical attention. Anyone treating the character must succeed in a Medicine skill roll (DR 11) to return the character to consciousness. When the character comes around, he immediately regains 1 Vitality point.

Vitality lost due to the Impediment returns to the character at a rate of 1 point per day.

The Narrator should roll a d10 any time another character spends time around the consumptive character. On a roll

of 10, the character is exposed to the wasting disease and must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds, the character is not affected. If the roll fails, the character begins to develop tuberculosis. If the disease is caught in time, it can be treated by Neo-Victorian physicians. A character that has been cured of consumption is immune to it thereafter.

A consumptive character cannot have Vitality higher than 3. If a character with Vitality greater than 3 contracts this disease, he suffers -1 Vitality every three months until his Vitality has been reduced to 3.

Half-lifers cannot take this Impediment.

### Deaf, 5 Point Impediment

The character is stone deaf and cannot hear a sound. The character automatically fails all Wit – Perception and skills rolls based on hearing and suffers -3 on Charm rolls requiring verbal communication.

### Defects, 2 Point Impediment

Though unsettling to some, physical defects are common throughout Neo-Victorian society. In the poorest boroughs, it is not uncommon to see children with grey hair and wrinkles before the age of fifteen, unnaturally aged by lives of back-breaking work, squalor, and the murderous smogs. Prolonged exposure to the smogs tends to rob an individual of all skin pigmentation and stains their teeth a sickly yellow. Hair, toe-nails, and fingernails grow thin and fall away. Many children in the worst boroughs have stark white or sickly green hair virtually from the time of birth.

Defects may also be the result of exposure to the Wastelands or a taint of death. Half-lifers are prone to pallid flesh that is cold to the touch. The eyes of a half-lifer are often blood-coloured or may reflect light like a cat's. The breath of most ghouls reeks of decay.

Defects are likewise common among the heavily inbred aristocracy. Among some families, cleft palates and vestigial tails are regarded as signs of pure breeding.

Possible Defects include, but are not limited to, cleft palate, discoloured skin or hair, incorrect number of fingers, pervasive and ineradicably body odour, port-wine birthmarks, species-inappropriate eyes, skin tumours, or a surplus vestigial limb. A player should choose his character's defects prior to the start of the game.

The character suffers –1 on Charm – Guile and Charm – Seduction rolls versus anyone who can see his defects. This Impediment may be taken multiple times, and the effects are cumulative.

### Evil Eye, 4 Point Impediment

*"He had the eye of a vulture – a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees – very gradually – I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever."*

*—Edgar Allen Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart," 1843*

The character possesses a deformed eye that inspires fear and dread in the mind of any who gaze upon it. The eye could be blood-red and swollen, pale and cataracted, or wholly alien. The character may have been born with the strange deformity or received it later in life. The eye may be helpful should the possessor attempt to intimidate another, but for the most part it is an impediment in all social interactions.

Unless the character has taken another Impediment which hinders his vision, the eye functions normally despite its bone-chilling appearance.

Whenever his eye is uncovered, the character suffers –2 on non-Intimidation Charm rolls.

The character may have two Evil Eyes, but he only gains points for the first one.

### Fits, Variable Point Impediment (2-4)

The character suffers from chronic seizures caused by abnormal electrical impulses in the brain. These violent fits take hold of the character without warning. The character may have suffered brain damage or tumours, though in most cases the cause of the condition will be unknown.

The point value of this Impediment depends on the frequency of the character's fits. Mild Fits strike about once every 2 game sessions and is a 2 Point Impediment. Severe Fits strike at least once per session and is a 4 Point Impediment. Fits always strike at the Narrator's discretion.

When a fit strikes, the character can do nothing for d10 minutes. Unless the character is restrained during these fits, he suffers a 2d10 damage roll minus his Vitality from bruises and injuries sustained during the fit.

### Glass Jaw, 3 Point Impediment

The character is prone to being knocked unconscious. When rolling to resist knockout, double the attacker's Vitality (see Knockout, Chapter 2, page 108).

### Haemophilia, 7 Point Impediment

Haemophilia is a hereditary disease particularly widespread among the members of the aristocracy; Queen Victoria herself was a carrier and passed the disease on to her children. When a haemophilic character is injured, the blood will not clot properly to stem the bleeding, and so the character will continue to bleed for a very long time. This is equally true

for internal and external injuries and can result in significant blood loss or death.

Anytime a haemophilic character suffers a wound or Complication he suffers -1 Vitality, regardless of the severity of the injury. If the character is reduced to less than 0 Vitality, he dies. Vitality lost due to Haemophilia is regained at a rate of 1 point per week.

Additionally, anyone making Medicine skill roll to treat the haemophilic character suffers –3 on his rolls.

### Lame, 5 Point Impediment

The character's legs are permanently damaged. The character may have been born with some physical malady or may have suffered some terrible accident from which he never entirely recovered.

The character is lame and is unable to walk without braces or other assistance. Even assisted, the character cannot run. A Lame character cannot have a Coordination higher than 3.

A character with one or more missing legs as a result of Amputee cannot take the Lame Impediment.

### Leper, 8 Point Impediment

Leprosy, or "the living death," is a dreaded disease that gradually destroys the living tissues of the body. Since the Plague Years, the disfiguring malady has claimed victims across the Wastelands and throughout the slums.

Leprosy is an infectious disease that destroys the body's ability to feel pain and injury by attacking the nerve endings, resulting in increased rates of minor injury. The traumatized tissues fail to heal normally; injuries become infected and result in tissue loss. Untreated, these infections can cause deformity, crippling, blindness, and amputation. Characters suffering the advanced stages of leprosy are easily mistaken for animates.

The character's face and limbs show the ravages of the disease. His eyes may be red or cataracted, his nose sunken and deformed. The character cannot have a Coordination or Charm higher than 3. The character also suffers –2 on ranged attacks and Wit – Perception rolls based on vision.

Each month the character must make a Vitality roll (DR 11) to check the spread of the disease. The character gains a +3 bonus on this roll if he is receiving regular medical treatment. If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, roll a d10.

**1 or 10:** The character suffers –1 Vitality. If his Vitality is reduced to 0 as a result of leprosy, he soon dies.

**2 or 9:** The character suffers –1 Charm. A character cannot have his Charm reduced to less than 1 as a result of leprosy.

**3 or 8:** The character suffers –1 Wit. A character whose Wit is reduced to 1 goes blind (see Blind, page 182). A character cannot have his Wit reduced to less than 1 as a result of leprosy.

**4-7:** The character suffers –1 Coordination. A character whose Coordination is reduced to 1 is lame and can no longer walk unassisted. A character whose Coordination is reduced to 0 dies.

Thankfully, most of the population is naturally immune to leprosy though that is of little comfort to its victims. Spread through saliva, the disease is carried by coughs and spittle. Anyone spending an extended amount of time in the vicinity of a leper without taking protective measures must make a Vitality roll (DR 11). In the roll fails, the character contracts leprosy.

### Lost Eye, 2 Point Impediment

The character is missing an eye. The missing eye could be the result of a birth defect or an accident that occurred later in life. The character suffers -1 on Wit and skill rolls for actions requiring vision or depth perception, such as ranged combat rolls.

### Midget, 4 Point Impediment

The character is very short, but otherwise well-proportioned. Midgets are not uncommon on the streets of the metropolis, where all manner of exotic abnormalities occur with regularity.

The character cannot have Vitality greater than 3. The character also suffers -1 on Charm rolls versus anyone who holds his height against him.

Midgets are especially common among the anathema.

### Mute, 5 Point Impediment

Due to physical or psychological infirmity, the character has an inability to speak, though he may have a limited ability to grunt. Providing the character is not a psychological mute, his speech functions may be restored to a limited degree with a Rattler prosthetic (See Chapter 4, pages 231 – 232).

A character starting with the Mute Impediment cannot also start with the Prosthetic – Rattler Impediment.

### Prosthetic – Oraculum, 3 Point Impediment

The character lost an eye and had it replaced with an Oraculum, or ghost-eye (see Chapter 4, page 231 for details). The player and Narrator should determine the details of how

the character lost his eye and paid for the Oraculum before the start of the game.

### Prosthetic – Rattler, 3 Point Impediment

The character lost his ability to speak and underwent an operation to have a Rattler grafted to his throat (see Chapter 4, pages 231 – 232 for details). The player and Narrator should determine the details of how the character lost his voice box and paid for the Rattler before the start of the game. Most Rattler recipients are victims of throat cancer.

A character cannot have both the Mute Impediment and a Rattler.

### Prosthetic – Ticker, 5 Point Impediment

Due to life-threatening damage to his heart, the character underwent an operation to replace his heart with a Ticker (see Chapter 4, page 232 for details). Perhaps the character had a weak heart or suffered inoperable damage in combat. Whatever the case, the character certainly has a short amount of time left to live. The player and Narrator should determine the details of how the character lost his heart and paid for the Ticker before the start of the game.

Players taking this Impediment for his character should understand that their character is on borrowed time.

### Syphilis, 5 Point Impediment

The character is a carrier of syphilis. The disease has remained dormant for some time, but someday it will become active again. One day the character will suddenly suffer damage to his nervous system (permanently reducing both his Vitality and Coordination at a rate of -1 per six months) ending in paralysis and incontinence. Alternatively the disease may cause drastic personality changes that end in madness, and in this case, the Narrator should choose Will, Intellect, or Charm to be reduced by -1 every six months.. Inevitably, the disease is sure to kill the character, but not before making a real mess of him. The Narrator determines when and how the disease will strike.

It is recommended that player characters not take the Syphilis Impediment. It is best reserved as a non-player character background or story point. If a player ignores these admonitions, the Narrator is urged to do his worst.

Half-lifers cannot take the Syphilis Impediment.

# Mental

## Mental Qualities

### Faith, 2 Point Quality

The character has a deep and abiding faith to sustain him. It does not matter what this faith is in – religious faith is common, but faith in a personal destiny or in the greatness of Britain, for example, will serve just as well. The character gains a +1 to Will rolls to resist fear and exhaustion.

### Linguist, 4 Point Quality

The character has a natural gift for languages. He can have up to a 6 in the Language skill and gains +2 on Acting, Etiquette, Language, and Trade – Writing skill rolls.

### Photographic Memory, 6 Point Quality

The character remembers everything he sees and hears with absolute clarity. To represent this extraordinary gift, the player controlling the character should take copious notes throughout play to represent his character's memory. When the player asks the Narrator about details of the game he does not recall, the Narrator should be as accommodating as possible.

### Resolve, 3 Point Quality

The character has become accustomed to the horrors of the Neo-Victorian world and possesses a steely resolve. When the character fails a Will – Fear roll, he is shaken but does not make a second roll (see Will – Fear, Chapter 2, page 85).

A character with the Cowardice Impediment cannot also have the Resolve Quality. If the character gained Resolve from his Calling, he loses it if he selects Cowardice.

### Savant, 4 Point Quality

Destined for greatness, the character possesses one of the keenest minds of his time. His capacity to understand the sciences dwarfs even the brightest amongst his peers. A character with the Savant quality can have Academic skills with ratings 1 higher than his Intellect even if this would allow him to have skills of 6 or more.

### Synaesthesia, 3 Point Quality

Synaesthesia is a mental condition in which a stimulus from one sense elicits a response in another sense. For instance, someone with synaesthesia, called a synaesthete, may be able to see sounds, taste shapes, or read otherwise black-and-white printed words in colour. A synaesthete cannot control when the synaesthesia occurs or what stimulus triggers it. The responses are consistent: a synaesthete who hears colour will always hear colour and will always hear the same colours in the same way.

Synaesthesia is not a disease and is not considered harmful. Synaesthetic sensations, like ordinary ones, are not always pleasant: some colours may sound grating or shrill, for example. Synaesthetes tend to possesses creative minds and exceptional memories.

Narrators are encouraged to find ways to weave the synaesthete experience into their story telling. A character with this rare gift could glean insight into the nature of a person or place by the responses triggered.

The character's strange way of perceiving the world gives him +2 on Wit – Perception rolls.

### Time Sense, 2 Point Quality

The character is never late. He possesses a preternatural sense of timing and knows the exact time down to a few seconds. Because punctuality and timeliness are intimately tied to professionalism in the Neo-Victorian mind, time sense is a much valued aptitude.

## Mental Impediments

### Amnesia, Variable Point Impediment (1-5)

The character has large gaps in his memories. Depending on the severity of his amnesia, the character could have lost the details of a few important events of his life, whole months or years, or nearly his entire life's history. Sometimes the character may grasp onto fleeting memories as if in a dream, but these instances are rare and the memories are indistinct, as if they happened to another person. Occasionally the character may become confused about dates, places, or people. He may even adopt a fictional history in order to fill the gaps in his own memory. Amnesia is generally caused by damage to the brain, severe physical or psychological trauma, disease, or drugs.

The character should never regain his memories completely. Lost memories can provide endless fodder for play. The Narrator and player should decide on a general concept for the lost memories, though what the player believes about his character may not be the whole, or even the actual, truth.

If a player selects this Impediment, make sure it has a dramatic impact on his play experience. The Narrator should seed his dreams with half-memories of tragic or horrific events. Long-dead and wholly unremembered siblings could call to him from the void; his murder victims may seek revenge, or his unknown enemies may strike at him from nightmares. Always, there should be a sense of loss and mystery. One day,

the character may make it his life's mission to discover the truth – when that day comes, it is best not to disappoint.

**1 Point Impediment** - The character has short but important gaps in his memory that haunt his waking thoughts. The character suffers -1 on Intellect – General Knowledge rolls concerning area knowledge or current events.

**3 Point Impediment** - The character has lost much larger periods of time (months, years, or more). The character may not recall the whole of childhood or anything before a tragic accident. He may have been kidnapped and tortured by a cult for years, repressing the memories in order to survive. The character suffers -4 on Intellect – General Knowledge rolls concerning area knowledge or current events.

**5 Point Impediment** - This is the worst case scenario. The character could have awakened from a coma last year, last month, last week, or yesterday with absolutely no recollection of his identity. Maybe he was the sole survivor of an expedition into the Wastes and returned wearing shredded clothes and carrying a satchel containing only a gnawed-on human hand. The character cannot make Intellect – General Knowledge rolls concerning area knowledge or current events. He also suffers -3 on Charm – Credibility rolls.

### Cowardice, 3 Point Impediment

The character is a coward. He breaks under pressure, never fights when flight is an option, and tends to pull the covers over his head at night. While this may be a perfectly sane reaction to life in the metropolis, it is hardly in keeping with the Neo-Victorian stiff upper lip.

The character suffers –2 on Will rolls concerning fear, interrogation, and intimidation.

A character with the Cowardice Impediment cannot also have the Resolve Quality. If the character taking this Impediment gained Resolve from his Calling, he loses it when he selects this Impediment.

### Dim, 5 Point Impediment

The character is as stupid as a box of hammers. Perhaps he was dropped on his head as a child, suffered an exotic brain fever from which he never recovered, or was simply born dim. In any case, the character cannot have Intellect higher than 1.

### Fastidious, 1 Point Impediment

The character does not like to get dirty. The character must succeed in a Will roll (DR 11) to engage voluntarily in any activity that would require him to become significantly soiled. For example, he would prefer not to follow a feral vampire into the Underground or assist a doctor in an autopsy.

### Hypersensitive, 7 Point Impediment

*"He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of a certain texture; the odors of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror."*

*—Edgar Allen Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," 1839*

The character's senses are so exquisitely sharp that the sights and sounds of the outside world are unendurable. Unless isolated from unwanted stimuli, the character is constantly tormented by his environment. Though he can read in virtual darkness, candle light is nearly blinding. He cannot tolerate a human voice above a whisper, even his own.

Forced into isolation from the very light of day, the character's flesh is pallid. His meals must be carefully prepared to his particular specifications. He may develop nervous disorders as a result of constant seclusion and uncontrollable pain.

Unless the character is in a silent and dim environment, he suffers –2 on all skill, Wit, Will, Intellect and Charm rolls. If he is in the vicinity of an unexpectedly loud noise, bright light, or other violent sensation, he must make a Vitality roll (DR 11). If the roll fails, his permanently loses 1 Will. If his Will is reduced below 0, his nerves give out and he dies.

Hypersensitivity is a malady commonly associated with inbred aristocratic bloodlines. In the hereditary form, this disorder is known as Usher's Syndrome.

It is recommended that player characters not take the Hypersensitivity Impediment. It is best reserved as a non-player character background or story point.

### Illiterate, 2 Point Impediment

The character never learned to read. Illiteracy is all too common among the lower classes who have few opportunities to attend school. Except in the case of severe learning disabilities, illiteracy is virtually unheard of among the higher classes.

Aristocrats, Doctors, and Mourners cannot take this Impediment. Characters that take this Impediment cannot begin with Academic skills.

If able, an illiterate character can learn to read during play. The character will require a tutor and the character's lessons should come up during play. After months of game time spent learning to read, the character may negate the effects of this Impediment.

### Melancholy, 4 Point Impediment

*"...suicide is an effect of the struggle for existence and of human selection, which works according to the laws of evolution among civilized people."*

*—Henry Morselli,* Suicide: An Essay on Comparative Moral Statistics, *1881*

The character suffers from protracted bouts of depression and may appear sullen and morose for days or weeks at a time. In the past, the character has been driven to desperate acts by loneliness or failed love affairs. Melancholy may be further intensified through alcohol or drug addiction.

Whenever left alone or confronted with failure, the character must make a Will roll (DR 14). If he succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the character suffers –2 on all skill rolls for the next twenty-four hours. If the character rolls a critical failure, he will take his own life.

### Night Terrors, 2 Point Impediment

The character suffers from a sleep disorder; nightly, he spontaneously awakens with panicked screams. During a typical episode, the character bolts upright in bed, his face a fear-marred mask and his eyes dilated, sweating profusely, and tormented by a baseless agitation. During such an attack, the character is unresponsive to attempts to comfort him until confusion and agitation subside. The character may then recount an overwhelming sense of dread and fragmentary dream images, but rarely a vivid and complete dream sequence. Morning amnesia of the entire episode is the rule. Much to the befuddlement of witnesses, especially those kept awake, the character simply cannot recall the occurrence of the event.

### Sleepwalker, 1 Point Impediment

The character is prone to sleepwalking. A typical episode lasts for a few minutes up to a half hour. In addition to walking, the character may perform complex actions, such as dressing or opening doors. During an episode, the character's face remains blank and unresponsive to communication. The sleepwalker can only be awakened with great difficulty. While sleepwalking, the character's co-ordination is poor, but he is able to see and will walk around objects in his path. Some sleepwalkers take dangerous routes, such as down fire escapes or out windows.

The walking behaviour may terminate spontaneously with the walker awakening but will be followed by several minutes of disorientation. The walker may also return to bed, none the wiser; his nocturnal wanderings masked in a fog of amnesia. Fragmentary dream images are generally the extent of the character's memories of these walks.

### Superstition, 1 Point Impediment

In stark defiance of the scientific leanings of Neo-Victorian society, the character possesses an unshakable belief in the validity of several superstitions and will never purposefully act to tempt ruin. A superstitious individual erroneously believes that his actions can influence the outcome of events which are, in reality, beyond his control. These beliefs are not only irrational, but can also open the character up to ridicule. Even in the most polite company, the character will stand out as an eccentric.

Superstitions, by definition, are not based in fact. Rather, they provide the believer a way to deal with fears, rational or irrational, real or imagined, that are beyond their control. While the existence of prescience and haunting apparitions may seem to contradict public opinion of superstition, it is worth pointing out that often today's sciences are tomorrow's folktales and vice-versa.

What form these superstitions take is up to the player controlling the character. Possible examples of superstitions include stepping around cracks while walking to avoid bad luck, whistling past graveyards, avoiding of certain numbers, not leaving one's home after dark, or never touching a corpse.

Any aggressively rational individual who witnesses the character's superstition and recognize it for what it is will either think the character simple or old fashioned. The character suffers -1 on Charm rolls versus a character who would hold his superstitions against him.

### Uncontrollable Temper, 4 Point Impediment

The character is prone to extraordinary fits of anger. When the mood takes him, it overwhelms all reason, and he destroys and maims everything in his path until exhaustion overtakes him. These rages are generally marked with periods of blackouts in which the character forgets his actions entirely.

Anytime the character suffers a setback or is provoked even slightly, he must make a Will roll (DR 14). If the roll fails, the character flies into an uncontrollable rage and assaults the object of his anger.

Uncontrollable Temper is common among Dhampiri.

### Weak Willed, 5 Point Impediment

The character lacks mental fortitude. He backs down easily from altercations, is easily broken during interrogation, and generally lacks the will to stand up for himself. A character with this Impediment cannot have a Will higher than 1.

# Mental Disorders

Mental disorders represent a very specific variety of Mental Impediment. A character with one or more disorders is certifiably mentally ill. Should he be diagnosed by an alienist, it is likely he will at least be put under observation if not committed to an asylum or sanatorium. A character may suffer from multiple disorders, each further shaping his mannerisms and limiting his capacity to interact socially. There is more to playing a character with mental disorders than the simple game effects mandated by the character's specific illnesses. Mental disorders help frame the character's view of the world. If he is a paranoiac, his waking moments are spent dreaming up ever more sophisticated and convoluted plots his enemies may use to destroy him. If he suffers from delirium, he lives in a fantasy world of his own creation. He may find ways to interact with the real world, but his perceptions will be very different from the consensual reality.

### Responsible Insanity

*If you chose to play an insane character, the authors sincerely hope you chose to play this option responsibly. Avoid the classic over-generalized character traits, i.e. "my character is insane." Instead, determine precisely how the character is insane, and what caused him to be that way. Is he a criminal sociopath with a strong xenophobic streak, or perhaps a bipolar manic-depressive? Did the character crack after some traumatic event in his life, or is he just a bit too inbred? True madness adds flavour to a character, but generic insanity as an excuse to be silly gets very tiresome, so if you opt for a mentally unbalanced character, a little creative thought goes a long way. The more thought that goes into the character's personality, the more depth he will have, and in turn, he will be much more enjoyable to play.*

## Severity

When a player selects a mental disorder for his character, he must decide how severe the character's mental illness is. There are two basic severity levels, minor and chronic.

Minor mental disorders are largely nervous conditions that can be kept under control. Even at their worst, the character can generally remain functional. A minor mental disorder should only be triggered once every couple of game sessions.

Chronic mental disorders are severe enough to inhibit the character's ability to function in society. Medication may help keep the character under control, but there are limits even to modern pharmacology. Despite the sincere efforts of medical health officials, chronic mental disorders are all too common among the inhabitants of the metropolis. A character with a chronic mental disorder should have at least one episode per session.

## Control Checks

When a character's mental disorder is triggered during play, the character must make a control check to keep control of himself. A control check is a Will roll versus a DR based on the severity of the mental disorder. A character with a minor disorder makes control checks versus a DR of 14. A character with a chronic disorder rolls versus a DR of 16.

If the roll succeeds, the character maintains control. If the roll fails, his disorder overwhelms him and he begins to act erratically. The exact effects of failing a control roll depend on the disorder. If the character rolls a critical success, the DR for control checks is permanently reduced by 1. If the character rolls a critical failure, the DR for future control checks is increased by 1.

## Treatment

For a general discussion of the state of Neo-Victorian psychological treatment, see Madhouses, Chapter 6, pages 310-312. A character receiving care from an alienist has the potential to regain some degree of control over himself. Treatment is a long-term commitment, and success is by no means assured. Treatment for chronic mental disorders generally requires isolation in an asylum or sanatorium. Occasionally, a particularly wealthy patient may be treated in the privacy of his own home by a live-in alienist, but such arrangements tend to be prohibitively expensive.

For every full month of treatment the character receives, he can make a control check adding his doctor's Psychology skill. If the roll succeeds, the DR for control checks is reduced by 1. If the roll fails, nothing happens. Treatment cannot reduce the DR for control checks below 11. If the character suffered a chronic condition and his DR for control checks is reduced to 14 or less, the character now only suffers from the effects of a minor mental disorder.

If the character has access to the appropriate apparatus, galvanic therapies may be applied as a part of treatment. For rules on use of galvanic therapies, see Therapeutics Galvanism, Chapter 6, pages 358-361.

If the character quits treatment, then any time he fails a control check, the DR for future control checks is increased by 1 until all bonuses for treatment have been lost.

# Descriptions of Mental Disorders

## Catatonia, 4 or 6 Point Impediment

*"The disease of the lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of her physicians. A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character were the usual diagnosis."*

*—Edgar Allen Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," 1830*

The character bears a particular affliction which seeks to isolate the psyche from its surroundings. The character settles into an apathetic state so complete that he scarcely notices the world around him at all. Wandering through the world in an insular haze, the catatonic can go days without speaking or acknowledging the presence of another person. He can wander through crowds, never noticing a soul unless directly confronted with an individual attempting to get his attention. Some days the character is unable to summon the willpower required to rise from bed. To the uninitiated eye, his sleep is so complete that he could pass for dead. When the character speaks at all, his voice is hollow, utterly lacking human emotion.

Though episodes of catatonia are known to come on without warning, most often they are brought on by negative outside stimuli. Whenever the character is confronted by traumatic or stressful events that threaten his peace of mind, he must make a control check. If the roll fails, the character enters a catatonic state. While in a catatonic state, the character has little if any ability to interact with those around him. If attacked, he will have no ability to defend himself. After 4 + d10 hours, the character can attempt to make a second control check. If the roll succeeds, he comes out of the catatonic state. If the roll fails, he can make another control check after an additional 4 + d10 hours have passed.

Minor Catatonia is a 4 point Impediment. Chronic Catatonia is a 6 point Impediment.

## Delirium, 3 or 5 Point Impediment

*"True! – nervous – very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses – not destroyed – not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad?"*

*—Edgar Allen Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart," 1843*

The character has difficulty matching his perceptions of the world to the consensus reality. His consciousness is clouded and may be indistinct or wholly artificial. Often delusions are accompanied by misinterpretation of outside stimuli and a disordered stream of thought. The character has great difficulty focusing and sustaining attention.

Perceptual disturbances are common and result in various misinterpretations, illusions and hallucinations. For example, a banging door may be mistaken for a gunshot (misinterpretation), faces may appear in cracks in the walls (illusion), or leering demonic entities may hover above the character and rain down tears of blood upon him (hallucination). These disturbances are often backed by both delusional conviction and emotional response. The character will believe what he sees to be real. Some may pick at their flesh, while others reach out to phantasmal objects. Others may suffer a near catatonic state, experiencing their illusions in silence. A character in the grip of delirium cannot maintain coherent thought. In minor delirium, this may manifest as an acceleration or deceleration of thought. In severe delirium, thought is completely disorganized. This disturbance is reflected in speech that may be sparse or incoherent.

Additionally, a delirious character will suffer disturbances to his sleep cycle. He may be either constantly tired or hypervigilant. Vivid dreams and nightmares are common and may merge with waking hallucinations.

Unlike some mental disorders, Delirium is constantly active. A delirious character suffers –2 on all Wit, Intellect, and skill checks unless he passes a control check to temporarily take control of himself. If the roll succeeds, the character can act normally for d10 turns in combat or d10 minutes outside of combat.

Minor Delirium is a 3 point Impediment. Chronic Delirium is a 5 point Impediment.

## Dementia, 2 or 4 Points Impediment

Dementia interferes with a character's ability to remember information and can also impair his judgement. A character with mild dementia suffers from forgetfulness: he may need to have information several times before he will remember it. In more severe cases, the character may forget names or even entire conversations. He may forget to return and finish a task if he is interrupted. In the most severe cases, the character may forget his closest friends and family members.

The impaired judgement and lack of impulse control which often accompany the memory loss can be a source of some embarrassment for those close to the character. A demented character is likely to make off-colour jokes or use inappropriate language. He disregards standard rules of social conduct, making this Impediment particularly embarrassing for members of the upper class.

Unlike some mental disorders, Dementia is always active. The character's short term memory is badly flawed. The Narrator should require the character to make control checks to recall important information from time to time. If the character succeeds, he remembers. If he fails, he does not. The character's controller may have the character make a control check to temporarily pull himself together. If the roll succeeds, the character acts normally for d10 x 10 minutes after which he returns to his previously confused state.

Minor Dementia is a 2 point Impediment. Chronic Dementia is a 4 point Impediment.

## Hysterical Blindness, 3 or 5 Point Impediment

The character is prone to hysterical blindness. Occasionally his mind simply refuses to process the images in front of him to shield his psyche from further damage. Anytime the character finds himself in a threatening or stressful situation, he must make a control check to keep from going blind. If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the character fails, he goes blind. The character remains blind until the stressful situation ends or he regains control over himself.

After each of his turns of combat or after every minute outside combat, the character can make an additional control check to regain control over himself. If the roll succeeds, his vision returns. If the roll fails, he remains blind. While blind, the character automatically fails Wit – Perception and skill rolls related to vision, including ranged attacks, dodge, and parry rolls. The character suffers -6 on melee and unarmed combat attack rolls.

Minor Hysterical Blindness is a 3 point Impediment. Chronic Hysterical Blindness is a 5 point Impediment.

## Narcolepsy, 2 or 4 Point Impediment

Narcolepsy causes the character to simply fall asleep, without warning, for a brief period of time. He will awaken feeling refreshed. Narcolepsy occurs with greater frequency if the character's sleep schedule is interrupted. Though fairly harmless on its own, narcolepsy can lead to fatal accidents. For example, a narcoleptic may fall asleep while driving a cart, running over pedestrians in the process.

The Narrator should have the character make Narcolepsy control checks at entertaining or dramatically appropriate times. If the character succeeds, nothing happens. If the character fails, he falls asleep for 2d10 minutes or until awakened.

Minor Narcolepsy is a 2 point Impediment. Chronic Narcolepsy is a 4 point Impediment.

### Necrophilia, 2 or 4 Point Impediment

*"I often saw a man, in Paris, who would pay their weight in gold for all the cadavers of young girls and young boys who died a violent death and were freshly buried: he had them brought to his home and would commit an infinity of horrors on those fresh bodies."*

—*D.A.F. de Sade,* Histoire de Juliette, ou les prospérités du vice, *1797*

Necrophilia has quietly grown increasingly common since the Reclamation, especially among the aristocracy. The act of copulation with a corpse is a taboo which is made a terrifically dangerous act by the risk of reanimation. This has only served to height the sense of excitement surrounding the perverse act. Perhaps the spark of life, or vestigium vitae, that leads to reanimation excites a certain type of low character.

For some necrophiles, the illusion of death is enough for arousal. They require their lovers to lie in baths of ice, adorn themselves in pallid make-up, or perfume themselves with the musk of dead animals. More advanced necrophiles feel an overwhelming attraction to corpses. A number of resurrection men exclusively make their livings supplying grotesque lovers to the wealthy.

Any time the character is in the presence of a corpse or reminded of death for any reason, he must make a control check. If he succeeds, he manages to control his unnatural lusts. If he fails, he will attempt to have sexual contact with a corpse as soon as possible. The character will go to elaborate lengths to arrange to have uninterrupted time with a corpse but will not mindlessly pursue his preoccupation if there is an unwanted risk of discovery.

After the character fails the roll, he is constantly preoccupied with his desires. The character suffers –1 on all skill rolls until these desires are satisfied.

Minor Necrophilia is a 2 point Impediment. Chronic Necrophilia is a 4 point Impediment.

### Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, 2 or 4 Points Impediment

The character is plagued by recurrent thoughts and behaviours. The character will become trapped by obsessive thoughts. He may, for example, continually focus on fears that harm will come to himself or to those he loves or worry constantly about performing every action perfectly. Compulsive behaviour often accompanies these obsessive thought patterns. The character may wash his hands, check the lock on the door, or repeat a certain phrase every few minutes. In some cases, these repetitive behaviours may develop into complex rituals that grant some relief to the constant anxiety felt by the Obsessive Compulsive.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is a mental disorder that requires care in role-playing. The player needs to constantly keep the disorder in mind, creating not only a daily routine of rituals for the character but also the internal logic behind the rituals. Any time the character's daily routine is disturbed or his rituals rushed or skipped, he must make a control check. If the roll succeeds, the character is able to reign in his agitation. If the roll fails, the character suffers –1 on skill rolls for d10 hours or until he can go back and complete his routine.

Minor Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is a 2 point Impediment. Chronic Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is a 4 point Impediment.

### Panic Disorder, 3 or 5 Point Impediment

The character suffers panic attacks when faced with a stressful or unpredictable situation, such as while driving a cart or speaking before a crowd. A character having a panic attack feels sudden and intense fear or terror. These emotions cause the most common symptoms associated with the disorder: palpitations, chest pain, hot and cold flashes, sweating, choking, vertigo, and faintness. Attacks usually last only a few minutes but, in rare cases, may last hours.

Any time the character finds himself in a threatening or stressful situation, he must make a control check to keep from having a panic attack. If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the character has a panic attack and can take no actions for 2d10 minutes. If the character rolls a critical failure, the attack lasts for 6d10 + 60 minutes.

Minor Panic Disorder is a 3 point Impediment. Chronic Panic Disorder is a 5 point Impediment.

### Paranoia, 2 or 4 Point Impediment

A character suffering from paranoia believes, mistakenly, that people seek to hurt him. This can be the simple belief that everyone the character knows is lying to him, cheating on him, or otherwise conspiring against him, or it can develop into a larger-scale conspiratorial belief that becomes its own reality. Paranoia destroys friendships and marriages. Any small slight made by a friend will become the focus of a paranoiac's next delusions, and any abnormality will become proof that his lover has betrayed him.

Paranoia is another disorder which requires care in role-playing since it colours the character's perceptions of the

world around him. When the character suffers setbacks or is confronted with even the slightest real evidence of betrayal, he risks losing control. Anytime the Narrator believes the character is in jeopardy of succumbing to his paranoia, he should have the character make a control check. If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the character lashes out at those around him. During these outbursts the character will be verbally abusive and accusatory. He may not react violently, but he will contemplate violence. Such episodes generally last until the character has tired himself out and anyone in his presence leaves.

Minor Paranoia is a 2 point Impediment. Chronic Paranoia is a 4 point Impediment.

## Phobic Disorders, 2 or 4 Point Impediment

Characters with phobic disorders irrationally fear an object, situation, or activity with unreasonable severity. A character may refuse to enter a room containing rotting food or may stay indoors to avoid crowds. When confronted by his fear, the character will attempt to remove himself from the situation. If he cannot leave, he will suffer severe anxiety. In more severe cases, the character may take leave of his senses all together and take flight.

In the Neo-Victorian world, a world full of more horrors than the human mind has capacity to recognize, there exists a limitless variety of phobias. Fear of corpses (necrophobia) is exceedingly common and for good reason. Likewise, fear of the dark (scotophobia) could well be considered a natural extension of life-preservation instincts. Players are encouraged to choose phobias that are both interesting to play and that fit well into the character's background.

If the character is confronted by the object of his fear and cannot get away from it, he must make a control check. If the roll succeeds, he suffers –1 on skill rolls until he leaves the vicinity of the object. If he fails, he suffers a panic attack and can take no actions. On a critical failure, the character overacts to the object of his phobia. He may attempt to destroy it or take extreme or even suicidal risks to get away from it. After d10 minutes, if the character is still in the vicinity of the object of his phobia, he can make another control check to regain his composure.

Minor Phobic Disorder is a 2 point Impediment. Chronic Phobic Disorder is a 4 point Impediment.

### Sample Phobias

While there are countless varieties of phobias, some of the more common irrational fears plaguing the Neo-Victorian population are listed below.

**Acrophobia:** Fear of heights.

**Agoraphobia:** Fear of open spaces, usually manifested as a fear to venture outside the city's walls.

**Bacteriophobia:** Fear of bacteria.

**Cenophobia:** Fear of empty rooms.

**Claustrophobia:** Fear of enclosed spaces.

**Demophobia:** Fear of crowds.

**Entomophobia:** Fear of insects.

**Genophobia:** Fear of sex.

**Hydrophobia:** Fear of water.

**Hypnophobia:** Fear of sleep.

**Iatrophobia:** Fear of doctors.

**Ommetophobia:** Fear of eyes.

**Teratophobia:** Fear of monsters.

**Tomophobia:** Fear of surgery.

**Trypanophobia:** Fear of injections.

**Xenophobia:** Fear of strangers. Especially common among the upper classes who dread contact with the surplus population.

### Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, 3 or 5 Points Impediment

The character bears powerful psychological scars due to having experienced traumatic events. This disorder is unfortunately common in a world in which corpses rise from the dead in search of human flesh. The effects of this disorder can been seen in every level of the metropolis, from the dull eyes of a young aristocrat who was tortured by a depraved relative to the Undertaker who was nearly pulled apart by a horde of animates.

The symptoms of this disorder involve mentally reexperiencing the traumatic event and becoming withdrawn from the outside world. In some cases, the character will go beyond just having vivid memories of the traumatic event and actually relieve it, acting out his actions as if the trauma was reoccurring. Such states are prevalent among combat veterans such as Deathwatch personnel. A walking shadow of his former self, the character suffering from this disorder exists in a state of "psychic numbing," which usually begins soon after the traumatic event.

Such states are prevalent among combat veterans such as Deathwatch personnel.

Even at his most relaxed, a character suffering this disorder is prone to hyperalertness and insomnia. Those who survived a life-threatening trauma when others did not may feel significant guilt that pushes them to the oblivion offered by alcohol or opium.

Unlike some mental disorders, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is always active. The character is constantly distant and numb to the world around him. The character may make a control check to temporarily pull himself together. If the roll succeeds, the character acts normally for d10 x 10 minutes after which he returns to his previous condition.

Anytime the character is startled, he must make a control check. If he succeeds, he keeps control of himself. If the roll fails, he lashes out with deadly force. After an initial attack, the character can make an additional control check to regain control of himself. If the roll fails, he can make subsequent control rolls at the start of each of his turns of combat or until everything around him is dead.

Minor Shell Shock is a 3 point Impediment. Chronic Shell Shock is a 5 point Impediment.

### Zoophagous Maniac, 2 or 5 Point Impediment

*"He disgusted me much while with him, for when a horrid blowfly, bloated with some carrion food, buzzed into the room, he caught it, held it exultingly for a few moments between his finger and thumb, and, before I knew what he was going to do, put it in his mouth and ate it. I scolded him for it, but he argued quietly that it was very good and very wholesome; that it was life, strong life, and gave life to him."*

*—Bram Stoker,* Dracula, *1897*

The character has a peculiar mental compulsion which drives him to consume and absorb as many lives as possible. Most zoophagous maniacs are methodical in the pursuit of their mad schemes. Instead of merely devouring a single life, they take great exaltation in feeding lower order life forms to higher order, then feeding those to still greater life forms before ultimately consuming the largest predators possible. In this way, they consume a magnitude of life forces simultaneously. Often the maniac will keep a careful ledger to record the number of lives each of his pets has consumed. Upon completing the cycle by dining upon the most complex animals possible, he sensibly begins his tally anew.

The depth of the character's mania determines how far up the food chain he is willing to climb. A character with minor Zoophagous Mania will content himself to feed flies to spiders, and spiders to birds, and birds to felines, and so forth. A chronic zoophagous maniac is a dangerous lunatic who concludes his experiment after feeding upon the flesh of a man who has in turn dined on his morbid menagerie.

The character must make some progress in completing his cycle each day unless he completed his cycle the previous day. If the character is interrupted in his feeding cycle or fails to complete his meal, he must make a control roll. If the roll succeeds, he maintains control of himself but suffers −1 on skill rolls due to ongoing agitation until he is able to complete the next step of his meal. If the roll fails, the character becomes extremely agitated and can focus on nothing other than the next meal in his cycle until either he receives his meal, one way or another, or twenty-four hours pass and he makes another control roll.

Minor Zoophagous Mania is a 2 point Impediment. Chronic Zoophagous Mania is a 5 point Impediment.

## Character Development

Characters should be thought of as living, breathing people. They learn from their experiences, work to further their goals, improve upon old talents, and learn new skills.

They grow and change as their stories progress. Some of this progression comes with a player's growing familiarity with his character. Over time, a player will learn his character's mannerisms as the character's personality continues to develop.

Additionally, characters earn Experience Points during play, representing the continuing development of the character's capabilities in the game. Experience Points can be spent to increase attribute or skill levels or to buy new skills. Not all changes to a character are purchased with the expenditure of experience points of course. Throughout play, characters will have the chance to make allies, destroy enemies, gain and lose wealth, etc. Experience Points are simply an additional means for a player to influence his character's progression.

# Earning Experience Points

The Narrator determines how many Experience Points players earn each game session. The Narrator should award experience points based on the rate of character advancement that he and his players are comfortable with. The Narrator may use the following guidelines to award Experience Points, if he chooses.

*Game Session* – At the end of a game session, each character that participated in the session gains one Experience Point.

*Good Role-playing* – If the Narrator believes the player did a good job of breathing life into his character and added to the enjoyment of other players, his character should earn one additional Experience Point for the session.

*Major Events* – A Narrator may give characters one or two Experience Points per session if they took part in major events that transpired during the session. The character must have played a major role in the event for the experience to impact his development.

*Resolution* – At the conclusion of a scenario, the Narrator may award each participating character one Experience Point. This point represents closure on another chapter of the character's life.

*Beyond the Call of Duty* – Some players are willing to go above and beyond the call of duty, taking play to whole new levels. They may dress in costume, physically act out scenes in the midst of role-play, keep detailed in-character journals, etc. Anytime such devotion to the game heightens the experience for all parties involved outside the realm of ordinary role-playing, that player's character should be awarded an additional Experience Point. Earned Experience Points and their expenditures are tracked on the character sheet.

# Spending Experience Points

While there are no hard guidelines for how players can spend Experience Points to develop their characters, the Narrator may wish to provide some guidance. There should be a reason for the Experience Point expenditures: the player should be able to justify a change to his character based on the events of play and the ongoing story.

For example, a player controlling an Undertaker has plenty of justification for increasing his character's Melee Combat skill if his character has spent three game sessions wading through animate hordes armed with only a sword cane and board with a nail through it. The same player may have trouble explaining why his character suddenly develops the Hypnosis skill without ever so much as mentioning a passing interest in the subject. If, however, the player described his character's new found interest in magnetism and went out of his way to have his character enrol in classes on the subject or to find someone to teach him the basics of hypnosis, he would have plenty of justification for learning the skill.

When a player spends Experience Points to increase an attribute or skill, he can only increase the attribute or skill one rank between game sessions. Likewise, when a character buys a new skill, he cannot immediately increase its level. Characters take time to develop, and skills must be practiced before a character becomes adept in them.

A player does not have to spend all his character's Experience Points at once. In fact, more often than not, they will be saved until the character has enough to purchase a particular sought-after advancement. Furthermore, Narrators may wish to limit the timing of Experience Point expenditures. A Narrator may prefer to have his players spend Experience Points after a scenario has been resolved, once the characters have a chance to spend time practicing their skills, rather than between sessions in the middle of an ongoing story. At other times, a Narrator may allow a character to further develop a much needed skill at a critical moment, representing terrific inspiration or sudden insight into the problem at hand.

### The Costs

**Attribute Increase** – Increasing an attribute by 1 level costs 5 Experience Points x the current level.

**Skill Increase** – Increasing a skill by 1 level costs 2 Experience Points x the current level.

**New Skill** – A new skill can be purchased at level 1 for 3 Experience Points.

# Chapter Four - Tools of the Trade

**From the introduction to Abram McAllister & Sons Catalogue, 2104-2105 edition**

*In addition to our consumer goods, Abram McAllister & Sons is pleased to offer a full range of alchemical and galvanic laboratory equipment. Since the days of the Reclamation, alchemists have refined their craft in the tireless pursuit of the Elixir Vitae. Innovations in medical science have doubled or tripled the human lifespan in the past century. The dream of immortality comes closer to its ultimate realization with each passing year, and Abram McAllister & Sons is here to supply you in this age of wonder and discovery.*

*Galvanic science has produced a dazzling spectrum of marvellous devices, from electrical lanterns to the wireless radio transmitter, all powered, at no additional cost to the consumer, by the city's ingenious Tesla array. Seemingly impossible revelations of science come to light daily, challenging the imagination and ushering in a new era of technological development. It is our pleasure to provide our customers with the finest glassware, capacitors, oscillators, isolation jars, and surgical implements available.*

*In addition to the promise of longer, better life, science has also advanced the weaponry safeguarding society. Within the pages of this volume, you will find a bounty of modern firearms and compression weapons fit for the sporting man and fulltime Undertaker alike…*

## Currency

Despite an ongoing debate over reform, Neo-Victorian currency has never moved to a decimal-based monetary system. The standard measure of currency is the pound sterling. A pound is worth twenty shillings. Each shilling is worth twelve pence; therefore, there are two hundred forty shillings to the pound. The pound is represented by a £ sign, the shilling by a "s," and the penny by a "d," for "denarius," a holdover from the Roman days.

Amounts are expressed pounds first, then shillings and pence. The amount £10/6s/5d, for example, equals ten pounds, six shillings, and five pence. Amounts below a pound may also be written as 12s-6d meaning "twelve shillings and sixpence," or more casually, "twelve and six."Bank notes come in £5, £10, and £20 denominations. Larger notes up to £1000 are printed, but these large denominations are very uncommon.

**Currency Breakdown**

12 pence (d) = 1 shilling (s)
20 shillings (s) = 1 pound (£)
240 pence = 1 pound (£)

**Denominations of Currency**

Neo-Victorian currency is additionally broken down into the following denominations of coin:

Farthing = ¼ pence
Halfpenny = ½ pence
Threepence = 3 pence
Sixpence = 6 pence
Florin = 2 shillings
½ Crown = 5 shillings
Crown = 10 shillings
Sovereign = 1 pound
Guinea = 1 pound and 1 shilling or 21 shillings or 1/1/-

## The Black Market

The metropolis has an extensive black market for the sale of illegal goods including, but not limited to, alchemical contraband, military hardware, and corpses. Some underworld vendors use legitimate businesses as fronts for their operations. Others work from abandoned buildings, hidden tunnels, or dilapidated warehouses. More than a few employ middle men for deliveries, preferring to never meet their clients in person.

Unless the character knows precisely where to look, locating illegal goods can be difficult. A character with the Streetwise skill may locate most illegal goods with a few days of searching and a successful Streetwise roll (DR 11). Locating highly illegal substances requires 5 + d5 days and a successful Streetwise skill roll (DR 16). A character in a rush can cut this time in half but must add 2 to the DR of the skill roll. If a character fails a roll to locate illegal goods, he can make another Streetwise skill roll after the allotted time has passed.

As supply is always uncertain, the cost of black market goods fluctuates even more wildly than in the legitimate marketplace. At the Narrator's discretion, certain goods or substances may flood the market from time to time or become exceptionally rare. When the black market is flooded, goods are easier to come by and their cost may dip. When goods are scarce or in high demand, they will be harder to come by and far more expensive.

A character found to be in possession of illegal goods can expect to be arrested and thoroughly searched. The illegal goods found on the character's person will certainly be confiscated. Depending on the nature of the contraband, the character can expect to spend anywhere from two or three days in lockup to several years in prison. Possession of some highly illegal goods can command even longer prison terms if the goods are viewed as a risk to public health.

# Cost of Goods

The following prices represent goods commonly available throughout the metropolis. Prices for most items will vary greatly outside London. For instance, food and services may be cheaper outside the city, but specialized equipment may be hard, if not impossible, to find and fetch much higher prices. Items may be purchased second-hand for half the listed price.

## Clothing & Accoutrements

The following prices represent the costs of ready-made clothing of good quality. Rubber clothes cost twice the listed price. Leather clothes are three times the listed price. More expensive materials such as silk could easily quadruple the cost of any item of clothing. Double the cost again for tailor-made clothes. Clothing at the pinnacle of fashion costs five times the listed price.

| | |
|---|---|
| Apron | 6d |
| Ball Gown | £12 |
| Belt, Leather | 4s |
| Bonnet | 5d |
| Boots, Leather | £1/2s/- |
| Boots, Leather Riding | £5+ |
| Boots, Rubber | 10s |
| Bowler | 10s |
| Calling Cards (50) | 2s |
| Cane | 5s+ |
| Cane, Concealed Compartment | 10s+ |
| Cane, Silver-Tipped | £3+ |
| Collar, one dozen | 3s |
| Coat, Dress (Heavy) | £3 |
| Coat, Dress (Light) | £1/15s/- |
| Coat, Fashionable (Fur) | £10+ |
| Coat, Military | £1/15s/- |
| Coat, Plain (Heavy) | 8s |
| Coat, Plain (Light) | 5s |
| Corset (Metal Bone) | 5s |
| Corset (Whale Bone) | 18s |
| Cravat | 7d |
| Dress, Fashionable | £5+ |
| Dress, Plain | 10s |
| Dust Mask | 2d |
| Folding Fan | 5s |
| Gloves, Dress | 5s |
| Gloves, Work | 5s |
| Greatcoat | £1 |
| Handkerchief, | 2d |
| Handkerchief, Silk | 1s |
| Hand Mirror, Silver | 10s+ |
| Hand Mirror, Wood | 2s |
| Hip Flask | 2s |
| Leather Pocket Book | 10s |
| Leather Polish, Tin | 2s |
| Makeup Kit | 10s |
| Mourning Dress, Full | £5 |
| Mourning Dress, Half | £2 |
| Parasol, Rubber | 12s |
| Parasol, Silk | £2 |
| Plague Mask | 8d |
| Pocket Watch, Silver | £1 |
| Pocket Watch, Gold | £2/5s/- |
| Perfume, Cheap | 8d |
| Perfume, Quality | £1+ |
| Pipe | 1s+ |
| Pipe, Opium | 2s+ |
| Respirator | 10s |
| Respirator, Brass-Plated | £2+ |
| Respirator, Silver-Plated | £6+ |
| Respirator, Gold-Plated | £12+ |
| Respirator Filter Replacement | 3s |
| Scarf | 6d |
| Shawl | 6d |
| Silk Stockings | 10d |
| Shirt, Dress | 5s |
| Shirt, Fashionable | £1/5s/- |
| Shirt, Work | 5d |
| Shoes | 10s |
| Shoes, Expensive | £5+ |
| Spectacles | 10s |
| Spectacles, Photo-Reactive | £2 |
| Spectacles, Tinted | £1 |
| Straight Razor | 2s |
| Suit, Dress | £1/5s/- |
| Suit, Morning | £5 |
| Suit, Dress | £7+ |
| Suit, Riding | £5 |
| Suspenders | 8d |

| | |
|---|---|
| Tie, Silk | £1/10s/- |
| Top Hat | 10s |
| Travel Bag | 5s |
| Trousers, Dress | 8s |
| Trousers, Fashionable | £2 |
| Trousers, Work | 8d |
| Uniform, Servant | 12s |
| Veil | 4d |
| Veil, Rubber | 6d |
| Wig | £2+ |
| Work Clothes, Poor | 15d |

## Armour

| | |
|---|---|
| Arm Bracers, Leather | £5/10s/- |
| Arm Bracers, Plate | £30 |
| Arm Bracers, Reinforced Leather | £12/10s/- |
| Arm Bracers, Reinforced Rubber | £5 |
| Arm Bracers, Rubber | £2/10s/- |
| Armoured Boots, Reinforced Leather | £7/10s/- |
| Armoured Boots, Reinforced Rubber | £4/10s/- |
| Armoured Coat, Leather | £40 |
| Armoured Coat, Rubber | £5 |
| Armour, Deathwatch | £125 |
| Armour, Full Chain Mail | £30/10s/- |
| Armour, Full Leather | £12/10s/- |
| Armour, Full Plate | £80/5s/- |
| Armour, Full Reinforced Leather | £20 |
| Armour, Full Reinforced Rubber | £15 |
| Armour, Full Rubber | £7/10s/- |
| Armour, Lacquered | £250+ |
| Breast Plate | £25 |
| Chain Mail Sleeve | £15 |
| Coif, Chain Mail | £4/10s/- |
| Coif, Leather | £2/10s/- |
| Coif, Rubber | 6s |
| Collar, Leather | 5s |
| Collar, Plate | 18s |
| Collar, Rubber | 10d |
| Combat Corset, Leather | £5 |
| Combat Corset, Mourner | £20+ |
| Combat Corset, Rubber | £2 |
| Combat Corset, Steel | £12 |
| Cowl, Deathwatch | £15 |
| Gauntlets, Chain Mail | £4/10s/- |
| Gauntlets, Leather | £1/10s/- |
| Gauntlets, Plated Leather | £10/10s/- |
| Gauntlets, Rubber | 15s |
| Gauntlets, Plate | £6/10s/- |
| Helmet, Deathwatch, | £20 |
| Helmet, Mesh | £1 |
| Helmet, Reinforced Leather | £1/10s/- |
| Helmet, Reinforced Rubber | 10s/- |
| Helmet, Steel | £3+ |
| Helmet, Integrated Respirator + | £3 |
| Leggings, Chain Mail | £10/5s/- |
| Leggings, Leather | £3/10s/- |
| Leggings, Leather Reinforced | £5 |
| Leggings, Plate | £25 |
| Leggings, Rubber | £2 |
| Leggings, Rubber Reinforced | £2/10s/- |
| Shirt, Chain Mail | £10 |
| Shirt, Chain Mail Sleeved | £18 |
| Shirt, Leather | £2 |
| Shirt, Leather Reinforced | £4 |
| Shirt, Rubber | £1/10s/- |
| Shirt, Rubber Reinforced | £3 |

## Melee Weapons

| | |
|---|---|
| Bayonet | 10s |
| Combat Knife | 5s |
| Combat Syringe | £5 |
| Cutlass | £2 |
| Exculpus | £25+ |
| Headsman's Axe | 15s |
| Holy Water Sprinkler | 6d |
| Knuckle Dusters | 5s |
| Polearm | 18s+ |
| Sap | 5d |
| Stake, Reinforced Wood | 3s+ |
| Stakes, Wood | 5d+ |
| Sword | £2+ |
| Sword Cane | £5+ |
| Truncheon | 10s |
| Two-Handed Sword | £8+ |

## Ranged Weapons

| | |
|---|---|
| Derringer | 18s |
| Derringer, Semi-Automatic | £1 |
| Elephant Gun | £15+ |
| Grenade, Cindiary | £5+ |
| Grenade, Explosive | £2+ |
| Flamethrower | £10+ |
| Kramer 2086 Bolt-Action Rifle | £3 |
| Magwitch Gravedigger 10-Bore Combat Shotgun | £4 |
| Magwitch Reaper | £6+ |

| | |
|---|---|
| Revolver | 18s+ |
| Revolver, Custom Heavy | £10+ |
| Revolver, Heavy | £2 |
| Revolver, Hold-Out | 8s |
| Schreck-Hutter Balefire | £8 |
| Schreck-Hutter Requieter | £12 |
| Schreck-Hutter Syringe Gun | £8 |
| Throwing Knife | 3s |
| Vickers Machine Gun | £200+ |
| Westgate Executioner | £5 |
| 12mm Semi-Automatic Pistol | |
| Westgate Firebrand | £12 |
| 40mm Grenade Launcher | £12 |

## Galvanic Weapons

| | |
|---|---|
| Dr. Merrifield's Pandemonius Timidifier | £80 |
| Grenade, Electro-Pulse | £10 |
| Stun Cane | £15+ |
| Stun Gloves, pair | £8 |
| Stun Prod | £10 |
| Van Haller Death Ray | £300+ |
| Van Haller Lightning Gun | £75+ |

## Ranged Weapon Accessories

| | |
|---|---|
| Cartridge Belt | 5s |
| Firearm Cleaning Kit | 10s |
| Gun Brace | £1/10s/- |
| Shoulder Holster | 5s |
| Telescopic Sight, x2 Magnification | 15s |
| Telescopic Sight, x3 Magnification | £2 |
| Telescopic Sight, x5 Magnification | £5 |

## Tools & Equipment

The following price list is for new items available for purchase throughout the metropolis.

| | |
|---|---|
| Backpack, Canvas | 1s |
| Binoculars, Field | £1 |
| Bolt Cutters | 4s |
| Box Camera | £3 |
| Camera Slates (packet of twelve) | 6s |
| Camping Gear (including tent) | £3 |
| Chain (per foot) | 4d |
| Compass | 10s |
| Crowbar | 2s |
| Field Cooking Kit | 15s |
| Finger Printing Kit | 10s |
| Gas Blowtorch | 15s |
| Gas Mask, Equestrian | £1 |
| Glass Cutter | 4d |
| Goggles | 12s |
| Goggles, Tinted | £1/10s/- |
| Goggles, Photo-Reactive | £4 |
| Gramophone | £3 |
| Gramophone Record | 10s |
| Hacksaw | 4s |
| Handcuffs | 1s |
| Hatchet | 2s |
| Knife, Small | 10d |
| Knife, Folding (Small) | 15d |
| Lantern, Bull's-Eye | 4s |
| Lantern Oil (quart) | 5d |
| Lock Picks | 2s |
| Magnifying Glass | 12s |
| Map of London | 4s |
| Matches (box) | 1d |
| Meat Cleaver | 2s |
| Metal File | 2s |
| Padlock, Cheap | 10d |
| Padlock, Quality | 5s |
| Pencils (dozen) | 8d |
| Photo Developing Kit | 18s |

| | |
|---|---|
| Rope (per ten feet) | 5d |
| Saw | 3s |
| Shovel | 4s |
| Spy Glass | 17s |
| Telephone | £3 |
| Typewriter | £2/14s/- |
| Water Bottle, | 5s |
| Wheelbarrow | 5s |
| Wire Cutters | 3s |
| Whistle | 10d |
| Writing Paper (per ream) | £1/10s/- |
| Writing Paper, Highest Quality (per ream) | £2/10s/- |

## Galvanic Devices

| | |
|---|---|
| Electrical Lamp | 10s+ |
| Electrical Lamp, Surgical | £5 |
| Electrical Torch | 5s |
| Field Generator | £20 |
| Field Radio (Transmitter/Receiver) | £4 |
| Galvanic Grill | £2/10s/- |
| Home Console Radio | £2 |
| Aetherically Grounded Gloves | 15s |
| Plasma Lamp | £1+ |
| Tattoo Machine | £1+ |
| Tattoo Machine Needle | 2s |

## Undertaker Gear

| | |
|---|---|
| Animate Restraints | 10s |
| Dust Kit | 12s+ |
| Piercing Irons | 10s |

## Scientific & Medical Equipment

| | |
|---|---|
| Alchemical Lab, Complete | £200+ |
| Alchemical Lab, Travelling | £20 |
| Anatomical Preservation System, | £50+ |
| Artificial Womb, Anathema-Grade | £300 |
| Artificial Womb, Homunculus-Grade | £75 |
| Autoclave | £20 |
| Bandages (one dozen) | 1d |
| Beaker | 2s |
| Biogalvanic Reanimation Lab, Complete | £150+ |
| Ethanol, Laboratory-Grade (per half gallon) | 5d |
| Forceps | 10s |
| Industrial Crucible | £5 |
| Interface Jar | £50+ |
| Medical Valise Kit | 12s |
| Microscope | £2+ |
| Microscope Box Camera | £3 |
| Operating Room Furnishings | £40+ |
| Operating Table with Restraints | £4 |
| Operating Table with Restraints (Folding) | |
| Scales | £1+ |
| Scalpel Set | 6s |
| Straight Jacket | £2 |
| Surgical Saw Set | 8s |
| Syringe | 10d |
| Test Tube | 10d |
| Text Book, Anatomical | £3+ |
| Text Book, Alchemical | £10+ |
| Text Book, Galvanic | £10+ |
| Text Book, Medical Reference | £5+ |
| Wheel Chair | £10 |

## Medical Care

| | |
|---|---|
| Invalid Care (one month) | £12 |
| Medical Treatment by a Surgeon (per day) | £1 |
| Medical Care by a Physician (per day) | £5+ |

## Prosthetic Grafts

| | |
|---|---|
| Oraculum | £50 |
| Rattler | £10 |
| Ticker | £45 |

## Accommodations

Finer hotel rooms come with electrical lighting, access to shared bathrooms on each floor, and maid service.

| | |
|---|---|
| Hotel, Lavish West End (per night) | £5 |
| Hotel, Respectable (per night) | 10s+ |
| Hotel, Average (per night) | 6s |
| House | £650+ |
| House, Large (per month) | £60+ |
| House, Modest (per month) | £30 |
| Lodging House Room with a Double Bed (per night) | 8d |
| Lodging House Room with a Single Bed (per night) | 4d |
| Lodging House Room with a Double Bed (per week) | 2s/6d |
| Lodging House Room with a Single Bed (per week) | 1s/3d |
| Mansion | £1000+ |

## Groceries

Natural farm-raised food is very expensive within the metropolis. The food is shipped in by train daily from farmlands across the Empire. As the blight spreads, more and more farmland is lost yearly, causing price inflation and scarcity of goods. The poor subsist on single-celled protein food grown in tanks beneath the metropolis, commonly called "scop."

| | |
|---|---|
| Beef (per pound) | 12s |
| Bread, wheat (per loaf) | 5s |
| Eggs (each) | 1s |
| Fruit and Vegetables (per pound) | £1 |
| Milk (per pint) | 10s |
| Scop Stew/Porridge (per gallon) | 6d |
| Scop, Dried/Block (per pound) | 2d |

## Dining

Poor meals generally consist of flavoured scop, stale bread, and gamy meat supplemented by rat, eel, and sickly fish from the Thames. Most poor food is boiled or fried. Soup is made from left-over odds and ends. Often it is little more than meat grease and dried-out scop.

Fine meals consist of relatively fresh vegetables and meats. Dining in the West End will cost four times the listed price.

| | |
|---|---|
| Breakfast, Fine | 7s |
| Breakfast, Poor | 1s |
| Lunch, Fine | 15s |
| Lunch, Poor | 2s |
| Dinner, Fine | £1/10s/- |
| Dinner, Poor | 4s |
| Soup (per bowl) | 4d |
| Street Vendor's Snacks (Jellied Eels, Roasted Chestnuts, etc) | 1 d |

## Spirits & Beer

The following prices represent the average cost for liquor in Neo-Victorian public houses. The cost of refreshments in finer establishments, such as those in the West End, is at least twice the listed price. The cost of drinks at a private gentleman's club should be five times the prices listed below.

| | |
|---|---|
| Absinthe (bottle) | £3+ |
| Absinthe (glass) | 10s+ |
| Beer (half pint) | 6s |
| Beer Poor Quality (half pint) | 3s |
| Beer (pint) | 10s |
| Gin (bottle) | 12s |
| Slap (bottle) | 3d |
| Slap "Gin" (bottle) | 9d |
| Wine (bottle) | £1 |
| Wine, Fine (bottle) | £3+ |
| Whiskey (bottle) | 15s |

## Entertainment

| | |
|---|---|
| Cigarettes (20) | 2d |
| Novel | 2s+ |
| Penny Dreadful | 1d |
| Pipe | 2s |
| Playing Cards | 4d |
| Prostitute, Working Class (back alley congress) | 3d |
| Prostitute, Working Class (night) | 8d+ |
| Public Bath, First Class | 7s+ |
| Public Bath, Cold | 5p |
| Music Hall Attendance, Working Class Seats | 4d |
| Music Hall Attendance, Upper Class Seats | 10s+ |
| Theatre, West End Box | £2+ |
| Theatre, West End (Seated) | 10s+ |
| Theatre, West End (Standing) | 2s/6d+ |
| Tobacco (tin) | 6d |
| Violet Wand | £1+ |
| Violin with case | £2+ |

## Transportation

| | |
|---|---|
| Hansom Cab | £12+ |
| Hansom Cab Fare (per mile) | 6d |
| Cart | £12 |
| Coach | £40 |
| Horse, Cart | £25 |
| Horse, Racing | £200+ |
| Horse, Riding | £50+ |
| Horse Stable Fee (per day) | 5s |
| Horse Stable Fee (per month) | £4 |
| Omnibus Fare | 5d |
| River Steamer Fare | 5d+ |
| Row Boat | 10s |
| Saddle and Tack | £2/12s/- |
| Steamer Rental (per day) | £6+ |
| Train, London to Liverpool | 20s/6d |
| Train, London to Dover | 10s |
| Tube Fare | 2d |
| Tube Fare, First Class | 2s |

## Communication

| | |
|---|---|
| Phone Call (per three minutes) | 2d |
| Postage within London, Letter | 1d |
| Postage within London, Parcel | 1s |
| Telegram (per twelve words) | 6d |

## Services

| | |
|---|---|
| Anti-agapic Treatment (see Chapter 6, pages 309-310) | Price varies |
| Locksmith (Key Manufacture) | 2s |
| Locksmith (Pick Lock) | 5d |
| Mourner, (three day vigil) | £5+ |
| Mourner's Guild Dues (yearly) | £10 |
| Sin Eater (one meal) | 6d |
| Tattoo, Small | 5s+ |
| Tattoo, Large | 15s+ |
| Tattoo, Sleeve or Back | £5+ |
| Undertaker, Bounty (per animate) | 5s |
| Undertaker, Bounty (per thrope) | £5 |
| Undertaker, Bounty (per vampire) | £10 |

# Neo-Victorian Fashion

### A Concise Guide to Metropolitan Fashion

## Black is the New Black

Bored with simple suits, homogenized gowns, and traditional materials, the nouveau chic grab at vintage, foreign, and futuristic themes with which to twist their regalia. These influences add intrigue to a metropolis concerned mostly with mourning, modesty, and self-defence.

Despite this, the dominant wardrobe remains that of the late 1800s. Deviations from this style are generally variations on a theme: a fashionable lady may wear a Gibson Girl bouffant, a bustled gown with a mandarin collar, and a kabuki-themed gas mask. With so many centuries spent in the same style, mutations are natural and necessary. Top hats, bustles, corsets, and moustaches are everywhere, but their sizes, shapes, and materials change with the drifting trends and the whim of the wearer.

Durable and easy to clean, high-fashion rubber clothing has been a popular alternative to traditional materials for years. Indeed, rubber parasols have surpassed the popularity of lace in the past century.

### If You Have to Ask, You Cannot Afford It

Wealth is the largest factor affecting the variety and quality of a citizen's wardrobe. Those in the upper social strata are expected to spend a great deal of time and money on maintaining fashionable attire. Cleaning and repair bills are astronomical due to the filthy streets and smogs, and after a while, clothing tends to simply fall apart.

Another factor is profession. Specialization in clothing is strongly geared toward the practicalities. Whores must balance allure with accessibility. Street vendors invest most strongly in their masks since they spend all day in open air. Clerks use the majority of their clothing budgets to purchase good-quality galoshes, gamps, and overcoats to shield their officewear between home and their place of business.

The very poor, forced to spend much of their time on the street, simply wear as much clothing as possible, usually keeping the tougher stuff closer to their bodies and piling the rags and remnants on top in layers.

## Second-Hand Clothing

A great deal of clothing worn by the lower and middle classes comes from second-hand clothing dealers. Collected from morgues, purchased cheaply from debt-ridden aristocrats, or acquired in the course of violent crime, less-than-new clothes are sold in a range of venues. The better-quality and lesser-worn items are found at moderate prices in boutiques and sometimes will be sold alongside new items. Clothes stained with blood and soot or damaged by battle are usually sold in less-reputable establishments to poorer consumers.

## Gas Masks & Respirators

The gas mask is the single most important element of any ensemble that is meant to be worn out of doors. The Neo-Victorians are never far from their masks, perhaps leaving them on pegs in the coatroom during parties, but just as likely toting them at all times. The basic gas mask design is military and utilitarian, shaped more for battle than the promenade. Designers, however, have rectified this aesthetic failing. Masks are now as chic as bustles and walking sticks and come in a dazzling variety of styles. Trends ebb and flow, visiting every shape from sleek Teutonic minimalism, to gold-plated Rococo, to Noh-influenced Orientalism.

Masks come with attached eyepieces or are worn with goggles. Some clamp to the wearer with rubber straps, others with leather, and still others with silk ribbon or even spectacle-style ear-wires (to avoid mussing fancy hair arrangements). The fashion masks often are hollow, with sockets for an interchangeable filter. Oftentimes, several compatible masks are possessed along with one filter.

Filter canisters with embedded perfumes are a brisk trade, as are "recreational" canisters with just a hint of rose-scented ether.

The masks used by law enforcement and the Deathwatch are still very much utilitarian, with only a few nods, if any, to high-fashion's frill and filigree. Undertakers and other freelancers are prone to tinkering with their masks, customizing the form and function as they see fit. They are adept with the soldering iron and the needle and will cobble together the most useful bits of several masks into one Frankensteinian gestalt.

## Ladies Pinch; Whores Use Rouge

A lady of style keeps a trove of cosmetics on her vanity: white, green, and lavender powders for face and body; red salve for the lips; a tiny pot of kohl for darkening the eyelashes and eyebrows; and, yes, rouge powder for cheeks, ears, nostrils, and eyelids. Tincture of foxglove is administered ocularly to put a sparkle in the eye and a skip in the heart. A lady's goal is to achieve a doll-like, porcelain surface, calling to mind both youth and undeath. The vampiric influence on society has only underscored the Victorian obsession with delicate perfection, and the Neo-Victorians are charmed by the vampire aesthetic.

Henna hair dyes are secretly used to conceal grey or lime paste applied for a bleaching effect. A variety of clothing dyes have been adapted for use on the hair, and more daring forays into hair colouring are being conducted by the avant-garde.

## Indelible Ink

In the Victorian Era, tattooing enjoyed a vogue that still continues today. In a crowded and dangerous metropolis, individual identification in case of death is extremely important. While safety-conscious tattooing began with simple and small marks, such as a star or anchor on the ankle, the yen for elaboration has won out. Current tattoo designs cover the gamut from filigree decoration to painterly depictions of people and animals. Descriptions of wanted or missing persons will contain a detailed list of body modifications, including surgical and cosmetic work.

## Unmentionables

Perhaps the most infamous item of Victorian clothing is the corset, or "stays." The corset is de rigueur for females of all ages and is worn for a wide variety of reasons. Corsets create the ideal feminine form: a tiny waist, lifted and bifurcated bosom, and flaring hips. They are also advertised to correct a variety of ills: poor posture, malformations of the skeleton and innards, and even hysteria. "Medical" corsets often include strap-on magnetic pads for external application to the uterine area of the abdomen, prescribed to ease a variety of feminine ills.

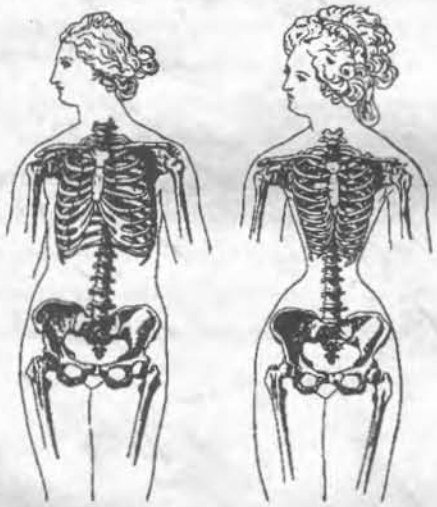
The genuine medical establishment is purple-faced with indignation over the self-mutilations undergone for the sake of silhouette as well as the lies of the corset manufacturers. These protestations fall on fashionably deaf ears. In an era of celebrated mortality, it is better to be breathless and dainty than healthful and coarse.

In construction, corsets vary in shape and purpose but maintain common elements. They are all "boned," stiffened with long pieces of a rigid material such as steel (either thin strips or long, flattened springs), "whalebone" (not actually bone but rather baleen from krill-eating whales), and in rare

cases, reed, wood, or even stiff cording. Lacing goes up the back to adjust the fit, and a stiff metal busk with hook and eye closures goes down the front for easier undressing.

Generally, stylish women own one or two everyday corsets that constrict them down to a fashionable but not dangerous size. At night they will change into cotton "sleeping stays" that are slightly looser, allowing more room to breathe. Parties, theatre attendance and portrait sitting call for the stiffest and tiniest corsets of all; these are usually not worn for more than a few hours at a time and often cause dizziness, tingling and coldness in the extremities, and of course, unconsciousness. Gentlemen are all well practiced in spotting swooning women and sweeping them to the nearest fainting couch, where they are revived with smelling salts and in extreme cases, the snipping of their staylaces. Men of style carry delicate pocket knives for this purpose, as well as for on-the-go moustache trimming, shaving pilling from felt hats, and the removal of detritus from underneath fingernails.

Little girls of the aristocratic and middle classes are corseted early to encourage the proper developments of the ribcage. Particularly rich or daring parents of hearty little daughters will occasionally make appointments for the surgical removal of a pair of lower ribs to make room for a few more inches of constriction. The period of convalescence following a ribectomy or "Eve's Debt" (a facetious name recalling Biblical Eve's birth from one of Adam's ribs) is cause for friendly teatime visits to the sickbed, the patient lightening the mood by spooning a bit of her laudanum prescription into the Earl Grey. Many women trained to the corset from an early age find it impossible to support the weight of their own upper bodies without a corset because their dorsal and abdominal muscles have atrophied. This condition is referred to as "Hinge Syndrome," as the afflicted tend to bend limply in the middle. Tightlacers also endure various problems with their internal organs, including prolapsed uteruses.



Corsetry is not limited to women and girls, and male corsets are becoming more common. A combination of interest in the deviancy of cross-dressing, a modern urge for body modification, and a desire for a slimmer figure has led to at least one large corset manufacturer, Vespid & Vespid's Vise-Fit Unmentionables, to create a men's line and even to run tasteful advertisements for it. Men's corsets, unless they are being used for gender modification, are generally conical, and emphasize a taper from broad shoulders to slim hips. It is not uncommon for aristocratic lovers to lace each other tight before venturing out to the night's revels, and indeed this is the subject of many erotic woodcuts and French picture postcards.

The Neo-Victorians do not limit their corset affections to the style of a single era, and shapes that were fashionable from the 1700s through 1905 regularly make appearances, as do inventive new patterns from the bleeding-edge designers.

## Combat Corsetry

Traditional corset construction restricts movement as well as waist size, and this is burdensome to women employed in physically active professions. Flexible corsets are in great demand by prostitutes, actresses, and labourers. Experimental designs using hinges, shifting plates, gills and gussets are constantly being developed and tested. Working corsets tend to be shorter, ending below the breasts and above the hips to allow maximum movement. Separate brassieres support and augment the bosom when underbust corsets are worn.

Female Undertakers are fond of leather or rubber stays with spiralled steel boning, which allows some bending and also wards off the claws and teeth of the ravening undead. Vespid & Vespid makes a specialty calfskin corset with external pockets for optional steel plating. "Straight from the Massacre to the Minuet!" proclaims the advertisement.

Early in their training, Mourners are instructed in the construction of custom stays that are designed to be silent, flexible, protective, and absolutely chic. This corset pattern is considered a Guild secret, and only Mourners have access to it. It is the envy of every style-minded funeral attendee that sees the resulting slim line and ease of movement.

## Metropolitan Battledress

Although large-scale Plague outbreaks within city walls are relatively uncommon, protective clothing is still considered necessary. Defensive items have taken on an aesthetic role in the normal citizen's everyday wardrobe. A recent vampire outbreak, though contained quickly, spurred a trend towards

decorative "neck corsets" made of leather and gold- or silver-plated steel. Trimmed with lace, ribbon, or jet beads, these items are both functional and protective. Some even come pre-punctured with "fang marks," lending an air of danger. Filigree, scale, and chain have replaced lace and silk as the most popular materials for lady's gloves.

Leather and rubber are the most common protective materials. Men and women wear leather overcoats when venturing outdoors, often with rubber over the top to protect against the corrosive smogs and rains. Chain mail is likewise common, usually in conjunction with the leather outerclothes.

Weather is a major concern for anyone venturing outdoors. Especially during precipitation, such as ashy snow or acid rain, thick rubber umbrellas with floor-length rubber veils shield fashionable ladies travelling from home to revelries. This also provides a modicum of protection from grime and corrosion. Galoshes are buttoned over dainty boots, and pedestrians take a winding path to avoid puddles of offal and chemicals.

# Explanation of Goods
## Clothing & Accoutrement

### Respirators

**Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Respirator | 10s |
| Respirator, Brass-Plated | £2 |
| Respirator, Silver-Plated | £5 |
| Respirator, Gold-Plated | £12 |
| Respirator Filter Replacement | 3s |

The toxic quality of London's air has ensured that virtually no man, woman, or child ventures outdoors without the protection of a respirator or gas mask. Those who do risk contracting all manner of lethal ailments, from asthma to black lung, and soon find themselves winded, filthy, and gasping for air. Even the destitute do what they can to get their hands on functional masks, often settling for failing filters, filthy cloth masks, or water-soaked rags.

Most respirators are rubber, glass, and brass apparatuses, but leather masks are not uncommon. The respirators themselves rely on a wide variety of filters to clean the air breathed. The most complex systems utilize redundant filters to ensure the wearer receives the cleanest air possible. The smogs of London are so bad that filters must be replaced continually. The most expensive can operate for up to two weeks of continuous outdoor exposure.

In addition to the protection from the smogs (see Chapter 2, page 115), a character wearing a respirator gains 1 point of armour on his head (see Armour, below).

The cheapest masks are simply cloth and offer little, if any, actual protection. So-called "dust masks" are said to reduce particles breathed by up to twenty percent. Cloth masks quickly become filthy and must be carefully maintained or replaced if any protection is to be obtained from them. These masks do little to cut the smell of the city streets, and often the lower classes soak these masks in cheap perfume to cover the stench.

# Armour

The many dangers of the Neo-Victorian world have necessitated the widespread use of armour. Leather armour has been worn consistently since the Plague Years by citizens seeking to guard themselves from the infectious bite of animates. For Undertakers and those who make their livelihood beyond the fortifications, venturing out into the Wasteland without some form of armour is unthinkable. Even within the confines of London, where Plague outbreaks are thankfully rare, armoured clothing has become almost as commonplace as respirators or top hats.

Most Neo-Victorian armour consists of layers of leather, rubber, and steel. Though rubber and leather are less effective against modern weapons, they provide ample protection from the scratches, bites, and fluids of animates. Heavier armour incorporates metal plates and rings sewn or bolted in interlocking layers over leather garments. Undertakers have been known to take the additional precaution of wearing chain mail shirts beneath their leather vestments or armoured long coats.

Other types of armour are less common but are still occasionally worn. Finely lacquered Asian styles are very expensive and difficult to manufacture; however, the metropolis boasts several armouries adept in their creation. These armouries were originally founded by immigrants who settled in London before the Plague, bringing their traditions and specialized knowledge with them. Such armour is prohibitively expensive yet remains in high demand, though most suits are destined for museums or private collectors rather than for fighting men.

Embracing armour as another fashion trend, many aristocrats prefer ornate leather armour with gold filigree and fine flourishes. These rakes think nothing of spending thousands of pounds to look their best while strutting through the streets in imposing, armoured top coats. The tastes of the upper classes have led to something of a renaissance in traditional armour. Full suits of plate, while seldom if ever worn, are commissioned as centrepieces for the home. Personal armouries have become features of many upper-class Neo-Victorian homes.

### Tailored Armour

High-fashion armour is extremely expensive. Tailoring a suit of armour to ensure a perfect fit generally adds fifty percent to its cost. Adding delicate decorative touches will increase the cost greatly. Players who wish their aristocratic characters to look their best should expect to spend three or four times the listed prices for their personalized armour. Those who are willing to accept a lower standard can purchase stamped, or mass-produced, decorative armour at twice the usual cost.

#### Keeping Covered

One of the chief reasons for the popularity of armour is to reduce the risk of infection from animate bites. Remember, it only takes a Serious Wound to become infected by the bite of an animate.

## The Rules

A piece of armour covers a particular portion of a character's body. The amount of protection provided by the armour, represented by an associated value, depends on the type of armour worn. When a character is hit in a location covered by armour, the value of the armour covering that location is subtracted from the damage roll.

A character wearing a respirator is considered to have 1 point of armour on his head.

Armour points stack unless the description states otherwise, but a character cannot have more than 3 points of armour in any one location. If the character has more than 3 points of armour in a location, he is treated as having 3 points when resolving damage rolls.

Armour is heavy and can slow a character down by reducing his co-ordination. A character can have a single point of armour in all locations without affecting his Coordination. If the character has 2 points of armour in one or more locations, he suffers -1 Coordination. If the character has 3 or more points of armour in one or more locations, he suffers -2. Coordination penalties for armour are not cumulative.

For example, Aron's Dhampir character, Balthazar, wears an armoured coat over chain mail sleeves and a leather shirt. The armoured coat grants Balthazar 1 point of armour on his arms, legs, and torso. The chain mail sleeves give Balthazar 2 additional points of armour on his arms. The leather shirt gives him 1 point of torso armour. Altogether, Balthazar has 3 points of armour on his arms, 1 on each leg, and 2 on his torso. Because Balthazar has 3 points of armour covering at least one location of his body, he suffers -2 Coordination.

### Damaging Armour

Armour is designed to absorb the brunt of attacks intended to inflict grievous injury on the wearer. Over time, armour will begin to lose its structural integrity and must be repaired or replaced. Anytime a character suffers an Incapacitating or Fatal Wound to a location of the body covered by chain, leather, or rubber armour, the value of the armour is decreased by 1 in that location. The value of Deathwatch or plate armour is only reduced if he character suffers a Fatal Wound.

The Coordination penalty for wearing heavy armour is not adjusted if the armour is damaged unless the character removes the damaged portion of armour.

# Armour Descriptions

## Arm Bracers

**Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Leather | £5/10s/- |
| Plate | £30 |
| Rubber | £2/10s/- |
| Reinforced Leather | £12/10s/- |
| Reinforced Rubber | £5 |

Arm bracers are protective coverings worn over the arms. Generally sold in pairs, they can be purchased singularly for half the price listed above.

Leather and rubber arm bracers provide 1 point of armour to the wearer's arms and can be worn under chain or plate armour. Reinforced leather, reinforced rubber, and plate arm bracers provide 2 points of armour to the wearer's arms. Plate arm bracers can be worn over chain, leather, or rubber armour.

## Armoured Boots

**Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Reinforced Leather | £7/10s/- |
| Reinforced Rubber | £4/10s/- |

These are steel-plated rubber or leather boots. Armoured boots are not particularly fashionable, but they do offer a great deal of protection to anyone who can afford them. Armoured boots give the wearer 3 points of armour to his feet without reducing his Coordination.

## Armoured Coat

**Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Leather | £40 |
| Rubber | £5 |

Armoured coats are full-length coats that integrate steel plates, studs, and bands for added protection. Stylish and easy to put on and take off, armoured coats are among the most common Neo-Victorian armour. Leather coats are often favoured over rubber coats for reasons of style. An armoured coat gives the wearer 1 point of armour on his arms, legs, and torso. Armoured coats can be worn over other types of armour.

## Armour, Deathwatch

**Cost:** £125

The signature armour and uniform of the Deathwatch is known throughout the Empire for its high degree of protection and distinctive imposing appearance. Deathwatch armour is manufactured by the best Neo-Victorian armouries. Prohibitively expensive on the open market, each armoured uniform must adhere to the Deathwatch's strict standards and guidelines.

Upon acceptance into this branch of the Armed Forces, each soldier is issued a full suit of leather body armour reinforced with riveted steel plates, including plated leather gauntlets and boots. The gauntlets are fully articulated to preserve the maximum degree of manual dexterity possible. Each soldier also wears a steel helmet and gas mask over a padded leather cowl. Finally, a heavy leather coat is worn over the rest of the armour. Deathwatch armour offers incredible protection against animate attacks and gunshots alike.

Deathwatch armour is thoroughly modern, designed with maximum mobility in mind. Evenly distributed armoured plates move easily with the human body. The standard issue gas masks allow for a great deal of visibility. In the field, Deathwatch personnel communicate with a combination of barked out orders and hand signs.

Deathwatch armour gives the wearer 3 points of armour in all locations, though the wearer only suffers –1 Coordination. While wearing the helmet, cowl, and mask, the character suffers a –2 penalty to Wit – Perception rolls.

## Armour, Full Chain Mail

**Cost:** £30/10s/-

Full chain-mail armour consists of padding, a sleeved chain shirt, chain leggings, a chain coif, and chain gloves. Though heavy, modern chain mail is evenly distributed over the body to reduce encumbrance as much as possible. Full chain gives the wearer 2 points of armour to all locations. For an additional £10 the full chain armour can be grounded to the aether, adding an additional 2 points of armour versus galvanic weapons.

## Armour, Full Leather

**Cost:** £12/10s/-

Full leather armour consists of a leather shirt, leather arm bracers, a leather coif, and leather gloves. Leather armour is fairly light and does little to restrict movement; however, it is easily scuffed and worn and must be continually polished. Full leather armour gives the wearer 1 point of armour to all locations.

### Armour, Full Plate

**Cost:** £80/5s/-

Neo-Victorian full plate armour serves as both protection and status symbol. Classically inclined aristocrats constitute the primary market for this type of armour. Modern plate suits are ingeniously hinged to allow as much range of motion as possible while providing the unquestionable protection of heavy steel. The armour typically consists of padding, a helmet with integrated respirator, breast plate, plate arm bracers, plate leggings, and gauntlets. Full plate gives the wearer 2 points of armour to all locations. For an additional £10, the full plate armour can be aetherically grounded, adding an additional 2 points of armour versus galvanic weapons.

The helmet respirator costs an additional £5.

### Armour, Full Reinforced Leather

**Cost:** £20

A full suit of reinforced leather armour is composed of the same elements as the leather armour described above, but metal strips, studs, and plates are integrated into the leather for greater protection and durability. Reinforced leather armour restricts motion a little more than standard leather armour. Reinforced leather armour gives the wearer 2 point of armour in all locations.

### Armour, Full Reinforced Rubber

**Cost:** £15

A full suit of reinforced rubber armour is composed of the same elements as the rubber armour described below, except that the material is integrated with metal in the same fashion as reinforced leather armour. Like standard rubber armour, reinforced armour squeaks slightly in motion, giving the wearer a –1 modifier on Shadow skill rolls. Reinforced rubber armour gives the wearer 2 point of armour to all locations and 1 additional point versus galvanic weapons.

### Armour, Full Rubber

**Cost:** £7/10s/-

Rubber armour is most common among the lower middle class who cannot afford proper leather or chain armour. Though functional, it lacks the aesthetic appeal of more classical varieties of armour. Part of the problem is that rubber armour is poorly vented and tends to stew the wearer in his own juices, keeping it from catching on amongst the fashion conscious.

Full rubber armour consists of a rubber shirt, rubber arm bracers, a rubber coif, and rubber gloves. Rubber armour does not restrict movement, but it does squeak a little, giving the wearer a –1 modifier on Shadow skill rolls. Full rubber armour gives the wearer 1 point of armour to all locations and 1 additional point versus galvanic weapons.

### Armour, Lacquered

**Cost:** £250+

These are ornate suits of armour in the Asian style. Though seldom worn in combat, each suit is fully functional and gives the wearer 2 points of armour in all locations.

### Breast Plate

**Cost:** £25

A breast plate is a section of plate armour worn over the torso. Breast plates may be worn over chain, leather, or rubber armour for greater protection. A breast plate gives the wearer 2 points of armour to his torso.

### Chain Mail Sleeve

**Cost:** £15

Chain mail sleeves are garments of armour worn over the arms. Though generally sold in pairs, they can be purchased singly for half the above price. Chain mail sleeves provide the wearer's arm with 2 points of armour. Chain sleeves may be worn over leather or rubber armour or under plate armour.

### Coif

**Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Chain Mail | £4/10s/- |
| Leather | £2/10s/- |
| Rubber | 6s |

A coif is an armoured hood, traditionally made of chain mail. A character wearing a chain coif has 2 points of armour on his head. A character wearing a leather or rubber coif has 1 point of armour on his head. Anyone wearing a coif suffers -1 on Wit – Perception rolls to hear.

### Collar

**Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Leather | 5s |
| Plate | 18s |
| Rubber | 10d |

Originally intended for protection against the bite of a vampire, armoured collars are more fashion statement than defensive device. The wearer of a leather or rubber collar has 1 point of armour around his neck. A character wearing a plate collar has 2 points of neck armour.

### Combat Corset

**Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Leather | £5 |
| Mourner | £20+ |
| Rubber | £2 |
| Steel | £12 |

Worn under the clothing, or sometimes over it in the case of the low born, armoured corsets have been popular since the Reclamation. These corsets are not only functional and decorative but also provide 1 point of armour to the wearer's torso.

The construction of the armoured corsets worn by Mourners is a tightly held Guild secret. Each corset is tailor fitted to its owner at considerable time and expense. The ingenious armour grants the wearer 2 points of armour to her torso but does not reduce her Coordination.

### Cowl, Deathwatch

**Cost:** £15

The Deathwatch cowl is a thick leather coif designed to be worn with an integrated respirator. A Deathwatch helmet is generally worn over the cowl to ensure maximum protection. The cowl-respirator combo gives the wearer 1 point of armour on his head. A Deathwatch cowls does not hinder a character's senses.

## Gauntlets

**Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Chain Mail | £4/10s/- |
| Leather | £1/10s/- |
| Plated Leather | £10/10s/- |
| Rubber | 15s |
| Plate | £6/10s/- |

Generally sold in pairs, gauntlets are pieces of armour that cover the hands, wrist, and forearms. Neo-Victorian gauntlets may be made of thick leather, rubber, or chain mail, but those covered in riveted steel are vastly more popular among clientele who can afford them.

Leather and rubber gauntlets give a wearer 1 point of armour to the hands and may be worn under chain or plate. A character wearing chain-mail or plate gauntlets has 2 points of armour on his hands but suffers -2 on non-combat skill rolls for actions taken with his hands.

First manufactured for use by the Deathwatch, ingeniously made plated leather gauntlets are designed to allow maximum manual dexterity. These items provide 3 points of armour to a wearer's hands, and the wearer suffers no penalties to actions made with his hands while wearing the gauntlets.

## Helmet

**Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mesh | £1 |
| Reinforced Leather | £1/10s/- |
| Reinforced Rubber | 10s |
| Steel | £3+ |
| Integrated Respirator | +£3 |

Helmets of all styles are popular throughout Neo-Victorian society, from the ornate great helms of the aristocracy to the simple stamped-steel artefacts passed down through lower-class families. Modern helms either integrate respirators or are made to fit over separate respirators. Mesh helmets are cheap alternatives to steel helms and are generally used indoors, especially among those who expect to come face to face with animates.

A character wearing a steel or mesh helm has 2 points of armour on his head but suffers a –2 penalty to Wit – Perception rolls. A character wearing a reinforced leather or rubber helmet only has 1 point of armour on his head, but suffers no penalties.

## Helmet, Deathwatch

**Cost:** £20

Based on the "battle bowlers" of the Reclamation era, the modern Deathwatch helmet, sometimes called a "skull cap," is worn over the Deathwatch respirator and leather cowl. Made of hardened manganese steel, the shallow bowl design allows the use of relatively thick steel that can be formed in a single pressing while maintaining the helmet's thickness.

Surplus Deathwatch helmets are sold throughout the metropolis and are much treasured by Undertakers who eschew the trademark top hat of that profession.

A character wearing a Deathwatch helmet has 2 points of armour on his head but suffers a –2 penalty to Wit – Perception rolls.

## Leggings

**Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Chain Mail | £10/5s/- |
| Leather | £3/10s/- |
| Leather Reinforced | £5 |
| Plate | £25 |
| Rubber | £2 |
| Rubber Reinforced | £2/10s/- |

Leggings are sections of armour worn over the legs. Generally sold in pairs, they can be purchased singularly for half the above price.

Leather and rubber leggings provide 1 point of armour to the wearer's legs and can be worn under chain or plate armour. Chain-mail, reinforced leather, reinforced rubber, and plate leggings provide 2 points of armour to the wearer's legs. Plate leggings can be worn over chain, leather, or rubber armour.

## Shirt

**Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Chain Mail | £10 |
| Chain Mail Sleeved | £18 |
| Leather | £2 |
| Leather Reinforced | £4 |
| Rubber | £1/10s/- |
| Rubber Reinforced | £3 |

Armoured shirts are sections of armour that cover the torso. Chain-mail shirts are popular among Undertakers, but most civilians prefer leather for its greater comfort. Leather and rubber shirts provide 1 point of armour to the wearer's torso and can be worn under chain or plate armour. Chain-mail, reinforced leather, reinforced rubber, and plate shirts provide 2 points of armour to the wearer's torso. Breast plates can be worn over chain, leather, or rubber armour. All armoured shirts can be worn over armoured corsets.

# Melee Weapon

Weapons have been a common sight on the streets of the metropolis since the Reclamation, and few citizens would consider leaving their homes unarmed. Traditional cleaving implements have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity among Undertakers and those forced to deal with animates first hand. Aristocrats have taken to carrying sabres and sword canes for fashion as much as protection.

Few constables can be bothered to stop a citizen carrying a weapon in plain sight, provided he is not brandishing it with threatening intent. Most often, even the most heavily armed men are allowed to go about their business provided they are sober and respectful of authority.

## The Rules

Each melee weapon has a set of attributes that describe its effectiveness during play.

**Cost:** This is how expensive the weapon is.

**Skill:** This is the skill that governs the use of the weapon.

**Damage Modifier:** This is the number, along with the attacker's Vitality, that is added to the damage roll when resolving an attack with the weapon.

**Features:** Features are additional rules pertaining to the performance of the weapon.

### Bayonet

A bayonet is a dagger-like implement designed to fit over the muzzle of a rifle barrel. A weapon of last resort, the bayonet is used in close combat. The bayonet can be detached from the barrel and used as a combat knife (see below).

**Cost:** 10s

**Skill:** Melee Weapon

**Damage Modifier:** +1

**Features:** A character attempting to parry with a bayonet suffers -2 on his roll.

### Combat Knife

Combat knives are close combat weapons that are often fashioned from cut-down bayonets or swords. Some versions have a triangular stiletto blade for thrusting rather than a traditional knife blade. More expensive combat knives integrate "skull crushers," heavy-steel knuckle guards that double as knuckle dusters (see below).

**Cost:** 5s, with Skull Crusher +5s

**Skill:** Melee Weapon

**Damage Modifier:** +1

**Features:** A character attempting to parry with a combat knife suffers -2 on his roll.

### Combat Syringe

As its name suggests, the combat syringe is more of a weapon than a medical implement. When closed, it appears to be a long metal and glass cylinder. A retractable plate slides back to reveal an industrial needle of prodigious length. The syringe may hold a single dose of a drug or alchemical solution, which it delivers when thrust into the flesh of a victim (see The Catalogue, Chapter 6, pages 292 – 305). Combat syringes are sometimes used by near-suicidal Undertakers to deliver thrope reversion drugs.

**Cost:** £5

**Skill:** Melee Weapon

**Damage Modifier:** +0

**Features:** A combat syringe injects a dose of an alchemical solution or drug into the target when it inflicts a Flesh Wound or greater. Effects depend on the type of drug in the syringe.

Double the value of armour against combat syringe hits. If the syringe fails to inflict at least a Serious Wound against an armoured target, the needle breaks. Replacement needles cost 5s.

A combat syringe cannot be used to parry without destroying the weapon. A character attempting to parry with a combat syringe suffers -2 on his roll.

### Cutlass

The heavy-bladed cutlass is a favourite weapon among sailors, Undertakers, and Metropolitan Police.

**Cost:** £2

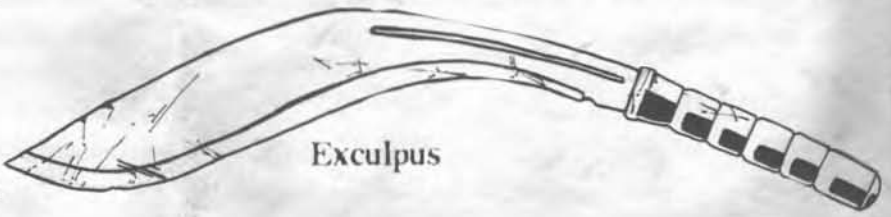
**Skill:** Melee Weapon

**Damage Modifier:** +3

**Features:** None

### Exculpus

The signature weapon of the Mourner's Guild, the Exculpus is a heavy curved knife reminiscent of the Nepalese Kukri. The weapon is designed to effortlessly remove the head of an animate. The watered-steel blade is exquisitely balanced and honed to a razor's edge. Each Mourner must master the Exculpus before completing her Guild apprenticeship. A Mourner is expected to carry



Exculpus

the weapon at all times throughout her life. Most carry no other arms. The weapon can be used singly or paired.

The Exculpus is very rarely sold on the open market. Each is hand-made for its owner through exclusive contracts with the Guild. The craftsmen knowledgeable in the creation of the Exculpus selfishly guard the secrets of its manufacture. Each blade takes weeks of intense labour to produce. Those that find their way into private hands are treasured by collectors and fetch incredible prices.

**Cost:** £25+
**Skill:** Melee Weapon
**Damage Bonus:** +2
**Features:** None

## Headsman's Axe

With a monstrously broad head nearly a metre in length and weighing over six pounds, the headman's axe is a Neo-Victorian two-handed battle axe favoured by Undertakers. The weapon is ideal for removing the heads or limbs from animates with a single stroke.

**Cost:** 15s
**Skill:** Melee Weapon
**Damage Modifier:** +4
**Features:** A character attempting to parry with a headman's axe suffers -2 on his roll.

## Holy Water Sprinkler

A favourite weapon of underworld enforcers throughout the metropolis, a "holy water sprinkler" is a wooden club with large nails driven through it. These weapons are never sold prefabricated. The cost listed below reflects the raw material cost for the nails and club.

**Cost:** 6d
**Skill:** Melee Weapon
**Damage Modifier:** +2
**Features:** A "holy water sprinkler is an Improvised Weapon (see Chapter 2, page 96).

## Knuckle Dusters

Knuckle dusters, sometimes called "knucks" or "brass knuckles" are steel punching weapons designed to fit around the knuckles. The weapon focuses the energy of the swing into a smaller contact area made up of a harder material; this increases the potential damage caused by each punch. Frequent wielders tend to tape their knuckles to ensure a tight fit for maximum control in combat.

**Cost:** 5s
**Skill:** Unarmed Combat
**Damage Modifier:** +1
**Features:** When a target is hit in the head by a knuckle duster attack, add 2 to his DR to resist knockout.

## Polearm

The Neo-Victorian Age has seen a renaissance of medieval weaponry as industrious Undertakers seek new and ever more inventive tools to ply their trade. Polearms are among the rediscovered weapons that have experienced a resurgence in use since the Reclamation. The most popular, known as pole cleavers, are reminiscent of ancient voulges, bardiches, and Lochaber axes.

Most modern weapons of this sort tend to be no more than five feet in length, long enough to keep a hungry animate at bay while short enough to work indoors should the need arise. The heavy blades favoured by today's Undertakers are more than enough to behead most anything in their path. The weapons are simple and inexpensive, though they require both hands to operate.

**Cost:** 18s+
**Skill:** Melee Weapon
**Damage Modifier:** +4
**Features:** Polearms are two-handed weapons.

The weapon's long reach offers the character a certain degree of protection. Melee and unarmed attacks targeting a character armed with a Polearm suffer –2 to hit unless the character is taking evasive action (see chapter 2, pages 95 – 96).

Polearms cannot be used to attack a target that is grappling the character.

## Sap

A sap, or cosh, is a leather-wrapped shaft with a lead weight at one end. Some varieties have a coiled spring rather than a shaft, and some are made of materials other than leather and lead, rubber saps being particularly popular alternatives. Saps are popular among lower-class criminals because they are cheap, easy to conceal, and can be used to inflict devastating damage.

**Cost:** 5d
**Skill:** Melee Weapon
**Damage Modifier:** +2
**Features:** Subtract the victim's Vitality from sap damage rolls.

When a character is hit in the head by a sap attack, add 2 to his DR to resist knockout.

A sap cannot be used to parry.

### Stakes

Wooden stakes have been mass produced and sold throughout the metropolis since the existence of vampires was made public. The most expensive stakes are either crafted from rare woods or reinforced with metal fillings. Some are engraved or covered in inscriptions — verses from the bible are particularly popular. Most homes contain at least a few stakes, just in case of vampire attack.

**Cost:**

Wood 5d+

Wood (Reinforced) 3s+

**Skill:** Melee Weapon

**Damage Modifier:** +0

**Features:** When resolving damage rolls, double the value of the target's armour in the location hit.

A character attempting to parry with a stake suffers -2 on his roll.

For rules on staking vampires, see Chapter 5, page 268.

### Sword

Swords have been commonplace since the Plague Years. They are often carried by professional Undertakers and vampire hunters, as well as those looking for an elegant personal protection device. The Dhampiri, in particular, seem to have adopted the sword above all other weapons.

The vast majority of Neo-Victorian swords are mass produced on assembly lines and then hand assembled and sharpened. The Wolcott Cutlery Co. is the largest producer of fighting blades in the metropolis. Though their quality is said to be exquisite, traditionalists prefer hand-forged swords made using traditional methods in bladesmith craft houses. The finest blades available in London are said to be those forged at Cornelius Eberhart & Sons of Islington. Though common-make swords may be purchased at markets throughout the metropolis, the finest can easily go for ten times or more the average rate.

**Cost:** £2+

**Skill:** Melee Weapon

**Damage Modifier:** +3

**Features:** None

### Sword Canes

Sword canes, or swordsticks, are canes made to conceal a short sword or thrusting blade. Since these weapons tend to be light and short, they are less than ideal when facing the animate dead and so are generally carried for personal defence or assassination. Few professional combatants would carry such a foppish weapon. Many aristocrats carry the weapon along with concealed firearms to safeguard their persons.

**Cost:** £5+

**Skill:** Melee Weapon

**Damage Modifier:** +1

**Features:** Anyone examining the cane may discover the blade with a Wit + Search roll (DR 11). The Difficulty Rating for detection could go as high as 14 or 16 for truly well-made sword canes. Well-made canes cost a small fortune.

### Truncheon

A truncheon, night stick, or baton is a short club, usually made of wood or metal. Commonly carried by police throughout the metropolis, a truncheon can be used to strike, jab, or block.

**Cost:** 10s

**Skill:** Melee Weapon

**Damage Modifier:** +1

**Features:** When a character is hit in the head by a truncheon attack, add 2 to his DR to resist knockout.

### Two-Handed Swords

Great swords and claymores have been used since the Medieval period. The weapon is a favourite among Dhampiri vampire hunters and some Undertakers, who value the blade for the truly grievous injuries it is capable of inflicting.

**Cost:** £8+

**Skill:** Melee Weapon

**Damage Modifier:** +5

**Features:** A character attempting to parry with a two-handed sword suffers -2 on his roll.

A character attempting to parry a two-handed sword attack suffers -2 on his roll.

## Ranged Weapons

Despite great advances in pneumatic and galvanic weapon technology, firearms remain the most common Neo-Victorian ranged weapon. Though galvanic weapons are unquestionably powerful, they are expensive to produce and difficult to maintain, and ballistic weapons remain inexpensive and effective.

Firearms have been common among civilians since the Plague Years, when the entire population was forced to fight for survival. Even now, few safety-conscious citizens would dare venture out at night without some means of personal protection. The lingering threat of spontaneous animation is enough for middle-class parents to ensure that virtually

every child has at least rudimentary knowledge of firearms and the wherewithal to aim for the head.

Though the Neo-Victorians possess the technology to manufacture fully automatic weapons, such firearms are seldom seen outside military use. Even within the military, the predominant doctrine maintains that a soldier capable of making every bullet count is superior to one who wastes ammunition, and hence standard-issue combat rifles remain bolt action. Undertakers and professional vampire hunters prefer double-action revolvers, semi-automatic pistols, and bolt-action rifles due to the curious anatomy of their prey. A single well-aimed shot can be vastly more effective at killing the undead than a multitude of bullets fired haphazardly, though rapidly, at a target. Such weapons are also much safer within the densely populated environs of the metropolis. The Metropolitan Police force has maintained an eloquent lobbying effort against the sale and distribution of automatic weapons within the city proper.

Next to galvanic weapons, the most significant development in Neo-Victorian weapon technology is pneumatic, or gas-driven, weapons such as the Schreck-Hutter Requieter. Though effective, such weapons have never been completely accepted by the public and remain something of a tool for specialists.

# The Rules

Each ranged weapon has a set of attributes that describe its effectiveness during play.

**Cost:** This is how expensive the weapon is.

**Ammo Cost:** The cost of ammunition for the weapon.

**Skill:** This is the skill that governs a character's accuracy with the weapon.

**Ammo:** Ammo dictates how many times the weapon can be fired before it must be reloaded.

**Range:** This is the weapon's maximum range in meters.

**Damage Modifier:** This number is added to the damage roll for an attack with the weapon.

**Features:** Features are any additional rules information required for the weapon.

## Ammunition & Ranged Weapon Accessories

### Derringer

The derringer is a small-sized, high-calibre handgun that is neither a semi-automatic weapon nor a revolver (commonly called a "palm gun"). The original derringers were produced by American Henry Deringer, though most Neo-Victorian derringers are produced by the firm of Wallace & McNaill. The derringer is always sold in matched pairs to help compensate for the relative power of single-shot, short-barrelled firearms. The derringer is a favoured weapon among criminals, whores, and assassins. In modern times, the derringer has become the signature weapon of anarchists.

**Cost:** 18s, pair

**Skill:** Firearms – Pistol

**Ammo:** 1

**Ammo Cost:** Box of twenty rounds, 8s

**Range:** Long range for a derringer is eight meters. Extreme range for a derringer is fifteen meters.

**Damage Modifier:** +4

**Features:** Reloading a derringer takes 1 action.

### Derringer, Semi-Auto

A more recent development, the four-shot, semi-automatic derringer is something of a status symbol among the criminal class. Most semi-auto derringers are .22 calibre firearms designed for ease of concealment rather than stopping power. The weapon can prove invaluable in a brawl but is of little use when it comes to combating the hungry dead. Unlike traditional derringers, semi-auto derringers are not sold in pairs.

**Cost:** £1

**Ammo Cost:**

Box of twenty rounds, 5s

Extra Clip, 5s

**Skill:** Firearms – Pistol

**Ammo:** 4

**Range:** Long range for a derringer is eight meters. Extreme range for a derringer is fifteen meters.

**Damage Bonus:** +2

**Features:** Provided the character has a loaded clip, a semi-automatic derringer takes one action to reload.

### Elephant Gun

Literally designed to put a bullet through the brain of a charging elephant, these big-game hunting rifles are among the most powerful firearms ever created. Pitching golf-ball-sized conical rounds at incredible velocities, elephant guns are ideally suited to bringing down rampaging thropes from a safe range. A hit from this weapon can effectively disintegrate anything remotely human on impact. Though impractical for military application due to their high cost, slow rate of fire, and extreme weight, weapons of this size are popular with some Undertakers, especially those with a strong sense of nostalgia.

Elephant guns come in eight, six, and four bores. The smaller the bore, the larger the projectile it fires. Smaller-

bored rifles are much heavier than larger-bored rifles because this weight compensates for the rifle's considerable kick. The four-bore, while destructive in the extreme, has little application for close work. Undertakers who use these weapons on the job tend to keep a number of smaller weapons in reserve.

Elephant guns are reasonably accurate up to three hundred meters, and most are equipped with an integrated rear sight. The stock sight is often replaced with a more advanced rifle scope for increased accuracy.

Not many elephant guns are produced; most are commissioned by collectors or very successful Undertakers who can afford the best gun-makers. These guns tend to be handcrafted masterpieces, often made with the most beautiful woods or hand engraved with designs of the commissioner's choice. They are priced accordingly. Widely acknowledged as the best Neo-Victorian manufacturer of elephant guns, weapons produced by Lion Arms are particularly prized. Lion firearms sell for at least twice the listed price for the weapon, if one can be found for sale at all.

**Cost:** £15+
**Ammo Cost:** Box of ten rounds, £2
**Skill:** Firearms – Rifle
**Ammo:** 1
**Range:** Long range for an elephant gun is three hundred meters. Extreme range for an elephant gun is twelve hundred meters.
**Damage Modifier:** +10
**Features:** Reloading an elephant gun requires three turns.

Attacks made with an Elephant Gun can benefit from a telescopic sight.

A character firing an elephant gun without a gun brace must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If the character succeeds, nothing happens. If the character fails, he suffers a cumulative –1 penalty on all attack rolls made with that hand for one hour. On a critical failure, the character dislocates his shoulder. Treat this injury as a Torn Muscle Complication (see Chapter 2, page 104).

## Grenade, Cindiary

The cindiary grenade is a fire bomb based on Fenian Fire, or white phosphorous. When detonated, a cindiary device explodes with fearsome force and heat; the phosphorous that fuels these devices will burn even underwater. During the Reclamation, the substance was used to incinerate concentrations of zombies. Cindiary grenades are now used exclusively by the Deathwatch. Though the weapons are intended for use outside London and are illegal to possess within the city walls, they were, in fact, used in London during the outbreak of 2097. Any civilian found with such a weapon in his possession can expect a lengthy prison term of hard labour.

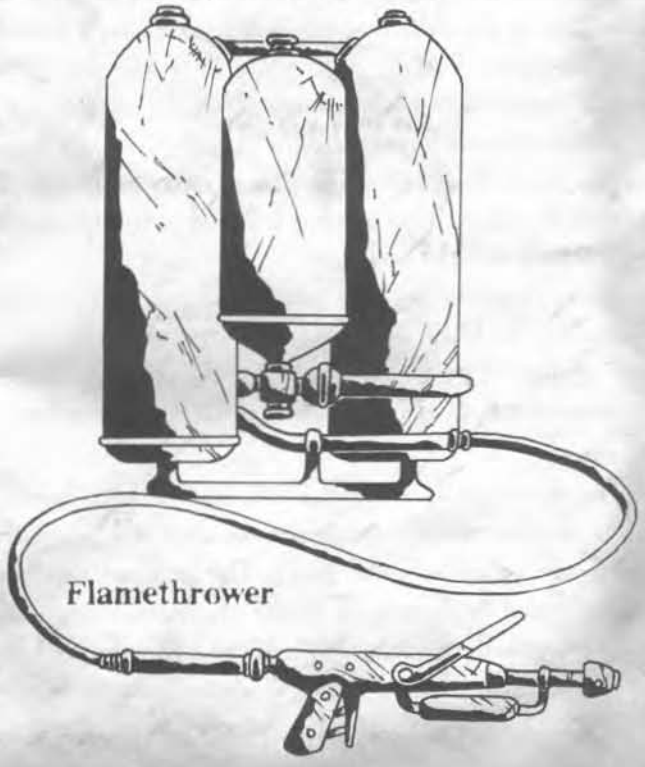
**Cost:** £5+, Highly Illegal
**Ammo Cost:** None
**Skill:** Thrown Weapon
**Ammo:** None
**Range:** Thrower's Vitality x 3 meters
**Damage Modifier:** +6
**Features:** Additional rules for hand grenades can be found in Chapter 2, pages 113-114.

In addition to taking damage when the grenade explodes, anything flammable within fifteen feet of the grenade, including characters, will also be set on fire (see Chapter 2, page 115).

## Grenade, Explosive

Explosive hand grenades are small timed bombs. They are not generally available to civilians, and even the military usually confines their use to outside the walls of the metropolis. Highly prized among Undertakers, explosive grenades fetch astronomical prices on the black market.

**Cost:** £2+, Illegal
**Ammo Cost:** None
**Skill:** Thrown Weapon
**Ammo:** None
**Range:** Thrower's Vitality x 3 meters
**Damage Modifier:** +8
**Features:** Additional rules for explosions and hand grenades can be found in Chapter 2, pages 113-114.



Flamethrower

## Flamethrower

Flamethrowers were developed in the midst of the Plague Years as a method of dispatching hordes of animates. The wisdom of using the weapon has always been a topic of debate because, though they eventually consume their targets, blazing animates can be extremely dangerous to the living until they have taken sufficient structural damage to lose mobility. Flamethrowers are highly illegal and, officially, only used on reclamation details for cleaning out particularly heavily infested buildings already slated for demolition. Deathwatch personnel only use flamethrowers in teams of two, with the second soldier charged with protecting the weapon from rapidly closing animates. Despite the promise of a lengthy prison term, these weapons have found their way into the hands of Undertakers, especially those who make their livings hunting vampires.

A flamethrower produces a controlled and continuous stream of fire fed by a backpack fuel tank. Inside the backpack, several containers hold reservoirs of fuel and propellant. Depressing the weapon's trigger forces the pressurized liquid fuel to pass over a source of ignition and out of the weapon in an impressive stream of flame.

**Cost:** £10+, Highly Illegal
**Ammo Cost:** Tank, £1
**Skill:** Artillery
**Ammo:** 12 blasts per tank
**Range:** 8 meters
**Damage Modifier:** +6
**Features:** A flamethrower produces a jet of fire that can hit multiple targets. The number of potential targets within the weapon's spray is determined by the Narrator. Anything flammable that is hit by a flamethrower, including characters, will be set on fire (see Chapter 2, page 115).

Flamethrower attacks do not suffer range penalties.

Refuelling a flamethrower with a fresh tank takes 5 turns.

A character carrying a flamethrower suffers –3 Prowess.

## Kramer 2086 Bolt-Action Rifle

Produced by the Kramer Arms Co., the Model 2086 Bolt-Action Rifle has remained among the most accurate bolt-rifles available on the market for nearly three decades. The weapon has seen extensive military application since its introduction and is particularly prized by Deathwatch sharpshooters.

The weapon is fed by an internal tube magazine along the barrel which must be loaded by hand. The Kramer 2086 has a magazine capacity of ten .303 rounds. Though a far cry from the destructive potential of modern military weapons like the ion pulse cannon, the Kramer 2086 has earned the respect of the men who use it in the field.

**Cost:** £3
**Ammo Cost:**
Box of twenty rounds, 10s
Extra clip, 10s
**Skill:** Firearms – Rifle
**Ammo:** 10
**Range:** Long range for the Kramer 2086 is two hundred and fifty meters. Extreme range for the Kramer 2086 is one thousand meters.
**Damage Modifier:** +8
**Features:** Loading a round into the Kramer 2086 takes 1 action.

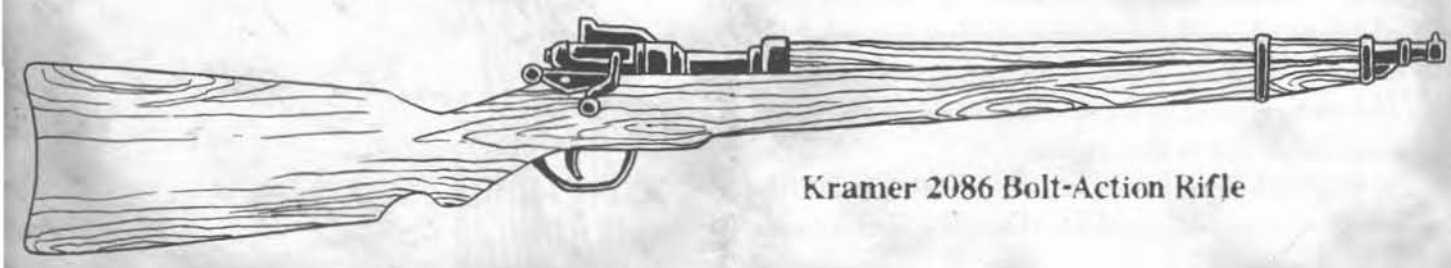
Attacks made with the Kramer 2086 can benefit from a telescopic sight.

## Magwitch Gravedigger 10-Bore Combat Shotgun

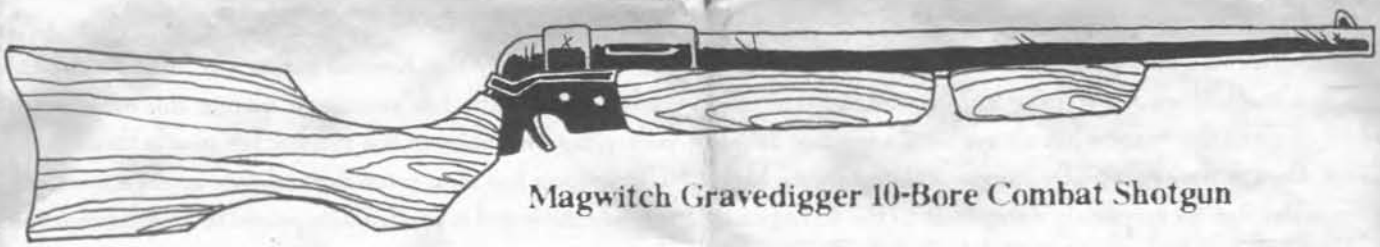
The Gravedigger is Magwitch's premier combat shotgun, marketed directly to the Undertaker market. The weapon's short barrel and pump action make it ideal for close-quarters fighting wherever zombies spontaneously animate. The shotgun is fed by a tubular five-round magazine underneath the barrel. Though buckshot is preferred against living targets, professional animate hunters and the Deathwatch prefer the stopping power of solid slugs.

Magwitch also sells a bayonet designed to be mounted on the end of the Gravedigger's barrel.

**Cost:** £4



Kramer 2086 Bolt-Action Rifle



Magwitch Gravedigger 10-Bore Combat Shotgun

**Ammo Cost:** Box of twenty shotgun shells (either solid or shot), 14s
**Skill:** Firearms – Rifle
**Ammo:** 5
**Range:** Long range for a Magwitch Gravedigger is eight meters. Extreme range for the Gravedigger is thirty meters.
**Damage Modifier:** By shell type:

*Solid Slugs* – A solid slug has a +9 Damage Modifier.

*Shot* – The Damage Modifier for shot depends on the distance from the attacker to the target. If the target is within one meter of the attacker, the weapon has a +9 Damage Modifier. If the target is one to eight meters away, the attack has a +6 Damage Modifier. If the target is eight to thirty meters away the attack has a +3 Damage Modifier. Shot attacks do not suffer range penalties. Shot may hit anyone close to the target of the attack at the Narrator's discretion. Double the armour value of any location hit by a shot attack.
**Features:** Loading a round into the Gravedigger takes 1 action.

Shotguns may be loaded with various shells that drastically alter the performance of the weapon.

## Magwitch Reaper

Though an arguably impractical weapon, the distinctive Magwitch Reaper has been a favourite with collectors and classically minded Undertakers since it first went into production in 2048. The weapon is essentially a Magwitch Gravedigger pump-action shotgun set with a heavy folding scythe blade. The blade opens smoothly and locks into place with the touch of a button and a flick of the wrist.

The weapon was clearly intended for the Undertaker market, but it never caught on. Formidable as the weapon may appear, the Magwitch Reaper is both heavy and awkward in combat. Though it has something of a cult following, the Reaper is seldom seen on the streets of the metropolis. Enthusiasts advise that first-time wielders remember to fully discharge the weapon before attempting to unfold the blade and start swinging, as accidental misfiring seems to be a common design flaw in the weapon.

The Magwitch Reaper went out of production in 2090. However, it is commonly available through collectors and second-hand markets.

**Cost:** £6+
**Ammo Cost:** Box of twenty shotgun shells (either solid or shot), 14s

*10-Bore Shotgun*
**Skill:** Firearms – Rifle
**Ammo:** 5
**Range:** Long range for a Magwitch Reaper is eight meters. Extreme range for the Reaper is thirty meters.
Damage: By shell type, see Magwitch Gravedigger, above
**Features:** See Magwitch Gravedigger, above.

Magwitch Reaper

*Scythe Blade*
**Skill:** Melee Weapon
**Damage:** +3
**Features:** This weapon is incredibly unwieldy. The attacker suffers -3 on Melee Weapon rolls with the blade.

## Revolver

The reliability and ease of manufacture has ensured the popularity of the revolver for centuries. The revolver takes its name from the cylindrical block which revolves to bring each bullet into alignment with the gun's barrel. Antiquated revolvers, of which there are still some in circulation, are single action and require the hammer to be pulled back manually to prepare for the next shot to be fired. All commercially produced modern Neo-Victorian revolvers are double action, meaning that when the trigger is depressed, the hammer is cocked and the barrel revolves after the shot is fired.

Most revolvers have a five- or six-shot capacity, but some revolvers hold as many as ten rounds. Reloading revolvers can be a slow procedure, so most professional gunmen, such as Undertakers who rely on revolvers outside the walls of London, carry multiple handguns to avoid having to reload in the thick of combat.

Many Neo-Victorian firms manufacture revolvers. The largest firearm manufacturer is Kramer Arms Company of Birmingham. Kramer Arms has an outstanding reputation for providing high quality firearms for both the civilian and military markets. Though the Westgate Executioner remains the standard sidearm of the Deathwatch, a number of Kramer revolvers are also carried as back up weapons. Kramer Arms' leading competitor for the revolver market is Wallace & McNaill. Though Wallace & McNaill firearms are less accurate and are of a generally shoddy manufacture, their low price makes them popular among criminals and non-combatants looking for personal defence weapons.
**Cost:** 18s+
**Ammo Cost:** Box of twenty rounds, 8s
**Skill:** Firearms – Pistol
**Ammo:** 5 or 6
**Range:** Long range for a Revolver is twenty meters. Extreme range for a Revolver is sixty-five meters.
**Damage Modifier:** +5
**Features:** Loading a round into a revolver takes 1 action.

## Revolver, Heavy

Heavy revolvers are extremely high-calibre hand-cannons. Before the Plague, they were used mainly for hunting large game in Africa. Today they are a preferred weapon for the elimination of the animate dead.
**Cost:** £2
**Ammo Cost:** Box of twenty rounds, 10s
**Skill:** Firearms – Pistol
**Ammo:** 5
**Range:** Long range for a heavy revolver is twenty-five meters. Extreme range for a heavy revolver is eighty-five meters.
**Damage Modifier:** +6
**Features:** Loading a round into a heavy revolver takes 1 action.

These weapons are extraordinarily heavy and cannot be fired one handed.

## Revolver, Custom Heavy

Each custom heavy revolver is tailored specifically to its prospective owner, machined to perfection, and then hand assembled to ensure the highest quality. Undertakers tend to favour extremely heavy revolvers with a low muzzle velocity to inflict maximum damage. These guns are massive and visually impressive, intended as much for show as for heavy action. The largest-bore weapons require special braces to be fired safely.

The process of hand crafting a custom revolver requires a great deal of time and labour. The weapon is fitted precisely to the character's specifications and preferences. Many of the parts must be machined by hand and then painstakingly assembled. The average time to craft such a weapon is four weeks. At twice the listed price, Lion Arms weapons are preferred by aristocratic hunters and the most prosperous Undertakers.
**Cost:** £10+
**Ammo Cost:** Box of twenty rounds, 10s
**Skill:** Firearms – Pistol
**Ammo:** 5
**Range:** Long range for a custom heavy revolver is forty meters. Extreme range for a custom heavy revolver is one hundred and twenty meters.
**Damage Modifier:** +7
**Features:** Loading a round into a custom heavy revolver takes 1 action.

These weapons are extraordinarily heavy and cannot be fired one handed.

A character firing a revolver that was customized to his specifications gains +1 on attack rolls.

A character firing a custom heavy revolver without a gun brace must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If the character succeeds, nothing happens. If the character, fails he suffers a cumulative –1 penalty on all attack rolls made with that

Schreck-Hutter Requieter

hand for one hour. On a critical failure, the character's wrist snaps. Treat this injury as a Broken Arm Complication (see Chapter 2, page 104).

### Revolver, Hold-Out

Hold-out revolvers, or pocket pistols, are small revolvers carried either as a back-up weapon or for its ease of concealment. Hold-out revolvers lack the stopping power to be effective against the undead, but can be used for personal protection.

**Cost:** 8s
**Ammo Cost:** Box of twenty rounds, 5s
**Skill:** Firearms – Pistol
**Ammo:** 5
**Range:** Long range for a hold-out revolver is ten meters. Extreme range for a hold-out revolver is thirty-five meters.
**Damage Modifier:** +3
**Features:** Loading a round into a hold-out revolver takes 1 action.

### Schreck-Hutter Balefire

A favoured weapon of plaguemen, Undertakers, and the Deathwatch, the Schreck-Hutter Balefire is the most advanced flamethrower developed to date. The Balefire is a sleek brass and steel apparatus fuelled by a small drum integrated directly into the weapon. This design spares its operator the hassle of carrying a heavy fuel tank on his back.

The Balefire was intended for use within the metropolis and utilizes an integrated electrical igniter powered by the city's Tesla array. Those used outside the metropolis rely on pilot flames that are unfortunately prone to catastrophic malfunction. Unlike larger flamethrowers, which lack the ease of the Balefire's firing control mechanism, the weapon is legally available to licensed operators. Though the Metropolitan Police are loathe to issue these licenses, they are fairly common among both Undertakers and plaguemen.

These weapons are fairly short range and only have fuel for a few seconds of operation. An integrated tank has enough fuel for five bursts.

**Cost:** £8
**Ammo Cost:** Canister, 15s
**Skill:** Firearms – Rifle
**Ammo:** 5 blasts per canister
**Range:** five meters
**Damage Modifier:** +6
**Features:** A Balefire produces a jet of fire that can hit multiple targets. The number of potential targets within the weapon's spray is determined by the Narrator. Anything flammable, including a character, that is hit by a Balefire will be set on fire (see Chapter 2, page 115).

Balefire attacks do not suffer range penalties.

Refuelling a Balefire with a fresh canister takes 3 turns.

### Schreck-Hutter Requieter

Another marvel of Schreck-Hutter innovation, the Requieter is the premier vampire-hunting weapon on the market today. An air-driven, high-velocity stake gun, the Requieter packs a powerful pneumatic punch. The weapon relies on terrific air pressure to propel shots up to ten meters with high accuracy. Its magazine holds ten stakes that may be fired in rapid succession, and the air tank is good for twenty shots before it must be replaced with a fresh tank. Noted for its sleek profile and trademark pop of gas when fired, the Requieter is immensely popular among Undertakers.

**Cost:** £12
**Ammo Cost:**
Compressed Gas Tank, 10s
Dozen Stakes, 10s
Extra magazine, 10s
**Skill:** Firearms – Rifle
**Ammo:** 10
**Range:** Long range for a Requieter is ten meters. Extreme range for a Requieter is forty meters.
**Damage Modifier:** +5
**Features:** When resolving Requieter damage rolls, double the value of the target's armour.

Provided the character has a loaded magazine, the Requieter takes one action to reload.

After firing 20 shots, the Requieter's air tank must be replaced. Replacing the tank takes 3 turns.

For rules on staking vampires, see Chapter 5, pages 268.

## Schreck-Hutter Syringe Gun

The syringe gun was originally developed by the military during the Reclamation to aid in the pacification of rampaging thropes. The weapon fires a heavy-duty steel syringe that delivers drugs or alchemical solutions into a target's blood stream. The gun was designed to deliver massive doses of thrope reversion drugs from a safe distance. The heavy steel projectiles are incredibly dangerous to human targets since the syringes hit with tremendous force and can rupture organs or break bones. Generally the weapon is used to bring down very large creatures such as thropes and unusually large Anathema.

The Schreck-Hutter Syringe Gun utilizes the same patented air compression system as the Requieter but with an extended barrel. The syringe gun's magazine holds ten syringes that may be fired in rapid succession, though few civilians could ever hope to afford a syringe gun fully loaded with alchemical serums. The air tank is good for twenty shots before it must be replaced with a fresh tank. The weapon is widely used by the Metropolitan Police and Undertakers who fancy themselves big game hunters.

**Cost:** £8

**Ammo Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Compressed Gas Tank | 10s |
| Box of 6 syringes | £2 |

Alchemical solutions sold separately (see the Catalogue, Chapter 6, pages 292 – 305).

**Skill:** Firearms – Rifle

**Ammo:** 10

**Range:** Long range for the syringe gun is one hundred meters. Extreme range for syringe gun is four hundred meters.

**Damage:** +4

**Features:** Each syringe injects a dose of an alchemical solution or drug into the target when it inflicts a Flesh Wound or greater. Effects depend on the type of drug in the syringe.

Double the value of armour against syringe gun hits.

Provided the character has a loaded magazine, the syringe gun takes one action to reload.

After 20 shots, the syringe gun's air tank must be replaced. Replacing the tank takes 3 turns.

Attacks made with the syringe gun can benefit from a telescopic sight.

## Throwing Knife

Throwing knives remain common amongst the criminals who value the weapon for its silence and low cost. When not thrown, the weapon can be used to deadly effect in melee combat.

**Cost:** 3s

**Ammo Cost:** None

**Skill:** Thrown Weapon

**Ammo:** None

**Range:** Thrower's Vitality x 3 meters

**Damage Modifier:** +1

**Features:** The throwing knife is a balanced throwing weapon (see Thrown Weapons, Chapter 2, page 99).

## Vickers Machine Gun

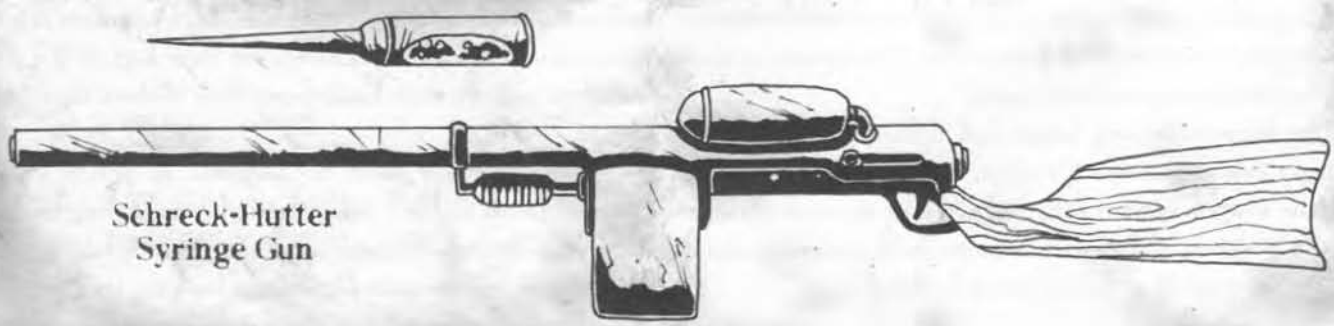
The Vickers machine gun is among the most devastating weapons ever devised by man.

The Vickers machine gun is capable of unleashing up to six hundred .303 inch rounds a minute. Due to mechanical strain and overheating, experienced machine gunners prefer to fire shorter bursts of twenty-five rounds, limiting themselves to about fifty rounds per minute unless facing overwhelming numbers of animates. Even under the best conditions, barrels should be replaced after every ten thousand rounds fired. The gun is water-cooled, holding seven pints of water in the cooling jacket. This water boils after some six hundred rounds have been fired, the steam passing via a tube into a condenser can from which it can be put back into the cooling jacket.

A gun crew is made up of a gunner and second crew man who feeds ammunition to the weapon. With a reputation for great solidity and reliability, Vickers gun crews are very devoted to their machines, spending off-hours lovingly maintaining each piece for the highest efficiency.

Vickers machine guns are the exclusive province of the military.

**Cost:** £200+, Highly Illegal



Schreck-Hutter Syringe Gun

Westgate Executioner

**Ammo Cost:** Box of 100 rounds, £4
**Skill:** Artillery
**Ammo:** 250 round canvas belt
**Range:** Long range for the Vickers Machine Gun is seven hundred and forty meters. Extreme range for Vickers Machine Gun is forty-one hundred meters.
**Damage Modifier:** +8
**Features:** The Vickers machine gun is typically used to fire a twenty-five round concentrated burst and can pepper multiple targets with each burst. The weapon can be used for raking fire that throws lead over a wide area, giving the gunner the best chance to hit multiple targets, or for concentrated bursts into a narrow field. The type of burst fired determines how many targets may be hit. When making a concentrated burst, the gunner gains +3 on his initial attack roll and has a chance to hit every thing within two meters of the target area. The gunner makes an attack roll against every character in that area. When making raking bursts, the gunner has a chance to hit every target within a five meter radius of the target area.

It is possible for a target to be hit multiple times per burst. If the initial attack hits a target, the gunner can make additional attacks targeting the same character until he misses. However, the attacker suffers a cumulative -2 attack roll modifier on each additional attack. For example, if the initial attack is made with a +3 attack modifier and that attack hits, then the second attack is made with a +1 modifier. If that attack hits, the third attack is made with a −1 modifier and so on until an attack roll misses.

The gunner cannot make called shots and never receives an aiming bonus on machine gun attacks. The gunner cannot avoid targets in the area fired upon.

The weapon is very heavy and difficult to transport, requiring two characters to move. A character helping to move the weapon cannot run, dodge, parry, or make attacks. Once in position, the weapon requires both crewmen spend 3 full turns to set it up before it can be fired.

Reloading the Vickers takes both crewmen 2 turns.

After six hundred rounds have been fired, water from the condenser must be poured back into the cooling jacket, a task requiring both crewmen to spend 2 turns.

## Westgate Executioner 12mm Semi-Automatic Pistol

The most popular Neo-Victorian semi-automatic handgun, the Westgate Executioner has been the sidearm of the Deathwatch for over seventy years. It is sturdy, reliable, and provides more force than most pistols available on the market. The Executioner is said to be ironically named due to the number of mercy killings a Deathwatch soldier can expect to make throughout his career. The weapon is easily distinguishable by its "broom handle" pummel and forward placement of the trigger magazine. The magazine holds ten 12mm rounds and is capable of blowing the head off an animate at up to eighty meters.
**Cost:** £5
**Ammo Cost:**
Box of 20 rounds, 10s
Extra clip, 10s
**Skill:** Firearms – Pistol
**Ammo:** 10
**Range:** Long range for an Executioner is twenty-five meters. Extreme range for an Executioner is eighty meters.
**Damage Modifier:** +5
**Features:** Provided the character has a loaded clip, the Executioner takes 1 action to reload.

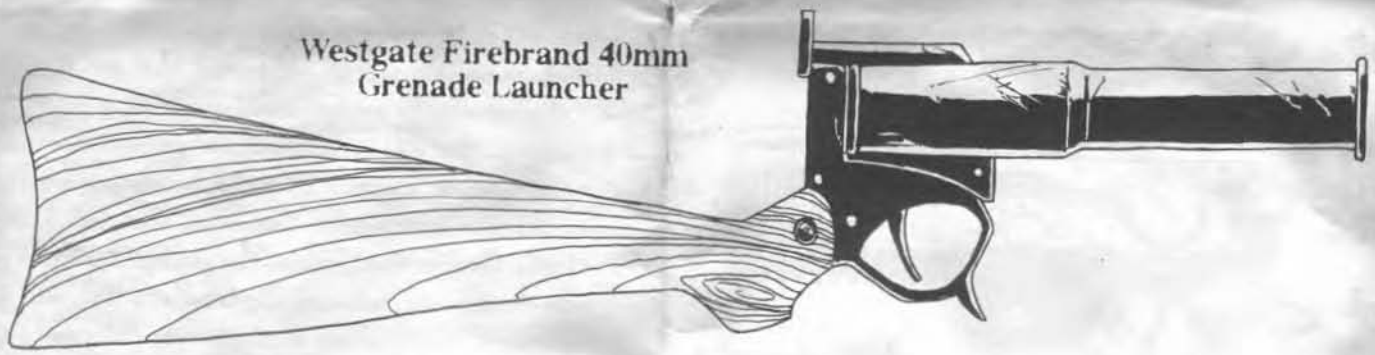
## Westgate Firebrand 40mm Grenade Launcher

The Firebrand is a breach-loading, single-shot, 40mm grenade launcher manufactured by Westgate Arms. Though the weapon is not very accurate, it has remained wildly popular since its introduction at the end of the Reclamation. The Firebrand supports a variety of ammunition types, which makes it an incredibly flexible weapon.

Though they are sold within the metropolis, it is illegal for civilians to carry a weapon loaded with explosive rounds within the walls of London. Undertakers and Deathwatch personnel utilize the shells to incapacitate swathes of animates at a time. Once animates have been blown off their feet, it is a simple matter to remove their heads from their broken, smouldering bodies.

Non-lethal net shells are favoured by police forces to control crowds and by Undertakers who make their livelihood capturing "living" animates and vampires. While nets have little chance of restraining a vampire for long, they can hinder movement long enough to drive a stake into its heart.

**Westgate Firebrand 40mm Grenade Launcher**



The Firebrand can also be loaded with signal flares that can be invaluable in the Wastelands or for calling for assistance within the metropolis. Anarchists and criminals have been known to use flares to start fires by launching shells through building windows.

**Cost:** £12

**Ammo Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Flare | 5s |
| High Explosive | £1+ |
| Net | 15s |

**Skill:** Firearms – Rifle

**Ammo:** 1

**Range:** Long range for the Firebrand is sixty meters. Extreme range for the Firebrand is one hundred and eighty meters.

**Damage Modifier:** By grenade type, see below.

**Features:** Loading a grenade into the Firebrand takes 1 action.

The Firebrand cannot be used to make called shots.

*High Explosive* – Targets within the epicentre of the blast suffer a +7 damage roll (see Explosives, Chapter 2, pages 112 – 113).

*Flare* – A target hit by a flare suffers a +2 damage roll. Flares can ignite fires if they hit something that is flammable (see Fire, Chapter 2, page 115).

*Net* – The target of a successful net attack and anyone within 2 meters of him are entangled. While entangled, a character suffers -2 Coordination, -2 on skill rolls, and cannot kick, run, take evasive action, or dodge. An entangled character can spend one or more actions during his turn to attempt to untangle himself. When the character attempts to untangle himself, he makes a Vitality or Coordination roll (DR 16). If the roll succeeds, he frees himself. If not, he may spend another action to attempt to free himself again. A character does not suffer the entangled penalty to his Coordination when attempting to free himself.

# Galvanic Weapons

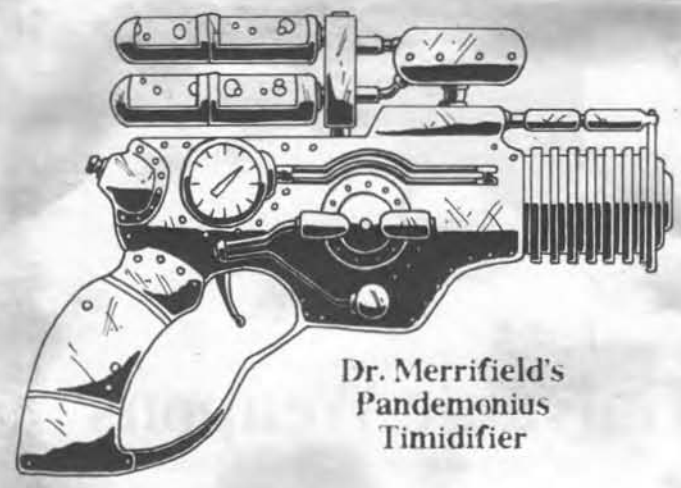
The galvanic science of Neo-Victorian London has produced weapons of awesome power. The term itself has slipped somewhat from its original meaning — in the common parlance, any modern electrical or electroalchemical technology, whether powered by chemical galvanic cells or no, is referred to simply as "galvanic". Regardless of the mechanism of operation, weaponry of this type shares an extraordinary destructive potential. For decades, the Deathwatch has brought these weapons to bear against the animate hordes that assault London's walls, splitting the night with thunderous explosions of blinding light.

It is not hard to discern galvanic artillery men by their singed hair, wild eyes, and scent of ozone. Galvanic weapons are seldom found in the hands of civilians. Most are highly illegal and prohibitively expensive. Even those weapons deemed appropriate for civilian ownership are incredibly sophisticated devices requiring frequent maintenance and extreme care in their operation. The soldiers that use these weapons require specialized training in their safe operation. Anyone handling a galvanic weapon first dons a pair of aetherically grounded gloves and rubber-soled shoes to protect against any potential shock.

## Dr. Merrifield's Pandemonius Timidifier

Despite the best intentions of its creator, Dr. Greville Merrifield, the Timidifier is a weapon of absurd cruelty. Better known on the streets of the metropolis as the Breathtaker or Tormentor, the device was designed to incapacitate a target without causing physical harm. Horrified by the food riots of 2084, Merrifield intended his invention to revolutionize urban pacification.

In early field trials, the device seemed effective beyond the doctor's wildest expectations. The emanations projected by Merrifield's apparatus flawlessly induced paralytic fear in test subjects. Only when a small segment of these subjects slipped into permanent catatonia did Dr. Merrifield realize the error in his calculations. The Timidifier proved desta-



**Dr. Merrifield's Pandemonius Timidifier**

bilizing to the human mind. Despite the doctor's adamant objections, his financial backers were delighted by the results, even after the Timidifier caused cardiac arrest in a number of subjects during the weapon's second round of trials. The day the Timidifier went into production, Merrifield took his own life.

The distinctive pistol is squat, ugly, bulky, and uncomfortable to handle. Unlike most other weapons in this class, the Timidifier does not draw energy from the Tesla array. The device integrates oscillating teleforce beam projectors powered by a galvanic distillate of unnamed alchemical substances. The Timidifier unleashes crippling bio-electrical jolts which overload the mind with catastrophic terror. Most humans simply faint dead away but some suffer seizure responses or worse. A small number suffer heart failure. Those surviving the initial effects of the Timidifier may suffer permanent brain damage or severe psychological trauma. Even those that seem to pull through the harrowing ordeal unscathed often later develop acute mental disorders.

**Cost:** £80
**Ammo Cost:** Galvanic Distillate £4
**Skill:** Firearms - Pistol
**Ammo:** 10
**Range:** twenty meters
**Damage Modifier:** None
**Features:** A living or half-living character hit by the Timidifier must make a Will roll (DR 14). If the character succeeds, he falls unconscious for d10 minutes and cannot be awakened by any means. If the character fails, he suffers a fit lasting d10 minutes, followed by d10 minutes of excruciating pain that leaves him unable to do anything but whimper and twitch on the ground. If the character rolls a critical failure, he either dies of heart failure or enters a permanent state of catatonia, at the Narrator's discretion. The undead are not affected by the Timidifier.

Once a character recovers from the initial effects of the Timidifier, he must make an additional Will roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds, he recovers without lasting psychological damage. If the roll fails, either he gains a new minor Mental Disorder or a minor Disorder he already possesses becomes chronic (see Mental Disorders, Chapter 3, pages 189 – 194). On a critical failure, the character suffers permanent brain damage, reducing his Intellect, Wit, and Will by 1 point each. If any of his attributes are reduced to 0 as a result of the Timidifier's effects, the character enters permanent catatonia.

Timidifier attacks do not suffer range penalties.

The weapon is powered by a galvanic distillate of alchemical solutions that must be replaced after 5 shots. A character with the Galvanics skill can replace these fluids in 10 minutes without a die roll.

Any blow to the weapon will misalign its fragile aiming components. Any attack made with a misaligned weapon suffers –3 to the attack roll. The weapon can be realigned by a character with the proper equipment succeeding in a Galvanics skill roll (DR 14). If the weapon suffers any serious damage, it will be rendered inoperable until repaired. Repairing the weapon requires the proper tools and a successful Galvanics skill roll (DR 16).

### Grenade, Electro-Pulse

The electro-pulse grenade is a rechargeable weapon sometimes employed for crowd control. As its name suggests, instead of detonating like an ordinary grenade, the device generates a powerful electrical pulse that shocks anyone within two meters. The pulse is accompanied by an unmistakable electrical crackle and the smell of ozone. Though not illegal, electro-pulse grenades are generally only found in the possession of agents of Her Majesty's Government due to their high cost.

**Cost:** £10
**Ammo Cost:** None
**Skill:** Thrown Weapon
**Ammo:** 1
**Range:** Thrower's Vitality x 3 meters
**Damage Modifier:** See below.
**Features:** Anyone within two meters of the grenade when it goes off suffers a +3 Electrical Shock damage roll (see Electrical Shock, Chapter 2, page 112).

While within the confines of the metropolis, the grenade will recharge after one hour.

### Stun Cane

A stun cane appears to be little more than a fine walking stick with a metal head. The weapon conceals an ingenious galvanic weapon that can be used to shock an enemy into unconsciousness. The stun cane can generate electrical shocks every bit as powerful as the stun prod (below) even though its onboard capacitor is smaller and holds fewer charges.

**Cost:** £15+
**Ammo Cost:** Extra capacitor unit £1
**Skill:** Melee Weapon
**Damage Modifier:** See below.
**Features:** Damage is determined by the weapon's settings: either +4 for a minimum shock or +6 for maximum shock. Stun canes generate shock damage (see Electrical Shock, Chapter 2, page 112). Do not add a character's Vitality to the stun cane's damage roll.

A stun cane can hold up to six charges. The weapon uses one charge on a minimum shock and three charges on the maximum shock setting. While within the confines of the metropolis, the battery regains one charge every ten minutes.

### Stun Gloves

Stun Gloves are heavy rubber and steel-mesh gloves. When activated, the mesh is electrified to shock a victim hit by an unarmed attack. The gloves are powered by a capacitor array usually hidden beneath the clothes of the wearer. Wires run from the pack down the wearer's arms.

**Cost:** £8 (pair)
**Ammo Cost:** Extra galvanic battery £1
**Skill:** Unarmed Combat
**Ammo:** 4
**Damage Modifier:** See below.
**Features:** An Unarmed Combat attack while wearing the gloves inflicts normal damage and a second Electrical Shock damage roll at +2 (see Electrical Shock, Chapter 2, page 112).

Each glove comes with a capacitor unit that holds 4 charges. While within the confines of the metropolis, the capacitor regains one charge every five minutes.

It takes a full turn to change out the capacitor array if the original is damaged.

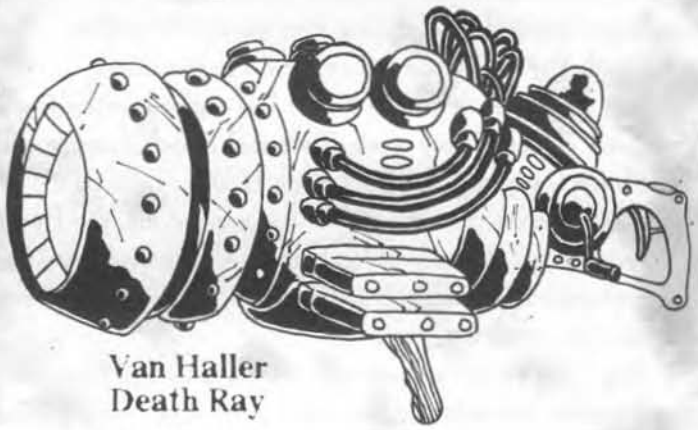
### Stun Prod

The stun prod is a metallic truncheon designed to shock an assailant on contact. The weapon can be set to low strength to conserve energy or full strength to deliver a stronger jolt.

**Cost:** £10
**Ammo Cost:** Extra capacitor unit £2
**Skill:** Melee Weapon
**Damage Modifier:** See below.

**Features:** Damage is determined by the weapon's settings, either +4 for a minimum shock or +6 for maximum shock. Stun Prods generate shock damage (see Electrical Shock, Chapter 2, page 112). Do not add a character's Vitality to the stun rod's damage roll.

A stun prod can hold up to nine charges. The weapon uses one charge on a minimum shock and three charges on a maximum shock setting. While within the confines of the metropolis, the capacitor regains one charge every ten minutes.



**Van Haller Death Ray**

### Van Haller Death Ray

The Van Haller Death Ray is unquestionably the pinnacle of modern galvanic weaponry. The powerful teleforce particle exciter destabilizes matter, causing catastrophic high-energy failure of a structure at the molecular level. The weapon is capable of blowing craters in the earth, reducing the target and everything within five meters of him to fine ash.

The weapon is fuelled by an extremely powerful capacitor that draws power directly from the city's Tesla array. Should the weapon be completely discharged, it may also be recharged by the application of an integral hand crank. The operator simply turns the crank in a rapid motion to recharge the battery until it can be fired once more.

The Van Haller Death Ray is a military-grade piece of hardware, and none are known to have entered civilian hands. The weapon is highly illegal and extremely dangerous. Any civilian found with such a weapon is certain to spend the rest of his natural life in solitary confinement in the depths of a small, lightless subterranean cell.

**Cost:** £300+, Highly Illegal
**Ammo Cost:** Extra capacitor unit £40

**Skill:** Firearms - Rifle
**Ammo:** 4
**Range:** one hundred twenty meters
**Damage Modifier:** See below.
**Features:** On a hit, the target disassembles explosively, leaving behind a crater ten meters in diameter. Anyone unlucky enough to be within the five meter blast radius suffers a +10 damage roll. Any character suffering a Fatal Wound is reduced to ash. Those who survive are thrown clear of the crater and are knocked down, and flammable items on their person will be set on fire (see Knockdown and Fire, Chapter 2, pages 108 and 115 respectively). Should the blast miss, its target may still be within the weapon's blast radius at the Narrator's discretion. It is a common tactic to fire the weapon at the ground in front of a target or into a nearby structure, thereby missing the target, but still annihilating it in the resulting blast.

Death Ray attacks do not suffer range penalties.

Any character firing the Death Ray without aetherically grounded gloves suffers a +5 Electrical Shock damage roll (see Shock Damage, Chapter 2, page 112).

While within the confines of the metropolis, the Death Ray regains one charge every half-hour. If a character manually recharges the weapon, it regains one charge every ten full minutes the crank is turned.

Any blow to the weapon will misalign its fragile aiming components. Any attack made with a misaligned weapon suffers –3 to the attack roll. The weapon can be realigned by a character with the proper equipment succeeding in a Galvanics skill roll (DR 14). If the weapon suffers any serious damage, it will be rendered inoperable until repaired. Repairing the weapon requires the proper tools and a successful Galvanics skill roll (DR 16).

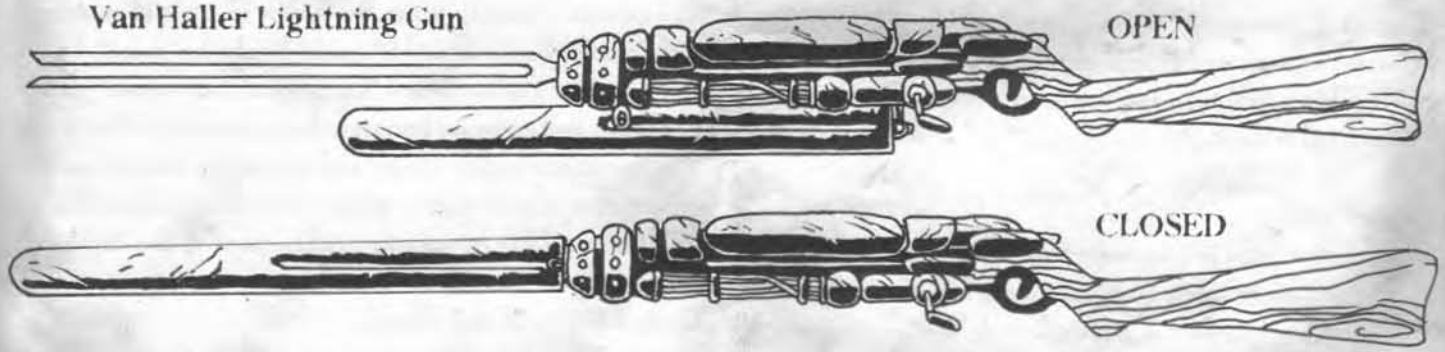
### Van Haller Lightning Gun

The Van Haller lightning gun is a sophisticated apparatus that causes a target to be struck by artificially generated lightning. The weapon generates an ionic corridor leading to a target, resulting in a lightning discharge. Often, the only warning the target receives is a milliseconds-long static tingle and the faint smell of ozone. Then, he is ripped apart by the force of the blast. The effect of the weapon's discharge is spectacular, as may be expected from a lightning strike at close range – the initial blinding discharge is followed by a number of smaller restrikes along the ion channel, resulting in a fascinating display of arcing lights and extraordinary sonic effect. The report of the lightning gun can often be heard for over a mile.

The lightning gun is a favoured weapon of the Deathwatch since the weapon is fully capable of obliterating multiple animates with a single blast. Those that are not immediately destroyed are thrown, burning, to the ground, where they are easily dispatched. Though unlicensed possession of the weapon is highly illegal, a few have fallen into civilian hands.

The weapon utilizes delicate components that are shielded from harm by a retractable protective shell when it is not in operation. The lightning gun is fuelled by a massive capacitor that draws energy from the city's Tesla array. Should the weapon be completely discharged, it may be recharged by the application of an integral hand crank.
**Cost:** £75+, Highly Illegal
**Ammo Cost:** Extra capacitor £10
**Skill:** Firearms - Rifle
**Ammo:** 6
**Range:** one hundred fifty meters
**Damage Modifier:** +10
**Features:** Anyone within three meters of a target hit by the lightning gun suffers a +5 damage roll. Any character that suffers a Flesh Wound or greater is knocked down. Any character who suffers an Incapacitating Wound or greater is set on fire (See Knockdown and Fire, Chapter 2, pages 108 and 115 respectively).

Lightning gun attacks do not suffer range penalties. When targeting a character wearing chain or plate armor, the attacker gains a +3 bonus on the attack roll unless the armor has been aetherically grounded.



Retracting the weapon's protective shell requires a full turn.

While within the confines of the metropolis, the lightning gun regains one charge every ten minutes. If a character manually recharges the weapon, it regains one charge every ten full minutes the crank is turned.

Any character firing the lightning gun without aetherically grounded gloves suffers a +3 Electrical Shock damage roll (see Shock Damage, Chapter 2, page 112).

Any blow to the weapon will misalign its fragile aiming components. Any attack made with a misaligned weapon suffers –3 to the attack roll. The weapon can be realigned by a character with the proper equipment succeeding in a Galvanics skill roll (DR 14). If the weapon suffers any serious damage, it will be rendered inoperable until repaired. Repairing the weapon requires the proper tools and a successful Galvanics skill roll (DR 16).

# Ranged Combat Accessories

## Gun Brace

**Cost:** £1/10s/-

The dangers of the Neo-Victorian world have greatly increased the appeal of high-powered firearms such as elephant guns, large bore handguns, and sawed-off shotguns. While these weapons are capable of gunning down the largest abominations, they put extreme stress on the body of the gunman, in some cases breaking wrists and dislocating shoulders. The gun brace is a metal contraption designed to compensate for the kick of high-powered weapons. Strapped to the wrist, arm, and shoulder, the device dispels the recoil energy of these heavy weapons. Each is custom made and fitted to its owner. An individual wearing a brace that was not fitted to him gains no benefit from it. The gun brace is not mass-produced military hardware and must be constructed by a skilled craftsman (a successful Trade – Metalworking skill roll versus a DR of 11).

Locking the brace in place requires the expenditure of one action. A character suffers –2 on melee attack, unarmed attack, parry, and dodge rolls while his gun brace is locked in place.

## Telescopic Sight

**Cost:**

| | |
|---|---|
| x2 Magnification | 15s |
| X3 Magnification | £2 |
| X5 Magnification | £5 |

Telescopic sights, or scopes, are optical devices mounted on some weapons to enhance accuracy. The cost of a scope depends on its magnification. Scopes are fragile and expensive devices and are seldom used within the confines of the metropolis where the fogs generally limit the range of combat to five meters or less.

Not all ranged weapons can benefit from a scope. Those that can have this noted in the Feature section of the weapon description.

When aiming a weapon with a scope, the attacker gains an additional +1 on his first attack roll with the weapon.

The long range of a weapon equipped with a x2 magnification scope is effectively increased by twenty meters. The long range of a weapon equipped with a x3 magnification scope is increased by sixty meters. The long range of a weapon equipped with a x5 magnification scope is increased by one hundred meters. Even with a scope, the weapon's long range cannot exceed its extreme range.

# Tools & Equipment

## Gas Mask, Equestrian

**Cost:** £1

Replacement Filter 10s

The air of the metropolis is fit for neither man nor beast. Specially fitted gas masks are used on horses kept and worked within the metropolis to prevent the valuable beasts from succumbing to the respiratory maladies that shorten the lives of the city's poor. Some equestrian gas masks are intended to cover the horse's whole head while others cover just the muzzle. Some include glass visors or pockets for the horse's ears. Equestrian gas masks utilize the same sort of filtration devices used in masks intended for human wear. The filters on equestrian gas masks must be replaced after ten hours of exposure to the outside air of the metropolis.

## Goggles, Photo-Reactive

**Cost:** £4

These are high-quality, tinted goggles that have been treated to react in bright light. The tint on the goggles becomes darker relative to the brightness of the light to which they are exposed. Photo-reactive goggles are especially prized among welders and galvanic engineers who use them to keep from being blinded. Some Undertakers also use them to keep their night vision when on the job.

# Galvanic Devices

A great boon of the modern age, galvanic devices are powered directly by the city's Tesla array. Galvanic devices are built for ease of use within the confines of the metropolis. Some devices are capable of limited use outside the metropolis before their onboard capacitors are completely discharged. Many have integrated hand cranks that can be manually wound to build up a charge.

### Electrical Lamp/Tesla Lantern

**Cost:** 10s+

An electrical lamp is any light generating device fuelled by the city's Tesla array without the need for wires or electrical plugs. Unless shut off, they constantly generate light. The cost of a Tesla lantern varies depending on the lamp's artistic flourishes and the materials from which it was made. Replacement light bulbs sell for about 2s.

### Electrical Torch

**Cost:** 5s

This is a hand-held lamp powered by the city's Tesla array. Most torches lack batteries and only function while within the confines of the metropolis.

### Field Radio (Transmitter/Receiver)

**Cost:** £4

The wireless field radio draws energy from the city's Tesla array to broadcast and receive radio transmissions. These devices are quite bulky and weigh around eight kilos. The Deathwatch and Metropolitan Police both utilize the device for internal communication, and a number of channels are reserved for their uses. Most field transmitters are capable of sending and receiving transmissions up to five miles away. Government buildings, commercial radio stations, naval vessels, and airships are equipped with vastly more powerful wireless devices that are capable of transmitting fifty miles or more.

A field transmitter has integral capacitors that will hold a charge outside the metropolis for two hours of operating time. The device incorporates a hand crank that will fully recharge the battery after ten minutes of cranking.

### Galvanic Grill

**Cost:** £2/10s/-

This is a galvanic grill heated by ambient electrical energy from the Tesla array. Most grills consist of a metal heating element that glows red hot soon after it is turned on. Consumer varieties weigh a few kilos and are easily transportable. These devices are expensive and are generally only found in the best middle-class homes. A number of wealthier homes and large restaurants have much larger versions permanently installed within their kitchens.

### Home Console Radio

**Cost:** £2

Home console radios are consumer radio receivers. These devices are quite heavy and are generally not portable. They tend to be made of heavy hard woods in the fashion of furniture centrepieces. Home console radios are never equipped with transmitters. These devices only operate within the confines of the metropolis.

### Plasma Lamp

**Cost:** £1+

Plasma lamps have been integrated into homes throughout the Neo-Victorian Empire. Once thought of as curiosities, these devices have come to represent the lightning that fuels the Galvanic Age and humanity's taming of the electrical spark. Based on Tesla's Inert Gas Discharge Tube, these spherical glass lamps are filled with a mixture of gasses at low pressure driven by an alternating current at high voltage. A much smaller orb in its centre serves as an electrode. The lights generated by the device are actually emergent patterns in ionized gas which extend from the inner electrode to the outer glass container, giving an appearance similar to multiple constant beams of coloured lightning. These devices only operate within the confines of the metropolis.

# Undertaker Gear

### Animate Restraints

**Cost:** 10s

Animate restraints are leather straps and collars used to restrain captured animates for the purpose of research and transportation. The restraints are set with a number of steel rings and hooks that may be used to tether the animate or further reinforce the restraints with chains or rope. The animate is fitted with a leather hood or muzzle to keep it from biting. Animate restraints are common pieces of equipment among Undertakers who capture "live" specimens for research facilities. Full sets of restraints are sometimes owned by degenerate aristocrats who enjoy playing "zombie."

Getting animate restraints on a zombie requires that the creature is first grappled (see Chapter 2, pages 97 – 98). Once the creature is grappled, a contested Vitality check is required to restrain the animate. If this roll fails, the animate bites its would-be subduer's hand or wrist, scoring an automatic damage roll.

### Dust Kit

**Cost:** 12s+

The Undertakers who hunt vampires are faced with a number of difficulties when attempting to collect a bounty on their prey. When a vampire is destroyed, its body is immediately reduced to fine ash. To collect his bounty, an Undertaker must collect at least sixty-five percent of these remains for identification. The dust kit consists of a set of tiny brushes and small dust bin that may be used to carefully collect vampiric ash. Dust kits are specialized pieces of equipment that are sold at premium prices.

### Piercing Irons

**Cost:** 10s

Piercing irons are a pair of cast iron tongs made to fit over a human head. When the tongs close around the skull, sharp spikes set into the tongs pierce the head and destroy the brain. The tongs are generally used to put down virtually harmless zombies that have already lost large portions of their anatomy. Plague-cart workers use tongs of this sort to ensure that their cargo will remain inert.

## Scientific & Medical Equipment

### Alchemical Lab, Complete

**Cost:** £200+, plus alchemical materials

A complete alchemical lab represents a significant investment in one's craft. Though alchemical supplies are available throughout the metropolis, assembling a working lab still takes time and planning. Permits must be acquired, gas lines installed, tools ordered, etc. Provided the funds are available, a lab can be put together in as little as a month.

Alchemical labs contain a staggering number of devices that no one outside the field could ever hope to identify, including a vast array of glassware, chemicals compounds, receptacles of salts and sand, ovens and autoclaves, charts, implements of iron and stone, precious metals, scales, industrial crucibles, metallurgical tools, scorifiers, bone-ash cupels, alembics, aludels, cucurbits, adopters, receivers, and other chemical apparatuses of ceramic, glass, and steel.

The lab cost only includes the tools, trappings, and consumables required to maintain the lab. Alchemical materials will cost extra (see the Catalogue, Chapter 6, pages 292 – 305 for details).

### Alchemical Lab, Travelling

**Cost:** £20, plus alchemical materials

A wonder of the modern age, a travelling alchemical lab is a medical valise filled to capacity with the essential materials of the alchemist's craft. The kit contains everything required to work in the field including a multitude of vials, Tesla burners, a small set of scales, tools, crucibles, and assorted receptacles. Travelling labs are extremely fragile and care must be taken that their delicate contents are not shattered or miscalibrated.

The lab only includes the tools, trappings, and consumables required to maintain the lab. Alchemical materials will cost extra (see the Catalogue, Chapter 6, pages 292 – 305).

### Anatomical Preservation System

**Cost:** £50+, plus £10 per week in operational costs

The preservation system is an array of tanks, structural reinforcements, and directional tubing intended to preserve the integrity of anatomical specimens prior to transplant. Optimal temperatures are maintained within the system, and alchemical solutions are conducted through the tissues to maintain a state of stasis, preserving the living tissue perfectly without subjecting the cells to the damaging potentials of freezing. A specimen contained in the preservation system may be considered to maintain its original condition for up to six months, assuming the system's operation is not interrupted.

The operational costs of this system reflect necessary maintenance and filtration and replacement of the alchemical solutions.

A system of this sort is absolutely necessary for the work of galvanic reanimation.

### Artificial Womb, Anathema-Grade

**Cost:** £300, plus £25 per month in operational costs

The anathema-grade artificial womb represents a milestone in the field of ectogenesis. The device is the first of its kind capable of gestating a human foetus, artificial or otherwise, to full term. The womb itself is a hermetically sealed apparatus of glass and steel filled with an artificial amniotic fluid maintained at body temperature. Embryonic umbilical cords are attached to external pumps that regulate nutrient intake and waste outflow.

Development of the foetus may be altered or accelerated with the introduction of alchemical solutions through the umbilical cord. In fact, it is common practice to reduce the period of artificial gestation by up to six months, though this

practice compromises the quality of the finished product (see The Creation Process, Chapter 6, pages 318 – 324). The actual sequence of ectogenesis is exceedingly intricate and requires a great deal of careful maintenance by the attending technician. If the incubation process is not properly monitored, the embryo may die before becoming viable or errors in ontogeny may accumulate, producing a monstrous creation.

The creation of life outside of sanctioned academic research is highly illegal. However, despite rigorous attempts to enforce these laws, there remains a constant demand for the fruits of artificial labour. As long as there are wealthy patrons who are unable to conceive their own children and prepared to pay for the best science money can buy, there will remain a black market in artificial infants.

### Artificial Womb, Homunculus-Grade

**Cost:** £75, plus £10 per month in operational costs

Though the homunculus-grade artificial womb is a great deal simpler than the anathema-grade womb, it is still a marvel of its time. While the device cannot carry true human life to term, it is capable of gestating less-advanced organisms. Homunculus-grade wombs are a staple of genetic research throughout the Neo-Victorian Empire. Virtually every medical school worth its salt boasts of one locked behind unmarked doors, away from the prying eyes of outsiders.

### Biogalvanic Reanimation Lab, Complete

**Cost:** £150+, plus maintenance

The assembly and maintenance of a complete and functional biogalvanic lab represents a significant investment. Most legal laboratories of this type are academic or industrial research facilities devoted to development of technology for the biomechanical interface – prosthetics, interface jar technology, and production of post-cadaverous automata are the most common activities conducted in these legitimate facilities.

A laboratory of this type is necessary for research into galvanic reanimation. If the goals of the research include construction and reanimation of a full human body, the needs of the laboratory in terms of equipment and supplies will be intensive. The anatomical preservation systems will need to be capable of supporting a complete body and ancillary parts, including the delicate neural tissues, over the entire course of construction. The laboratory will require considerable power: in addition to the power required by the support apparatuses, a massive array of capacitors will be needed to generate the galvanic impulses necessary for reanimation of tissues.

Any laboratory of this sort will include at least a basic anatomical preservation apparatus, though complex and correspondingly expensive apparatuses of this type are common. Some alchemical equipment is necessary for the formulation and modification of the basic ALS2(X) serums (see Chapter 6, page 292).

### Interface Jar

**Cost:** £50-150, plus £5 per week in operational costs

The interface jar is a device for the preservation of a living human brain. The simplest jars are little more than temporary life-support systems for the isolated brain, allowing nutrients and oxygen to reach the delicate tissues but providing no sensory inputs or outputs for the brain. These jars will suffice to transfer a brain between hosts or even to provide short-term storage for a few days or weeks, but long-term residence in the sensory deprivation of these jars will

do irreparable damage to the processing and response capabilities of the brain.

More complex devices are intended for longer use, providing sensory input and output of at least a basic type and usually incorporating some sort of locomotive capacity under the control of the stored brain. The most sophisticated provide analogues of all five senses through a variety of attachments to the jar. A brain may be stored under these conditions for years before the detrimental effects of the jar begin to manifest.

# Prosthetic Grafts

Neo-Victorian advances in the field of medical science have led to revolutionary developments in prosthetics that may be grafted directly to the human body. Though these devices can often restore senses and some physical function, they are expensive, sometimes painful, and often imperfect. Prosthetic grafts are notorious for the hideous scars they leave on the flesh.

**Cost:** Cost is the purchase price of the prosthetic. Note that surgery for implantation of the prosthetic costs extra (see Medical Procedures, Chapter 6, page 307).

## Oraculum

**Cost:** £50

**Description:** The Oraculum, or ghost-eye, is a sensitive instrument grafted into an empty eye socket in place of a missing orb. Though the device does not restore lost vision, it enables its owner to gaze a short distance into the spirit world. Unless naturally gifted with second sight or availed of the use of other artificial apparatuses for this purpose, the viewer has no ability to communicate with spirits, but he may, at least, detect their presence.

The Oraculum itself is constructed chiefly from finely etched glass and gold, set into an iron housing and grafted directly to the optic nerve. The operation required to graft the prosthetic eye requires hours of labour and the skilled hands of a consummate surgeon. Few would even attempt such an undertaking.

Once attached, the Oraculum takes several days to begin transmitting information through the optic nerve. During his recovery time, a character with a new Oraculum sleeps little if at all and suffers –2 Wit, Will, and Intellect. The character's attributes cannot be reduced to less than 1 as a result of this penalty. Once the character's mind has had time to adjust, the spirit world appears as an indistinct haze that becomes clear only when focused upon. Most parapsychologists believe this haze to be a psychological defence put up by the conscious mind to protect itself from sensory overload. With a little practice, the wearer can easily pierce the threshold at will and peer into the spectral landscape beyond corporeal existence.

Generally covered behind an eye patch until needed, the eye glows with a sickly green light and continually flickers in a most disquieting fashion. Powered by bio-electricity generated by the character's body, the Oraculum unnaturally ages its owner. Often, the hair turns grey and then stark white within a few years of the implantation. It is said that the Oraculum cuts years off its owner's lifespan, and that after death it continues to glow for days or weeks before dimming.

By gazing upon an individual, all manner of abnormalities come to light. The device not only pierces the threshold but also reveals the auras of men. The character gains +2 on Wit – Perception rolls involving the health or mental state of other characters. The Oraculum enables its owner to instantly identify the undead by their lack of life energy.

It is rare to meet a person with an Oraculum. A very few may be found in the possession of Undertakers who use the devices to discern the living from the dead.

Superstitions surrounding these devices have ensured that virtually no second-hand market exists. No one wishes to risk the attention of a previous owner's discarnate spirit or that of the eye itself; for it is said that the Oraculum awakens into a strange consciousness of its own, gazing inwardly into the soul of its owner as he gazes outward.

A character with an Oraculum suffers –1 on Wit and skill rolls for actions requiring vision or depth perception, such as ranged combat rolls.

## Rattler

**Cost:** £10

**Description:** The smogs that contaminate the air of the metropolis have taken their toll on the population, leading to a sharp rise in cases of throat cancer, black lung, and respiratory ailments. When such afflictions are operable, they often render the survivor mute. The grotesque Rattler is a rough answer to the resulting disability. Grafted rudely to the flesh, the device restores some speech function. However, the quivering, droning "voice" generated by the small iron box is wholly metallic and utterly inorganic in quality. The Rattler's hollow timbre is inhuman in the extreme and leaves a stark impression on the memories of a listener. Even after enduring painful surgery and terrible scars, an owner seldom uses the device except in times of need; for no ear, not even

the possessor's, ever grows accustomed to its sound.

A character with a Rattler suffers –1 on non-Intimidation Charm skill rolls involving speech.

### Ticker

**Cost:** £45

**Description:** A clockwork device of exceptional complexity, the Ticker is a brass and steel prosthetic replacement heart about the size of a human fist. The Ticker mimics the action of a true heart, pumping blood throughout the body. Though the Ticker is capable of sustaining human life, it is weaker than a natural heart and those with the prosthetic experience low blood pressure for the rest of their lives. Tickers are exceedingly rare and generally only the wealthiest citizens can afford them. Even those who undergo the operation can only expect another eighteen months of life, and most die on the operating table. Those who survive the procedure must take a daily dose of rejection-suppressant drugs.

The Ticker must be wound every six hours to maintain function. A dial rises through the flesh of the recipient and must be turned. Those possessing a Ticker carry specialized pocket watches with a six-hour timer to remind them that it is time to wind their hearts.

A character with a Ticker must make a Vitality roll (DR 11) each month. If the roll fails, the character permanently suffers –1 Vitality. If the character's Vitality is reduced below 0, he dies.

The Ticker interferes with the prey sense of animates. The possessor seems to "read" as unnatural and may be avoided for seemingly more human prey. Animates suffer –3 on sense prey rolls to detect the character (see Chapter 5, page 246).

## Groceries

### Scop

**Cost:**

6d (per gallon)

2d (per pound)

Scop is a tasteless and greasy single-celled protein food manufactured to feed the poor of the metropolis. Often sold in dried cakes or as a ready-made porridge, it is a staple of the working-class diet. A number of firms make incredible sums of money selling dried and canned scop to the poor.

### Spirits & Beer

Alcohol is a popular diversion from the drudgery of life that transcends class. Many Neo-Victorians appreciate a stiff drink once in a while, if only to help them ease into sleep at night.

A character consuming a number of drinks equal to his Vitality or less suffers –1 Coordination, Wit, Will, Intellect, and Charm and –1 on skill rolls for one hour. Each additional drink after the first extends this penalty by one hour. After consuming a number of drinks equal to his Vitality score, the character must make a Vitality roll (DR 11) after every drink. If the roll fails, the character suffers an additional –1 Coordination, Wit, Will, Intellect, and Charm and –1 on skill rolls. On a critical failure, the character suffers alcohol poisoning and dies unless he is successfully treated by a character with the Medicine skill (DR 11). If any of the character's attributes are reduced to 0, he passes out for 3 + d10 hours and cannot be awakened by any means.

### Slap

**Cost:** 3d (bottle)

This foul-tasting alcoholic substance is a by-product of scop production, salvaged from the fermentation tanks. A staple of "gin" joints throughout the East End, slap is the only alcoholic beverage many Londoners can afford. Nutritious and high in vitamins, many citizens prefer to drink their dinners rather than suffer through reheated scop porridge.

### Slap "Gin"

**Cost:** 9d (bottle)

Slap "gin" is refined and distilled slap. Lacking most of the nutritional value of the less-refined drink, this is a pure intoxicant. With a taste little better than paint thinner, few have developed a taste for this decidedly lower-class drink except out of necessity.

## Transportation

The metropolis is alive with nine million people constantly on the move. Most inhabitants of the city no longer dwell within walking distance of their places of employment. The streets of the metropolis are choked daily with masses of private carriages, hansom cabs, carts, and omnibuses catering to all budgets and social classes. Beneath the streets, electric tube trains haul hundreds of thousands of travellers across the city daily.

For the upper classes, the only acceptable mode of transportation is by private carriage. Any aristocrat worth his family name owns at least one carriage and a team of horses to pull it. A driver is likewise kept on retainer to take

his master throughout the metropolis. Though many aristocrats are expert riders, horseback is not viewed as a suitable method of transportation through the city. Horses are largely relegated to sport and Sunday rides through the park for those few who can afford to maintain the animals. In recent decades, as fresh food has become more difficult to obtain, it has become more expensive to maintain even a small stable. A fashion has arisen among the London elite for carriages of the Oriental type, drawn by one to four servants depending on the size of the carriage.

Those who cannot afford to keep up private carriages rely largely on hansom cabs and the omnibus. The industrialists of the City, mostly lacking the accommodations for teams of horses, rely on lavish cabs kept at their beck and call. There are about ten thousand licensed cab drivers servicing London's streets. The omnibus is a huge double-decker conveyance pulled by a full team of labourers and can seat twenty-two riders. Some adventurous souls prefer to take matters into their own hands and propel themselves through the streets of the metropolis on bicycles.

A popular alternative to aboveground travel is the Tube. Not only are the electric trains inexpensive, but they also circumvent the congestion that can paralyze busier city streets for up to three hours a day. The Tube was nearly complete when the outbreak of the Plague halted its construction. Work did not begin again until after the Reclamation of London in 1959. The original loop was completed by 1966. At peak hours, trains run every ten minutes. Tickets are sold by passenger class rather than by destination.

The Deathwatch has the authority to halt the trains during animate outbreaks. Should an event of reanimation occur on the train, the doors of the various cars are immediately sealed, the train is isolated, and Deathwatch personnel race to the train as fast as possible. It is always the hope that losses can be minimized through this process of quarantine. The trains themselves keep the active Tube tunnels clear of animate infestation. Those that stumble onto the tracks are quickly and quietly cut down. At the end of the night, the trains are scrubbed clean of the day's accumulated gore.

The Thames serves the metropolis as an east-west highway. Goods and passengers may be ferried along the waterfront or outside the city altogether. Generally goods shipped into the metropolis are placed on great steam-driven trains that travel throughout England.

Though public transportation is widely available and generally inexpensive, it is not without its risks. Incidents of spontaneous animation on omnibuses and, worse yet, trains and ferries are very low, but the results can be catastrophic. The threat of animate attack in confined spaces is more than enough to illicit an immediate panic response potentially more dangerous than the attack itself. Passengers may jump out doors and windows, trample each other in the aisles, or open fire indiscriminately. The Neo-Victorians are no strangers to reports of tragic dramas played out in their mass transit system. Many passengers have developed a siege mentality and respond either by sitting in silence or reciting their prayers aloud until released from the confines of their chosen conveyance.

# Communication

The Neo-Victorians have continued to refine communication technology. Within the confines of the metropolis, the most common forms of communication are the posted or courier dispatched letter, the telephone, and the radio. The city has an extensive pneumatic post used to deliver letters through pressurized air tubes. The network of tubes is utilized to deliver mail to most stately homes and major businesses throughout the metropolis.

Though the telegraph is utilized for long-range communication to distant localities outside the metropolis, it is unreliable at best. Despite the buried telegraph lines, service interruptions occur constantly, forcing repair crews into the Wastelands for spot repairs. Undertakers are commonly employed to accompany service workers on these dangerous outings beyond the fortifications of the city.

Most public buildings, larger businesses, and upper-class homes have at least one telephone. New Scotland Yard is a hub of communications and remains in constant contact with the Home Office, the Deathwatch, and all metropolitan police stations. Police call boxes can be found throughout the city.

Within the greater London area, radios have grown increasingly popular. Powered by the Tesla array, radios offer an inexpensive method of communication, though one that is far less private than a person-to-person phone call. The Deathwatch has instituted a warning system that is utilized to spread the word of Plague outbreaks and impending lockdowns. Many citizens keep radios on just in case of trouble. The radio has likewise proven to be a godsend to the naval and shipping concerns.

# Chapter Five - The Anatomy of Horror

## The Animate Dead

*From the School of Medicine at the University of London*

### Introduction to Non-Human Pathology

Dr. Jacob Highman.

*This compulsory course provides a survey of systemic animate anatomy, including the skeletal system, muscular system, structural system, sensory system, and the degradation thereof upon lack of feeding.*

### *From the introductory lecture given by Professor Jacob Highman last autumn term.*

*In your studies, you will have the opportunity to observe firsthand many of the oddities to be found in the natural and preternatural worlds. Possibly the strangest and the most ubiquitous is the common animated corpse – the zombie. The animate is the oldest of the class of unliving forms, having made its initial appearance some two hundred years ago. Since virtually the moment of its appearance, the scientific mind has struggled to understand the mysteries of this phenomenon. Where did it come from? What are its causes? What is the principle that imbues an ordinary clay corpse with movement and the appetite for the living flesh of men? Despite two hundred years of earnest inquiry, the answers are still far from clear. The animate – the zombie – remains to us nearly as mysterious now as they were to the first scientist who ever brought a scalpel to bear on that rotten, unliving flesh.*

*The biology of the zombie is extremely interesting. Later in this term, we will review in greater detail the physiological changes that can be observed in a bitten individual. These alterations, beginning in the later stages of the infection, transform the physiological attributes of the human material into the unusual adaptations observable in the physiology of the new animate. The creature's tendons become stiff, giving a rigidity to the frame that is readily apparent in its movements. The bones grow dense and heavy, particularly in the face and jaw, the muscles becoming tense and corded. Over time, the teeth will break away from the jaw during use, leaving a jagged edge of extremely durable bone that is used in biting. Overall the creature is strong, having tremendous strength especially in the hands and jaw, but lacking somewhat in agility. A new animate can move at a slow run and retains some ability to climb but lacks the manual dexterity to do so much as work a doorknob. The senses are as they were in the human prior to death with the exception of the sense of smell, which becomes exceptionally acute, and the sense of touch, which seems to disappear entirely. If the animate is denied opportunities to feed, these abilities will decline, leaving the zombie as little more than a slow, shambling husk.*

*The decline of a starved animate has been well documented in numerous labs. The process is not dissimilar to ordinary decomposition save that the process occurs much more slowly. A fresh animate, kept captive and deprived of opportunities to feed, will maintain its full speed and strength for up to several years. Over time, the small encroachments of decomposition and desiccation will take their toll. As the muscles decay, the creature will lose strength and speed. The eyes and the soft tissues of the nose rot, depriving the creature of sight and its keen sense of smell. The skin will tighten over dry bones and desiccated muscle, giving the creature the appearance of a mummy or skeleton. Finally, the creature's dry bones and ligaments will become too fragile to support the weight of the monster, and the creature will cease to move.*

*This is not to say that the animate ceases to be a danger. The head remains well preserved internally long past the time when visual inspection of the monster would give any reason for alarm. Many reclamation men have been bitten in just such a fashion, carelessly handling the remains of what appeared to be a dry, harmless inanimate corpse. Though the senses of sight, hearing, and smell are long gone, until the brain is finally destroyed, the creature retains the uncanny prey sense that allows it to seek out and locate living humans despite the intervening distance or barriers to sight and scent.*

*You may observe all this for yourself.*

[The professor gestured to the assistant waiting in the wings, and a cage was wheeled onto the podium. Inside was an animate of great age. Decomposition was far advanced in this specimen. The face was a staring skull, eyes shrivelled, nose decayed to the bone. The skin was grey parchment stretched over a skeletal frame, beneath which desiccated muscles writhed abominably. The creature moved awkwardly within the cage; the head lifted and turned, seemingly testing the air. The creature lurched forward, straining against the bars of the cage, striving to throw itself forward into the front rows of students. It made no sound.

The students in the front rows started and cried out. Several dropped their books and fled.]

*Allow me to introduce you to Alfred Wilcox, Ph.D. and Friend of the College. This specimen has been the property of the University for twenty-five years. Dr. Wilcox bequeathed himself to the Nonhuman Pathology Department prior to his death, with the stipulation that the body was to be used for research purposes. He was the subject of a number of experiments in humanity reestablishment in his early days and has been used for observations and class demonstrations for the past fifteen years of his tenure. We have several specimens of this sort at present, of which Dr. Wilcox is the most venerable. It is, of course, impossible to feed these specimens, as the living flesh of humans is required for their sustenance. The specimen you see before you has therefore existed twenty-five years without nourishment under the carefully controlled conditions enjoyed by university specimens, and though you can observe his decrepit state, he is manifestly still very much a danger. Were he by some accident to be let loose among you, you would observe him to call upon the most amazing reserves of speed and strength.*

*Until the head is severed from the body or the brain is destroyed, the animate is a danger. This cannot be stressed highly enough. You will be working with cadavers of this type in your studies at the university, and it is easy to permit familiarity to make you careless. This program loses students to such carelessness every year. We are instituting a new set of safety precautions for this year's class in an effort to avoid this. The University cannot afford a repetition of the incident several years past – you have no doubt heard the stories or seen the site of the former Nonhuman Pathology wing. But I digress.*

*Were Dr. Wilcox to be allowed his way, he would be able to kill and feed upon dozens of you without slowing. Though he has been twenty-five years without feeding, his capacity is entirely undiminished. He would feed without stopping until no living individuals remained within his reach. When the food supply within this auditorium was exhausted, he would venture forth in search of still greater supplies of food.*

*Despite their extraordinary ability to maintain activity in the absence of feeding opportunities, when given access to prey, an animate will feed almost continuously. There appears to be no reflex for satiety. I have personally observed an animate stuffed with flesh, fresh human organs protruding from its own rotting viscera, chewing into the neck of yet another victim despite its inability to actually swallow the flesh it was masticating.*

*The physiology of the zombie is altered in an extraordinary fashion following a feed. The natural processes of decomposition and desiccation that wear away at the corpus are halted and actually reversed by the absorption of living flesh into the system. A creature as far destroyed by age as the one you observe before you can be restored to the strength and appearance of a nearly fresh corpse with sufficient infusion of living flesh. The language I have used here is not accidental. The corpse animate is, simply and fundamentally, just that – a corpse. It does not metabolize. It does not have a beating heart or pumping lungs. It does not digest and excrete. Rather it seems to integrate the flesh it consumes into itself. Even animates lacking intact viscera or throats appear to be able to perform this oddity. The precise mechanism by which this occurs remains something of a mystery. Moreover, it is likely to remain a mystery, as experimentation in this vein would require the commission of acts worse than mere murder...*

## From laboratory course in Nonhuman Pathology, Autumn 2104:

### *Part One: Specimen Security.*

*You will be led to the specimen kennels to select a demonstration unit for today's laboratory exercise. Your lab leaders will be familiar with all appropriate protocols within the kennels; they are to be obeyed unquestioningly on all counts. This exercise is not without danger, and your safety will depend on them. The kennel master, an Undertaker on retainer with the University, will escort you to and from the underground chambers and will act as troubleshooter for this exercise.*

*The primary kennels are located beneath the laboratories in the new Nonhuman Pathology wing. To achieve entrance, you will be conducted through a series of locks beneath the building proper; the specimens are isolated thirty meters beneath the grounds of the University in an area accessible only through a series of ramps and heavily doored passages that are kept secured when not in use. All doors are to be opened only to permit passage and are to be locked again when your team has passed through. Note that the doors, all of which open inward, are of metal and sturdily made, intended to resist tremendous pressure from below. In the event of an emergency, the doors will not be opened.*

*The specimens are contained individually. In this way, they may be accessed with a fairly low likelihood of accident. These animates are contained in wide, rounded cells with a double-gate system regulating access, a design offering no possibility of concealment for the creature contained within. On approach, you will be easily able to determine the position of the specimen before entering the cell.*

*A special apparatus will be required for specimen capture and transport. All equipment needed may be found in the chamber immediately inside the terminal kennel doors; the kennel master will allow you access. To secure the specimen, you will require a set of thick, sturdy ropes, the heaviest grade of leathered sack, and a gurney equipped with the full set of heavy leathered restraints. For your personal safety, you will be required to wear a full set of protective gear: leathered coveralls, a coat with reinforced collar, supple gloves, and a helmet with a steel mesh faceplate.*

*When you are fully equipped, organize into teams. Five of your strongest will be required to secure the animate. The others will act to move the animate to the gurney and secure it there.*

*Open the outer gate and permit four of the strongest to enter, two by two, each pair holding a length of the rope between them. The fifth should stand behind the rope teams with the leathered sack ready. The rest of the team should enter with the gurney and stand prepared, closing the gate behind themselves.*

*By the time you are in position, the animate will have sensed your presence. Wait for it to come toward the second gates before triggering the mechanism that permits these inner gates to open. As the animate comes forward, the rope teams should rush forward, catching the creature on the ropes and bearing it down. The fifth team member must close ground immediately and secure the sack about the creature's head. Remember that any healthy adult will be faster than an animate of this age. However, the creature is still quite powerful. If it does catch hold of a team member, do not panic. As long as the head is secured, you are quite safe, as unnerving as the experience may be.*

*Convey the animate to the gurney as quickly as possible and secure it firmly by means of the attached straps. If the creature has managed to take hold of any of your team, it can be induced to release its grasp with a short application of an electric prod to the appropriate muscle group. The kennel master will be available to provide this service. Once the creature is secured, you may remove the helmets. The remainder of the gear should remain in place for the duration of the exercise.*

*Check that the restraints are absolutely secure before proceeding to the first set of locks. The animate will struggle against its bonds and may succeed in loosening them. It is therefore necessary to check the restraints at every set of locks and tighten any loose straps before proceeding. The troubleshooter will check your work and accompany you through the locks and into the laboratories.*

## *Part Two: Physiology and Response.*

*Begin the physiological examination with an exploration of the animate's superficial appearance. The former humanity of the animate should be immediately evident. Examine closely the muscular structure in particular. In an unfed animate of this age, the muscles should be thoroughly desiccated beneath the skin. The tendons and ligaments should be pronounced, easily visible at the joints. Observe the jerkiness of the muscle contractions and the ligament response as the creature moves against its restraints.*

*Observe the skin. Discoloration should be thorough, betraying no evidence of the original hue. The texture should be slippery or parchment-like depending on the age, and the skin will release a distinctive odour when touched. In places it may have sloughed away or worn through to reveal the structures beneath, which will have taken on a leathery appearance with exposure to the air.*

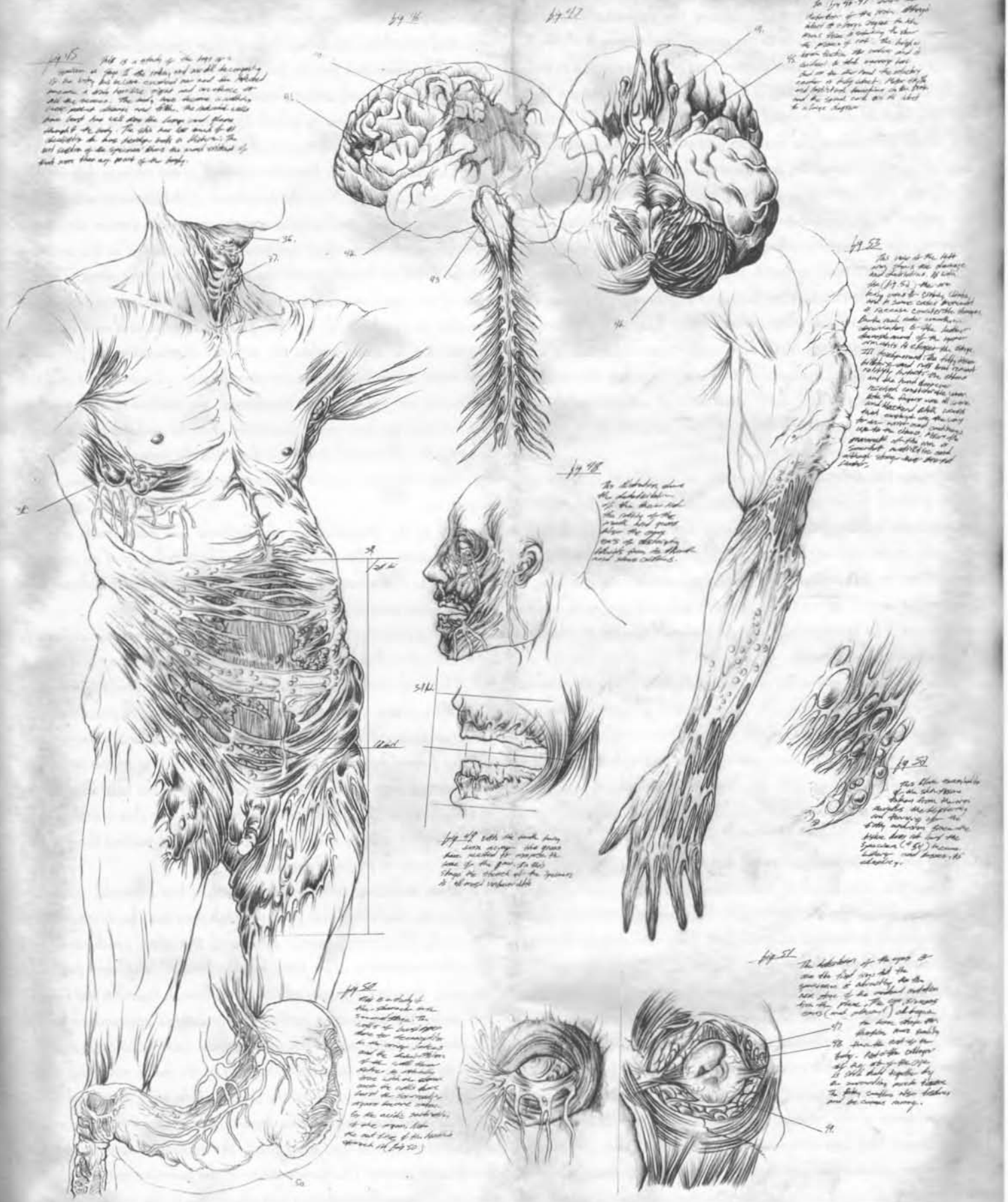
*Part the skin and muscle of the abdomen, making an incision if necessary. Note the condition of the organs. The viscera should be dry and atrophied, retaining little of their original colour and plasticity. The animate's faculty for consuming and processing of living flesh remain curiously intact despite the degree of ruin of the organs, though the mechanism by which the creature absorbs its nutrition without functional gastrointestinal machinery is unknown.*

*Cut away the flesh from the left half of the ribcage, leaving the chest cavity exposed. Note the toughness of the connective tissues in this region. These cartilaginous structures, as with similar structures throughout the body, have tightened and toughened in the unliving creature and no longer permit the easy motion of the chest. The rib cage of the aged animate is largely inflexible; the creature does not breathe, so the lungs do not fill. The desiccation and ruin of these organs can be noted within the exposed chest cavity. In a fresher specimen, where the organs are atrophied to a lesser extent and the ligaments are incompletely toughened, the motion of the creature can continue to force small quantities of air in and out of the lungs, causing the "moaning" sound attributed to the animate. As the creature ages, this capacity for vocalization will vanish as the lungs and larynx rot.*

*All of the physiological observations you have made are the result of years of slow decomposition. The devolution of an animate is similar to that observed in clay corpses, but very much delayed and having some unique properties.*

*For approximately the first year, an animate remains very much as it was when first rose. The fleshy tissues remain intact and do not rot. The body cools to the ambient temperature, having no internal heat. The skin is pale and mottled with lividity, with precise colour patterns depending on the orientation of the corpse at passing and the lag period between death and rising. As this phase nears its end, blisters may be observed on the skin, and the skin may begin to slough away from the underlying tissues. Over this initial period, decomposition proceeds slowly on a cellular level, paving the way for the next stage in physical development.*

*Once sufficient cellular decomposition has occurred, putrefaction begins. The skin takes on a greenish-gray tint due to alterations within the blood and becomes slimy with the waste products of cellular decomposition. The fatty tissues beneath the skin begin to saponify, forming a greasy whitish or yellowish layer on the tissues and giving the animate a particularly gruesome appearance where the skin has fallen away. Microorganisms within the body cavities begin to feed on the nutrient-rich fluids of the body, releasing waste gases that cause distension of the tissues of the belly, face, and groin. Internal pressures result in the expulsion of unclean fluids from the orifices of the body and may cause the tissues to tear outward if the bloat is severe. The temperature of the animate may be slightly elevated from ambient during this phase due to the metabolic activities of the microorganisms digesting it from within.*



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*The decomposition of the tissues does not proceed to the same extent in an animate as in a clay corpse. In an animate, much of the muscular tissue remains intact as do the nonnutritive tissues such as the connective materials, skin, and bone. Large portions of the brain remain astonishingly untouched. Extensive portions of the soft (organ) material may remain as well, though this varies by individual case and environmental conditions. Once the putrefaction stage has passed, the third and longest stage will begin.*

*In the third and final stage, the animate progresses slowly through mummification. The remaining tissues become dry and leathery with dehydration. The tendons toughen, slowing the animate and imparting a jerkiness to its movements. The senses decline into near uselessness with the exception of the prey sense, which remains sharp throughout the animate's existence. As the desiccation of the tissues progresses, the animate becomes more fragile and vulnerable to damage. Twenty to thirty years spent in the environmental conditions generally endured in the wild reduces the animate to an almost complete immobility.*

*As a note, you have certainly observed that the behaviour of the animate has not altered one iota through these proceedings. The creature is entirely insensible to pain and seems, in fact, to have no capacity for sensation of any sort. This is one of the aspects of the animate that make it such a formidable opponent. No damage done to an animate will dissuade it from its aim, and no wound will serve to slow it unless significant portions of the anatomy are damaged past functionality. Animates have been observed to pursue their targets despite the loss of multiple limbs and even after being put to the torch. When fresh, the animate may possess sufficient instinct for preservation to flee when confronted with a serious enemy, but the instinct is rudimentary at best.*

*The only certain way to stop an animate is to sever the head or destroy the brain. Portions of the ordinary animate removed from the body are dead flesh. It is the brain, the unliving yet undying brain, that drives the animate. If the brain can be somehow destroyed or the head removed from the body, the animate will be deprived of its vital force and will become motionless, a harmless lump of clay. There exists a strain of animate for which this generalization is not true, but due to the additional danger of handling specimens of this type, you will not be permitted to examine the peculiarities of this physiology until considerably later in your studies.*

*As the University animates are valuable research specimens, you will not be permitted to destroy the creature in this lab…*

## Notes from the 2089 logbooks of Phinneas Finn, now an OUD administrative clerk, from his days as an Undertaker.

***13 June.*** *Risens on the loose in the East End again. Stepney's a real hot zone. Reclamation burned it out six months ago, stupid bastards moved right back in. Went hand to hand. Total maybe twenty takes. Another ten mercy kills, all bitten – heads spiked as per standard, bodies burned.*

***23 June.*** *Risen in the Covent Garden. Escape from a Plague Cart. Gave us a bit of a chase. Fast canny bastards, the fresh ones. Limited incidental casualties.*

***8 July.*** *More in the East End -- Plague Cart caught by surprise this morning. Twelve takes, three mercies. Department of Health gives East End a rating of one per three for the summer.*

***19 July.*** *Incident at Hospice of the Quiet Sleep at Burns and Lombe. One died in the night, nurse on duty asleep. Others ran, secured the doors. Good – contained the infection. Less trouble. Hospice not reclaimable – burned and razed. Maybe forty dead.*

***28 July.*** *East End again. This damnable heat. Old keep dying. Four dead, locked in by surviving family. No mercies. Quick knife work cleanup. Damned glad the risen think slower'n wood*

## Excerpt from Professor S. Kinney's book *A Natural History of Undeath; Being a treatise on the various unliving and half-living inhabitants of the modern world.* Published by Oxford University Press, 2011.

*The xombie is generally a solitary creature, though the term may have implications that are not needed here. It is more accurate to say that the xombie appears to pay the presence of other xombies no attention whatsoever. Recognizing its fellow undead as such, and therefore as not a source of nutrition, the xombie pays its kindred as much mind as it would a nearby rock or tree.*

*This utter indifference, paradoxically, may be a driving force behind the "flocking" behaviour observable in groups of xombies. The spread of the contagion is radial from an original incident, wherein a risen corpse begins to feed and thereby creates a growing group of xombies in its vicinity. Caring nothing for one another, these newly risen creatures will search out any source of prey in the vicinity and, in many cases, will move collectively toward the nearest source of prey. The observation that xombies may descend en mass to feed is, therefore, not an incidence of pack behaviour but an accident of proximity. There is no evidence whatsoever for cooperative behaviour among xombies of the ordinary type.*

*Beginning in 1983, we do, however, have scattered reports of a variety of xombie beyond the ordinary type. This monster is reported to be more intelligent than the customary xombie, capable of limited reasoning and, apparently, some degree of animal cleverness. These aspects, unexpected in the animate dead, make this variety of xombie a terrifying opponent, difficult to predict and extremely challenging to destroy.*

*One of the first reports of this manifestation dates from 1980, contained in the journal of a young woman trapped in the last fortified*

*building of a fallen compound in the North of the kingdom. Here I present the last page of the journal, unedited, for the edification of the public.*

*"...others are gone. They went to get help and never came back, and it has been four days. No one is coming back. I know this now. I am prepared to die, but only... not at the hands of those things. If there is a God, I pray it. I will not join those monsters with my death.*

*I can see him walking past now, beneath the window. They all walk by the window. Around and around the building... they know I am here. They know I am here because the strange one knows I am here.*

*He is standing in front of the building, where he has been for two days. I know him. He was a farmer. He was one of the first to die. Two days ago, I looked out the window and saw him. He saw me too, and he stopped and looked up. Then... oh unspeakable... the others stopped, like puppets whose strings had gone tight, and turned as one to look up at me too. I have not slept since.*

*I try not to look at the window, but I cannot help looking. He has not moved, not once. The others circle the building in lines, removing any chance of escape. One by one, they throw themselves against the back door. The sound is changing. They are almost through. When they break through the door, he will come for me.*

*There, the crash. I looked out the window and he was gone. The others stood in the courtyard like unused toys. Now a rattling at the door latch... he has me now*

*Others at the door -- no time. Have a pistol -- too few rounds. God help me"*

*This and other more recent observations indicate the existence of a xombie of unusual intelligence and manual skill. The memory facilities are superior: in many cases, we have evidence that the xombie recalls the location of prey and will work tactically to corner a target, even ignoring new targets once prey is well secured. We have multiple observations of what appear to be the same xombie in multiple incidents within a region over long periods of time, indicating that this strain of xombie may be of greater natural durability than its simpler cousins. Moreover, the regular observations of unusual coordination and cooperation among simple xombies in the presence of a xombie of this strain have led some scientists to speculate that this strain possesses some sort of corrupted telepathy or other ability for mental control of lesser specimens. It is this ability that has led to the creation of the epithet "Xombie Lord."*

*Relatively little is known about the creation of this strain. Based on the observations we have, we presume it did not come into existence until the 1980s. It is widely presumed to be a mutated form of the standard xombie, though the origins of the strain (and, indeed, the very nature of the xombie contagion) remain something of a mystery. There are no observations to date of the strain occurring among the spontaneously risen, and as it stands, the strain appears to be vanishingly rare. Though the Xombie Lord does appear to be able to compel lesser strains of xombie into its service, there are presently no known instances of cooperation between individuals of this strain; whether this is an intrinsic behavioural trait or a function of the strain's rarity is unknown.*

*It is worthwhile to note that there is no reliable superficial means by which the Lord-strain can be discerned. The differences of the strain appear to be largely behavioural rather than physical, save for the increased delay in the decay process. This delay was observed closely under laboratory conditions in the Bell Harbour Paranormal Research labs. Regrettably, these labs were overrun by xombies in year five of the experiment. As this incident is widely considered to be a spectacular verification of the Xombie Lord's ability to control lesser undead at distance, no lab has since proved willing to continue the experiment...*

# The Pathology of the Animate

The zombie, or *mortuus animatus*, is easily the most ubiquitous of the semi-living and unliving horrors of this world. The origins of the global pandemic remain unclear, and the reasons for the continued reanimations remain a mystery. The zombie plague began spontaneously two hundred years ago, when a series of nearly simultaneous manifestations occurred at scattered points across the known world. Telegraph messages sent during those first few critical hours before the scope of the threat was understood and the reports of the few refugees that made their way to the comparative safety of the British Isles confirm the opinion that the manifestation was global: no part of the world was spared the horrors of the Plague.

The cities overrun with zombies were abandoned, the populace fleeing to the countryside and establishing encampments for mutual protection against the depredations of the dead. Civilization began to re-establish itself within the encampments, learning to cope with the ever-present threat of reanimation and the perpetual assaults from without. These were British men and women, hardy and curious, and so it was a matter of no great time before the natural incisiveness of that native mind was applied with success to the first of the mysteries of the animate dead. Reclamation teams established to defend the camps were given the task of securing and containing animates from among the camp's own dead. These unfortunates were put under the scrutiny of the most brilliant minds of the time in the hopes of finding a cure for the Plague.

It was well known from the first days that the surest mode of creating an animate was is for an existing animate to bite a

living person. The creature feeds upon the flesh of its victim, generally beginning its feast either in the soft vascular tissues of the neck, which are easily accessible, or in the viscera. Generally, the victim expires during the act of feeding due to blood loss, systemic shock, or a combination of these factors. The animate appears to lose interest in the body once vitality departs; the reasons for this have been endlessly speculated upon but thus far remain unknown. The end result of this curious phenomenon is that the corpse of the unfortunate victim, while far from pristine, is largely functional and intact insofar as the larger musculoskeletal structures are concerned. When death occurs in this fashion, the resulting corpse will invariably rise within a matter of minutes or hours.

Nearly as common are cases of zombie attack where the victim manages to survive the initial assault. If during the assault the victim is unlucky enough to sustain a bite from the animate, death is as certain as if the creature had obtained its meal. The wound from a zombie bite, as with any bite from a living human, almost invariably festers and putrefies. The resulting infection is more aggressive and tenacious than gangrene. Neither medication nor sanitation can arrest the spread of the infection. Cauterization and even amputation in the case of limb bites fails to stop the spread of the infection through the body.

In the first hours and days of infection, the bitten individual progresses through a malady not dissimilar to influenza in a gangrene victim: fever, chills, malaise, and heat and pain spreading outward from the location of the injury. At some point, the fever dissipates and the victim makes an apparent recovery, save that the wound will entirely fail to close. At this point, death is very near. The patient complains of hunger but is unable to take sustenance. He develops a pronounced aversion to the company of men, often trying to escape caretakers in an attempt to die alone. The body temperature continues to drop, and the wound site takes on a numbness that spreads through the body. The tendons stiffen and harden, causing cramps and contortions of the muscle tissues that the patient fails to feel. The bones thicken and solidify, causing distortions of the facial features and stiffness of movement. The higher brain functions begin to fail, resulting ultimately in death. After the death of the body, the bitten victim resurrects as an animate ravenous for human flesh.

Physicians at the time of the first outbreak were given the opportunity to observe these phenomena in great detail, and their notes have been of tremendous value to modern physicians and Undertakers alike. The inexperience of the populace in those early days led to large numbers of infections initiated by the attacks upon the rudimentary walls and unexpected reanimations within the compounds. Many physicians and surgeons made extraordinary and heroic efforts to preserve the life of bite victims, all to no avail.

After centuries of research and countless lives lost, it is known with certainty that there is no cure for the bite of an animate. Once the infection has set in, hope is lost. There is some very small percentage of cases where infection does not occur, and these individuals appear to recover normally and remain fully human. It is believed that these individuals throw off the infection through a combination of natural constitution and incredible luck. It must, however, be noted that recovery from one zombie bite does not appear to provide the slightest immunity to a second.

Studies of the physiology of the animate have revealed that the creature's continued animation relies on the existence of a certain amount of intact central nervous tissue. Any significant structural damage to the brain is sufficient to destroy the creature. The severing of the spinal cord at or above the first thoracic vertebral bone also suffices to render the creature inanimate. This has led to speculations that the essential reanimating agent is located or rooted in the nervous tissue, but all attempts to isolate this agent have proved fruitless.

Most of this information comes from the records of the scientists and military forces of the Reclamation Period. During this period, a large number of animates were retained for study in various formal and informal institutions. Many laboratory accidents occurred and were recorded during this time, providing the best data available on the feeding behaviour and regenerative capacities of the animate. The late Reclamation Period, when London itself was cleared, provides a substantial body of information on the capabilities and dangers of the "mummified" zombie. The largest collection of period records is housed in the Nonhuman Studies Library at the University of London.

Zombification may, of course, occur spontaneously. The method of death is of no matter; the corpse of a murdered man is no more likely to rise than the corpse of an influenza victim or an individual who died quietly in his sleep. The location where the person died, however, appears to matter a great deal. Reanimation rates are highest in the sepulchres, abandoned cities of ill omen scattered through the Wastes; a person who dies in one of these ill-favoured places will certainly rise as one of the hungry dead. The Wastes themselves have high rates of reanimation; in the areas lost to the Wastes, reanimation rates are estimated at seventy to eighty-five percent. In the remaining arable lands surrounding the cities, rates fall further, rarely reaching one in ten. Within the cities, reanimation rates are extremely variable; London possesses "hot spots" where reanimation rates may reach one in three and "still zones," mainly in the West End, where reanimation may

occur once out of every hundred deaths. In general, the East End of London exhibits the worst reanimation rates in the metropolis; this region contains the majority of the hot spots in the city, and average rate of reanimation for the entire quarter is nearly one in five. The West End and the Square Mile, by contrast, have very few hot spots, and average rates of reanimation are universally low, with barely one in a hundred bodies becoming animated and then rarely until two days have passed. It is important to note that it is the location of death rather than the location in which the body is disposed that is important in determining expected rates of reanimation. The reason or reasons for these geographic discrepancies are unknown.

Regardless of its origins, the zombie is precisely what it appears to be: an animated corpse. The body itself is inert and decaying; it does not require water or air, and the living flesh it consumes is not digested or metabolized in any ordinary manner. Compared with an inert corpse, the process of decay is somewhat arrested in the zombie; the processes which skeletonise a normal corpse in a matter of weeks operate on an animated corpse over a period of many years before the same effect is achieved. Three basic stages have been identified in the decomposition process of an animate: the ravener, the shambler, and the husk or mummy.

The ravener stage persists for at least a few months to one year after rising, even if no prey is taken. The corpse remains largely intact during this period, even retaining the appearance of a perfectly fresh corpse for the first several weeks. The body goes to ambient temperature (algor mortis), and lividity patterns will be visible on the skin (livor mortis), coloration otherwise being bloodlessly pale beneath any natural pigmentation. The animate corpse does not go through a stage resembling the rigor mortis of an inanimate corpse and is always active, mobile, and ready to feed. The senses retain a lifelike acuity, save for the sense of smell, which is heightened beyond that of a human, and the sense of touch, which disappears entirely. The animate retains some of the speed and agility of the human form; it is capable of a slow run in pursuit of prey and is tireless, but it lacks the fine dexterity and intelligence necessary to work a doorknob. The internal anatomy remains largely intact during this phase. The ordinary motion of the animate can be sufficient to incidentally propel small amounts of air into and out of the lungs, resulting in the characteristic "moaning" of the fresh animate. If a kill is made during this stage, the animate essentially "resets" to the physical condition of the corpse at the time of death, minus any portions of the gross anatomy that may have been lost by some injury. As the phase proceeds, the body loses some speed due to stiffness in the limbs and the senses begin to diminish as the tissues begin to degrade. As this phase nears its end, the skin will begin to blister and slough away from the underlying fat and muscle and the first signs of bloat will become apparent. Over this initial period, decomposition has been proceeding slowly on a cellular level, releasing organic nutrients into the interstitial spaces of the body and paving the way for the next stage in the development of the animate's physiology.

The next stage, the shambler stage, will occur after approximately a year if no prey is taken. An animate given the opportunity to feed consistently is presumably able to delay indefinitely the onset of this stage, which is characterized by large-scale putrefaction. The remaining skin becomes greenish-gray and slimy, and the exposed fatty tissues saponify, becoming greasy and yellowish. "Corpse bloat," the collection of gasses within the cavities of the body as a result of microbial action within the dissolving tissues of the corpse, distends the cavities of the body with putrid gases, causing expulsion of the fluid by-products of decay from the orifices. The moaning develops into an unpleasant gurgle and then ceases altogether once the tissues of the larynx are too far decayed to respond to the passage of air. The animate is somewhat more flammable during this stage due to the accumulation of volatile gases in the body cavities. The senses begin to decline, beginning with vision, as the tissues rot. The gradual decomposition of the tissues further reduces the speed and agility of the animate. It is no longer capable of even a slow run, instead taking on the characteristic "shamble" of the animate dead. Body temperature may be slightly above ambient during this phase due to the metabolic activities of microorganisms within the decaying tissues.

This unfortunate stage may proceed over the course of several years, depending on conditions: an animate in a wet or warm environment will proceed through this stage more quickly than one exposed to consistent cold. In the open air of the countryside of northern England, with its cool air and chill rains, the animate may remain in the putrefaction stage for three to five years; in a tropical climate, this stage may persist for a matter of mere months. The animate in this condition is a fearsome thing, difficult to approach due to the horrific smell and the grotesquerie of its appearance. Many victims succumb to fear and shock at its approach, becoming unable to fight off the monstrosity.

The third and final stage will transpire if the shambler is denied opportunity to feed and the processes of decay are permitted to proceed. In this stage, the body of the animate desiccates slowly, resulting in a "mummified" appearance. The remaining tissues become dry; the tendons toughen, slowing the animate and imparting a jerkiness to its movements. The senses lose acuity and will, in time, fail entirely. The prey sense

is an exception; this uncanny ability to detect the presence of living humans will remain functional until the animate is destroyed. Despite its weakening senses, the animate does appear to retain some rudimentary but functional proximity sense: collisions with immobile objects are rare and its ability to grapple with prey does not appear to suffer with the loss of sense acuity. As the desiccation of the tissues progresses, the animate becomes more fragile and vulnerable to damage; a single solid hit may be enough to fragment the skull of a well-mummified animate. In approximately fifteen to twenty years, given exposure to the ambient environmental conditions of Britain, the bones and muscles of the legs will fail, and the animate will be reduced to crawling. Some animates in this state have broken in half at the juncture of spine and pelvis, becoming desiccated torsos that crawl silently toward their prey on skeletal arms. In twenty to twenty-five years, the animate is reduced entirely to immobility as the desiccated limbs and failing ligaments lose the ability to support the creature's weight.

Even when immobile, the animate may be dangerous. The tissues of the brain are the last to decay and may remain largely intact long past the time when the body has broken down. Moreover, the tough connective tissues of the skull and jaw remain intact for some time after the dissolution of the muscular structures, enabling the animate to deliver a bite even after its body has failed. This stage may last for an additional ten to fifteen years. It is therefore considered advisable among Undertakers and reclamation men to shatter the skull of any potential animate remains. The bones will be brittle and easily broken, and this small effort may save the life of a team member. Once an animate is decayed to this stage, feeding will be of little benefit to it. Its body, largely reduced to dust, is no longer capable of receiving whatever infusion of vitality it would otherwise obtain from the living tissues of its victim. The bite, however, retains all of its potency, and a bite from an animate in this stage will infect as surely as any other.

At any point in this process until the final stages of desiccation, feeding will restore some of the vitality lost in the process of decay. An animate is not capable of entirely regrowing lost tissues -- an animate that has lost a hand, for example, will never grow that hand again -- but amazing restoration of partially decayed or desiccated tissues is possible. The transformation extends to the cellular level, reversing the processes of decay throughout the animated body. Experimentation in this process is impossible due to the dietary needs of the animate, but a good deal of information is available from the extensive notes taken observationally during earlier periods when laboratory accidents were somewhat more common than they are in secure, modern research facilities. Animates kept in laboratory conditions for years have been observed to regain a startling amount of their original speed and strength after a single feeding. It has been noted that an animate in a stage of putrefaction can be restored to nearly the appearance of a fresh corpse with a single kill, whereas a partially desiccated animate will require multiple kills to attain the same level of tissue rejuvenation. Speculation abounds on the mechanism or mechanisms responsible for the restoration processes, but no satisfactory answer has been found.

The desiccated animate is a special case. A desiccated animate that is largely intact (less than ten years in the husk stage on average or up to fifteen years if carefully preserved, as in research specimens) can restore its movement capability and senses to those of a shambler with a single kill; restoration of the animate to ravener levels requires a minimum of one additional kill. A more badly desiccated but structurally sound animate (ten to fifteen years on average or up to twenty-five years in carefully maintained specimens) will achieve the same results with at least two kills. The animate will appear to regain flesh on the face and limbs, and strength and speed will increase. The senses that have been lost will partially re-establish themselves as the associated tissues regain moistness and pliability, though the physical senses will remain weak. The specimen will not develop the symptoms of decay to the same magnitude as observed in the first shambler stage, as much of the original soft tissue is too badly damaged to revitalize fully, and the body is not such fertile ground for microbial action as before. It is not possible, regardless of the number of prey taken, for a fully desiccated and damaged animate to regain the appearance or abilities of a fresh corpse.

Once an animate has reached the point of desiccation where immobility becomes imminent, very little restoration of the tissues is possible. The animate does not appear to be able to integrate the vital tissues of its prey with any efficiency. Partial sensory restoration is possible with a relatively large number of kills, and some restoration of muscular strength will occur, but the gains will be minimal. Vision in particular will remain very weak, allowing the animate no more than the ability to distinguish shapes and light. The appearance of the animate will not be greatly altered by any amount of feeding; the flesh may regain some small amount of suppleness, allowing it some ability to withstand damage and to move with greater speed, but the tissues are too badly damaged at this point to gain much benefit from feeding.

The animate may be destroyed only by removing the head or destroying the brain. An animate destroyed in this manner will rot as an ordinary clay corpse. The tissues of the destroyed animate are entirely incapable of supporting animation; even

if the body is reasonably fresh and the brain can be replaced, the body tissues will not reanimate under any circumstances. However, the head must be severed from the body at or above the first thoracic vertebra to effectively render the corpse exanimate. If the spinal column is disrupted below this point, the body will become inert and begin to decompose, but the head of the animate will remain active. Research specimens are sometimes stored in this fashion, if only the head and brain are required for a particular project.

Alternatively, the entire body may be destroyed, as by fire, or the animate may simply be rendered incapable of movement. The animate's body is subject to the usual mechanical laws; once a certain amount of damage has been done, the animate will simply no longer be able to move under its own power. Extremely massive blunt trauma or other types of injuries can be used to render the animate's body unusable.

# University of London

The University of London was rebuilt following the Reclamation of London. A number of the original buildings were damaged or destroyed during the initial days of the Plague, though damage sustained during the Burning was fairly minor. Almost miraculously, many of the University libraries were found to be nearly intact when the grounds were cleared of animated dead, allowing this university to become the centre of the new scientific and technological revolution.

Some of the finest minds of the Neo-Victorian world worked and were educated at the University during the reconstruction of London. These laboratories were responsible for the further development of the technologies of Nikola Tesla and ultimately for the co-design of the Tesla tower network that currently powers the whole of London. The greatest medical minds of the time resurrected the medical school and directed the creation of the new Centre for Nonhuman Studies, a division dedicated entirely to research into the various nonliving and half-living creatures of the world.

The Centre for Nonhuman Studies in the University of London's Medical School is the nation's leading institution in unlife sciences. The Centre houses the Nonhuman Pathology Department, where the largest collection of research animates in Britain is stored. Animates are supplied to this institution by royal decree at the rate of one hundred twenty per annum, the supply being collected from the plague carts and the hospices of the city. Many of the fresh animates are used for experimentation in humanity restoration, a field of study devoted to the search for a method of reinfusing true vitality into an unliving body. Once an animate begins to decay, it is of no use to the restorationists, and the body is handed on to the physiologists and the pathologists. Most of these specimens are truncated for preservation: the limbs are removed from the body and the mouth is secured to prevent accidental bites. Some specimens are left intact for special projects or as training aides for students, who are required to handle and dissect an intact animate cadaver in preparation for similar activities in their professional careers. Most of the animates are preserved in sub-basement levels of the University, as the natural cold of the below-ground levels helps in delaying the onset of putrefaction. Some animates are preserved for a time in jars of ethanol or formaldehyde either before or after truncation, though this is seldom viable in the long term as the chemicals may seep through the tissues over time and cause damage to the brain.

The head of the Centre is Dr. Helena Wilcox. A graduate of the medical school at Cambridge, Dr. Wilcox has held the position of Chair of Nonhuman Studies for twenty years. The eldest child of a common apothecary-surgeon, Dr. Wilcox's fascination with the processes underlying spontaneous animation began when, as a child of eight, she witnessed the death and reanimation of her ten-month-old brother during an epidemic of influenza. As a young woman, Helena haunted the libraries and corridors of Cambridge, eventually securing a paid position as assistant to the hospital's apothecary. The wages she earned were used to pay her way into the lectures offered by the medical school. At twenty-three, Helena earned her physician's credentials and entered practice as a researcher in the Nonhuman Pathology department at the University of London's Medical School, following in the footsteps of her uncle Dr. Alfred Wilcox, then Professor Emeritus at that institution. Her research into the correlates of spontaneous animation was groundbreaking, establishing her institution as

foremost in the science of spontaneous reanimation. It was Dr. Wilcox who led the first successful scientific expeditions into the sepulchres of the Wastelands, establishing as fact several of the most curious properties of these regions. Now in her eighties, Dr. Wilcox has recently undergone her first course of anti-agapics and is planning a new series of investigations into the sepulchres and the sealed portions of the London Underground.

# Sepulchres

The sepulchres are regions previously inhabited by men but rendered uninhabitable by the encroachment of the Wastelands. Some of these are villages and cities from the time before the Plague but devoid of human life since; some are encampments from the early days of the Plague that were overrun by zombies or destroyed from within. All of the ruins marked as sepulchres were the sites of massive mortality during the initial periods of the Plague, though it is not certain why these places and not others fell so entirely to death.

Since the Reclamation Era, the sepulchres have existed in folklore as places haunted by ghouls and spirits, fouled lands certain to cause the reanimation of any unfortunate enough to die within their borders. The few who have made investigations of these places remark on a feeling of oppression and a physical darkness that pervades these ruins, even in the daytime. The impression is said to be one of perpetual twilight, as if even the rays of the sun were reluctant to travel through these places of ill repute.

Dr. Helena Wilcox and her students have led a series of investigations of the sepulchres over the past half-century, which have served to solidify the reputation of these ill-omened ruins. These investigations were generally conducted by a small scientific staff, often headed by Dr. Wilcox herself, and a larger body of Undertakers and OUD soldiers hired to ensure safe passage. Typically, these teams were well trained and very well armed; even scientific personnel were required to undergo preliminary training and to carry substantial weaponry. Despite all these precautions, the teams suffered high casualty rates.

Many of these sepulchres are still unexplored. The sepulchre at the ruins of York has most notoriously resisted attempts at study. Several parties have made forays into these ruins, but none have returned to report their findings. Even expeditions that attempted an overnight encampment on the Yorkshire Moors surrounding the ruins suffered heavy casualties, some from ghoul attack, some from zombie, and some from creatures or forces not identifiable. Survivors of these attacks report that the zombies observed in the ruins are fresh, presumably the casualties of earlier expeditions. Based on the reports from these survivors, the ghoul population of York is believed to be substantial, though it is not certain what source or sources provide the sustenance for that population.

# The Zombie in Nature

The animate, though not extremely dangerous individually, is a terrifying opponent. The creature is tireless in its pursuit of prey, entirely insensible to pain, and careless of damage; it will pursue a target until it is destroyed. A host of zombies loose in the streets of a city is capable of incredible destruction.

Much of the danger posed by the animate dead within the walls of the cities arises from events of spontaneous reanimation. In these circumstances, the first individuals likely to encounter the freshly animate dead are civilians: bereaved friends and family, neighbours, or passers-by. Though the average Londoner lives with the knowledge that spontaneous animation is possible, most do not possess the training to deal effectively with zombies or to remain calm in the face of supernormal horror. An ordinary individual facing one of these monstrosities is as likely to succumb to panic as to fight off the undead attacker, risking death or infection in the process. In this way, the Plague may spread with astonishing rapidity from an initial outbreak if not contained.

Animates are non-thinking predators wholly lacking any capacity for cunning. The animate will mindlessly attack the nearest available meal source, ignoring weaker targets for those that are closer or easier to reach. For an exception, see Good Tasting, Chapter 3, page 179. During play, players can exploit this trick of animate behaviour by moving the characters that are most combat proficient in front of those who are lest prepared to fend off the hungry dead.

# Zombie Rules

## Undead

Zombies are undead. The creature does not need to breathe, does not tire, and needs no sleep. It is incapable of digesting food, and the "nutrition" obtained from consuming flesh is assimilated directly into the body. Animates suffer no penalties from fatigue and never become exhausted.

## Cause Fear

The zombie is a horrifying foe. Humans or half-lifers confronting one or more zombies must pass a Will – Fear roll to avoid fleeing (see Chapter 2, page 85).

The difficulty rating of the Will check depends on the appearance of the animate. Facing down a freshly risen animate in relatively good physical form is DR 11. Facing a mutilated or putrefying animate requires a roll versus DR 14. The Narrator may increase or decrease this roll based on the circumstances under which the animate is encountered. For example, if the animate is strapped to a board in the midst of an anatomy theatre, no roll may be required. However, if the animate has just finished gutting a character's close friend, the DR for the roll may increase substantially.

### Prey Sense

Zombies have a chance to detect the presence of living humans in their vicinity regardless of whether the targets can be seen, heard, or smelled by the creature. A zombie can make a roll to detect a character located within 50 yards times the character's highest Corruption Path rating. If the character is within detection range, the Narrator makes a Wit – Perception roll (DR 11) for the zombie and adds the character's highest Corruption Path rating to the animate's roll. If the roll succeeds, the zombie determines the character's exact location but not necessarily the fastest way to reach him. If the roll fails, the zombie does not detect the character.

Because a zombie's Prey Sense does not require sight or hearing for detection, it is not modified by the Shadow skill.

Prey Sense cannot detect half-lifers.

### Destroying an Animate

Zombies are undead, making them terrifically resistant to damage. Only Fatal Wounds can inflict structural damage to an animate. The head is the most vulnerable part of the animate's anatomy. Any attack that decapitates the zombie or inflicts a Fatal Wound to its head will destroy the creature. A Fatal Wound to the limb of an animate destroys the limb, and one to the torso of an animate reduces the animate's Vitality by 1. Once an animate's Vitality is reduced to 0, it is effectively destroyed, though its jaws may still snap at potential victims.

A zombie does not suffer wound penalties from damage it sustains.

See Destroying the Undead, Chapter 2, pages 110 - 112.

### Pre-Existing Damage

It's rough being a zombie. At the Narrator's discretion, the zombie may have pre-existing damage assigned to it. This will make the zombie somewhat easier to cripple. Narrators are encouraged to describe the injuries assigned to the zombies to add colour to the role-playing experience. The game application of these wounds may be limited to cosmetic descriptions, or the Narrator could assign Complications (see Chapter 2, pages 102 – 107) or lost limbs to the animate.

### Feeding

Animates feed exclusively on human flesh, whether from the wholly living or a half-lifer.

Consuming flesh heals damage the animate has sustained, replenishes the body, and reverses the effects of decay. The amount of damage an animate heals depends on the Vitality of the victim it consumes. For each Vitality point its victim had at the time of death, the animate may remove one Fatal Wound or a single Complication. An animate cannot regenerate or reattach severed limbs. The Narrator chooses in what order the zombie recovers from damage it has sustained.

Feeding may be accomplished in a manner of minutes and ceases upon the death of the victim. The amount of flesh consumed may not correlate directly to the amount of mass gained by the zombie; precision of measurements has historically been problematic, and the question of conservation of mass in animate regeneration is not likely to be solved definitively in the near future.

Devouring a single victim is enough to restore a husk to the shambler state or a shambler to the ravener state. A severely damaged husk will not be restored to the ravener state regardless of the number of kills made.

### Zombies in Combat

A zombie uses its Coordination when it makes unarmed melee attacks. An animate with arms will always attempt to grapple a victim before biting into him (see Unarmed Combat, Chapter 2, pages 97-98). An animate without arms will simply attempt to bite its victim but suffers –3 on the attack roll.

If a ravener is successful with its grapple attack, it immediately makes a bite attack against the victim it grappled. Lacking the speed of a ravener, shamblers and husks must grapple one turn and then bite on the next. A single character may be grappled by up to five attackers.

When a zombie bites a grappled victim, it rolls versus DR 11 (rather than 11 + its victim's Coordination). A zombie will bite any portion of its victim's anatomy it can reach, so the location is up to the Narrator. Because the zombie bites into the easiest part of the victim it can reach, a zombie does not suffer a penalty for attacking any portion of its victim's body. Generally, the first zombie to grapple a character will

bite into the character's neck, face, or head. Any other zombies grappling the character will have to content themselves with biting into the character's torso or limbs.

An animate's jaws are capable of inflicting horrific wounds. When resolving a successful zombie bite attack, add the zombie's Vitality +2 to the damage roll. Additionally, add any damage modifiers based on the portion of the victim's body into which the zombie bites. Then subtract the victim's Vitality and double the value of the armour covering the location bit.

Zombies only feed on the flesh of the living. Once a victim has succumbed to his wounds, the zombies that were attacking him will move on to the next living victim in the vicinity.

## Infection

Assuming a victim survives an encounter with an animate, he risks plague infection. A bite from an animate that inflicts a Serious Wound or worse will transmit the infection, and this infection is almost always fatal. There is a slim chance that a bitten individual will be able to throw off the contagion, but there is no cure for the bite of an animate. Some of the early symptoms can be alleviated, allowing the character to fight on for a time, but the progress of the disease cannot be halted or even slowed. Symptoms begin to appear approximately one hour after the bite.

An infected character has two opportunities to throw off the infection. The first is at the time of initial infection (when the character is first bitten). The second opportunity occurs at roughly hour seven of the infection. At each point, the character makes a Vitality roll (DR 20). If he succeeds, then the infection has failed to take hold, and he will recover. If the character fails the roll, the infection progresses normally. If the character fails the second roll at hour seven, recovery is impossible.

If the character does not succeed in throwing off the infection, he will die slowly before rising again as one of the hungry dead. If an infected character dies before the Plague runs its course, he may spontaneously animate as normal.

### The Symptoms

Hour 0 – The character suffers pain at the wound site. At this time the character can avoid infection by succeeding in a Vitality roll (DR 20). If the roll succeeds, the character completely throws off the infection and does not develop any plague symptoms. If the roll fails, symptoms continue to develop as normal.

Hour 1 – The bite wound begins to swell and inflame. Nearby tissue is hot to the touch. At this stage of infection, anyone examining the infected character's wound may diagnose his affliction with a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds, the character successfully diagnoses the cause of the infection and its current stage of progression. If the roll fails, the examining character believes the wound is simply infected by common bacteria.

Hour 2 – The infected suffers a fever of approximately one hundred and one degrees associated with chills and general malaise. Heat and inflammation spread outward from the bite. Flesh at the site of the injury becomes necrotic. The symptoms can be treated, but the disease will continue to progress. At this stage, any medical professional can diagnose the wound on sight without a die roll.

Hour 3 – The fever worsens, reaching one hundred and five degrees. The character suffers weakness in the limbs and severe chills, and without medical attention, he will be entirely prostrate. The character loses 2 Vitality points. If the character's Vitality is reduced to 0, he enters a comatose state. At this stage, any character with the Medicine skill can diagnose the wound on sight without a die roll. Diagnosis based on symptoms only, without access to the wound, requires a successful Medicine roll versus DR 11.

Hour 6 – The character appears to improve. The fever breaks, and swelling and heat at the wound site begin to decrease. The character regains 1 Vitality point. Characters in plague-induced comas awaken.

Hour 7 – The patient's body temperature hovers near ninety-four degrees. The infected character is extremely hungry but will vomit up any food or drink he consumes. The wound site is numb, and while it is nearly free of swelling, it does not begin to heal. The infected suffers a powerful aversion to humans and will attempt to escape caretakers. At this point, the character makes a second Vitality roll (DR 20). If the roll succeeds, the character regains 1 Vitality point and begins to recover from the wound as normal. If the roll fails, the infection progresses into its final stages and the character becomes an NPC under the Narrator's control.

Hour 8 – Body temperature falls to near ambient. Numbness has spread outward from the wound site into the torso. The character loses 1 Vitality point and continues to do so every hour until he reaches 0 Vitality. When this happens, the character enters a comatose state. When his Vitality is next reduced, he dies. Reanimation is inevitable.

## Spontaneous Animation

Spontaneous animation refers to the phenomena of dead bodies not infected by the Plague rising from the dead. Any fresh corpse has a chance of spontaneously animating. The likelihood of animation is based on the corpse's location at the time of death and his highest Corruption Path rating. Though

the dead can spontaneously animate anywhere, a corpse is most likely to rise if it died in a place tainted by death, pain, and sorrow, such as within the confines of sepulchres or the worst slums of the metropolis.

Similarly, the speed at which a corpse rises varies with the location of death. After the approximate time associated with the area has passed, the Narrator makes a roll to determine if the corpse spontaneously rises. To do so, the Narrator rolls 2d10 and adds the deceased character's highest Corruption Path rating, comparing the total to a DR based on the location where the character died. If the roll succeeds, the corpse rises from the dead within minutes or seconds. If the corpse does not rise, the roll is repeated at regular intervals until either the corpse rises or three days pass. After three days, the danger passes and the corpse will not animate. The times listed below are approximations and should be varied to keep players guessing rather than watching their timepieces. A corpse that had a Corruption Path rating of 4 or higher could animate at any dramatically appropriate time without an animation roll.

A freshly risen corpse is a ravener.

For example, Mr. Grimely suffers from an acute case of consumption. One night, while staying at a workhouse, Mr. Grimely succumbs to his illness. Consulting the Spontaneous Animation Table, the Narrator determines that, since Mr. Grimely died in a slum, the earliest he could rise from the dead is four hours later. After four hours pass, the Narrator makes a roll to determine if Mr. Grimley rises. The DR for spontaneous animation at the location of death is 16. The Narrator rolls a 9 and adds Mr. Grimely's highest Corruption Path, Drive Corruption 3, for a total of 12. Thus, Mr. Grimely does not animate at this time, but the Narrator will roll again to see after Mr. Grimely rises every four hours for the next three days. The roll for reanimation remains based on the slum timetable even if the corpse is moved.

### Sepulchres

Sepulchres are plague cities that dot the landscape of the Wastelands. Now largely in ruins, these places are utterly consumed by the blight. The sepulchres are entirely uninhabitable. If a character dies within the bounds of a sepulchre, he will invariably reanimate.

### Wastelands

The Wastelands are the vast stretches of land that have succumbed to the withering power of the blight. Aside from a spectrum of biological abominations, little grows in the Wastelands. These are lands nearly as tainted as the sepulchres.

### Hot Zones

Hot zones are small areas within the confines of a city in which the risk of spontaneous animation is alarmingly high. Generally, hot zones occur in areas that have seen the greatest death and suffering. The area of a hot zone may fluctuate slightly from year to year, requiring continual zoning reassessment within the metropolis. Temporary hot zones may occur after large-scale tragedies or mass killings, lasting for months or years before fading away. Most hot zones within the confines of the metropolis occur within the city's slums, the greatest concentration being within the East End. The Deathwatch keeps exhaustive records of known hot zones, and patrols are increased in these areas.

Some hot zones are so small that they can go unnoticed for years. A house that has seen unspeakable evil may be a tiny pocket hot zone in addition to being a home for restless spirits.

### Slum

By their very nature, Neo-Victorian slums are places of dread and horror. Suffused with misery, it is little wonder the dead are prone to rising in the slums. It is here the plaguemen must be their most diligent.

## Spontaneous Animation Table

| Location of Death | Interval Between Animation Rolls | DR |
|---|---|---|
| Sepulchre | Less than 5 minutes | 11 |
| Wastelands | 1 hour | 14 |
| Hot zones | 2 hours | 16 |
| Slum | 4 hours | 16 |
| Standard, farm or city | 8 hours | 20 |
| The West End | 12 hours | 20 |

### Standard

The standard represents most inhabited areas, including the majority of London as well as the farms outside the city proper.

### The West End

The West End is the portion of the city most removed from the horrors of the Plague. Though the risk of spontaneous animation remains a major risk to public health, it is most manageable here.

#### Average Attributes

The attributes for the undead creatures in this chapter are based on the creature's attributes before its death. With the exception of the feral vampire below, these attributes are based on the default human average of 2. At the Narrator's discretion, particular undead creatures could have attributes much higher than 2. Indeed, should a meaty dockworker with a Vitality of 4 succumb to the Plague, he would rise as a ravener with a Vitality of 6.

## Animate Attributes

### Ravener (Fresh Animate)

Ravener, or "fast shambler," describes the first stage of animate progression. The zombie remains largely fresh for up to a year under starvation conditions. In this stage, the processes of decay have not yet taken serious hold; all the senses are intact, as is most of the gross anatomy. The animate in this form is extremely strong and reasonably fast. Very recently risen animates are particularly dangerous because they still bear some resemblance to the living. For instance, the clothes worn by the corpse are still relatively intact, as is the animate's flesh. In poor light, it is possible for the creature to be mistaken for a living person.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 4 (3-7) |
| **Coordination:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Wit:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Intellect:** | 0 |
| **Will:** | 0 |
| **Charm:** | 0 |
| **Prowess:** | 4 (2-10) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-3) |

**Attributes:** In addition to the average ravener's attribute ratings above, the numbers in parenthesis show the normal range of a ravener's attributes. A ravener's Vitality, Coordination, and Wit are based on the deceased character's attributes before his death. If a character animates during play, either as a result of a bite or due to spontaneous animation, it gains +2 Vitality and retains its Coordination and Wit as a zombie. A zombie's Wit represents the sharpness of its senses and reflexes rather than its speed of thought. The ravener's Intellect, Will, and Charm are all reduced to 0. When determining the attributes for an animate, the Narrator should consider the size of the animate, its physical condition, and how fresh it is.

**Skills:** A ravener has no skills.

**Features:** *Climbing* – A ravener is capable of climbing an easy surface such as stairs.

*Fear* - Humans or half-lifers confronting one or more zombies must pass a Will – Fear roll (DR 11) to avoid fleeing.

**Attacks:** *Grapple and Bite* – The ravener will always attempt to grapple its target before biting. If the grapple succeeds, the animate will immediately attempt to bite its victim during the same turn, as part of the same action.

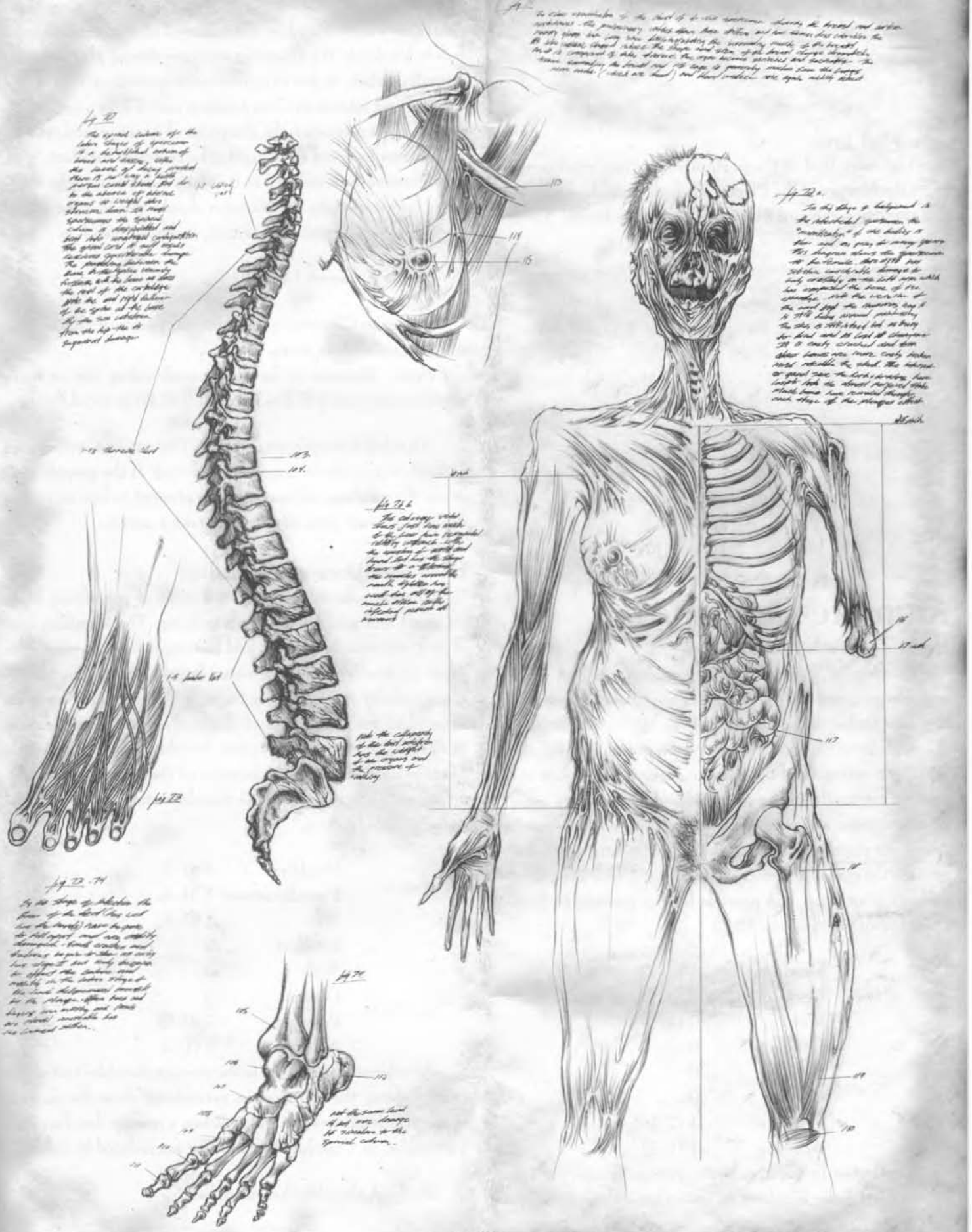
### Shambler (Decayed Animate)

The animate in this stage is a mass of putrefying flesh; its smell and appearance are horrifying. The shambler has, at best, rudimentary vision, and hearing is likewise poor. The sense of smell, however, remains largely intact. The shambler generally relies on Prey Sense for hunting. An animate exposed to the vicissitudes of England's weather may remain in this stage for three to five years. In cold, dry conditions such as those maintained in the kennels of the major universities, an animate can remain in the shambler state for up to eight years without feeding.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 4 (3-7) |
| **Coordination:** | 1 (0-4) |
| **Wit:** | 1 (0-4) |
| **Intellect:** | 0 |
| **Will:** | 0 |
| **Charm:** | 0 |
| **Prowess:** | 2 (0-8) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-2) |

**Attributes:** In addition to the average shambler's attribute ratings above, the numbers in parenthesis show the normal range of a shambler's attributes. When a ravener devolves into a shambler, its Coordination and Wit are reduced by one.

**Skills:** A shambler has no skills.



**Features:** *Climbing* – A shambler can climb but not as well as a ravener, due to its reduced Coordination.

*Fear* - Humans or half-lifers confronting one or more zombies must pass a Will – Fear roll (DR 14) to avoid fleeing.

*Flammable* – A shambler that is on fire suffers a +5 damage roll during each of its turns. See Fire, Chapter 2, page 115.

**Attacks:** *Grapple or Bite* – Unlike the ravener, the shambler cannot grapple and bite as part of the same action. Instead, the shambler will attempt to grab hold of a victim with a grapple attack during one round and then bite its victim during its turn the next round. If a victim has already been grappled by another animate, an animate in striking range may bite the character instead of grappling the character itself.

### Husk (Desiccated Animate)

The animate in this stage dries out slowly, giving it the appearance of mummification. As the desiccation progresses, the husk becomes slower and more fragile. The zombie's physical senses will fail entirely over the course of this stage, leaving only the supernatural senses intact. The animate can remain in this stage for up to twenty-five years under ordinary conditions before it becomes too fragile to move; under university conditions or other conditions conducive to preservation of the tissues, this process may take thirty years or more.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 3 (2-6) |
| **Coordination:** | 0 (0-3) |
| **Wit:** | 1 (0-4) |
| **Intellect:** | 0 |
| **Will:** | 0 |
| **Charm:** | 0 |
| **Prowess:** | 1 (0-7) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-2) |

**Attributes:** When a shambler devolves into a husk, its Vitality and Coordination are reduced by one. A husk's Coordination cannot be reduced below 0 as a result of this penalty. In addition to the average husk's attribute ratings above, the numbers in parenthesis show the normal range of a husk's attributes

**Skills:** A husk has no skills.

**Abilities:** *Fear* - Humans or half-lifers confronting one or more zombies must pass a Will – Fear roll (DR 11) to avoid fleeing.

*Flammable* – A husk that is on fire suffers a +5 damage roll during each of its turns. See Fire, Chapter 2, page 115.

*Less Resistant to Damage* – The animate in this stage becomes increasingly fragile as the tissues desiccate. Add +2 when rolling for damage inflicted upon the animate.

**Attacks:** *Grapple or Bite* – The husk cannot grapple and bite as part of the same action. Instead, the husk will attempt to grab hold of a victim with a grapple attack during one round and then bite its victim during its turn the next round. If a victim has already been grappled by another animate, an animate in striking range may bite the character instead of grappling the character itself.

## Other Zombie Strains

The vast majority of zombies are of the ordinary type: slow, unintelligent, and easily dispatched by decapitation or destroying the brain. There are, however, three "species" of zombie known to exist. The two extraordinary zombie types are rare, but the potential danger posed by these aberrant undead is far greater than that of the prototypical animate.

In most regards, the zombie strains are largely identical. All are undead, lacking any metabolic activity, and all will decay over time. Feeding habits are apparently identical for all three strains. All possess the uncanny "prey-sense" and are reluctant to surrender a target once sensed. The differences between the strains are related to the physiological specifics of the animate.

### Zombie Lord

The first aberrant zombie type to be discovered was the lord, or zombie lord, strain, originally documented by Professor Edith Halifax-Roussel of the Nonhuman Pathology Department at the University of London in 1985. The earliest reports of this subtype come from the Reclamation Era. Records from fallen encampments dating to this period reveal instances of apparent cooperative behaviour among zombies in the company of a single animate of unusual behaviour. These unusual zombies possessed greater mechanical control than their counterparts. Lords exhibit signs of greater intelligence, incorporating animal-level tactics into the hunt rather than simply moving single-mindedly toward prey. Even more frightening is the lord's apparent control over the actions of their lesser counterparts.

It is now known without doubt that the zombie lord can exercise control over lesser animates. However, the

mechanism by which the lord communicates its wishes is not known. There appears to be no visual or verbal signal made by the controlling animate, and the lord appears to be able to control lesser zombies that are not within range of such signals. If the control is telepathic in nature, the telepathy is not of an ordinary type; human psychics are unable to communicate with these greater undead or to intercept any signals between lord and subject animates.

Researchers have documented single zombie lords controlling hordes of thousands of animates during coordinated attacks on Neo-Victorian cities. The most recent such incident was the assault of 2097, when the walls of London itself were besieged by fourteen thousand animates. It is widely believed that the zombie lords are capable of working together, joining their hordes to form vast unliving legions. Researchers believe, based on the movement patterns of the zombies, that The Battle of Edinburgh in 2036 is an example of three lords operating in accord.

Physically, the lord strain is identical to the standard animate in most respects. It is impossible to determine the lord status based on gross or fine anatomy, even under dissection. The lord strain does decay more slowly than its simpler counterpart. Observations of structural devolution in the lord strain under laboratory conditions, taken at Bell Harbour Labs over a period of five years, indicate an approximate forty percent dilation of decay times in this strain. However, it should be noted that these measurements were taken under artificial conditions over a relatively short period of observation, introducing uncertainty into the reported observations.

## Zombie Lord Rules

In appearance, the zombie lord is indistinguishable from the ordinary zombie. The movement of the lord, more purposeful and intelligent than that of an ordinary animate, may provide the first clue of the creature's unusual ability. Often, the zombie lord's proximity is made known only indirectly by the curious cooperative behaviour of animates in the vicinity, the lord preferring to permit its subordinates to take the prey to ground.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 4 (3-7) |
| **Coordination:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Wit:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Intellect:** | 1 (0-4) |
| **Will:** | 1 (0-4) |
| **Charm:** | 0 |
| **Prowess:** | 2 (2-10) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-3) |

**Attributes:** A lord's attributes are based on the deceased character's attributes before the time of death. If a character animates during play as a zombie lord, it gains +2 Vitality and retains its Coordination and Wit but suffers –1 Intellect and Will. A zombie's Wit represents the sharpness of its senses and reflexes rather than its speed of thought. The lord's Charm is reduced to 0. When determining the attributes for a lord, the Narrator should consider the size of the animate, its physical condition, and how fresh it is. Over time, a zombie lord can devolve like any other zombie if it does not regularly feed.

**Skills:** Zombie lords have no skills.

**Features:** *Climbing* – Zombie lords can climb like a normal human.

*Creation* – The zombie lord will spontaneously manifest at a low rate (approximately one per ten thousand spontaneous reanimations). Anyone who succumbs to the bite of a zombie lord has a ten percent chance of rising as a lord; the other ninety percent of victims will rise as normal zombies.

*Fear* - Humans or half-lifers confronting one or more zombies must pass a Will – Fear roll (DR variable dependent on zombie condition) to avoid fleeing.

*Zombie Control* – A zombie lord has the ability to control lesser zombies with a thought. Zombies under the control of a lord act in an organized manner. The controlled zombies can be directed to work together to perform any task that is within their usual physical ability. The zombie lord is capable of controlling all ordinary zombies within a radius of five miles. Both the standard zombie and the aberrant modular subtype can be controlled by the lord.

The zombie lord may completely dominate the behaviour of lesser animates under its control, or it may leave them with the ability to perform some autonomous movement. Generally, a lord only fully controls a zombie horde while the horde is on the move to a major assault. At other times, the zombies will be left to their own devices, allowed to hunt and feed themselves.

**Attacks:** *Grapple and Bite* – The lord will always attempt to grapple its target before biting. If the grapple succeeds, the animate will immediately attempt to bite its victim during the same turn, as part of the same action. Lord-type zombies without arms will attempt to bite. Remember, a creature attempting to bite a victim it is not grappling suffers a –3 penalty to hit.

**Notes:** Zombie lords should be particularly threatening foes. While not particularly powerful independently, their ability for limited reasoning and tactics coupled with their control over other animates makes them formidable. Zombie lords are seldom encountered without a retinue of enslaved zombies under their influence. A single zombie lord encountered in the Wastes could be served by hundreds or even thousands of animates. All the rules that apply to ordinary zombies also apply to zombie lords.

## Modular Animate

A second animate subtype was discovered during an outbreak of the Plague in a London rookery in 2046. During the cleanup, a Deathwatch soldier severed the head of an attacking animate, but the creature failed to fall. The headless torso, in possession of its full strength despite the decapitation, grappled the soldier and wrestled him down onto its fallen head. After a struggle, the soldier managed to bisect the head, destroying the brain. With the head destroyed, the creature lost all animation. The remains were taken to the University of London for examination, but no overt aberrations were found in the inanimate remains.

Later that same year, an Undertaker hunting for bounties in the East End captured a second specimen of this type. He sold the specimen to the University of London, where a series of experiments were performed to analyze the physiology of this new strain. It was discovered that the animate was capable of consciously moving any part of its body regardless of whether there was a direct physical connection between that part and the head. The motions of the severed portions of the anatomy were limited by the ordinary mechanical potentials of that part: an arm severed at the elbow had fairly free movement in the fingers but the muscles of the forearm, lacking attachment points for the controlling tendons, could only contract ineffectually.

Pieces of the animate were moved to increasing distances away from the head to determine if there was a limit to the range of the control. Distance appeared to have no effect for the first nine meters, after which motility dropped rapidly; at ten meters, no movement or nerve firing was evident in the severed parts. When the parts were moved back into the observed area of effect, nerve function immediately resumed.

The researchers then disassembled the animate and placed the parts in individual heavy metal boxes, stored within nine meters of the head. The condition of the pieces has been reevaluated at six-month intervals since disassembly and compared with the condition of an ordinary truncated animate stored in similar conditions. The "modular" animate appears to decay at a slower rate than the ordinary variety. Extrapolations from laboratory data give the modular animate a "fresh" stage of one to three years and a "wet" stage of six to eight years under England's environmental conditions; the length of the "desiccation" stage is not known, as none of the specimens have succumbed entirely to decay, but available data suggests a stage length of up to forty years.

The modular animate is somewhat more difficult to destroy than its prototypical counterpart. As with the standard zombie, destroying the head or removing the brain will render the corpse exanimate; however, the modular zombie must have its spinal cord broken at or above the third cervical vertebra to cause the same effect.

This recent evolution of the Plague has caused some concern among researchers. It is now believed that the Plague is changing slowly over time, and researchers suspect that further variants of animated dead will eventually emerge. The Centre for Nonhuman Studies at the University of London is conducting research into this possibility in the hopes of anticipating the next novel mutation of the Plague.

## Modular Zombie Rules

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 4 (3-7) |
| **Coordination:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Wit:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Intellect:** | 0 |
| **Will:** | 0 |
| **Charm:** | 0 |
| **Prowess:** | 4 (2-10) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-3) |

**Attributes:** A modular zombie's attributes are based on the deceased character's attributes before the time of death. If a character animates during play as a modular zombie, it gains +2 Vitality and retains its Coordination and Wit. A zombie's Wit represents the sharpness of its senses and reflexes rather than its speed of thought. The modular zombie's Intellect, Will, and Charm are all reduced to 0. When determining the attributes for a modular zombie, the Narrator should consider the size of the animate, its physical condition, and how fresh it is. Over time, a modular zombie can devolve like any other zombie if it does not regularly feed.

**Skills:** Modular zombies have no skills.

**Features:** *Creation* – The modular zombie will spontaneously manifest at a low rate (approximately one per five thousand spontaneous manifestations). A character that suc-

cumbs to the bite of a modular zombie will rise as a modular zombie.

*Fear* - Humans or half-lifers confronting one or more zombies must pass a Will – Fear roll (DR variable based on condition) to avoid fleeing.

*Modular* – Unlike most other varieties of undead, the module zombie is not destroyed by ordinary decapitation. Destroying one of these animates requires severing the spinal cord at or above the third cervical vertebra. Alternately, the animate may be destroyed, as usual, by doing significant damage to the brain or completely destroying the entire body, as with fire.

When a modular zombie is decapitated, the Narrator should roll a d10. On a roll of 1-7, the modular zombie is not destroyed by the decapitation. On a roll of 8-10, the modular zombie's spine was severed above the third cervical vertebra and it is destroyed.

A modular zombie is not destroyed when it suffers a number of Fatal Wounds to its torso equal to its Vitality attribute. When a modular zombie suffers a Fatal Wound to the torso, its Vitality is not reduced by 1.

Anytime a modular zombie suffers an Incapacitating Wound, it may lose a portion of its anatomy at the Narrator's discretion. These portions of the zombie's anatomy remain animate and under the control of the zombie. For instance, if the zombie suffers a shotgun blast to its right arm that inflicts an Incapacitating Wound, the arm is severed from the creature's body, yet remains animate. Similarly, a severed arm can maintain a death grip or pull itself along the ground toward fresh victims, and a severed head can continue to bite or chew. The modular zombie can control body parts up to nine meters away from its head. Severed portions of the creature's anatomy effectively have the same attributes as the animate.

A Fatal Wound to a severed portion of the creature's body destroys the portion.

*Reduced Damage* – Damage rolls on a modular zombies are made at –1.

**Attacks:** *Grapple and Bite* – The zombie will always attempt to grapple its target before biting. If the grapple succeeds, the zombie will immediately attempt to bite its victim during the same turn, as part of the same attack action. A zombie without arms will attempt to bite, suffering –3 to hit.

*Severed Parts* – The modular zombie may make attacks with any portion of its anatomy that has been severed from its body if it is within nine meters of the head. The Narrator determines what attacks a portion of the zombie's anatomy is capable of making. Each severed part can make one attack during the zombie's turn.

**Notes:** Module zombies can either be virtually unstoppable foes or played up as comic relief. Unless you are trying for comedic value, avoid going overboard with attacks made by severed limbs. All the rules that apply to ordinary zombies also apply to modular zombies.

# The Vampires

*"You walk upon the dead with scornful glances,*
*Among your gems Horror is not least fair;*
*Murder, the dearest of your baubles, dances*
*Upon your haughty breast with amorous air."*

*"Tu marches sur des morts, Beauté dont tu te moques;*
*De tes bijoux l'Horreur n'est pas le moins charmant,*
*Et le Meurtre, parmi tes plus chères breloques,*
*Sur ton ventre orgueilleux danse amoureusement."*
*—Baudelaire, "Hymn to Beauty," 1861*

## From the notes of Dr. Anais Singh, noted Reclamation-Era physician, dated 1962.

*...The creature has been at this facility for several days, and we are no closer to an answer than we were when the soldiers dragged it in. We have at least convinced the creature to take nourishment, and so it appears we may be able to maintain it long enough to get our questions answered. For the first few days, it refused to take any food. The dietary preference noted in the field was for human blood, which was presented at body temperature, but the creature refused to even acknowledge the food for the first two days. On the third day, it threw the container at the wall. We were beginning to believe it would starve without live prey. On the fifth day, it was presented with a live dog. The creature responded with incredible speed, draining the poor animal dry and demanding more. Further animals were produced with the hope of gaining some idea of the creature's capacity. The quantity it drank before becoming satiated would have exsanguinated a grown man.*

*Now that it seems to be possible to keep the creature – alive? let us say active – I must confess I have grave doubts about the wisdom of doing so. The creature is extremely dangerous. It is impossible to keep human surveillance within the room where the creature is confined. The creature's voice is a danger – it has some mesmeric capability which it very nearly used to effect its escape. It became necessary to install a soundproof barrier around the creature's containment area. Its gaze is likewise extremely com-*

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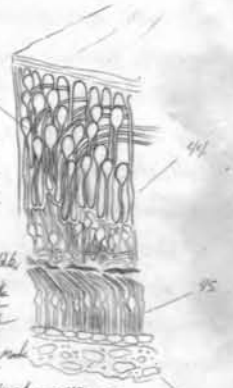
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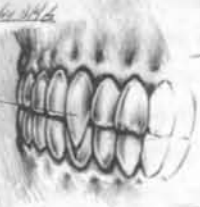
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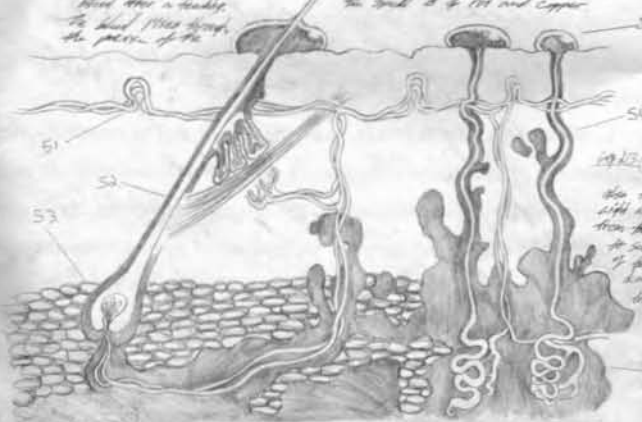
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*pelling; the creature will stare at any guards posted within the room and thereby gain some hold over their minds. On several occasions, it has nearly lured a guard into its cell before the technicians could intervene. I am urging the necessity of proceeding with our experiments as quickly as possible so that the creature can be safely terminated.*

*Unfortunately, the experiments are not going as well as could be hoped. Our standard behavioural tests are useless. The creature simply refuses to cooperate. Worse, it seems to be developing a sense of humour. One of the reclamation teams obtained a few old-fashioned religious devices while in the field, and one of the junior researchers insisted on trying them on the creature. He entered the cell in his best impression of priest's black, gesturing with a cross and splashing water from a golden aspergillum – the poor man harbours some unusual ideas about religion. The effect, at any rate, was electric. The creature screamed and fell over backwards, hissing and clawing at its skin until it bled, cursing the researcher and his god with exceptional eloquence. The water was, of course, not blessed. When the researcher retreated from the cell, the creature promptly relaxed completely and began to laugh. The experiment has been repeated several times with more or less the same results, though the creature's curses are becoming almost poetic as this charade goes on. It has taken to cursing items the researcher does not actually carry - relics of saints and the like - though I believe it only does this to annoy. I believe firmly that the creature has no allergy to the holy items, and I fear it will soon tire of this game.*

*I have urged the other researchers to permit me to proceed with the dissection. They disagree with my assessments; they say the creature is manageable and that we will soon know more. I fear that the creature has them all fooled. We have become the experiment...*

## From Professor Eli Levin's 2037 *Treatise on the Sanguinivorous Undead.*

*The sanguinivorous undead – the vampire – has become a figure of public myth. Due to the comparative rarity of this manifestation of undeath, the public mind has transformed this admittedly dangerous creature into a monster of occult proportions. The vampire is a naturally occurring manifestation of the post-plague world, and its dimensions and processes are well known to men of science. It is our duty and the purpose of this manuscript to describe the hidden nature of the vampire in plain language, for the edification of the public.*

*The vampire, like the zombie, is true undead. If the vampire is not given the opportunity to feed, it begins to weaken as the body begins to desiccate. Given sufficient time without a feed, the vampire will take on the appearance of great age, eventually becoming extremely weak and entering a dormancy that may preserve the starved vampire for months or years.*

*Some believe that the vampire must feed itself on human blood, specifically the blood of a virgin – a perfectly ludicrous assertion. The vampire is capable of feeding on any blood taken from a living victim, virgin or no, and even seems to prefer to feed upon the whores and other derelicts of the metropolis. The creature is, in fact, capable of maintaining itself on a diet of animal blood, but the effect is a diminution of the vampire's energy, resulting in weakness and sluggishness.*

*Physically, the vampire is extremely strong and capable of moving with an extraordinary grace and speed. The vampire is more powerful than a human or even a fresh animate and is, of course, entirely indefatigable. A well-fed, relatively undamaged vampire is capable of lifting a grown man into the air with one hand or tearing the limbs from a victim's body. During the Reclamation, vampires encountered in the ruins of fallen cities were observed to move over the wreckage of fallen buildings with extreme speed, "like lizards or spiders," unhampered by the severity of the terrain.*

*The senses of the vampire are extremely acute. In this respect, at least, rumour tends to understate the truth. The vampire's vision is slightly better than a human's; the vampire is able to see farther into the infra-red portion of the spectrum than a human, allowing it to detect the heat of living things, and the creature has the ability to see in extremely low light conditions. The sense of hearing is more acute in a vampire than in a human, and a larger range of frequencies can be detected, especially in the high range; it is believed that a vampire can actually hear a human heartbeat from several paces. The sense of smell is sharper, allowing the creature to detect the scent of blood; a single drop of blood can be smelled from across a crowded room.*

*Though the vampire does possess unusual physical capabilities, it is an incarnate creature, incapable of significantly altering itself in the pursuit of prey. The vampire cannot become mist nor can it transform into the shape of a bat or wolf, as some of the legends would have it. Nor can the vampire assume a discarnate form, leaving its body to hunt as a "ghost" or "spirit"; the vampire's essence is imperceptible to the psychically gifted and to the instruments of the spiritualists. The creature appears to have no aetheric component whatsoever.*

*Contrary to the legends, vampirism is not a consequence of the manner of a person's death. A suicide will not rise as a vampire; nor will an excommunicate, an illegitimate child, or a person born within a caul. No verified instances of spontaneous vampirism have been observed. A vampire may only be reliably created when a human dies as a result of the attack of an existing vampire or succumbs to the infection as transmitted by a vampire...*

# History's Greatest Monsters

The origins of the vampire are unclear. The first recorded incidence of vampirism is from 1953, when a reclamation team sent to clear an overrun encampment reported an unusual variety of undead. These hostile undead initially appeared to be human and were taken for survivors until they attacked. These creatures moved much more quickly than the zombies, displayed more intelligence, and fought with a ferocity and cunning the reclamation men had never before observed in the undead. Moreover, these creatures did not feed on the flesh of the soldiers they managed to subdue, instead opening a large blood vessel with their teeth and taking only the blood from these victims. When decapitated, these new undead were not simply rendered inert; the corpses would disintegrate entirely, leaving nothing behind but a small pile of ash. Only a small number of these undead were present in the encampment, and most chose to flee rather than face the superior force of arms demonstrated by the reclamation team.

The team captured one of these new undead and transported it to the reclamation base. Studies by military scientists on this specimen quickly revealed that, contrary to initial expectations, this was not simply a new strain of zombie. This creature was an entirely new species of undead. It possessed the uncanny strength of the zombie but lacked the shambling gait and clumsiness of these lesser undead, instead exhibiting a predatory grace. It ignored animal flesh and all other foods but would take fresh blood readily, even accepting the blood of one brave researcher when the intrepid youth offered his cut finger to the creature. Animal blood was accepted after a few days of starvation, but the creature appeared noticeably weaker when fed exclusively on nonhuman blood. Observations of this diet led to the classification of the specimen as "sanguinivorous (vampiric) undead."

Unlike the zombie, the vampire did not appear to decay. Prolonged periods of starvation served only to increase the already considerable pallor of this specimen and to dry and desiccate the body, causing the creature to take on the appearance of age. After several weeks without food, the vampire would weaken sufficiently to stop moving almost entirely, though it could be roused and restored to strength if provided with blood. Like the zombie, the vampire appeared to be truly undead; oxygen deprivation had no effect on the creature, and it did not appear to sleep. Disturbingly, the creature was able to speak, though this specimen rarely did so, only occasionally hissing epithets at the researchers and staff.

This specimen was destroyed accidentally during dissection when, in an exploration of the chest cavity, an attending physician attempted to remove the heart. When this organ was removed, the vampire promptly crumbled into ash, to the dismay of the researchers present. It would be some time before another such specimen was obtained.

An unusual specimen was taken in 1962, again by reclamation forces. This vampire, apparently cannier than its predecessor, managed to escape the laboratory where it was confined by coaxing a technician into its enclosure. Under the influence of the vampire's mesmeric command, the technician allowed the creature to escape the facility. Before fleeing, the vampire killed and exsanguinated its liberator. The body was taken to the facility's morgue for observation, and in one day's time, the corpse rose as a vampire, though unintelligent, feral, and lacking the grace and cunning of its vanished parent. This event provided the first confirmation of the theory that vampirism could be spread from an existing vampire to a human victim.

Vampirism was apparently rare in Britain until after the Reclamation of London, and most citizens did not actually believe in the vampire's existence. Reclamation teams would occasionally report an encounter with "fast undead," always in areas that had fallen only recently to plague outbreaks, but very few further research subjects were secured until after the 1972 medical documentation of vampirism within London by Dr. Robert Ashton. The case was one of some delicacy, involving a venerable and respected nobleman who had contracted vampirism from liaisons with undead prostitutes and who was decapitated by his eldest son after attempting to feed on that young man's wife. The story was acquired by the press, and a wave of sensationalism swept the papers and penny dreadfuls. The lower classes denounced the hypocrisy and licentiousness of the aristocracy, and the moralists and reformers enthusiastically condemned the institution of prostitution and the "low creatures" who had been the vector of contagion in this tragedy. Pressure from the families involved and the force of public outcry led to Parliament's swift passage of the first of what would come to be known as the Vampire Acts. This Act reinstated the Contagious Diseases Act, abolished a century before, and gave police authority to screen registered prostitutes for signs of vampirism and other transmittable disease. Those found to be infected were imprisoned until death and then summarily destroyed before they rose from the dead. With the passage of the Act and further pressure from the prominent families involved in the scandal, the matter quickly disappeared from

the pages of the dailies, and the initial blaze of vampire panic faded from the public mind.

In 1983, the Benewick case broke in the dailies. Miss Julia Marston, a reporter for a leading London daily, launched a series of articles claiming that the heads of the more decadent aristocratic families and the most corrupt of the nouveau riche were actually seeking out the company of vampires in the hopes of obtaining the immortality possessed by these predators. The aging Lord Benewick, landed aristocrat and respected peer, was mentioned by name as one of those who courted the gifts of the city's most secretive monsters in the hope of gaining eternal life.

The exposé sparked a scandal that reached to the highest strata of society. The lower classes were outraged: the aristocracy and the wealthy, already present in the public imagination as fiends and predators on the imagined virtue of the working class, were literally becoming monsters that fed on the living. The young heirs of the wealthy and aristocratic houses were outraged at the thought of a perpetual and undying peerage clinging to lands and titles in perpetuity and cheating their heirs of their natural rights of inheritance.

In 1986, Parliament passed a number of acts in rapid succession, adding to the reinstatement of the Contagious Diseases Act of 1972 to form the Vampire Acts. These new laws explicitly defined vampires as deceased and denied the right of the dead and undead to hold property or titles or to claim any office of the land. The possessions of the dead, animate or not, were to be the property of the rightful heirs, and the titles held by the deceased would pass to the next in succession at the event of death. Additionally, vampirism was declared a civic danger and a menace to public health. Destruction of vampires was placed under the auspices of the Office of Urban Defence, and bounties were established for the capture or destruction of vampires by freelance hunters. Research institutions, most notably the preeminent laboratories at the University of London, campaigned for an allotment of research specimens to be selected from the vampires brought in for bounty. The request was granted by Parliament, which established research allotments of vampire specimens, of which the University of London, for example, was to receive ten per annum.

# Pathology of the Vampire

The vampire is an undead creature: it has no metabolism, it does not require oxygen, and it requires no food beyond the blood it takes from its victims. As with the zombie, the vampire does not digest the materials it takes from its victims, instead absorbing the blood directly into its tissues. The creature lacks a metabolism and is ordinarily cold to the touch, though it will warm for a short period after feeding heavily from a living source. Despite the fact that the vampire itself is unliving, the creature is capable of creating a half-living type, the Dhampir, using a human host.

The origins of the vampire are unknown. Some believe that the vampire is a mutated expression of the Plague, a higher order of undead than the common animate but a creature from the same source. There are no cases of spontaneous manifestation of vampirism known to modern science, leading authorities in nonhuman studies to speculate that vampirism may have begun with a single manifestation and that all subsequent instances of vampirism are the result of predation.

Most of the vampire's victims do not die of blood loss as a result of the bite; after the vampire has taken his fill, it is likely to murder the victim by some ordinary means, generally stabbing or strangulation, but the more feral predators may maul the victim to death. This is done generally to camouflage the vampire's activities in the case of the more intelligent predators. The feral vampire presumably destroys its victim in an act of boredom once the pang of hunger has passed. The vampire's prey will not rise as a new vampire unless the infection has been successfully transmitted, either during the course of feeding or by other means, prior to the death of the body, but an individual slain in this manner and not infected with vampirism may rise in the ordinary manner as a zombie.

The creation of a new vampire by an existing vampire requires some significant fluid contact between vampire and victim. It is comparably rare for a living victim to contract vampirism from a single bite, instead acquiring the infection from ingestion of the vampire's blood or direct mingling of the bloodstreams. The infection can thus pass to a living human, who will die slowly of an apparent wasting disease. This is common in prostitutes catering to the specialized needs of the vampire and in cases where the vampire chooses a single victim for a predatory "love affair." A vampire who intends to turn its beloved will often bite the inside of its mouth prior to feeding, thus permitting direct mingling of blood during the feeding act. A recently bitten victim that is turned will display livid bite-marks for the first few days of unlife, though these marks will fade entirely with time.

The first stages of vampiric transformation become evident within the first few days of the infection's progress. The victim begins to show an aversion to daylight,

preferring to sleep during the brightest parts of the day, and develops a sensitivity to strong odours. Physically, the victim is languid and weak but appears otherwise healthy. In these early stages, the contagion may be arrested and the victim restored to full health by a complete transfusion of the blood. The disease in the early stages is difficult to detect and nearly impossible to diagnose; correct diagnosis at this stage often depends on the availability of information allowing the presupposition of vampiric activity. As the transformation progresses, the victim's senses will sharpen, the body will become thin and the skin pale, and the eyes will become very bright. The course of the transformation closely resembles the progression of consumption, and misdiagnosis is common. Though at this point the victim is very near to death, the unnatural strength granted by the vampiric infection sustains the body and prevents collapse until the infection is in the final stage. Once this consumptive stage is reached, the transformation cannot be reversed. Most will die of the infection, becoming a true vampire.

The vampiric infection is transmittable by sexual contact as well. Whores that have regular visits from a vampire or vampires have a significant chance of harbouring the infection, as the vampire will frequently use the whore for small amounts of blood as well as sex, and this frequent and multifaceted exposure often ensures transmission of the contagion. Fortunately, the contagion cannot be transmitted from a living carrier to an uninfected human, and this may be the only reason vampirism has not become a plague within the metropolis. The course of the infection proceeds through the same symptomatology as with the bite only or the direct mingling of blood, only much slower, requiring weeks or months to culminate in death, depending on the condition of the victim at infection.

Despite years of research, the origins and agent of transmission of vampirism are still unknown. The transmission of vampirism follows the pattern of a disease, spread by fluid transfer, but the infectious agent has not been isolated. Cultures of fluids and tissues from both active undead and living victims succumbing to vampirism have failed to indicate any possible zymotic agent for the contagion.

## Vampire Feeding

The vampire must feed once every three to four days, consuming at least five hundred millilitres of blood directly from a living victim, though the average vampire is capable of consuming several litres after a fast of this duration. If denied the opportunity to feed, the vampire will begin to desiccate, slowly taking on the appearance of great age. It will begin to slow, apparently conserving its resources. If forced to go more than four or five weeks without blood, the vampire will cease moving altogether and enter a semi-conscious dormant state. It will emerge rapidly from this "hibernation" when it detects a source of blood in proximity, starting into motion almost too rapidly to be observed and striking at the prey with deadly accuracy. If the target escapes, denying the vampire its meal, the creature will re-enter the state of hibernation. After ten to twelve months of hibernation, the vampire enters a deep dormancy from which it can only be roused by the physical touch of a warm, living body or, better still, the application of fresh blood.

## Activity Patterns of the Vampire

Under ordinary conditions, where the vampire is active and feeding regularly, it does not have any need for sleep.

The vampire may, however, enter periods of superficial dormancy to conserve resources. Though the vampire is semiconscious, this is not a state of true sleep: the vampire cannot enter a dreamstate, and if disturbed or threatened, it can emerge from this dormancy with incredible speed. Many vampires prefer to spend the brightest parts of the day in this dormant state.

## Physiology of the Vampire

The physiology of the vampire can be best understood by reference to its closest analogue, the zombie. Both are true undead, lacking a metabolism and apparently sustaining themselves directly on some vital force drawn from the living victim. The vampire is of a higher order than its nearest conspecific, retaining more intelligence than the zombie in all its forms and a higher degree of humanity in its physiology and appearance. Unlike the zombie, the vampire does not decay. The lungs and larynx remain intact and functional, allowing the creature to speak; a starved vampire will have a dry, soft, "spiderwebbed" voice, the result of desiccation in the chest cavity and throat. The skin is cool and dry to the touch. There is no smell of putrefaction, though a vague "dusty" smell is not uncommon, as well as a slight hint of copper if the vampire has recently fed.

Most of the physiological changes associated with vampirism rapidly follow the death of the body. The majority of these changes are extremely subtle, and few are immediately evident to the eye of an average observer. The flesh dries and shrivels somewhat in the initial period after rising, bringing the bone structure into greater prominence and giving the vampire a hard, hungry appearance. The skin becomes paler and slightly ashen, though the effect is fairly minimal; most vampires will pass easily for human on casual inspection, even if they have not recently fed. The internal structures of the sensory organs, specifically the ear and eye, reorganize slightly to permit the senses a greater acuity, though these effects are in no way visible to any examination less thorough than dissection.

The largest change in the vampire's physiology is in the bones of the face and jaw. The jawbones become somewhat more solid and the tendons thicken, but the change is far less noticeable in the vampire than in the animate. The effect of the change is to make the bite rather more powerful than a human's, capable of easily puncturing the thin flesh covering the major blood vessels of the human body, though not powerful enough to tear into muscle and viscera in the manner of an animate. The teeth become somewhat more pronounced as the soft tissues recede, the canine teeth alone undergoing additional development and becoming slightly elongated. These alterations are difficult to detect on casual observation, and a fully sentient vampire can easily conceal his true nature among humans.

The vampire has a very lifelike appearance internally as well as externally for the first few months of its unlife, and the desiccation that characterizes the internal anatomy of the vampire proceeds slowly. It is even possible to approximately age a vampire within the first year or two of unlife by examining the internal structures after the creature undergoes a fast of several days' duration. The alterations to the physiology stabilize after a few years; a vampire that has been active for fifty years in good conditions is physically indistinguishable, internally and externally, from one that has been active for five. It is theorized that the vampire is essentially immortal.

Internally, the organs retain their structure even though they are nonfunctional. In a starved vampire, the organs are dry and shrivelled, as if the entire body had been mummified; in a vampire that has recently fed, the organs are wet and fresh-looking, suppurating with blood. The heart in particular will be red and fresh-looking, its chambers filled with blood; it is not certain why this should be, as the vampire's heart is as inert as the rest of its internal anatomy and no longer has any active role in circulation.

The creature has the ability to heal most injuries done to it but cannot regrow any significant portions of its anatomy. Healing is very rapid and accelerates after a feed. As the vampire has few "critical" regions in its anatomy, it is difficult to do the creature any significant harm without targeting the head or heart. Damage to the limbs will slow the vampire, and it will not be able to use severely damaged limbs until it has had time to heal.

Even after the ordinary death of the body, the vampire does retain its senses. It can feel pain when injured, though it is rarely slowed by pain, and it will act to defend itself. It can experience pleasure and will seek out pleasurable sensation; vampires of the sentient type tend to frequent prostitutes, often spreading their contagion. Strangely, the vampire's pleasure/pain responses not infrequently become terribly confused after the change. Undertakers who have attempted to torture vampires have occasionally received responses entirely unlike what they were expecting. This trait has considerably aided the social success of vampires attempting to move through the more decadent and depraved circles of aristocratic society.

For the first few days of unlife, a male vampire is still able to impregnate a human female. The vampire does not, of course, produce new spermatozoa after the death of the

body. However, in the cool temperatures of the vampire's body, existing spermatozoa may remain viable for several days, providing that the vampire feeds often enough to keep the temperature of the body near 20 C (68 F) or the ambient temperature remains within a few degrees of this critical mark. The human physiological reflexes do not begin to diminish for some time, and if the vampire does not kill all of its partners during this initial period, there is a slim chance of pregnancy. The offspring of this union will be a specimen of the half-living Dhampir. Semen artificially preserved during this time will be found to be devoid of vitality and cannot be used to create Dhampir.

It is impossible for a female vampire to sustain a pregnancy after the ordinary death of the body. If the female has ovulated just prior to the natural death of the body, it is possible for fertilization of the ovum to occur, but implantation will fail in the corpse. However, if a female is turned during the term of a natural pregnancy, the foetus will be expelled within a few days following the mother's death. If the pregnancy is late in its term and the foetus survives, the child will be a Dhampir.

Destroying a vampire requires decapitation, the destruction of a significant portion of the brain, or the destruction of its heart. The old practice of hammering a spike through the temple of a corpse to prevent it rising as a vampire is very efficacious. A head-shot with large-calibre weaponry will generally do sufficient damage to destroy the monster. Removal of the heart from the body will likewise suffice to destroy the monster, though this is seldom practical under ordinary combat conditions. A stake piercing, but not destroying, a significant portion of the heart serves to stun the vampire, rendering it immobile, but this will not suffice to end the creature. Destroying the entire body with fire is also remarkably efficacious, particularly if the vampire has not fed recently, as the desiccated tissues tend to be highly flammable. Unless one of these acts of violence is undertaken against the vampire, the creature seems to be functionally athanatic.

The creature is not destroyed by sunlight. When exposed to daylight, the vampire becomes sluggish and enfeebled, the mental processes slow, and movement becomes clumsier and more awkward. Some have speculated that the vampire's senses, attuned to conditions of darkness, are overwhelmed by the light. However, it is only natural sunlight that has this effect; artificial bright lights serve only to confuse the vampire's vision. Lost Days, when the smogs of London prevent the sunlight from reaching the streets, are times of high vampiric activity.

Vampires are neither dissuaded by religious trappings nor in any way inconvenienced by running water. These myths have their roots in rituals of purification intended to drive an evil spirit out of a possessed corpse. No rites of purification or exorcism will have any effect on the creature. Oddly, the vampire does seem to have a universal dislike for garlic, also associated with the principle of purification; the cause of this strange aversion is thus far unknown. However, the response can be controlled; it is possible for a vampire to walk into a room that smells of garlic or even to taste food flavoured with the herb, but he will find the experience unpleasant

## Breeds Apart

Two forms of vampire are distinguishable based on the condition of the intellect following the transformation into unlife. The first and most common is the feral vampire, a creature in which the human mind does not survive the death of the body; these are psychotic creatures lacking utterly in restraint, prone to killing at random and unable to consider the consequences of their actions. The second, far rarer and infinitely more dangerous, is the sentient vampire, in which will and intelligence survive into undeath. The method of creation does not appear to have an effect on the type of the resulting vampire, but some of these sentient vampires have the capability to "breed true," producing lines of sentient vampires referred to as Legacies.

Hunting patterns vary among vampiric types. Many will take the hunt into the poorer districts, searching for easy prey. Transients, beggars, working-class poor, and run-down whores can be fed on virtually with impunity, so long as the police and the dailies are not given a trail of bodies to follow. The lower-functioning vampires will tend to feed almost exclusively in this fashion, enjoying the satisfaction of killing at will. Many seem to have a taste for the filth of the environs they frequent, revelling in the decay around them. The more refined monsters prefer not to confine themselves to this distasteful diet, instead taking their nourishment and pleasure in the more refined playing-grounds of high society. Many conduct their hunts as love affairs, becoming obsessed with one person and drawing out the pleasure of the chase.

Sentient vampires tend to fall in love easily and completely, if briefly. The beloved becomes an object of consuming interest, and the vampire will go to any lengths to be near its desire. The vampire will begin to feed on his beloved, prolonging the fear and pain as much as possible, unless it is physically prevented from gaining access to the object of love. It is an unfortunate fate to be the target of a vampire's obsession; the vampire is prone to fits of murderous jealousy

when consumed by passion and will frequently destroy the beloved object to better possess him. Even if the beloved lives to see the obsession fade, the vampire, enraged by the coolness of his beloved during the "courtship," may try to murder the former love object out of spite.

Some vampires frequent the whorehouses, seeking out partners who are willing to submit to any manner of indignity or agony for a sufficient price. These unfortunates are used for food and sex, frequently receiving violent treatment at the hands of their inhuman customers. Those who survive this life for any extent of time often bear horrifying scars. These vampire's molls, called "bloodbags" in the trade, frequently carry the vampiric infection.

Whores who succumb to vampirism and retain their intellect following the transformation tend to remain in the business, using their old trade to obtain easy victims. These vampire prostitutes are considered to be a public health threat, capable of spreading vampirism through all levels of society. Under the re-instituted Contagious Diseases Act, prostitutes can be forcibly examined for venereally transmitted diseases, including vampirism; whores suspected to be carrying the vampiric infection are confined until the death of the body and then destroyed. However, there are difficulties with the examination. It is difficult, if not impossible, to be certain that an individual is infected until the latter stages of the decline. There is no direct assay for the vampiric infection, forcing the examining physician to rely on symptomatology to make their diagnosis. A sufficiently savvy whore may be able to conceal the symptoms through the course of the infection. Furthermore, many of the "bloodbags" are unregistered prostitutes, able to evade the police examinations, and the prejudices of the time are such that males are almost never suspected of carrying on the trade.

The OUD has paid a bounty on vampires since 1986. Of course, since vampires are reduced to ash upon destruction, this bounty can be difficult to collect. It is possible to analyze the collected ash from a vampire to confirm the source of the remains. However, collecting the ash is a procedure requiring patience. The process for determining the nature of the remains is alchemical, requiring several hours and approximately sixty-five percent of the ashes produced by the destruction of a vampire to yield conclusive results. If a sample of mixed ashes is provided, as is almost inevitable in a city densely populated with crematoria, the verification procedure can take days or weeks longer. Undertakers seeking to collect a bounty for a destroyed vampire must painstakingly collect the ash into a bag, hurrying to keep the remains from being blown away or soaked into the muck of the streets.

Enterprising Undertakers carry the gas-powered stake-thrower, the Requieter, to immobilize vampires for transport. Taking them in "alive" pays better than simple destruction of vampires, as these creatures are in constant demand as research subjects at universities and medical schools throughout the metropolis.

### Feral Vampires

Most vampires are of the feral type: undead psychotics utterly consumed by the instinct to feed. These creatures lack a higher or reasoning intelligence, but even the worst of them are not mindless. They have a fearsome animal cunning and a strong instinct for self-preservation. Driven by instincts and passions, these creatures live from kill to kill, seeking only the fulfilment of their needs. Feral vampires, regardless of higher cognitive ability, are excellent hunter and powerful fighters, making challenging opponents even for seasoned Undertakers.

Vampires of this sort engage in no cooperative behaviours; these creatures are very territorial and will fight one another over possession of prime feeding grounds. As these vampires tend to prefer the same prey — the whore, the beggar, and the transient — as human pleasure-killers, there are often battles between feral vampires and human killers over a particular section of town or a home territory in the Underground.

The feral vampire retains only vague memories of its former life. A feral vampire may remember the streets of the city it dwelt in or recognize its living family and friends, but no sentiment or fondness remains. Frequently, those that the vampire knew in life are among its first victims.

Creatures of this sort, possessed of uncontrolled passions and little will, are the easier of the two types of vampires to kill. They tend to be creatures of habit, moving within established territories and hunting in predictable patterns. Their first reaction is to attack in the hopes of making a kill; only when confronted with a significant threat will the vampire abandon its predatory activities and attempt to escape. A feral vampire will only break off an attack if seriously wounded or confronted with flame. Few retain enough intelligence to cover their tracks; most will not even have the cunning to hide the dismembered corpses of their victims or avoid trailing bloody tracks behind them as they make their way back to the nest.

Most will make nests in abandoned buildings or the Underground, where there is little chance of being disturbed during their diurnal rest. The nests of these vampires are frequently littered with the remnants of old kills. An aboveground nest that has been in use for any period of time will

be easily detectable by the smell alone, though nests in the sewers and the Underground are more difficult to detect by this means due to the overwhelming background smells of the tunnels. Feral vampires are known to bring living victims back to their nest after making one or two kills in a night. No longer hungry, the vampire will use these victims as entertainment, torturing and maiming these unfortunates until they expire. These victims are often found covered in "love bites," small wounds over the entire surface of the body made by the vampire as it slowly consumed the life of its prey. The vampire will occasionally lose interest over the course of its play, allowing the victim to escape. The mind and body of these survivors is irretrievably shattered by the experience, and the few who resist retreating into catatonia often take to the hunt, seeking revenge on the creatures that destroyed them.

When eating, the creature will gorge itself on blood, often drinking more than it can actually consume until the surplus blood runs out the mouth, nose, and other orifices of the body. In the frenzy of its hunger, the vampire will occasionally ingest chunks of flesh and skin from its victim. As the vampire is not able to digest this material, it putrefies in the digestive tract, giving the creature's breath a horrific smell.

Frequently, these feral creatures are hunted and destroyed by more intelligent members of their own kind. Blatant vampiric activity increases the bounties and draws the Undertakers into the streets to hunt, endangering even the most careful of the vampires and making hunting difficult. Moreover, these clumsy creatures are gluttonous, killing more than they can eat out of a sheer pleasure in destruction. Their more intelligent conspecifics regard them as unnecessary competitors taking an unacceptable toll on the easy prey.

These creatures, though physiologically nearly identical to the sentient vampires, are nonetheless easy to identify due to certain peculiarities of behaviour. The feral vampire does not have the cunning to attempt to pass for human. Its gait is not that of a human: it moves in a crouching manner, head low between the shoulders. The creature will invariably be filthy, a consequence of the abandoned places and underground tunnels where it will make its residence. Furthermore, sleeping amidst the remains of old kills leaves it with a smell not easily forgotten. It wears a more haggard and bestial countenance than an intelligent vampire, lacking the human will that directs its features into a civilized appearance. The creature is capable of a wide range of noises, as the vocal apparatus is still intact, but will have no language beyond a few monosyllabic epithets at most.

A few physiological anomalies appear only in the feral vampire. The nails will grow and thicken, becoming almost claw-like. Some vampires of this type, when replete after a heavy feed, will actually exude small amounts of blood through the skin in such a way that the vampire appears to be "sweating" blood.

### Sentient Vampires

The very few vampires that manage to maintain their intellect are considerably more dangerous than their simply instinct-driven conspecifics. Among these sentient vampires, there is a gradient of functionality. The least of these are scarcely better than feral psychotics driven by their passions: they are prone to destructive outbursts of rage and extremely likely to kill when they feed. The highest-functioning of the breed, however, retain sufficient force of will to affect a human social persona; urbane and genteel, their polished manners conceal the murderous predator beneath.

Yet, this veneer of civilization is thin and easily shattered. Many of those who retain sufficient intelligence to pass for human are rendered psychotic by the change. When these creatures descend into the poor sectors to feed, they are as savage as any feral vampire, dismembering their victims and wallowing in gore. They are frequently violent in their love affairs, becoming murderous if rejected and often destroying their beloveds in momentary fits of spite over some imagined slight. The vampire will frequently become self-destructive when it perceives a love affair to be going badly, planning its suicide and writing elaborate letters to the beloved cursing their cruelty. These dreams of self-destruction are seldom acted upon, however, the vampire far preferring to expunge his anger in the messy deaths of others.

The odds of survival for an intelligent vampire are much greater than for its animalistic kin. These vampires are far more cunning than their feral counterparts as well as more patient on the hunt and sufficiently forward-thinking to conceal the evidence of their kills. They retain the memories of their previous life, and some are able to conceal their condition and function in their previous societal roles for some time.

As is the case for feral vampires, these monsters are highly territorial, staking out physical and social territories that they will defend against other vampires. These creatures are generally aware of one another's territories, and it is not uncommon for several members of a Legacy, usually a master vampire and his "brides," to defend a large territory cooperatively. The sentient vampires will police their territories against encroachment by lesser monsters, efficiently destroying any animates or feral vampires that take up residence in

their hunting grounds and driving human pleasure-killers away from their game. Consequently, those living within the territory of a powerful vampire may have less to fear from the monsters of the city than those living in areas where the lesser killers of the metropolis are free to roam.

A vampire sees its territory and everything in it as property to do with as it pleases. Humans within its territory are game to be managed by its authority and hunted at its pleasure. Once a vampire has chosen a target, it is a matter of honor to take the chosen prize. The vampire will rarely kill the Deathwatch or Undertakers within its territory unless pressed to fight; it is considered unsporting for a vampire to remove too many obstacles between itself and its prey.

Frequently, a vampire will draw out the death of a victim with whom it has become obsessed. The victim will generally be attractive and young, and he or she will often be largely a stranger to the vampire prior to their "affair"; many vampires enjoy the "romance" of "love at first sight." The initial encounter may be of any type: the vampire is as likely to become obsessed with the pretty daughter of a merchant seen briefly on the street as with a lovely young rake encountered at a party of the wealthiest families in London. Once the vampire has selected its target, it may watch for a time, learning the patterns of the beloved's life and savouring the anticipation before beginning the hunt. The vampire will visit his beloved many times, using its powers of mind control to subdue the victim, then draining blood as the victim lies entranced and, frequently, engaging in intercourse with the half-conscious victim. The beloved will generally die within a few weeks as a result of the vampire's attentions. Some of the most powerful sentient vampires will gather brides in this fashion.

Some of those that retain their intelligence form Legacies, or bloodlines. While any vampire may emerge from the transformation as an unthinking, murderous animal, some sentient vampires have some ability to breed true: the vampires they create consistently maintain their intellect. Within a bloodline, individuals may engage in some cooperative behaviour, working together to hunt and maintain territories. Vampires

### Lord Crowstaff and His Brides

*In the South End borough of Bethnal Green, a sizeable territory is controlled by an extremely powerful vampire named Lord Crowstaff and his four brides. The origins of Lord Crowstaff are unknown, though he is certainly very old; Undertaker records list rumours of a vampire named "Crowstaff" dating back nearly a century.*

*Lord Crowstaff is an imposing figure. The vampire stands just over six feet tall and is broad-shouldered and powerfully built, with enormous, long-fingered hands. He appears to be in his late twenties, healthy and very strong; the desiccation that characterizes the vampiric features has had little effect on his face, giving him an appearance very like a living man. His muscular build suggests that his former life was an active one, probably involving physical labour of some sort. Lord Crowstaff does not speak of his past.*

*The features of the vampire, demonically handsome but coarse and brooding, do not suggest an aristocratic lineage. Rather, the moniker "Lord" comes from his appearance. The vampire is always handsomely dressed, clad in evening clothes, top hat, and elaborate gas-mask. Nor is "Crowstaff" a true name. The appellation is descriptive, referring to a queer walking stick the vampire carries with the knob fashioned into a replica of a crow's skull. He is a favourite of several of the wealthiest families in London, who pay handsomely for his presence during the social season.*

*The brides are a quartet of beautiful young men, ranging from seventeen to twenty-five in apparent age. All have the refined features of the aristocracy, though none lay claim to any family name. Crowstaff and his brides have no shortage of admirers among the younger generation of the aristocracy. Many have asked to become a bride, but Crowstaff has refused them all.*

*Crowstaff and his brides maintain their territory against encroachment by other vampires, but they have little patience for dealing with other disturbances within their territory. When there are other threats to be dealt with, the family customarily hires freelancers to take care of the trouble.*

### Cirques du Sang

*Among the more decadent circles of the aristocracy and the oligarchy, there are those whose tastes have palled on every sensation but the most depraved and bizarre. These jades, in the search for new and interesting blasphemies for their entertainment, have installed "monster shows" at their gatherings, where the curious and very wealthy can come to experience the dark side of London. Of these, the "vampire salons," the cirques du sang, are the most popular among the aristocratic thrill-seekers of the metropolis.*

*Most of those drawn to these events are curiosity-seekers, playful jades looking for a risk-free thrill. The proximity of the monster gives these soirées a touch of menace; just as people of another age enjoyed menagerie shows, where beasts of prey were lead on chains through an enraptured audience, these thrill-seekers enjoy the company of the "tame" monster, secure in the feeling that they can rub shoulders with the beast and walk away unharmed.*

*The vampire, of course, receives a price for his services. The bravest of the attendees will submit to having their blood drunk by the monster to enjoy the queer thrill of being prey. They are not, of course, bitten; even the small risk of infection would be too great. The blood is drawn using a small sharp blade, generally on the wrist or the hand, and the vampire bestows a gentle "kiss," taking a taste of the proffered victim. It is customary for the vampire to make a toast to the sacrifice before partaking.*

*However, this is not the full price paid for the vampire's presence. At the height of the festivities, a victim — a youth bought from the slums — is brought before the assembled. Ceremoniously, the victim is stripped and bathed before the party as they savour the fear of the doomed creature. Then she is dressed prettily and presented to the vampire. The monster will fix the victim with its stare, drawing the child unwillingly towards it, and with due pomp and circumstance feed from the child in full view of those assembled. Done properly, it is a transfixing display, repellent and erotic, a thrill entirely unlike any other.*

belonging to a Legacy will generally be aware of their genealogy, though it does not necessarily follow that they will be inclined to cooperate with others of their line. Furthermore, just as even a feral vampire may produce a sentient "offspring," even the strongest Legacies occasionally produce a rabid child who must be put down. Despite the risk, some wealthy patrons have actively sought out the better established Legacies in an attempt to cheat death. These desperate individuals will actually pay to be infected with the vampiric contagion. Once turned, these individuals will attempt to conceal their condition in order to maintain their position and wealth.

A sufficiently urbane vampire can do very well in society. Many of the aristocratic houses keep vampiric "houseguests" through the social season, providing these creatures with fine clothes, jewels, expendable funds, and access to victims in exchange for the glamorous privilege of the monster's company. The vampire considers these families to be part of its territory. It is considered a very serious trespass for a vampire to solicit an invitation from a family that is known to "belong" to another, but families may fall under the territories of multiple vampires if an agreement can be reached. A vampire's human territories provide it and its Legacy with social standing as well as material benefits. The activities of the social season permit these creatures to have access to the wealthiest and most powerful individuals in London. The families schedule the appearance of these creatures to provide a touch of menace to the festivities. While most of these affairs are arranged simply to display the vampire, at the Cirques du Sang, the nature of the beast is the centre of the occasion.

# Vampire Rules

## Undead

A vampire is undead. The creature does not need to breathe, and it is incapable of digesting food. Unless exceptionally fresh, the creature cannot produce natural offspring. The "nutrition" obtained from blood is not digested in the ordinary fashion. Rather, it is assimilated directly into the body, much like the flesh ingested by the animate. The creature does not tire and needs no sleep, though a diurnal period of dormancy is

common; vampires suffer no penalties from fatigue and never become exhausted.

### Prey Sense

The vampire lacks the prey sense of the animate. It is limited to the use of the five ordinary senses in the hunt.

### Feeding

A vampire must drink fresh blood from a living body for sustenance. Blood not only sustains a vampire's existence but also regenerates its body and fuels its inhuman strength. When a vampire drinks a victim's blood, it feeds on its victim's Vitality attribute. A vampire needs to feed once every three days, consuming at least five hundred millilitres of blood, to maintain full strength and alertness.

If a vampire fails to feed, it will begin to weaken. After four days without feeding, the vampire suffers –1 on skill rolls. If denied access to food for longer periods, the vampire suffers –1 Vitality and Coordination for each week spent without feeding. As the vampire gets weaker and weaker, its body rapidly desiccates. A vampire's Vitality and Coordination cannot be reduced below 1 as a result of not feeding. As a vampire's attributes are reduced, it will appear to age rapidly as it desiccates.

Before feeding, the vampire must secure a victim. The victim may be willing, coerced via means natural or unnatural, or taken by force. A willing victim is the cleanest option, but it may be difficult to find a victim who can be convinced or paid to allow the vampire to feed. Willing victims are often seduced and plied with liquor, laudanum, promises of eternal life, and vampiric mind control (see below).

Unwilling victims provide both sport and nourishment. A vampire must grapple an unwilling victim before it can feed. Once a victim has been secured, the vampire may spend an action to begin feeding. While grappling its victim, a vampire must succeed in an Unarmed Combat roll versus DR 11 to bite its victim. A vampire will generally go for the throat, but it does not suffer an attack roll penalty for biting the grappled victim's throat.

When the vampire bites its victim – willing or not – it has the option of being gentle or rough. The victim of a gentle bite suffers a Flesh Wound. If the vampire is rough, its victim suffers a damage roll equal to the vampire's Vitality, adding 3 to the roll if the vampire bit the character in the throat. Subtract from this total the victim's Vitality and double the value of the armour covering the location bitten.

Once the vampire begins feeding, it may continue from round to round by forfeiting its turn each round until the victim dies, the vampire takes another action, the vampire is destroyed, or its victim breaks free from its grasp. Once the victim dies, the vampire may continue to drink his blood but will receive no benefit from it.

An unwilling victim in a combat situation suffers –1 Vitality each turn he is fed on. Outside of combat, the vampire can take its time when feeding on a willing victim, taking 1 Vitality every minute or so. If its victim is reduced to 0 Vitality, the victim falls unconscious and will die unless stabilized (see Stabilizing Wounds, Chapter 2, pages 109-110). If the vampire continues to feed, the victim dies upon reaching –1 Vitality. A victim who survives regains 1 Vitality point per week until fully recovered. If the character dies, see Infection below; a character not infected with vampirism may rise as an animate as indicated by the location of death (see Spontaneous Animation, this chapter).

For each Vitality point ingested, the vampire regains 1 point of Vitality and Coordination lost due to not feeding. These regained points will remain until lost again to starvation or some other damage. Once the vampire's attribute penalties from not feeding have been removed, excess Vitality points drained from a victim may be spent to remove Fatal Wounds suffered by the vampire. Each Vitality point spent in this way removes 1 Fatal Wound or lesser wound. It takes ten minutes to reduce an Incapacitating Wound, five minutes to reduce a Serious Wound, and one minute to reduce a Flesh Wound or Scratch.

A vampire cannot regenerate or reattach severed limbs. Once a vampire regains all the Vitality and Coordination it lost from not feeding, it no longer suffers the skill roll penalty from starvation.

After feeding on a human, if the vampire is no longer suffering attribute penalties or Fatal Wounds, all non-Fatal wounds suffered by the vampire will be fully healed and the creature gains +2 Vitality and Coordination for eight hours.

### Animal Blood

A vampire gains far less sustenance from the blood of animals than he does from human blood. Regardless of the volume of blood consumed, a vampire can only drain a single Vitality point from most animals before the animal dies. At the Narrator's discretion, a vampire may be able to drain slightly more Vitality from very large animals.

A vampire that is able to feed only on animal blood will be able to spend the Vitality points it gains to remove Vitality and Coordination penalties from not feeding and to remove Fatal Wounds. However, a vampire that has not fed on a human within four days still suffers –1 on skill rolls whether it or not it has fed on animals.

## Infection

Vampiric infection is relatively rare and requires an exchange of bodily fluids. A character that is fed on by a vampire and not killed or that experiences intercourse with a vampire has a 1% chance per encounter of acquiring the vampiric taint. To determine if a character is infected, the Narrator secretly rolls 2d10. On a roll of 2, the character is infected. If there is deliberate and large-scale transfer of fluid, for example if the vampire feeds the victim a quantity of its blood, risk of infection is greatly increased. In this case, roll 1d10; infection occurs on a roll of 1.

Once infected, there is little chance of curing the victim. The infection will likely kill the character, transforming him into a vampire. If a character somehow survives infection, he will become a Dhampir. Additionally, if a correct diagnosis can be made within a week of the initial infection (see The Symptoms, below), the contagion can be arrested and the victim restored to full health with a complete transfusion of the blood. This procedure must be performed by a character with the Medicine skill (DR 14) and requires the use of a large quantity (~six litres) of blood. If the roll succeeds, the infection is arrested and the affected character survives but must remain in bed for seven days minus his Vitality. If the transfusion roll fails, the patient dies but does not rise as a vampire, though he may return as an animate.

## The Symptoms

Once the character has been infected, he begins to develop the symptoms of the disease.

Within three days, the victim begins to show an aversion to daylight, preferring to sleep during the brightest parts of the day, and develops a sensitivity to strong odours. By the end of the third day, the character suffers –1 Vitality and Coordination. A character cannot have his Vitality or Coordination reduced below 1 as a result of this stage of the infection. During this time, a character with Occult Lore of 2 or more and Medicine may attempt to make a Medicine roll (DR 20) to diagnose the affliction, assuming that the cause is not known. If the roll succeeds, the character is recognized as suffering from the vampiric infection. If the roll fails, the character misdiagnoses the illness as a common complaint.

After one week, the victim's senses grow painfully acute. He begins to lose weight and his flesh grows pale. At this stage, a character with Occult Lore of 2 or more and Medicine may attempt to make a Medicine roll (DR 14) to diagnose the affliction. If the roll succeeds, the character is recognized as suffering from the vampiric infection. If the roll fails, the malady is misdiagnosed as consumption. A character with reason to suspect the true origins of the suffering character's malady gains a +4 bonus to this skill roll. If the character is examined by a physician lacking the requisite level of Occult Lore, the doctor will certainly misdiagnose the disease.

After two weeks, the victim loses much of his surplus body mass. The eyes become very bright, as with fever, and the skin takens on an extraordinary pallor. Bright spots in the cheeks, as are characteristic of consumption, are common. The character suffers a further –1 to Vitality and Coordination. A character cannot have his Vitality or Coordination reduced below 1 as a result of this stage of the infection. The rules for diagnosing the illness are the same as those described after one week, above.

Every two days following, the character suffers –1 Vitality and Coordination. Once the character is reduced to 1 Vitality, he must make a Vitality roll (DR 16). If the roll succeeds, he lives but becomes a Dhampir. If the roll fails,

the character enters a coma and dies the following day, only to rise the next night as a vampire. The rules for diagnosing the illness are the same as those described after one week, above.

A surviving character recovers lost Vitality at a rate of 1 point per week or 1 point per point of Vitality taken from a victim while feeding.

### Rising From the Dead

A character who succumbs to vampiric infection will rise the following night as a vampire.

Whether a new vampire is sentient or feral depends primarily on upon the bloodline of the vampire that infected it. Some vampires are more prone to creating sentient vampires than others, and each new generation of sentient vampire is more likely to produce a sentient vampire in turn. Vampire bloodlines, or Legacies, are established in this way. For each step removed a vampire is from a feral ancestor, a vampire is 10% more likely to produce sentient vampires.

When a vampire rises from the dead, the Narrator rolls a d10. The result of this roll depends on the Legacy of the infecting vampire. If the vampire was infected by a feral vampire, it will be sentient on a roll of 1, otherwise the character rises as a feral vampire. If the vampire was infected by a sentient vampire that was created by a feral vampire, the new vampire will be sentient on a roll of 1 or 2. If a sentient vampire created by that original sentient vampire infects another vampire in turn, that third generation vampire is 10% more likely to remain sentient, retaining intelligence on a roll of 1-3. And so on. Even the most stable Legacies produce feral vampires on a roll of 7 or greater.

For example, Percy, Nicky's Undertaker, succumbs to vampiric infection, and the Narrator makes a roll to see if Percy rises as a feral or sentient vampire. Since the vampire that infected Percy was a member of a very stable Legacy of five sentient vampires in a row, Percy will rise a sentient vampire on a roll of 1-6 (10% base chance plus 50% from the Legacy of five sentient vampires). The Narrator rolls a 3; Percy rises from the dead hungry but intelligent.

A character that becomes a vampire during play gains +2 Vitality and Coordination and +1 Wit.

## Destroying a Vampire

Vampires are terrifically resistant to damage. Only Fatal Wounds can inflict structural damage to a vampire. Its head and heart are the most vulnerable part of its anatomy. Any attack that decapitates the vampire or inflicts a Fatal Wound to its head or heart will destroy the creature. The vampire is also destroyed if its heart is removed from its chest. A Fatal Wound to the limb of a vampire destroys the limb, and one to the torso of a vampire reduces its Vitality by 1. Once a vampire's Vitality is reduced to 0, it is destroyed and immediately reduced to fine ash.

A vampire does not suffer wound penalties from damage it sustains.

See Destroying the Undead, Chapter 2, page 110 - 112.

### Staking a Vampire

While any attack that inflicts a Fatal Wound to the heart of a vampire destroys it, an attack with a wooden stake that inflicts a Serious or Incapacitating Wound to the heart of a vampire paralyzes it. When the vampire is staked but not destroyed, the creature will become immediately dormant. While dormant, the vampire is unaware of its surroundings and unable to speak or act. Once the stake is removed, the vampire quickly comes to its senses and may act normally.

### Sunlight

Though vampires can remain active during the day, exposure to sunlight causes a vampire a degree of discomfort. Luckily for vampires, bright sunny days are vanishingly rare within the metropolis. A vampire that finds itself outdoors in direct sunlight on a day without cloud cover suffers –5 on attribute and skill rolls. A vampire outdoors on an average overcast day suffers –3 on attribute and skill rolls. A vampire outdoors at dusk will be uncomfortable, but will suffer no penalties to its rolls.

## Psychology

### Masochism

Though vampires do not suffer wound penalties, most do derive pleasure from the sensation of being harmed. A vampire will not disengage from combat until it has suffered a Serious Wound or greater. Even after suffering this damage, a vampire will actively prolong conflicts where it appears likely that it will continue to sustain low-level injuries. Breaking away before receiving a Serious Wound requires a successful Will roll (DR 14).

### Sadism

Vampires derive pleasure from inflicting pain on their victims. If a victim cries, screams, or begs for help, a vampire must succeed in a Will roll (DR 11) to keep from harming its victim again, regardless of the vampire's intentions. Vampires are fully capable of killing even the most willing victims to sate their sadistic tendencies.

## Heightened Physical Performance

Vampires are extremely agile and physically powerful creatures capable of performing amazing physical feats. In addition to the modifiers to a vampire's attributes, the creature also gains +3 on Vitality and Coordination rolls.

## Heightened Senses

Vampires are able to see farther into the infrared spectrum than humans. Vampires do not suffer ranged attack penalties or any other penalties for poor visibility due to low light situations. Vampires receive +3 to Wit – Perception rolls.

## Mental Control

A vampire has the potential to control the mind of any living human it can see or who can hear its voice. The transmitted voice of a vampire cannot control the minds of others. Through mind control, a vampire can force its victim to take any action short of doing direct and wilful harm to himself. For example, the vampire can order its victim to murder loved ones, sign away his fortunes, or tell the vampire anything it wishes to know. The vampire is capable of issuing direct nonverbal commands. Nonverbal commands must be simple: "open the door," "do not move," "go to sleep," or "shoot the man next to you." More complex commands can be issued verbally, to the same effect.

The vampire can only affect a single victim at a time. Issuing an order in combat requires the vampire to spend an action. When the vampire attempts to control the mind of another, the vampire and its victim make a contested Will roll. If the vampire wins, its victim will carry out the order to the best of his ability without being aware that he is being controlled. If the victim wins the contested roll, the mind control fails and the victim will be aware his that his mind was under assault.

If the vampire rolls a critical success, itd victim has become enthralled with him and the vampire can control the victim in the future without making a contested roll. If the vampire rolls a critical failure or its victim rolls a critical success, the victim has developed an immunity to that particular vampire's control and will automatically resist any control attempts in the future.

Dhampiri, animals, and the undead are completely immune to vampiric mind control. Other half-lifers are naturally resistant, but may still be affected. When a half-lifer makes a contested Will roll to avoid vampiric control, double his Will for the purposes of the roll.

Vampiric mind control is not telepathy. Human psychics are unable to interfere with the mind control or to intercept messages sent in this manner. The mind control ability generally confers contact in one direction only; the vampire can transmit orders to a hypnotized thrall, but the vampire cannot receive information from the vassal's mind. Prolonged contact with the vampiric mind control will alter the human mind, permitting the vampire's control to deepen (see Psychic Vassals below).

## Mind Control and Psychological Damage

Every time a victim comes under a vampire's influence, roll a d10. On a roll of 1, the character suffers psychological damage as a result of the vampire dominating his will. The character either develops a new minor mental disorder or one of his previously minor disorders becomes chronic. See Mental Disorders, Chapter 3, pages 189 – 194 for details. The effects of this psychological damage are determined by the Narrator.

## Psychic Vassals

Over time, a vampire's mental control over a victim can grow very powerful, especially if the victim willingly serves the interests of the vampire. After a time, the vampire will be able to influence these psychic slaves over a great distance, forcing them to carry out the vampire's mental orders without meeting them face to face. This level of control can only be established once the vampire succeeds in a critical success during a contested Mental Control roll and after a number of years pass equal to the controlled character's Will. After this time passes, the controlled character will become the vampire's psychic vassal. The vampire can mentally control or speak to the character at a distance equal to the vampire's Will x 500 miles. The vampire's mental commands can now be very complex. Provided the enslaved character is capable of understanding the vampire's orders, he will carry them out.

The vampire can will itself to see through the vassal's eyes, experience all he feels, and shape his dreams. With a contested Will roll, the vampire can even take control of its psychic vassal's body for an hour, controlling it like a puppet. While the vampire controls its vassal's body, use the enslaved character's Vitality and Coordination and the vampire's Wit, Will, Intellect, Charm, and skills.

If the vampire is ever destroyed, its vassals are certain to lose their minds, either entering a catatonia from which there is no return or devolving into an animalistic state of perpetual rage.

### Transfix

Transfix is a lesser mind control power that allows the vampire to enthrall a living human who makes eye contact with it. Gripped by equal parts supernatural fear and mesmerism, the living character will enter a near-somnambulistic state where he is entirely helpless. Once he meets the vampire's gaze, the living character will be transfixed until he summons the willpower to look away. During each of the transfixed character's turns, he must make a contested Will roll versus the vampire. If he succeeds, the spell is broken and he can look away. If the roll fails, he remains transfixed.

A transfixed character cannot speak, scream, move, or take any action. While transfixed, a character is a Helpless Victim (see Chapter 2, page 96), entirely at the vampire's mercy.

If the vampire is damaged by an attack, the charm is immediately broken and the target may again act normally. A survivor of this experience will be shaken, but there are no lasting mental effects.

Transfix has no affect on half-lifers, animals, or the undead.

### Sentient Vampire

A sentient vampire is among the most dangerous creatures to walk the Neo-Victorian world. In part, this is because it retains its intellect and memories from life. A sentient vampire also becomes vastly more dangerous over time as it adapts to its undead form and its influence grows. These creatures are careful to avoid detection and often act through slaves, pawns, or hired thugs.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 4 (3-7) |
| **Coordination:** | 4 (3-7) |
| **Wit:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Intellect:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Will:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Charm:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Prowess:** | 6 (4-12) |
| **Actions:** | 2 (1-3) |

**Attributes:** A character that becomes a vampire during play gains +2 Vitality and Coordination and +1 Wit.

A vampire gains an additional +1 Coordination or Vitality for every twenty-five years spent "living" as a vampire. A vampire cannot increase its attributes above 8 as a result of this bonus.

**Skills:** A sentient vampire retains all the skills it possessed in life and is capable of learning new skills as a vampire. An aged sentient vampire will have a great number of skills.

**Features:** ***Pass for Human*** – Most sentient vampires can easily pass for human, but a character with the Medicine or Occult Lore skills can spot a vampire in a crowd by succeeding in a Wit – Perception roll (DR 16). The DR for this roll may be reduced if the vampire has not fed in some time, has overfed, or if the character can touch the vampire's flesh. If the vampire actively disguises its form, the character makes a contested Wit roll versus the vampire's Disguise skill.

**Attack:** A sentient vampire has many options available in combat. A vampire's great strength, speed, and mind control make it a formidable opponent even while unarmed, and few sentient vampires would walk the streets of the metropolis unarmed.

**Notes:** Sentient vampires are intelligent monsters. They may be thoroughly driven by their predatory instincts, but they are capable of careful planning and frightful ingenuity. The vampires that tend to live the longest learn to work through pawns and intermediaries to shield itself from unwanted attention and potential threats. The vast majority of fresh vampires are destroyed within the first month of vampiric existence. Only the strong and adaptable can manage to hang on longer.

### Feral Vampire

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 4 (3-7) |
| **Coordination:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Wit:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Intellect:** | 1 (1-4) |
| **Will:** | 1 (1-4) |
| **Charm:** | 0 |
| **Prowess:** | 6 (4-12) |
| **Actions:** | 2 (1-3) |

**Attributes:** The feral vampire is a semi-intelligent hunter. What it lacks in brains it more than makes up for in savage cunning. A character that becomes a feral vampire during play gains +2 Vitality and Coordination, but suffers –1 Intellect and Will. The Intellect and Will of a feral vampire cannot be reduced to less than 1 as a result of these modifiers. The Charm of a feral vampire is always 0.

A vampire gains an additional +1 Coordination or Vitality for every twenty-five years spent "living" as a vampire, but few feral vampires ever live long enough to appreciate this bonus. A vampire cannot increase its attributes above 8 as a result of this bonus.

**Skills:** A feral vampire retains most of the skills it possessed in life; however, these vampires tend to lack the attention span to practice most skills. Feral vampires tend to only utilize skills that aid them in feeding, such as Hide, Search, and Combat skills. Some develop Lock Picking, Unarmed Combat, and the like as well.

**Features:** ***Insanity*** – Feral vampires are insane. Each has at least one chronic metal disorder and several acute disorders. In addition to disorders the character develops after becoming a vampire, he also retains any disorders he possessed prior to death. Chronic paranoia is common among feral vampires (see Mental Disorders, Chapter 3, pages 189 – 194).

***Pass for Human*** – Feral vampires have an extremely difficult time passing for humans due to their alien posture, predatory movements, and stench of death and decay. Any character can spot a feral vampire in a crowd by succeeding in a Wit – Perception roll (DR 11).

**Attack:** Feral vampires are extremely dangerous in a fight. They seldom use firearms but will gleefully use melee weapons. Many feral vampires prefer the thrill of dispatching their victims with their bare hands and teeth.

**Notes:** Feral vampires are more akin to wild animals than men. They live to feed and enjoy killing. They take vampiric sadism to extremes. At the same time, these creatures possess a dangerous cunning and are among the most dangerous predators of the Neo-Victorian world. Few would dare follow such a creature into its lair and ever expect to see the light of day again.

# Dhampiri

The Dhampiri are half-lifers: semi-living creatures bearing the vampiric taint. Most are survivors of vampiric infection who were able to fight off the contagion before it killed them. Others are the children of true vampires, though Dhampiri of this sort are quite rare. As a breed, the Dhampiri are extremely uncommon; estimates put their number within London at no more than a few hundred since the Reclamation.

Regardless of their origins, the Dhampiri move with an inhuman grace, the gift of their vampiric legacy. Many admirers consider the delicate, vaguely alien features of the Dhampiri to be the height of beauty. Although the Dhampir does possess elongated teeth similar to those of the vampire, the effect is less pronounced. The Dhampir condition brings an increase in sense acuity above that of a normal human: the senses of smell and hearing become keener and the visual sense gains in acuity and in range, permitting the Dhampir to see more clearly under low light conditions.

Physically, those born as Dhampiri are somewhat taller and thinner than humans, their frames belying a preternatural strength. As children, they appear to be human, though unusually slender in build. Their bone structure is finer than that of a human, resulting in a vaguely ethereal appearance. The creature ages as a normal human until, approximately, the age of sixteen. At this point, the Dhampir will begin to take on the characteristics of his vampiric progenitor: he will grow tall and still more slender, his senses will sharpen, and his teeth will extend. After this point in the Dhampir's lifecycle, he will age very slowly.

The created Dhampiri, those born human who are transformed by surviving a vampiric infection, lack some of the characteristics of the born Dhampir. If the infection is acquired and survived by an adult, as is almost invariably the case, the infection will not greatly alter the basic physical appearance of the incubator. The height and overall bone structure of the Dhampir will not be altered, but he will become more slender and gracefully appointed as a result of the infection, acquiring much of the air of preternatural beauty that characterizes the born Dhampir. The created Dhampir enjoys the same acuity of senses as the born Dhampir, and the same extension of the teeth occurs. As with the born Dhampir, a creature of this sort will age very slowly.

The Dhampiri resemble humans much more closely than vampires. The Dhampiri are half-living, possessing functioning metabolisms: they require oxygen, food, and sleep, though

far less than a human would require. They do need to eat and are capable of processing human food, and they have a marked preference for animal flesh. A Dhampir is capable of existing without drinking blood. However, as with the vampire, the Dhampir is more powerful after consuming human blood, and if permitted to feed on at least one hundred millilitres of human blood, he becomes considerably stronger and faster than normal, nearly able to face a true vampire in a contest of strength. The Dhampir is not true vampire stock and cannot pass on the vampiric infection.

The Dhampiri heal very rapidly and are virtually immune to disease. Nevertheless, they are not immortal. While their natural lifespan is much longer than a human's, easily reaching one hundred and fifty years, the Dhampiri will eventually undergo a natural death. These creatures are immune to the ill effects of London's foul air, though most still prefer to wear protective gear to keep from being stained by the smogs.

The Dhampiri make excellent Undertakers. Fast and strong, they are extremely efficient hunters. They possess unusually good vision and are capable of seeing in much lower light than humans, even if they lack the vampiric ability to perceive heat visually. Furthermore, the Dhampiri share a loathing of undeath that drives them to the hunt. These creatures, themselves tainted by death, react violently to the true undead. They have an uncanny ability to sense the energy of death and will be aware of the presence of nearby undead, even if they cannot be seen. When confronted with a vampire, the Dhampir is seized by an incredible bloodlust; it requires an immense act of will for the Dhampir to keep from attacking or to pull away from the fight before one combatant is dead.

While not as driven by emotion as vampires, Dhampiri are still passionate creatures, capable of incredible fits of anger. They fall in love easily but can never have children of their own. The vampiric taint, though diluted by the human blood, is antithetical to life. It is possible for a Dhampir to become pregnant or to impregnate a human, but the embryo will invariably destroy itself long before the pregnancy can come to term, cell lines differentiating uncontrollably and collapsing into necrosis. Artificial methods of preserving the pregnancy are of no avail. The Dhampiri are tragic creatures, sentenced to a long life trapped between life and death, acutely aware of the living world that they can never share.

Upon death, Dhampiri go through the final stages of the vampiric transformation. It is not known what causes this transformation. A Dhampir who is certain he will soon die prefers to take his own life, or have another take it for him, in such a way as to keep him from undergoing the transformation. The concept of becoming one of the undead is entirely abhorrent to a Dhampir, and he will go to any lengths, even immolating himself when he suspects death is near, rather than risk natural death and the subsequent transformation.

No Dhampir will rise as an animate. It is speculated that the vampiric heritage prevents the other transformation from taking hold. Even if bitten, the infection will fail to take, and the wound will heal. A Dhampir will only be bitten by an animate in the course of a hunt; under ordinary circumstances, the animate does not appear to be able to perceive the Dhampir as prey and will walk by one of these creatures as though it were not there.

# Dhampir Rules

### Alien Grace

Dhampiri gain +1 on Charm – Intimidation and Charm – Seduction rolls.

### Blood Drinker

Though a Dhampir does not have to drink blood for sustenance, consuming human blood drastically accelerates the Dhampir's recovery from wounds and makes the Dhampir immensely, if temporarily, physically powerful.

Before feeding, the Dhampir must first secure his victim. A willing victim must be chatted up and perhaps plied with drink.

The Dhampir must grapple an unwilling victim before he can feed. Once an unwilling victim has been grappled, the Dhampir may spend an action to begin feeding. While grappling his victim, a Dhampir must succeed in an Unarmed Combat roll versus DR 11 to bite his victim.

When the Dhampir bites his victim — willing or not — he has he option of being gentle or rough. The victim of a gentle bite suffers a Flesh Wound. If the Dhampir is rough, his victim suffers a damage roll equal to the Dhampir's Vitality, adding 3 to the roll if the Dhampir bit the character in the throat. Subtract from this total the victim's Vitality and double the value of the armour covering the location bitten.

Once the Dhampir begins feeding, he may continue from round to round by forfeiting his turn each round until the victim dies, the Dhampir takes another action, the Dhampir is killed, or his victim breaks free from his grasp. Once the victim dies, the Dhampir may continue to drink his blood but will receive no benefit from it.

An unwilling victim suffers –1 Vitality each turn he is fed on. Outside of combat, the Dhampir can take his time when feeding on a willing victim, taking 1 Vitality every minute or so. If his victim is reduced to 0 Vitality, the victim falls unconscious and will die within an hour unless stabilized (see Stabilizing Wounds, Chapter 2, pages 109-110). If the Dhampir continues to feed, the victim dies upon reaching –1 Vitality. A victim who survives regains 1 Vitality point per week until fully recovered. The Dhampir cannot spread the vampiric infection, and a victim that dies to his hunger will not become a vampire. However, the corpse is certainly a candidate for spontaneous animation.

For each Vitality point ingested, the Dhampir may reduce an Incapacitating Wound to a Serious Wound, a Serious Wound to a Flesh Wound, or simply remove a Scratch or Flesh Wound. It takes ten minutes to reduce an Incapacitating Wound, five minutes to reduce a Serious Wound, and one minute to reduce a Flesh Wound or Scratch. An ingested Vitality point can also be spent to reduce the healing time of a Complication by one week. The Narrator chooses the order in which the Dhampir's wounds are healed.

The Dhampir gains +1 Vitality and Coordination for one hour after feeding.

### Half-lifer

The Dhampir is not dead but is not wholly living either. He must eat, sleep, and breathe like a mortal man, but he is tainted by the energies of the grave. A Dhampir ages at one-fifth the rate of mortal men. He is virtually immune to all known diseases, including the Plague. The Dhampir is not affected by London's smogs. Half-lifers cannot be detected by an animate's prey sense.

### Hatred of Vampires

Anytime the Dhampir is confronted by a vampire, he must make a Will roll (DR 14). If the roll fails, the Dhampir is overwhelmed with hatred and charges the vampire. While in this state, the Dhampir cannot parry or dodge. The Dhampir gains +2 on melee damage rolls versus vampires but suffers –4 on all ranged attack rolls until he has regained control over himself or the vampire is destroyed or flees.

The Dhampir cannot make another roll to regain control over himself unless a third party, such as another player character, intervenes. If another party intervenes, the Dhampir can make another Will roll (DR 14) to overcome his emotions. Even if the Dhampir maintains his temper or regains control over himself, he will have to make further Will rolls if the vampire insults him or takes any hostile action.

### Heightened Vision

Dhampiri can see much better in low light than mortal men. They never suffer ranged attack penalties for poor visibility due to low light situations. The Dhampir also gains +1 on Wit – Perception rolls involving eyesight.

### Immune to Vampiric Mind Control

The Dhampir is immune to vampiric mind control.

### Sense Undead

The Dhampir's strange connection to death allows him to sense the presence of undead, whether he can see them or not. When an undead creature is within a range equal to the Dhampir's Wit x 10', he will immediately sense the presence of the creature. If the Dhampir senses a creature, he will know instantly if it is a vampire, though he cannot discern between other undead types. After sensing the undead creature, the Dhampir must make a Wit roll (DR 16) to know the location of the creature. If the roll fails, the Dhampir can roll again at the beginning of his next turn before taking any actions. Once the Dhampir discovers the creature's location, he can track its movements while it remains within a range equal to the Dhampir's Wit x 10'.

If there are two or more undead creatures within range, the Dhampir will not be able to pinpoint the creatures' whereabouts, but will be able to determine their general locations.

Detecting a vampire is enough to trigger a Hatred of Vampires roll.

### Unnatural Passions

The Dhampiri are prone to exaggerated fits of emotion, especially rage. Anytime the Dhampir is subject to a strong

emotional response, he runs the risk of getting out of control. When the Dhampir is at risk of being overwhelmed by his emotions, he must make a Will roll (DR 11). If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the character explodes into an uncontrollable fit.

### Vampiric Transformation

When a Dhampir dies, he rises from the dead a vampire. When this happens, the Narrator rolls a d10. Regardless of whether or not the vampire responsible for his initial infection was a sentient vampire or not, the Dhampir is only sentient on a roll of 1.

### The Dhampir

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 3 (1-5) |
| **Coordination:** | 3 (1-5) |
| **Wit:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Intellect:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Will:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Charm:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Prowess:** | 5 (2-10) |
| **Actions:** | 2 (1-3) |

**Attributes:** Dhampiri's attributes can vary widely. The average rating in all attributes for a normal human is 2, but most Dhampiri are in excellent physical condition, so the stats above reflect an average Vitality and Coordination of 3.

Becoming a Dhampir does not alter a character's attributes.

**Skills:** A Dhampir develops skills normally. A Dhampir will usually have at least one Combat skill with a rank of 4 or 5.

**Features:** ***Corruption*** – Dhampiri are subject to Corruption like any other character. Most Dhampiri have between 1 – 5 points of Corruption spread between Desire and Drive Corruption. Half-lifers cannot develop Physical Corruption

**Attacks:** Fast and strong, Dhampiri are natural warriors. Many Dhampiri, especially those who survived the crucible of vampiric infection, devote what remains of their lives to the destruction of vampires. Although Dhampiri are not above using firearms, most prefer bladed melee weapons that can be used to decapitate their immortal enemies.

## The Noctuary

There are those who prey upon the insidious vampire as the vampire preys on men. These individuals believe vampires represent a far greater threat to the continuation of humanity than the animates prowling the streets. Some theorize a vast conspiracy in which legions of vampires and their supporters have risen to positions of authority within not only the aristocracy but also Her Majesty's government itself. Among those keeping the silent vigil in the night, the Noctuary represents both hope and legend.

The existence of the Noctuary has never been formally confirmed, but the legend of the organization is widespread among Undertakers and the various offices of urban defence. The Noctuary is rumoured to be a secretive paramilitary organization devoted to the destruction of all vampires. It is believed to be comprised exclusively of the victims of vampire atrocities. The Noctuary is said to be so effective in its activities that some have gone so far as to suggest the organization is directly supported by the government, perhaps receiving information directly from CID or the Home Office.

Noctuary agents are said to be either investigators or hunters. Investigators operate at all levels throughout the city, painstakingly researching and documenting the movements of known vampires. Some are field agents charged with surveillance and information gathering missions. Others are spies employed by larger organizations who report useful information back to the Noctuary. The members may be lawyers, health officials, or police sergeants. Anyone who has access to pertinent records is a potential agent of the Noctuary. The exhaustive records made by the investigators are housed in a hidden library that also contains a treasure trove of vampiric folk lore gathered from across Europe.

Once all information of value has been gleaned from observing a vampire, a strike force of hunters is dispatched to eliminate the subject of the investigation. The hunters operate in small groups of between three and five. They are notoriously well armed and brutally efficient. While Noctuary hunters prefer to avoid civilian casualties, sometimes accidents happen.

Those who believe in the Noctuary claim that it maintains its secrecy through intimidation. Those in the habit of asking too many questions receive a blunt warning suggesting the cost of information may be higher than the questioner wishes to pay. Those who persist simply disappear. The Noctuary never accepts requests

for membership. Instead, it seeks out potential members from among those who have been victimized by vampires. They have found effective means of forging hatred and fear into potent weapons to combat an enemy that never sleeps.

### Noctuary Membership, 5 point Quality

*Sworn to absolute secrecy, the character is a member of the notorious vampire hunter society, the Noctuary. The character must either be a Dhampiri or have personally suffered deeply as the result of a vampire attack. Perhaps a vampire killed his family or destroyed his life in some fashion. The player and Narrator should determine the character's background and membership status before the start of the game.*

*While the character is a member, he only knows a few members of the group. He may or may not have aided in vampire hunting. The character will have to prove himself as a valuable member of the group before greater trust is placed in him.*

*From his contact with the organization, the character can gain a great deal of information about the vampires of London. After proving himself to the organization through play, the character may be able to borrow sophisticated Noctuary weapons and equipment. However, the Noctuary expects to be able to call upon the character in times of need. He may be asked to shelter other members, gather information about vampires, meet with contacts, or go on search and destroy missions.*

*Should the character betray the Noctuary, they will respond in kind. If the character mentions his membership to others, the Noctuary will come calling to inform him of the termination of his membership. Should he reveal member identities or in any way jeopardize the organization, he will certainly be killed in reprisal.*

*The character can recommend new members to the Noctuary but cannot invite prospective members to join.*

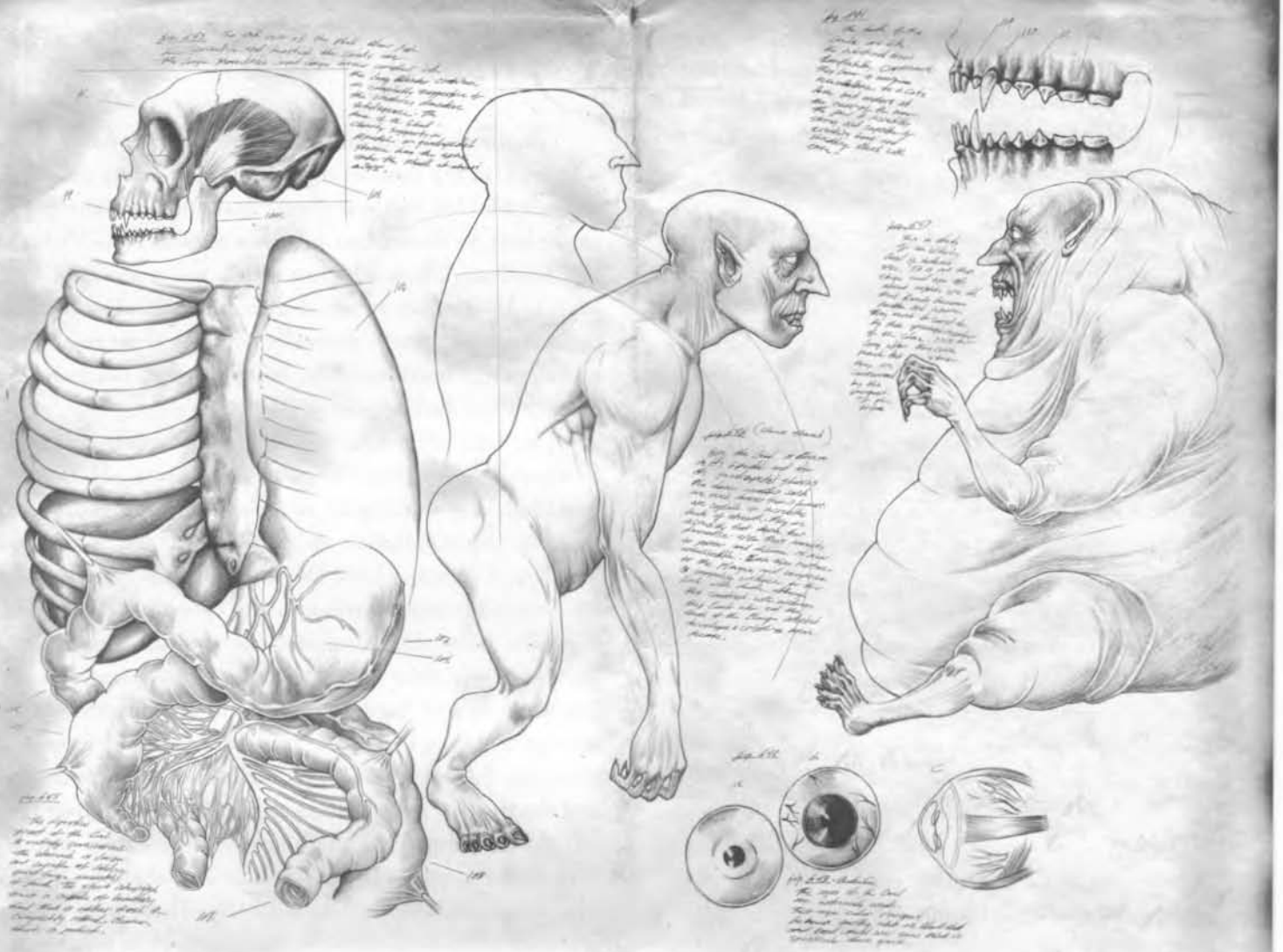
# Ghouls

Ghouls are a degenerate race, neither dead nor living, who feed on the flesh of men. Believed to have once been mortals who fed on the animate dead, these creatures generally keep to themselves in tribes outside Neo-Victorian fortifications. Those who live within the confines of a city keep to themselves to avoid attracting attention. Within the metropolis, ghouls generally purchase their meals from underground meat markets, black market butchers that cater to their dark appetites

The true origin of the ghouls is largely unknown. Science believes them to be a degenerate off-shoot of mankind that developed as a result of inbreeding, the warping characteristics of the Wastes, and a corrupting diet of human flesh. During the Plague Years, many encampments were overrun by the spreading Wastelands. With the cities still uninhabitable, the survivors in these encampments were forced to remain, desperately coaxing the withered land to yield food and hunting in the strange and growing wilds. The records tell of crops that could not be eaten, bitter plants that gave strange dreams, and the flesh of game turned cloying and poisonous. Most left the encampments, striking out desperately into the Wastes in the hope of finding some safe shelter. Of those who remained, the records tell little. These were desperate, insane times of rampant starvation when terrible acts were performed in the struggle to survive. The numbers of zombie and clay corpses found in these encampments by reclamation forces leave many survivors unaccounted for, and the large ghoul populations found in several of the cities in the Wastelands provides one possible explanation for where the missing survivors may have gone.

The first reports of ghouls date from the Reclamation Era. In 1970, a reclamation team sent to clear an overrun encampment reported encounters with a new, non-undead hostile. A small group of the creatures was initially sighted in the ruins and fled at the approach of the reclamation unit; the ensuing pursuit led the reclamation team directly into an ambush by a larger number of ghouls armed with salvaged edged and bludgeoning weapons. The reclamation team suffered several casualties but ultimately prevailed, killing most of the attacking creatures and capturing three for study.

The captive ghouls, initially fearful and aggressive, became thoroughly acclimated to the laboratory environment within days. The feeding habits of these creatures caused some concern initially; superficial examination of



the creatures' physiology clearly indicated a carnivorous diet, and a wide variety of ordinary meats were tried to no effect before the obligate diet of human flesh was discovered. Bribery with food rendered the creatures pliant, willing to accede to the gestured requests of the scientists.

The creatures were quickly discovered to be of high intelligence, comparable with normal to moderately retarded humans. The creatures conversed among themselves in a strange language; attempts to educate the creatures in English were surprisingly effective, and the creatures were communicating easily with scientists and staff within months. Later analysis of the ghoul language would reveal it to be a linguistic derivative of the English language, bastardized and distorted beyond easy recognition.

In the modern world, the ghoul is classified legally as a pest animal. These creatures do not have the rights of a human under British law. The ghoul presence in London is grudgingly tolerated, and ghouls living within the city do well to avoid calling too much attention to themselves.

# Pathology of the Ghoul

Internally and externally, ghouls bear a strong resemblance to humans. Ghouls are relatively short compared to man, seldom reaching five feet in height. The bodies of these creatures are stooped and the arms are long, allowing easy movement in a quadrupedal stance. They have sharp noses, pointed ears reminiscent of a canine, and jagged yellow teeth. The nails of their fingers and toes grow into sharp black talons. Most ghouls develop thick, black body hair over much of their bodies while a minority are utterly hairless. Ghouls dwelling in cities tend to shave to make themselves more appealing to the human population, and those who venture above ground take pains to disguise their race. Particularly in the poor districts, where mutation and malnutrition combine to alter the usual form of humanity, it is possible for a ghoul to pass for human.

The ghoul, though touched by death, is functionally living: it has a metabolism requiring food, water, and oxygen, and it is

capable of reproduction. The musculoskeletal system is basically human, though ghoul muscle has a greater fibre density than that of a human, giving the creature a fantastic strength despite is small size and spindly appearance. The arms of the ghoul are long and the legs short, and the stooped posture of the creature allows it to take a quadrupedal or bipedal stance. Locomotion resembles that of a gorilla or other large ape in the quadrupedal stance, though they may be taken for human when walking upright. The organs are as in a human, except for the digestive system: the stomach is large, allowing the creature to gorge itself at a feed, and the intestinal tract is much shorter than in a human, resembling that of an obligate carnivore.

Ghouls tend to have dull, milky eyes or red, blood-shot eyes. Their vision is extremely weak and becomes worse with age, and bright light is painful to their eyes, which are adapted to a more nocturnal or underground existence. It is not uncommon for ghouls who wish to move aboveground during the day to wear glasses, if they can be obtained. Spectacles are much prized among ghoul clans, especially those dwelling outside the metropolis, where such technology is extremely difficult to obtain.

Ghouls are stronger and faster than humans but tend to be less intelligent. While they do possess some reasoning capabilities, science and metaphysics are beyond the comprehension of most ghouls. Most have attention spans far too short to learn many technical skills. Those ghouls that do seek employment within the metropolis are likely to find manual labour well-suited to their innate abilities, and their outsider status predisposes these creatures well for lives in the criminal world.

Ghouls have both keen hearing and a powerful sense of smell, making up for the weaknesses in their eyesight. It is said that a ghoul's sense of smell is so keen that they may actually be able to sniff out spirits. Whether or not this peculiar ability is tied to their powerful noses, ghouls always seem to know when spirits are active within their locality. Parapsychologists attribute this strange talent to the ghoul's close connection to death rather than to a supermundane olfactory sense capable of piercing the threshold between the living and the dead.

The ghoul reproduces at a fantastic rate. Reproduction is sexual, with female ghouls capable of producing two litters of two to ten "pups" per year. Mating may occur at any time, though fertilization is possible only during the two annual reproductive periods. Ovulation is not concealed as in humans; females experience a distinct "heat" phase during the period of fertility. Normal ovulation involves the release of a dozen or more ova, with intrauterine cannibalism accounting for the discrepancy. The female has two teats and will normally raise only two or three pups to weaning age; the remainder will be consumed during infancy by their mother or siblings. Weaning occurs at four months of age.

Ghoul pups grow rapidly, reaching adult size in five years, though they are not capable of breeding until approximately age twelve. It is not uncommon for the largest member of a litter to consume smaller siblings in the first year if sufficient food is not available from other sources. Under conditions of plenty, ghouls are capable of extending the size of their communities with astonishing speed, though ghouls dwelling in cities prefer to keep their numbers low to avoid detection. This "family planning" is accomplished by eating unnecessary young shortly after parturition. Traditionally this is the mother's right, but offerings of young may be made to the elders of the tribe on ceremonial occasions. This is one of the only forms of intertribal cannibalism which is acceptable within ghoul society

Ghouls are immune to all known diseases, including vampirism and the Plague. A ghoul is capable of eating meat of extremely poor quality, including rotted or poisoned, without suffering any ill effects. There is no natural poison that can kill a ghoul and no meat so badly fouled that a ghoul cannot consume it. Their plague immunity is so complete that when a ghoul encounters an animate, the animate will pass it by as though it were invisible. Furthermore, no vampire or animate will feed on a ghoul, even if starved. Not even London's notorious smogs harm ghouls, and they are known to wander the city unprotected.

Ghouls require a diet entirely of human, or nearly human, meat, preferably fresh. Ghouls are capable of using the flesh of other ghouls for sustenance, though hunting within a tribe is expressly forbidden. Ghouls can make use of human corpses that have been dead for some time, so long as the flesh has not completely rotted away. Most, however, significantly prefer the taste of fresh meat and will go to great lengths to obtain it. Even the flesh of an embalmed or poisoned corpse can be consumed without significant negative effects, though most ghouls find the taste objectionable. Ghouls generally prefer their meat raw, but in lean times, ghouls will prepare "stews" using meat, bone, and sinew, rendering the tough parts of the body down into a digestible form.

The breath of all ghouls is rank with decay, especially that of those who have developed the disgusting habit of devouring the flesh of animates. Avoided by all sane creatures, especially other ghouls, these mad creatures are easily detectable by the foul odour pouring from their bodies like a tide of corruption. These creatures develop a debilitating disease of the brain, a wasting affliction of the nervous system wherein nervous function decays until the ghoul loses all control of its body. The loss of physical function is preceded by increasingly erratic behaviour, hallucinations, and finally outright mental dissociation and schizophrenia. The ghouls refer to the affliction as the Twitch, and members of ghoul society that exhibit signs of the disease are shunned.

The physiology of the ghoul changes with age. While young, ghouls are very agile, lithe creatures adept at hunting both within and outside the city. These little creatures are highly active, requiring little sleep, though most prefer to rest underground during the day both to elude detection and to avoid the light that pains their sensitive eyes. With age, ghouls become bloated and slow, sinking into a kind of primal mania in which they live to feed. These ghouls tend to indulge in gluttony when possible and grow to amazing proportions. Most ghouls of extreme age are morbidly obese anatomical blasphemies, barely able to contain their hideous appetites. These creatures sleep almost constantly, waking only to rave incoherently and demand to be fed. The oldest, eighty years old or more, are unable to move at all unassisted. Too large to care for themselves, they rely on their children to hunt for them.

One of the most disconcerting aspects of a ghoul's temperament is the tendency to go into hysterical fits of laughter when injured. These fits seem to be accompanied by a powerful surge of adrenaline. This aspect of the ghoul's behaviour makes it a fearsome enemy, powerful in combat when damaged or provoked.

## Ghoul Society

Despite the fact that ghouls do not seem to senesce and theoretically will not die of old age, in their natural environment, ghouls suffer incredibly high mortality rates. Commonly, they will starve in the wild or suffer the predations of their own kind. In lean times, ghoul tribes are known to launch brutal raids against rival tribes, carrying off as many of their enemies as possible for the purpose of feasting upon their flesh. The ghouls dwelling in the Wastes exist in a state of constant war as tribes compete for limited resources and prime hunting grounds.

Ghouls are very clannish and live in tight-knit tribal communities made up of smaller family units. Whether a ghoul lives in the city or in the Wastelands, his tribe is the centre of his social life. A ghoul chooses his mate from among his tribe. These creatures may mate for multiple seasons, but matings lasting over multiple years are rare. Ghouls think nothing of inbreeding, even with the closest familial relations. This inbreeding seems to have little negative impact on the genetic make-up of the tribe; there is very likely nothing inbreeding can do that has not already been done to the ghouls as a whole.

Some ghouls forsake the family structure completely, preferring a solitary life. These hermits invariably succumb to lunacy and talk to themselves continually. Some are known to conversationally speak to corpses. These ghouls may associate with haunting entities, attempting to engage them in conversation, whether or not the spirits are capable of perceiving the ghoul.

Tribal councils act as local governments, making laws and maintaining order. Within their tribes, ghouls live by a strict code of Lex Talionis. Under Talion Law, every wrong committed by a member of the tribe will be visited back upon him: an eye for an eye. The eldest ghouls determine if a wrong has been committed and the extent of the punishment. They then select members of the tribe to carry out their sentence. The victim is never allowed personal vengeance, thereby preventing perpetual cycles of retribution and ensuring that justice is done. Over time, the Metropolitan Police have learned that ghouls are quite capable of maintaining order among their own kind. Only under the most severe circumstances will the police get involved with internal tribal matters, especially those that occur in the Underground.

Among the ghouls dwelling within the metropolis, the greatest crime a ghoul can commit is to murder a human or a member of his own tribe. Of course, members of other tribes are not protected by this common law, and humans who trespass on ghoul territories in the Underground are considered to be the property of the tribe whose territory they have entered. Despite this prohibition, rogue ghouls, who are generally very young, occasionally take to the streets when hungry to hunt down unwitting humans and take their meal. When discovered, these renegades suffer summary execution.

The eldest members of the tribe who have not yet succumbed to madness govern all tribal affairs, holding court and presiding over the ceremonies of ghoul society. Ghouls are known to have a number of feast days in which family members indulge for up to a week at a sitting. Among the elders of some tribes are the haruspexi, ghouls touched with the oracular ability to see the future in the organs of men. Practicing a craft termed anthropomancy by human scholars, it is not uncommon for those captured by the ghoul tribes of the Wastes to be ritually slaughtered for the purposes of divining the future before their remains are consumed. A powerful haruspex is said to be able to discern his own imminent future in the faces of the dead.

The elders of the tribe who have grown too old to be of use in tribal affairs are revered and cared for by the younger, active ghouls. The tribe takes care of the elders' every need, every member performing some task to see to the well-being of their revered elders. The demands of these ancient ghouls are great; they consume vast quantities of flesh when they wake, growing in their slumber to immense size. On special ceremonial days, the elders are provided with gluttonous feasts well-furnished with every delicacy. On these occasions, the elders are ritually fed a portion of the surplus young of that season in the belief that this consumption will allow the tribe to keep the souls of the young and bear them again in a season of greater abundance. Some time past their hundredth year, these vast creatures will lose the ability to move entirely, becoming barely able even to gnaw the flesh presented to them as tribute. When this stage is reached, the

elder is ritually devoured by the immature members of the tribe. The ghouls believe that this ceremony allows the tribe to reclaim the elder's wisdom and the many souls he has devoured for the generations not yet born.

As ghouls age, their tastes become more rarified and they come to prefer "seasoned meat." Some of these connoisseurs prefer the unspoiled taste of children or the less-polluted flesh of the wealthy. Though these meats are harder to come by, the reverence afforded to the elder ghouls and the magnitude of their appetites demand their needs be met. Often the potential rewards will be great enough to lure some brave and unfortunate few into supplying the market. While some have a sweet tooth for peaceful deaths, others tend toward the tang of fear or pain; some seek out vampires or human serial killers, preferring the taste of their violated victims. Often these foul creatures form unwholesome partnerships with the information men and hired killers of organized crime.

By and large, these partnerships or any other associations between the ghouls and the men of the cities are rare and conducted with the greatest of care. City dwellers prefer to keep a low profile to avoid drawing unwanted attention. Within the cities, the ghouls are blamed for all manner of atrocities, from kidnapping children and dogs to robbing plague carts. Occasionally ,city-dwelling ghouls become the victims of riots and mob action. To avoid such unpleasantness, the ghouls of London prefer to purchase their meals from underground meat markets instead of scavenging their meals like their country cousins or hunting prey in the streets. These black market butcher shops cater to the ghouls' specific needs. Though these chop shops are illegal, they are kept in business by ghouls and amateur anatomists. Less scrupulous shop owners can occasionally be convinced to procure even the "specialty goods" desired by the elders of the tribe.

Ghouls are blessed with nimble fingers and a high level of natural dexterity. Some use this natural aptitude in plying a craft, though there are few with the patience for this type of undertaking. A few with the mental capacity to learn the trade have proven to be excellent pickpockets and burglars, though stealing from those above is a crime among most ghoul tribes. It is not that these scavengers value the property rights of others; ghoul tribes active within the city prefer to remain invisible, and any action that could bring official attention to the activities of the tribe is strongly discouraged.

Though most ghouls tend to focus more on scavenging their next meal and fending off their own kind, there are those few who are able to consider matters of metaphysics and their place in the universe. Though the average ghoul is hardly a deep thinker, even the most base ghoul understands that they are not alone in the universe; after all, they can sense spirits all around them. Interestingly enough, there is no evidence that the death of a ghoul is capable of spawning a lingering spirit.

There is a peculiar subset of ghouls living beneath the metropolis, a group of Catholic converts. Following the appearance of a lone pilgrim priest in the sewers sometime after the Reclamation, a number of ghoul tribes adopted this religion as their own. The priest, thought mad by his peers, reasoned that before succumbing to the withering influences of the Wastes, ghouls were once god-fearing men and believed they could be again. Though the unnamed priest disappeared in the Underworld soon after his ministry began, his legacy lives on in the hearts and minds of hundreds of ghouls.

There is something in the concept of transubstantiation that is very appealing to the brutally pragmatic ghoul mind. Though they may have little to eat, these ghouls are able to trick their minds and bodies into believing themselves fed on the flesh of their Lord. In the absence of their saintly patron, ghouls have had to develop their own rituals and masses that serve their interests and living conditions. To outsiders, ghoulish attempts at religion may seem heretical, if not blasphemous in the extreme, but it does effectively serve to bring together normally contentious rival tribes. Catholic tribes often put aside their differences to join together for holidays or to war upon heathen tribes.

# Ghoul Rules

## Aging

Though ghouls are effectively immortal, they do undergo physical changes throughout their lives. As the years pass, ghouls grow larger and more rotund, losing mobility as they increase in size. Eventually ghouls become so morbidly obese that they are incapable of independent movement. As a ghoul ages, he also suffers senility and degenerative insanity.

Aging has no effect on a ghoul until he has lived for 30 + 3d10 years. After this time passes, the ghoul suffers either –1 Coordination, Wit, Intellect, or Charm. Thereafter, the ghoul suffers a subsequent reduction to his attributes or suffers a deterioration of his mental stability every 20 years. The effects of aging are at the Narrator's discretion.

A ghoul's Coordination cannot be reduced below 0. If the ghoul's Coordination is reduced to 0, it loses the ability to move independently, though the ghoul's prestigious mass may be moved with the combined effort of several younger ghouls of the tribe. A ghoul's Wit, Intellect, and Charm cannot be reduced below 1.

If a ghoul's mental stability degenerates, he either gains a new acute Mental Disorder or one of his acute disorders becomes chronic (see Mental Disorders, Chapter 3, pages 189 – 194).

After a hundred years, a ghoul's Vitality increases by up to +2 as it puts on mass. Truly ancient ghouls may grow even stronger.

### Flesh Eater

Ghouls must eat human or ghoul flesh for sustenance. Though they may add the odd vegetable to their cuisine for seasoning, they must eat the meat of men to survive. Though expressly forbidden by their laws, ghouls sometimes turn to cannibalism within the tribe during times of starvation.

Feeding does not enhance a ghoul's attributes in the same fashion as drinking blood temporarily increases a vampire's attributes. All a ghoul gets is a full tummy.

### Half-lifer

Ghouls are not dead but are not wholly living either. A ghoul must eat, sleep, and breathe like a human, but the creature is tainted by his unnatural hungers. Ghouls are believed to be completely immortal. Though they continue to age throughout their long lives, no ghoul has been known to die of old age in their nearly two hundred years of existence. Ghouls are immune to all known diseases, including the Plague. Ghouls suffer no ill affects from London's smogs. Half-lifers never develop Physical Corruption. Half-lifers cannot be detected by an animate's prey sense.

### Heightened Hearing and Smell

Ghouls have a superior sense of hearing and smell. Ghouls gain +1 on Wit – Perception rolls involving hearing and smell.

### Pain Fit

Anytime the ghoul is wounded, he must make a Will roll (DR 16). If the ghoul succeeds, he keeps control over himself. If the roll fails, the ghoul goes berserk and attacks the source of his pain. If the subject of the ghoul's pain was an inanimate object, he will direct his energies toward destroying the object. If anyone interferes with the ghoul during this fit, he will immediately turn on that creature as well. While berserk, the ghoul gains +2 on all melee attack and damage rolls but suffers –4 on ranged attack rolls until he has regained control over himself or the subject of his fit is destroyed or flees.

The ghoul cannot make another roll to regain control over himself unless a third party intervenes by attempting to restrain the ghoul. In these circumstances, the ghoul can make another Will roll (DR 16) to overcome his emotions.

### Smell Spirits

As creatures heavily tainted by death, ghouls have evolved the strange and unique ability to "smell" spirits. The ghoul can automatically detect a spirit within the ghoul's Wit x 10'. The closer he gets to the space occupied by a manifesting spirit, the stronger the smell becomes. Particularly malignant spirits will agitate the ghoul's nose, causing him to sneeze uncontrollably.

### Twitch

Ghouls are subject to a terrible disease caused by the consumption of the flesh of animates. After eating an animate's flesh, a ghoul must make a Vitality roll (DR 16). If the roll succeeds, the ghoul spends a day violently ill but does not contract the disease. If the roll fails, the ghoul contracts the Twitch, a debilitating affliction of the nervous system.

Within days of contracting the illness, the ghoul's breath and sweat become rank with decay, an odour other ghouls can automatically identify. The afflicted ghoul will be driven from his tribe if not killed outright. Each month thereafter the ghoul must make a Vitality roll (DR 16). If the roll succeeds, the ghoul's condition does not change. If the roll fails, the ghoul loses one point from one of its attributes. If the ghoul's Vitality is reduced to 0, he enters a coma and soon dies.

Throughout his illness, the afflicted ghoul's behaviour becomes increasingly erratic. He begins to suffer hallucinations and ultimately descends into mental dissociation and schizophrenia.

### Weak Eyesight

Ghouls have weak eyesight that worsens quickly at a short distance. Though best described as nearsighted, not even nearby objects are seen clearly. As a result, ranged attack modifiers suffered by a ghoul are doubled. Ghouls also suffer a –2 penalty on sight based Wit – Perception rolls, which may be reduced to –1 with the use of spectacles.

## The Ghoul

### Young Ghoul

The following stats represent a young ghoul who has not yet begun to suffer the effects of aging.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 3 (2-6) |
| **Coordination:** | 3 (2-6) |
| **Wit:** | 2 (1-4) |
| **Intellect:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Will:** | 2 (1-4) |
| **Charm:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Prowess:** | 5 (3-10) |
| **Actions:** | 2 (1-3) |

**Attributes:** Ghouls tend to be very quick and quite strong for their size.

**Skills:** Ghouls develop skills throughout their lives. Most ghouls possess some Combat and Criminal skills. Ghouls virtually never learn Academic skills, and few are even literate.

**Features:** ***Corruption*** – Ghouls are subject to Corruption like any other character. Most ghouls have between 1 – 5 points of Corruption spread between Desire and Drive Corruption. However, half-lifers cannot develop Physical Corruption.

**Attacks:** Ghouls prefer to fight with weapons. Although they have poor eyesight, ghouls find great novelty in firearms, which have become a sign of wealth among tribe members. Ghouls tend to fight in great numbers, depending on their entire tribe to come to their defence, and ambushes in the Underworld are notoriously deadly. Ghouls are also prone to setting traps near their territories. Often a devastating trap precedes a ghoul assault.

**Notes:** Though ghouls can provide comic relief during play, they are also quite dangerous in their own right. First and foremost, ghouls are extremely adaptable survivors. Anyone who underestimates a ghoul will live to regret it – but only if he is very lucky.

### Elder Ghoul

The statistics below represent a ghoul that has begun to suffer the ravages of years gone by. These ghouls are generally eighty or more years old. Virtually all elder ghouls within the confines of the metropolis moved to the city as young ghouls during the Reclamation.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 5 (3-8) |
| **Coordination:** | 1 (0-4) |
| **Wit:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Intellect:** | 1 (1-2) |
| **Will:** | 2 (1-4) |
| **Charm:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Prowess:** | 2 (1-7) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-2) |

**Attributes:** As the ghoul ages, it grows morbidly obese. Its Vitality increases, but its Coordination, Wit, Intellect, and Charm decrease.

**Skills:** Elder ghouls have had years to develop skills. An elder ghoul generally has between 40 – 80 skill points worth of skills. See Starting Skills, Chapter 3, page 135.

**Features:** ***Corruption*** – Ghouls are subject to Corruption like any other character. Most elder ghouls have between 4-8 points of Corruption spread between Desire and Drive Corruption. However, half-lifers cannot develop Physical Corruption.

***Madness*** – Ghouls go mad over their long lives. An elder ghoul will have one or more chronic Mental Disorders and several acute Mental Disorders (see Mental Disorder, Chapter 3, pages 189 – 194).

**Attacks:** Elder ghouls are devolved brutes much more likely to fight unarmed than their younger descendents. Though these creatures have grown to terrible proportions and have become immensely strong, they are also painfully slow and clumsy creatures.

**Notes:** Elder ghouls are never encountered outside a tribe's central holdings. These creatures are revered elders of the tribe. They are attended to by dozens of younger ghouls who are willing to lay down their lives for their elders.

# Chapter Six - Miracles of Science

*"If you knew, if you could even dream of what may be done, of what one or two men have done in this quiet world of ours, your very soul would shudder and faint within you. What you have heard from me has been but the merest husk and outer covering of true science – that science that means death, and that which is more awful than death, to those who gain it."*
*— Arthur Machen, "The Inmost Light," 1894*

## The Tesla Legacy

*"Modern science says: The sun is the past, the earth is the present, the moon is the future. From an incandescent mass we have originated, and into a frozen mass we shall turn. Merciless is the law of nature, and rapidly and irresistibly we are drawn to our doom."*
*—Nikola Tesla, "The Problem of Increasing Human Energy," 1900*

The story of the Neo-Victorian world is the story of Nikola Tesla's legacy. The Victorian Age saw the emergence of electricity from its scientific infancy. The nineteenth century saw tremendous innovations in electrical power, from Faraday's description of electromagnetic induction to the development of a practical method for the transmission of alternating current (AC) power. The innovations of this time furthered the emergence of electricity as a household tool. In 1882, the first electrical power distribution system was switched on in New York, providing electrical energy to fifty-nine customers in Manhattan. The 1893 World's Fair, where Tesla and Westinghouse provided a powerful display of alternating current's potential by illuminating the entire Fair, introduced the world at large to the possibilities of electric power. By 1900, electricity was rapidly becoming a fact of modern life.

The needs of the Reclamation drove the emergence of the Tesla networks in Britain and abroad. On both sides of the Atlantic, civilizations struggling to drive back the hordes of animate dead from their cities made use of the awesome power of the radiant energy networks – energy that could not be disrupted by cut lines, that obviated the need for heavy battery systems in the field, and that could be used to supply power to units of the Reclamation without the prior need to establish an infrastructure in infested areas.

The influence of the inventor himself was instrumental in refining the networks into a form that could reliably power nations. Nikola Tesla, living in New York during the outbreak of the Plague, survived in a military encampment until the early years of the American Reclamation, when he was moved to Boston to lead the construction of the radiant energy network. When communication was reestablished with the Old World, the continued innovations of Nikola Tesla were communicated to Britain, allowing the rapid establishment of modern Tesla networks on both sides of the Atlantic. Nikola Tesla died of illness in the partially reclaimed New York City in 1929 while leading efforts to construct that city's radiant energy network. His body did not reanimate, and he was given a state funeral on Long Island.

The age of steam power and gas lamps had passed, giving way to the new age of the spark and the electrode. The reclamation of nations and the design of the walled cities rely on the radiant energy transmission made possible by Tesla's innovations. There is no single scientist who has made a greater mark on the Neo-Victorian world.

## Alchemists and Physicians

**From the notes of Dr. Phinneas Hartley, formerly of Oxford Medical, found in the aftermath of the fire at Whitley Manor of London and remitted to Oxford Medical for study.**

*... we are told in the texts of the ancients that the preparation of the Stone by which the Elixir, that perfect medicine, may be obtained, does require the extraction of the seed of gold from the substance itself. Moreover, we are told that the seed may not be extracted through merely mechanical means but that the isolation of the seed may be accomplished by some exposure of the imperfect substance to the philosophic Mercury of the sages. The description is, of course, metaphoric, couched in riddle to bewilder the idle dabbler and the simple of mind. Yet the meaning is clear. The essential force of the Elixir, the vital force which will empower the necessary transformation, must be distilled from an impure or lesser essence. Once this much is accomplished, the solidifying of the essence – the creation of the Stone and thereby the transformative elixir – must be comparatively simple, yet without* the true *vital force, all other efforts are as naught.*

*Therefore it must be determined from what substance the "seed" of our imperfect yet vital "gold" may be sought. Various plant and animal sources have been rejected after some experimentation as being of insufficient potency, and the source was thereby determined to be among the properties of Man. The life-giving fluids of the body – the blood, the liquids of the brain and spinal tissue, and the generative fluid – were additionally rejected as being of insufficient potency to achieve the ultimate goal, though none are without merit or application. These simple, timid analyses were ultimately abandoned as the search for the ultimate generative power of Man's essence proved too elusive for the methodologies acceptable to the limited science of our age.*

*More recently, I have obtained results somewhat more promising. I have succeeded in developing a compound mercurial in nature and highly refined, which is capable of producing the most interesting reactions in a human crucible. Various refinements of the serum have been tested over the past several months, and I believe I am finally on the verge of success. The serum itself is of a quicksilver type, viscid and reactive, warm to the touch, possessing metallic properties though not itself of a metallic extraction. Initial extraction was based on principles of the...*

[Here several pages are missing, apparently torn away from the binding.]

*...series of experiments proceeds as follows. A human subject, female, with foetus in utero, is secured and conveyed to the laboratories. The female is fasted two days to ensure purity of the blood; water is permitted ad libitum. The subject is then fastened to the dissection-board and the compound administered by injection directly into the womb. Over the next several minutes, the reaction proceeds within this natural crucible, the raw material within the foetus becoming transformed by the serum into an essence which may be collected by the channels in the table and distilled. Care is taken to collect the phases of the liquid corresponding to changes in the core temperature of the crucible. The individual phases are distilled and mixed variously for direct injection into the heart and brain of fresh cadavers obtained for the purpose. In review of the data, I have achieved some successes thus far with injections directly into the hindbrain of the cadaver. The brain being the centre for human impetus and the foremost concentration of life-energy according to my theories, these results are intuitive.*

*Success to date, however, has been limited. The strongest of the cadaver responses has consisted of limited muscle contractions in the limbs and incoherent attempts at vocalization. Tonight, I will make alterations to the procedure in the hopes of amplifying the response. It is my belief that the potency of the predistillate obtained by the standard methodology is insufficient for our purposes and that the most active components of the vital material are not extracted at the relatively low temperatures thus far achieved. A toxin of high potency but slow action will be introduced to the crucible via intravenous injection prior to the initiation of the reaction. This toxin, once introduced to the metabolism, will raise the core temperature considerably. Death rarely occurs sooner than six hours after exposure, far longer than the expected necessary duration of the reaction. Once an adequate rise in core temperature is observed, the reagent will be introduced to the crucible via the usual method. The accesses to the crucible will be mechanically sealed to prevent escape of vital fluids during the reaction. Samples will be extracted directly through the walls of the abdomen.*

*7:40 PM Subject secured and toxin administered. No immediate effect. Core temperature 36.5 degrees.*

*8:21 PM Core temperature at 37.9 degrees. Reagent administered. Immediate temperature jump – 39 degrees observed.*

*8:36 PM First sample taken. Colour and luminosity promising – brilliant red, nearly translucent and of great purity. Condition of the crucible worse than expected.*

*8:58 PM Core temperature 40.5 degrees. Second sample taken.*

*9:37 PM Core temperature stable, but condition of the crucible is markedly worse. Third sample taken. I fear the reaction may be terminated sooner than expected.*

*10:02 PM Core temperature 41.5 degrees. Extraordinary heat – very exciting, but cannot be sustained long. Fourth sample taken – deep red, complex, traces of metallics.*

*10:17 PM Core temperature 41.9 degrees. Fifth sample taken – complex silvered red, with a distinct metallic lustre heretofore unobserved.*

*10:45 PM Core temperature stable. Sixth sample taken – thoroughly metallic in hue, iridescing silver and gold within the red.*

*10:50 PM Sudden slide downward in temperature – 38.1 degrees. Seventh sample is grey-red, lustreless, indicative of cellular death – useless.*

*11:13 PM Heartbeat and respiration have ceased, but crucible remains animated. Seemingly under-aggressive for a new animate. May be useful for study. Have instructed assistant to secure the new animate and remove the foetal remains for further study.*

*3:50 AM Have finished distillation of sample six. Final serum is brilliantly lustrous, gold-red, and nearly luminescent. Injecting serum into cadaver hindbrain now.*

*3:51 AM Nearly immediate response to serum. Large-scale muscle movements, apparently coordinated, with distinct vocalization. Heartbeat not restored, however. Second dosage applied to cardiac tissue directly.*

*3:52 AM Have detected signs of heartbeat! Moving to phase three of trial – success at last!*

*4:15 AM Subject is an elderly male of the working class, chronological age unknown, physical or apparent age approximately sixty-five. Unconsciousness is achieved by administration of ether. Standard dose of serum administered directly into the first chamber of the heart for rapid systemic distribution.*

*4:20 AM Extraordinary. Subject has decreased at least twenty years in apparent age and has regained consciousness. The transformation appears to be quite painful, but I believe the worst has passed. Subject retains muscular reflex responses, though heartbeat and respiration are depressed and temperature is slightly low. Alertness appears to be returning quickly. Releasing restraints now for further examinations of the subject.*

[Writing stops and resumes several pages later. Handwriting changes drastically here.]

*6:27 AM What have I done… my God, what have I done? Too eager – too determined to see the fruits of my labour emerge, too willing to accept any sign of success – this is my failure and my doom.*

*The creature is loose. I hear it against the doors of the lab – well enough secured for now. The thing that was my assistant wanders the halls, seeking an exit under the guidance of that monstrosity. She is with him, guiding him. And that creature, that tiny awful creature, and that sound – I will be glad to die if death will let me forget that unspeakable sound…*

*Success I have had, yes, but what faint success, what terrible faint success, and at what terrible price… the old man, restored to youth, yes, and more – what hideous transformation! He will not die – no, he will not die!*

*I am infected. The changes begin – I have not much time. The equipment in the lab will suffice to ignite the fire, I can only hope, hot and fast enough to cleanse from the earth the evil that I have done. These notes perish with me – I leave this partial chronicle as a warning. Do not follow!*

In the wake of the Plague, the philosophies of science were at a loss for ways to grasp the terrible transformations within the world and were forced to re-invent themselves on a fundamental level. The bizarre manifestations of the new world – zombies, vampires, monsters of myth and nightmare – defied the understanding of modern science and rationality. In the search for a context in which the transformation of the world could be understood, the scientific minds of the time seized upon the metaphoric science and philosophy of alchemy.

Medical technology grew at a fantastic rate in the early days of the Plague. Science was gripped by questions of life, death, and resurrection. A multitude of brilliant minds grappled with these problems, seeking a treatment or a serum to render man invulnerable to the effects of the Plague, incorruptible and immune to the contagions of the world.

Anti-agapic technology, the science of life extension, developed rapidly as scientists searched for means by which the human body could be rendered pure, perpetual, and immortal. The human lifespan was extended again and again by means of treatments progressively more rarified and difficult to produce. These technologies were limited by difficulty and expense to those who possessed the influence and the wealth to obtain them. Pharmacology, in a perpetual search for the legendary medicine soma, succeeded in isolating a wide range of plant essences possessing medicinal value and in synthesizing an array of fantastic drugs unknown to the medical science of the old world. Promethean alchemical and galvanic experimentation, beyond the dreams of the scientists of the world before, succeeded in restoring some semblance of life to the body from which life had departed.

In this atmosphere of brilliant but wild speculation, fuelled by the superstitions of the new horror-infested world and the fervent nostalgia for the brighter days of the past, the principles of the alchemists of old came to the fore. The principle of essential purity, embodied by the Philosopher's Stone, found once again an honoured place in scientific thought. Many came to see the Stone and its child the Elixir Vitae as panaceas for the age, capable of restoring the lost principles of life and purity to a corrupted world. In the writings of the ancients, the universe was conceived of as possessing a single aetheric substance in which matter and spirit were intermingled and inseparable. The various expressions of matter, from metals to living things and even humankind itself, were imbalanced compositions created from this base, possessing aspects of the whole, but out of balance and lacking in purity.

Within this framework, gold was the most perfect of the metals. The substance is beautiful and brilliant, possessed of

a lustre that the tarnish of age does not diminish, as well as being fusible and malleable but resistant to fire. If gold could be rid of the inevitable combustible sulphurs and refined into a form entirely of "philosophical sulphur" and "philosophical mercury," the substance would be perfected, generating the Philosopher's Stone, itself a type of gold, but more pure and perfect than any naturally occurring metal. Through the action of man's art and science, matter itself was to be perfected, allowing the further and more incredible transformations of matter through the power of the Stone. An extremely small quantity of the pure substance was believed to be sufficient to initiate the transformation of even the lowest metals into purest gold.

Moreover, the Stone would have the power to alter and perfect the material form of man. Incredible powers of metamorphosis and cure were attributed to the Elixir Vitae, a medicine derived from the Stone. Under the alchemical paradigm there existed three varieties of medicines: the least of these brings about a temporary change and the second allows for changes that are permanent but incomplete. The primary medicine, capable of bringing about a permanent and total transformation of the physical form, removing all corruption and ensuring that disease and decay would never again take hold in that form, is the Elixir itself.

The alchemical theory of the natures of matter – mercury, sulphur, and salt – was frequently articulated in terms of Aristotle's theory of the elements:

*"The three Principles of things are produced out of the four elements in the following manner: Nature ... ordained from the very beginning that the four elements should incessantly act on one another so, in obedience to her behest, fire began to act on air, and produced Sulphur; air acted on water, and produced Mercury; water, by its action on the earth, produced Salt. Earth, alone, having nothing to act upon, did not produce anything, but became the nurse, or womb, of these three Principles."*

— *Sendivogius,* The New Chemical Light, *1605*

The earth was envisioned as the embodiment of the vital principle, the womb of matter, possessed of the quickening power that drove the development of the metals and the genesis of life. Without this vital principle, the earth would be inert matter, incapable of providing nourishment or inspiring life.

Some scientists of the modern alchemical schools theorize that this is precisely what has occurred. They see the reanimation of the dead as an indicator of the depleted power of the earth; the vital principle of the earth, the generative power that once accepted the remains of the departed and made new life from that decay, is believed to have diminished to the point where it cannot complete its claim on the bodies of the dead. These bodies, responding to the natural call to generate new life but unable to do so within the proper matrix, instead reanimate and walk the earth in search of the vital principle they crave. Lacking a wholesome and natural source for this vitality, the animate seeks to take into itself the power of life in a familiar, available form – the living flesh of men.

From this "vitalist" school come the practitioners of anti-agapic medicine. These sciences aim to reinfuse the vital principle into bodies when they have been depleted by the depredations of time, restoring the body to the semblance of youth. The technical roots of the science lie in the early research into the "half-life" state observed in the ghoul and the thrope, and even in these enlightened times, theorists and engineers of the half-life condition may be found on the fringes of vitalism.

Other scientists believe that incidences of reanimation are associated with an imbalance of elements, an excess of contaminating sulphur in a body insufficiently supplied with the mercuric and fixative principles. This theory indicates that the process of reanimation may be reversible if the imbalance of the elements can be corrected. If the surplus of contaminating sulphur can be alchemically purged from the reanimated body, the animate can be reduced to a harmless inanimate or "clay" corpse. Significant progress has been made in this direction in recent years. If the contaminating sulphur can be purged and the pure philosophical mercury restored, it is hypothesized that the animate corpse can be restored to full, living humanity. This last hypothesis is so far unconfirmed despite many decades of dedicated experimentation in humanity restoration. These experiments have, however, succeeded in producing a wide variety of nonliving monstrosities, though none precisely resemble the naturally occurring animated dead. Most of the scientific establishment regards continuing effort in this vein as an exercise in hopeless optimism.

In the modern world, the alchemical terminologies are largely recognized and discussed as metaphors or descriptive explanations of complex phenomena. Even so, the metaphors are powerful, and some believe wholly in the legendary power of the Elixir and its incredible transformative capability. These scientists theorize that the creation of a single example of the purified form of man would suffice to begin the transformation of the world to an uncorrupted and incorruptible state, undoing all the horrors of the age. The concept is met with some derision in serious scientific circles, but it is not without adherents, and many young

scientists and physicians make starts in this direction before conceding to less lofty goals.

Countless atrocities have been committed in this alchemical search for human perfection, sacrifices made in the name of science toward a hoped-for ultimate good. The use of human subjects is necessary, as the true Elixir must be demonstrated to have efficacy on a human body. While many scientists ultimately choose to test the finest in a series of distillations on themselves, early experiments require more disposable subjects, and the means that are used to secure these subjects are frequently less than pleasant. Still, in the search for an ultimate cure, many excesses can be forgiven; thus, despite the cost, the experiments must and will go on.

# The Neo-Victorian Apothecary

The pharmacopia available to the physicians and apothecaries of Neo-Victorian London is staggering. Following the investigations of earlier generations into the mysterious elixir soma came a revitalized interest in plant compounds. Investigators have performed distillations on every plant and animal subject easily available. They search for evidence of salutary effects in hopes of finding the compound or compounds that will form the base of their Elixir. The bravest of these have ventured into the wilds and the Wastes, searching the expanses outside the walls to discover foreign organisms whose essential juices might hold secrets never before revealed to the prying eyes of science.

In the course of these investigations over the many years since modern medical science began again to progress in earnest, a startling discovery was made. The fields and forests underwent an unprecedented revolution in taxonomic genesis in the years following the onset of the Plague. A dizzying array of unclassified and unclassifiable varieties of plant life not known to the science of the old world was uncovered by the investigations of the pharmacologists.

The plant life of the growing Wastes was almost entirely unlike any seen before. Life in these blasted places grew twisted and unfamiliar. Domestic species planted in these regions would grow queerly, and new generations did not resemble their forbearers. In a few short generations, any life brought to the Wastes would be altered nearly beyond recognition. The native plant species, which mutated unseen while the walls of the first encampments barred humanity from the world outside, were more bizarre than the new species that appeared with the Blight. Many generated unfamiliar toxins, poisons with novel and unsettling effects. Some were medicinal, others recreational, and some had effects sufficiently profound and unsettling as to ensure an immediate ban. A number of the plants, in both their unrefined and processed forms, are part of a thriving black market trade.

However, the varieties of life to be found in the Wastelands have not yet been thoroughly catalogued nor have the properties of the vast majority of known species been thoroughly explored. There are a small number of species, plant and animal, for which the properties are very well known and for which a market currently exists.

# The Rules

There are three general categories for distillates, medications, and controlled substances.

Herbs are plants with medicinal qualities that may be ingested or prepared without knowledge of pharmacology or alchemy.

Drugs are mundane substances and distillates that may be prepared by a character with the Alchemy skill. Manufacturing drugs requires raw materials and access to an alchemical lab.

Alchemical solutions include, but are not limited to, Mercurial reagents, thrope serums, body-wracking mutagens, and life-extending tinctures. Alchemical solutions can be prepared by a character with the Alchemy skill. Manufacturing alchemical solutions requires raw materials and access to an alchemical lab. Alchemical solutions are distinguished from mundane drugs by their metaphysical origins and unpredictability. Alchemy remains as much art as science, and alchemical solutions are rife with unintended side effects.

## Characteristics

The description of each herb, drug, and alchemical solutions lists a Formulation, Substance Type, Appearance, a DR for creation, Material Cost, Production Time, Purchase Price, Reaction Time, Duration, Effect, and potential Alterations to the compound.

**Formulation:** The form or forms in which the substance can be consumed.

**Substance Type:** The type of substance: herb, drug, or alchemical solution.

**Appearance:** A description of the substance.

**DR:** This is the Alchemy skill roll difficulty rating for manufacturing the substance.

A character forced to manufacture drugs or alchemical solutions under sub-optimal conditions, either because he lacks a proper lab or access to a sterile environment, suffers +4 to his DR for related skill roles.

A character looking over a collection of raw materials for a drug or alchemical solution can make an Alchemy skill roll to attempt to discern their most likely application. The DR for the roll is 2 lower than the DR to manufacture the substance.

For example, Marcy's Doctor, Dr. Baye James, can make an Alchemy skill roll to identify a collection of chemicals in a rogue alchemist's lab. Marcy makes a skill roll for Dr. Baye James and rolls a 15. The Narrator informs Marcy that the chemicals are used in the manufacture of Masque. Masque has a DR of 14 to manufacture, so Marcy needed to roll at least 12 to identify the chemicals.

**Material Cost:** The Material Cost is the amount of money a character must pay for the raw materials for the drug or alchemical solution. Raw materials may cost a fortune, require additional refinement, or be very difficult to locate, particularly if they are illegal or in very high demand. Occasionally a character may be forced to personally venture into the Wastelands for particularly rare specimens. Any change in the materials used in the creation of an alchemical solution can have dire repercussions.

**Production Time:** Production Time is the amount of time generally required to manufacture a drug or alchemical solution. An alchemist manufacturing a drug or alchemical solution may produce a greater quantity of the substance by increasing the amount of raw materials used. Increasing the amount produced does not generally increase the production time.

If the character takes extreme precautions, double and triple checks his calculations, and proceeds with supreme care in the manufacture of the substance, he gains +2 on his skill roll. A character making such careful preparations triples the normal production time for the experiment. If the character is interrupted during this time, he loses this bonus.

Conversely, a character rushing the manufacture of a drug or alchemical solution can produce the substance in half the time listed but suffers –4 on his skill roll.

**Purchase Price:** The Purchase Price is the going rate for a particular substance on the streets of the metropolis. Some drugs and alchemical solutions are outlawed and may only be purchased on the black market. Others are so dangerous they may not easily be purchased at any price. The prices of drugs and alchemical solutions are subject to market forces like any other commodity. Should demand increase, so will the cost. If the market becomes flooded, the price will dip accordingly.

Unless the character knows precisely where to look, locating illegal and highly illegal substances can be difficult. A character with the Streetwise skill may locate illegal substances with a couple days searching and a successful skill roll (DR 11). Locating highly illegal substances requires 5 + d5 days and a successful Streetwise skill roll (DR 16). A character in a rush can cut this time in half but must add 2 to the DR of the skill roll.

**Reaction Time:** The Reaction Time determines how much time will pass before a substance will take effect.

**Duration:** Duration determines how long the effects of a substance last.

**Effect:** This section describes the effects of a substance.

**Alterations:** The effects of some substances can be altered during their creation. Alterations generally modify the skill roll for manufacturing the substance as well.

### Manufacturing Drugs and Alchemical Solutions

A character with the Alchemy skill, access to an alchemical lab, and appropriate raw materials may attempt to manufacture a drug or alchemical solution by making an Alchemy skill roll versus the DR of the substance being manufactured. This roll is made once the Production Time has passed. If the roll succeeds, the character manufactures the substance without incident or side effects.

The result of a failed roll depends on the substance the character was attempting to create. If the character fails a roll to manufacture a drug, the materials are wasted and the character must start the procedure over again after thoroughly cleaning his lab equipment. If an attempt to manufacture an alchemical solution fails, the character may attempt to salvage his experiment by making a second Alchemy skill roll versus the same DR. If this second attempt succeeds, the character creates an imperfect solution. Though the solution does not perform precisely as intended, it may have some of the desired qualities, albeit with an added element of risk. If the second roll fails, the materials are wasted and the character must start his experiment over again.

When a character succeeds in producing an imperfect solution, the Narrator rolls on the Side Effects Table below.

### Imperfect Solution

When a character succeeds in producing an imperfect solution, the Narrator rolls 2d10 and consults the Side Effects Table below. At the Narrator's discretion, if the result of the roll is inappropriate for the alchemical solution produced, she may reroll the result. Unless the side effect rolled specifies the reaction is immediate, the results of the imperfect solution roll should be kept secret until the character attempts to use the solution on a living subject, such as a guinea pig, lab assistant, or mendicant.

In addition to the effects rolled on the table, an imperfect solution may differ in appearance from the solution the character intended to create. These descriptive elements should be added by the Narrator for dramatic effect.

## Repeated Experiments

*"My provision of the salt, which had never been renewed since the date of the first experiment, began to run low. I sent out for a fresh supply and mixed the draught; the ebullition followed, and the first change of colour, not the second; I drank it and it was without efficiency. You will learn from Poole how I have had London ransacked; it was in vain; and I am now persuaded that my first supply was impure, and that it was that unknown impurity which lent efficacy to the draught."*

—*Robert Louis Stevenson,* Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, *1886*

It is assumed that every alchemist keeps a journal recording the progress of his experiments and successful recipes. Once an alchemist succeeds in creating an alchemical solution, even an imperfect solution, he will be able to repeat the experiment if he has access to the notes used during his initial experiment and precisely same materials he used during the previous experiment. If these conditions are met, the character gains a +2 bonus on his Alchemy skill roll to repeat the experiment. If the character lacks either his notes or the exactly the same materials, he will not gain this bonus.

If the character is repeating an experiment that produced an imperfect solution, a successful skill roll produces an identical solution. If the character's controller fails the initial roll but succeeds in the second roll, a second side effect should be rolled.

### Alchemical Ammunition

*An alchemist with the Trade – Gunsmithing skill will be able to refine into alchemical bullets any alchemical solutions that may be injected by congealing the compound into a solid yet soluble form. The production of a single bullet requires a full dose of the solution, an alchemical lab, ammunition packing materials and production moulds, and a successful Alchemy skill roll (DR 14). If the roll fails, the solution is wasted.*

*If the roll succeeds, the character produces a single round of alchemical ammunition for a specific calibre of rifle or pistol. A damage roll for an attack made with alchemical ammunition suffers a –2 penalty. If a character is shot with an alchemical round and suffers a Serious Wound or greater, roll a d10. On a roll of 1 or 10, the bullet passes completely through the character's body. On any other result, the bullet is lodged in his flesh and dissolves into his blood stream. In addition to the damage from the attack, the character will experience the full effects of the alchemical solution.*

# Side Effects Table

Roll Effect

2 Bio-Chemical Change

The solution has a drastically different effect than was intended. If the solution enters a living human body, it wreaks havoc with the system. The affected character is immediately seized with a convulsive fit and thrown to the floor. After several minutes of painful spasms, he regains control over himself only to find his body changed. His bio-chemistry is permanently altered by the solution. The character has become a half-lifer. From this moment on, the character ages at a third the normal rate and becomes immune to the Plague, the smogs, and all mundane ailments.

Additionally, the character becomes sterile and gains an unnatural cast to his features. Skin or eye colour may be strangely altered; the shape of the body may change, or the transformation may be more subtle. The character gains the Defects Impediment (see Chapter 3, page 183).

The solution has no effect on half-lifers.

3 The Wasting

While the substance seems to have the intended effect, it also attacks the character's body, devouring muscle and nerve tissue. Over the next day, the character begins to waste away, becoming little more than a human skeleton. The character must make a Vitality roll (DR 14) after every 4 hours for the next 24 hours. If he succeeds in a roll, nothing happens. If the character fails the roll, he suffers –1 Vitality. If the character is reduced to 0 Vitality, he enters a comatose state. If reduced below 0 Vitality, the character dies. If he survives, he wakes after an additional 12 hours and regains 1 point of lost Vitality each week.

4 Permanent Cosmetic Alteration

In addition to the intended effects of the solution, it is also a powerful mutagen. Once the solution enters a living character's body, he undergoes a rapid transformation which throws him to the ground in a violent fit.

After d10 minutes, the character regains control over himself but suffers –1 Vitality for one hour. A character's Vitality cannot be reduced below 1 as a result of this side effect. It is only once he regains control over himself that he can look upon his altered form.

The details of the cosmetic transformation are at the Narrator's discretion. The character may lose all his body hair or his skin may change to a new colour, become wildly patterned, or turn transparent. His flesh may begin to painlessly rot away or his extremities grow to grotesque lengths. Whatever the effect, it should be tied to the properties of the solution. These alterations are permanent. The character gains the Defects Impediment (see Chapter 3, page 183).

The character can only be altered once by the solution no matter how many draughts he imbibes.

5 Temporary Psychosis

In addition to its intended effects, the solution throws the character into the depths of a psychotic episode. The Narrator should select an appropriate Mental Disorder; Catatonia, Dementia, Paranoia, and Phobias (see Mental Disorders, Chapter 3, pages 189-194) are popular choices. The character suffers the chronic effects of the disorder for 14 + d10 hours, after which the character is somewhat disoriented but suffers no permanent effects.

6 Hallucinogen

In addition to the intended effects of the solution, the character experiences vivid and overwhelming visual and auditory hallucinations. These figments should persist for several hours, during which time the character is unable to discern reality from hallucination and suffers –5 on skill, Wit, and Intellect rolls. The nature of these hallucinations is at the discretion of the Narrator.

7 Explosion

The flawed alchemical solution explodes in the character's face. The character is at the epicentre of an explosion that inflicts a +6 damage roll (see Explosives, Chapter 2, pages 112 – 113).

Most likely, the character and his lab will both be in ruins. Repeating this experiment is inadvisable.

8-9 Sickening

While the flawed solution seems to have the intended results, it also induces wracking pains followed by an overwhelming sensation of weakness and malaise. After d10 + 10 minutes, the affected character will begin to retch uncontrollably. For the next d5 hours, the character suffers –2 Vitality and Coordination. The character's

# Side Effects Table (continued)

attributes cannot be reduced below 1 as a result of this side effect. The character regains 1 point of Vitality and Coordination each day.

**10-11 Weak Solution**
The solution is very weak and has a fraction of its intended duration. A solution that was intended to have a permanent effect lasts d10 months; a solution that was supposed to last months has a duration of weeks, and so on.

**12-13 Temporary Isolation**
In addition to its intended effects, the imperfect solution causes the character to lose his vision and hearing for d5 hours (see Blind and Deaf, Chapter 3, pages 182 and 183 respectively).

**14 Gas**
The solution becomes a gas that rapidly fills the lab. Any character in the lab at the time it fills with gas fall unconscious and will be incapable of taking any action for 5 + d10 hours. Any character entering the lab without a respirator within the next 24 hours must succeed at a Vitality roll (DR 14) or suffer the same effect. The lab will have to be disinfected before it can be used for any activity.

**15 Toxin**
In addition to possessing the intended qualities, the resulting solution is also a powerful toxin. A character ingesting the poisonous draught immediately suffers –1 Vitality and must make a Vitality roll versus DR 14 every five minutes for the next half hour. Each time he fails a roll, the character suffers –1 Vitality. If the roll succeeds, he regains 1 Vitality lost due to the toxin. If the character survives, he will regain Vitality at 1 point per day. If he is reduced to below 0 Vitality, the character dies.

**16 Fire**
Before the experiment concludes, the solution erupts into flames. The equipment being used in the experiment is damaged past usefulness and must be replaced; repair is impossible. Unless the fire is put out, it will rapidly spread. Any characters within 2 meters of the centre of the blast will be set on fire (see Chapter 2, page 115).

**17 Rage**
The solution seems to work as intended, but upon consuming the serum, the character is filled with a blind rage that causes him to destroy anything and anyone in his path. The rage lasts for d5 hours. During this time the character is a menace to himself and others. Anyone and anything within the character's line of sight will be subject to physical assault. The character will suffer complete amnesia concerning the period of time he is under the influence of this side effect.

**18 Addictive**
The substance seems to produce the intended effect but is also instantly addictive. If the character goes a week without ingesting the substance, his addiction will begin to get the better of him. As withdrawal sets in, the character suffers –1 Vitality, Wit, Will, Intellect, and Charm and –1 on skill rolls until he can feed his addiction. After a month, this penalty is increased to –2. If the character can go three months without taking the substance, he breaks his addiction and lost attribute points return at a rate of 1 per month for each attribute reduced. A character cannot have an attribute reduced below 1 as a result of withdrawal.

The alchemist should be able to replicate the substance from his notes, assuming the supply of chemicals is not interrupted (see Repeated Experiments below).

**19 Permanent Psychosis**
In addition to its intended effect, the solution triggers a chemical imbalance in the imbiber's brain that results in permanent psychosis. At the Narrator's discretion, the character either gains a new minor Mental Disorder or one of his minor disorders becomes chronic (see Mental Disorders, Chapter 3, pages 189 – 194).

**20 Permanent Mental Damage**
Instead of having the intended effect, the solution causes a tremendous amount of damage to the character's brain. He suffers a permanent loss of –1 Intellect and Wit. Additionally, the character will develop some nervous tic of the Narrator's choosing: shrill laughter, palsies, a thousand-yard stare, or a slight drool at moments of inattention are common choices. A character can only be affected by this side effect once.

### Refining Substances

A character with the Alchemy skill can alter the physical properties of a manufactured substance, changing it from a liquid into a powder, pill, gas, or gel with a successful skill roll versus DR 11. If the roll fails, the solution is wasted. Refining alchemical substances takes half of the initial production time.

# The Catalogue

### Alchemist's Fire

**Formulation:** Topical
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** Brilliant green, viscous liquid
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** £1 for 1 application
**Production Time:** 30 minutes
**Purchase Price:** £4 for 1 application
**Reaction Time:** Instantaneous
**Duration:** 2d10 rounds
**Effect:** The solution is a dangerous volatile compound usable as a weapon. The solution must be stored carefully in glass tubes that have been treated to contain some inert gas. The alchemist must work quickly during the final steps to store the compound before the internal reactions are complete, as the finished solution will burst into flame in the presence of oxygen. The glass tubes may be thrown at a target in combat; if the target is hit, the tube breaks and the target is set on fire (see Chapter 2, page 115).

This solution is not subject to side effects. If the initial roll fails, the alchemist must make a second roll. If this roll succeeds, the process has merely failed and synthesis must begin from scratch with fresh materials. If the second roll fails, an accident occurs, and a chemical fire starts in the lab.
**Alterations:** None

### ALS2(X)

**Formulation:** Varies
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** Generally, a pale silvery-blue liquid
**DR:** Varies, see below
**Material Cost:** 10d per gallon
**Production Time:** 2 hours
**Purchase Price:** 2s per gallon of ALS2(1), 4s per gallon of ALS2(6)
**Reaction Time:** None
**Duration:** None
**Effect:** This is a class of artificial life support solutions; the name is an acronym. The parenthetical designation indicates the type of solution.

ALS2(1) is the official designation for the solution used in preserving body parts intended for transplant. The solution is legal, and any physician may reasonably be expected to know the formula and synthesis methods (DR 11). Decomposition is virtually arrested in body parts suspended in ALS2(1), but the fluid must be replaced after one month to keep the organic matter fresh.

ALS2(6) is the designation for the formula used in artificial wombs; the formula is available but is not easy to come by, and research into this area may be met with suspicion. Sythesizing the compound requires a successful Alchemy roll (DR 14).

This solution is not subject to side effects. If the roll fails, the solution is ruined, and synthesis must start anew with fresh materials.
**Alterations:** None

### Angel

Sometimes called the Black Pill or Borrowed Time
**Formulation:** Ingested or injected
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** Tiny, glossy black pill or a thick, vicious, black solution
**DR:** 14
**Material Cost:** £2 for 1 dose
**Production Time:** 2 hours
**Purchase Price:** £5 for 1 dose
**Reaction Time:** Instantaneous
**Duration:** 1 hour
**Effect:** Angel temporarily arrests the progression of the Plague, buying the affected character an extra hour of life. After an hour, the Plague resumes its course. If the character takes an additional dose after the first, he must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds, the Angel takes effect and the progression of the Plague is halted for another hour. If the roll fails, the pill has no effect. After a failure is rolled, no amount of the alchemical compound can help the character.
**Alterations:** None

### Anti-Rejection Drug

**Formulation:** Ingested or injected
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** White pill or clear, odourless solution
**DR:** 14
**Material Cost:** 5s for 10 doses

**Production Time:** 4 hours
**Purchase Price:** 10s for 5 doses
**Reaction Time:** Instantaneous
**Duration:** 24 hours
**Effect:** If a character receives a transplant that has not been engineered to elude an immune response, including any transplant of a mechanical type, he must take anti-rejection drugs for the rest of his life. Each day a character goes without the drug, he suffers – 1 Vitality. If his Vitality is reduced to less than 0, he dies. Vitality lost due to not taking anti-rejection drugs is recovered at a rate of 1 point per week if the character is able to resume treatments for the full week.
**Alterations:** None

## Chloroform

**Formulation:** Inhaled
**Substance Type:** Drug
**Appearance:** Clear liquid with a faint, pleasant odour and slightly sweet taste
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 10d for 10 applications
**Production Time:** 4 hour
**Purchase Price:** 2s per bottle (about 10 applications)
**Reaction Time:** See below
**Duration:** See below
**Effect:** Despite being a known carcinogen, chloroform remains a common Neo-Victorian anaesthetic. Since it is inexpensive and readily accessible, medical professions often use it to treat the lowest classes when ether is not on hand. Chloroform is generally applied to a cloth that is pressed to the face, allowing a patient to inhale the anaesthetic. Fatal cardiac arrhythmia, or "sudden sniffer's death," among patients treated with chloroform has added significantly to the common peoples' distrust of surgeons.

After 2 minutes of inhalation, a living character must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If the character succeeds, he remains conscious but must roll again every ten seconds if the exposure persists. If the character fails the roll, the world grows darker but he remains conscious until he fails a number of rolls equal to his Vitality attribute. Once the character succumbs to the chloroform and falls unconscious, he remains so for 10 + d10 minutes after his exposure to the substance ends. While unconscious, the character is unresponsive to all stimuli. Upon waking, he suffers –2 to all Coordination, Wit, Will, Intellect, Charm, and skill rolls for 3d10 minutes while the drug continues to wear off.

On a critical failure, the character suffers cardiac arrhythmia and dies.
**Alterations:** None

## Clarity

Sometimes called Christ's Blood
**Formulation:** Ingested or injected
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** Large, sickly yellow pill or a cloudy, yellow solution smelling of ammonia
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 2s per dose
**Production Time:** 1 hour
**Purchase Price:** 6s per dose
**Reaction Time:** Instantaneous
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Effect:** With a wash of nausea and numbing pain, Clarity instantly flushes all intoxicants, narcotics, toxins, and drugs out of the character's system. Immediately upon consuming the solution, the character sweats foul-smelling blood and must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If the roll fails, the character suffers –1 Vitality for 24 hours. If the character's Vitality is reduced below 0, he dies.
**Alterations:** None

## Cocaine

**Formulation:** Inhaled, ingested, or injected
**Substance Type:** Drug
**Appearance:** White powder
**DR:** 11

**Material Cost:** 1s per dose
**Production Time:** 24 hours
**Purchase Price:** 10s per dose
**Reaction Time:** For full effect, about 3 minutes if injected or 10 + d10 minutes when inhaled. Initial effects manifest within seconds.
**Duration:** 6d10 + 20 minutes
**Effect:** After being extracted from coca plant leaves and refined, cocaine may be inhaled, imbibed, or injected for both medical and recreational purposes. The drug works as a central nervous system stimulant, an appetite suppressant, and a topical anaesthetic as well as producing a sense of euphoria and increased energy.

Neo-Victorians who prefer to inhale cocaine carry small vials, boxes, or poison rings for the purpose. A character under the effects of cocaine gains +1 Prowess and +1 on Wit and Will rolls for 6d10 + 10 minutes. After the drug wears off, the character suffers –1 Coordination for 3d10 + 90 minutes.

Each time a character uses cocaine he must make a Will roll (DR 11). If he fails, he becomes addicted to cocaine. If the character goes twenty-four hours without taking cocaine, his addiction will begin to get the better of him. Withdrawal sets in and the character experiences suffers –3 Vitality, Wit, Will, Intellect, and Charm and –1 on skill rolls until either he takes a dose of cocaine or he detoxes over a week.

If the character makes it through detox, he will be free of the effects of withdrawal. However, should the character ever use the drug again he will immediately become addicted once more.

A character cannot have an attribute reduced below 1 as a result of cocaine use or withdrawal.
**Alterations:** None

### Corpse Flower

**Formulation:** Ingested
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** A flat grey liquid, cooler than the ambient air
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 2s per dose
**Production Time:** 3 hours
**Purchase Price:** 10s per dose
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 seconds
**Duration:** 4d10 minutes
**Effect:** This serum allows the imbiber to take on the appearance of a walking corpse. His skin grows cold and pale; his breath and heartbeat become shallow; his movements become slow and jerky, and his flesh shrinks and desiccates, giving him the appearance of a corpse. Animates suffer a –5 to their Prey Sense to detect the character, though a living person will be able to recognize the character as alive upon a cursory examination. Using this serum, it is possible to move through crowds of animates virtually unnoticed.

While under the effects of a dose of the serum, the character suffers –1 Vitality and Coordination.

When the drug's duration is over, the character's vital signs and attributes return to normal, and he becomes extremely thirsty. Within ten minutes of drinking his fill, he will return entirely to the appearance of a normal living human.

Corpse Flower has no effect on half-lifers.
**Alterations:** None

### Crone

Sometimes called Rackobone
**Formulation:** Topical
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** Milky grey-green, grease-like compound
**DR:** 16
**Material Cost:** 5s per application
**Production Time:** 6 hours
**Purchase Price:** £1 per application
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 minutes
**Duration:** d10 hours
**Effect:** Crone is a powerful alchemical solution that temporarily and rapidly ages a user. In a matter of minutes, the face puckers into a mass of sullen wrinkles, the flesh pulls taunt and withers, and the bones turn weak and brittle. Crone has been used as both an extreme form of disguise and as a method of incapacitation.

While under the effects of Crone, a character suffers -2 Vitality and Coordination and -1 Wit and Intellect. If Crone reduces any of his attributes to less than 0, the physical stress caused by the substance causes the character's heart to fail and he dies. Anyone attempting to recognize a character affected by Crone must succeed in a Wit – Perception roll (DR 16). While under the effects of Crone, a character suffers -5 on all Charm – Seduction rolls.

Once the primary effects of Crone expire with its duration, a user still suffers -1 Vitality and Coordination for another 12 hours. The aesthetic effects of Crone fade over this time as the character returns to his natural physical condition. Crone interferes with anti-agapic treatments, effectively undoing restorative care and causing permanent damage to the system.

Crone has no effect on half-lifers.
**Alterations:** Creating a permanent version is extrememly difficult (DR 20). The permanent version is highly illegal and sells for £10 or more when available.

**Note:** Producing a fast acting antidote to Crone requires 3s in raw materials, 1 hour of production time, and a successful Alchemy skill roll (DR 14). The imbibed liquid reverses the effects of Crone within d10 minutes. The antidote even counteracts the permanent version of Crone. The antidote is available at the cost of 10s.

## Ether

**Formulation:** Inhaled
**Substance Type:** Drug
**Appearance:** Clear, colourless, and highly flammable liquid with a low boiling point and a characteristic smell
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 2s for 10 doses
**Production Time:** 4 hours
**Purchase Price:** 8s per bottle (about 10 applications)
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 seconds
**Duration:** d10 hours
**Effect:** Ether is an anaesthetic agent used in medical procedures in facilities lacking the capacity for more sophisticated anaesthesia. The substance is used recreationally as well; scented ethers are sometimes impregnated into expensive filter cartridges for the gasmasks of the wealthy and fashionable. The drug is entirely legal and may be purchased from any reasonably well-equipped apothecary.

Ether evaporates quickly and so is generally administered through a breathing mask. The drug begins to take effect almost immediately, inducing minor euphoria and blurred vision. After three minutes, a living character inhaling ether must begin to make Vitality rolls (DR 16) every twenty seconds. If the character succeeds, nothing happens until he makes another roll. If he fails, the world grows a little dimmer. If the character fails a number of rolls equal to his Vitality, he becomes insensate and passes into unconsciousness. The character remains in a painless state of unconsciousness for 2d10 minutes after his exposure to ether ends. The character may choose to fail these rolls.

If a character fails one or more rolls but does not go unconscious, he suffers –2 Coordination, Wit, Will, Intellect, Charm, and skill rolls for d10 minutes after exposure to the drug ends.
**Alterations:** None

## Hyde

**Formulation:** Ingested
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** A sickly grey-green liquid with a thick musky odour and horrid taste
**DR:** 16
**Material Cost:** 15s per dose
**Production Time:** 12 hours
**Purchase Price:** Highly illegal (£4+ per dose)
**Reaction Time:** d10 minutes
**Duration:** 5d10 minutes
**Effect:** Actually swallowing the substance requires a successful Will roll (DR 11). Once a user drinks down a dose of the substance, a thick, grey mist escapes his nose and mouth. Regular users claim this is the imbiber's conscience escaping his body before the solution takes effect.

The immediate effect of Hyde is very similar to a thrope serum, though without the benefits of accelerated healing or immunity to the Plague and other contagions. Once consumed, the solution causes the character to go through a rapid metamorphosis. The exact changes the body undergoes depends on the version of Hyde the character drank. There are literally hundreds of formulations available and each has a slightly different effect. Most mimic a thrope-like appearance while others cause distinctly insectile or saurian alterations.

Once Hyde takes effect, the imbiber gains +2 Vitality and Coordination and ignores wound penalties. However, while under the effects of the substance, the character suffers –3 Intellect and Charm and loses all benefits from the Concentration skill. A character cannot have his attributes reduced to less than 1 as a result of Hyde. If the character's Charm is reduced to 1 as a result of imbibing Hyde, he will lose the ability to speak until he returns to human form. If his Intellect has been reduced to 1 as a result of Hyde, he will not be able to use ranged weapons until the solution's duration expires.

While under the effects of Hyde, the character's thoughts are cloudy and he will remember little that occurs. He will be incredibly aggressive and difficult to reason with. The character's reaction to sudden movement, aggressive action, and the slightest disappointment will be the same: destroy everything in sight. When provoked, the character can either allow his rage to consume him and simply destroy the object of his rage — be it man, woman, child, or inanimate object — or can make a will roll (DR 14) to retain control over himself. If the roll succeeds, the character keeps from lashing out for the time being. If the roll fails, he mindlessly attacks the object of his rage until he or it has been destroyed.

Once Hyde's duration passes, the character painfully and messily returns to human form. At this time the character must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds, the character suffers –1 Vitality and Coordination for the next 12 hours. A character's attributes cannot be reduced to less than 1 as a result of this penalty. If the roll fails,

this transformation is agonizingly slow. The character suffers –2 to all attributes for the next 12 hours. If his Vitality or Coordination is reduced to below 0, the character dies. If his Wit, Will, Intellect, or Charm is reduced to 0 or less, he enters a deep sleep from which he cannot be awakened by any means for the next 12 hours.

After consuming a dose of Hyde, repeated doses will have no effect for 24 hours.

For 2 weeks after his last Hyde-induced transformation, the character has to make a Will roll (DR 11) any time he is faced with a stressful situation. If the roll fails, he immediately undergoes another Hyde transformation and attacks the source of his stress. The character will return to his human form after 2d10 minutes and suffer the same penalties as above.

Hyde has no effect on half-lifers.

**Alterations:** None

**Note:** Producing a fast-acting antidote to Hyde requires 5s in raw materials, two hours of production time, and a successful Alchemy skill roll (DR 14). The antidote instantly causes the drinker to revert to human form. The antidote is available at the cost of 15s.

### Hyoscine

**Formulation:** Injected
**Substance Type:** Drug
**Appearance:** Clear to straw-coloured liquid
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 10s for 10 doses
**Production Time:** 8 hours
**Purchase Price:** 4s per dose
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 minutes
**Duration:** 6 hours
**Effect:** A sedative derived from plants in the nightshade family, hyoscine is used for everything from calming the insane to easing childbirth. When used for the later purpose, it is often mixed with morphine to produce "twilight sleep." It is, however, extremely dangerous in larger doses, resulting in instantaneous death if more than a quarter-grain is injected.

If a character receives a therapeutic dose, it will act as a sedative. The character suffers –1 to Wit and Coordination rolls for six hours after receiving the dose. Characters in the throes of a violent psychotic episode will be quieted by the dose, no longer requiring restraint or posing a danger to themselves or others; the character will be able to move slowly and speak coherently for short periods but will not be capable of taking any other action.

If a character receives a deadly dose, he must make a Vitality roll (DR 20). Failure results in instantaneous death.

**Alterations:** None

### Jack's Blessing

**Formulation:** Ingested
**Substance Type:** Herb
**Appearance:** Black-spotted leaves
**DR:** None
**Material Cost:** None
**Production Time:** None
**Purchase Price:** 5s per dose
**Reaction Time:** d10 minutes
**Duration:** 1 hour
**Effect:** There is a thriving market in the underworld for a small, black-spotted herb found in the Wastes that the criminal element of the metropolis calls Jack's Blessing. When chewed, the leaves heighten the senses: the faintest noise can be heard and the smallest changes in the currents of air can be felt.

A character chewing Jack's Blessing gains +2 on Wit – Perception rolls for the duration of the drug's effects.

**Alterations:** None

### Maiden's Heart

**Formulation:** Ingested
**Substance Type:** Herb
**Appearance:** A dark red, heart-shaped tuber, approximately the size of a child's fist
**DR:** None, but characters without the Alchemy or Natural Science skill cannot properly prepare the herb.
**Material Cost:** None
**Production Time:** 10 minutes cooking time
**Purchase Price:** 5s per dose
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 minutes
**Duration:** Number of hours equal to the character's Vitality
**Effect:** The root of a brilliant red flower, called Maiden's Heart for its curious shape, possesses unique medicinal properties. Cooked properly and eaten, this root gives the user extraordinary stamina for a period of time, reducing fatigue and allowing pain to be largely ignored.

A character who consumes properly prepared Maiden's Heart can ignore wound penalties for a number of hours equal to his Vitality. Each day an injured character consumes Maiden's Heart, his healing time is reduced by an additional day.

**Alterations:** Attempts to refine the substance into a drug for combat use have failed spectacularly. When distilled, the beneficial properties of the plant are destroyed. The result-

ing drug, named Werther (see below), causes massive systemic haemorrhaging, resulting in "blood sweats" and bleeding from the orifices of the body.

### Masque

**Formulation:** Ingested
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** A viscous, colloidal substance of no particular color, which is stored in a liquid form. It becomes semisolid when handled, but returns to liquid in the mouth.
**DR:** 14
**Material Cost:** 5s per dose
**Production Time:** 6 hours
**Purchase Price:** 15s per dose
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 minutes
**Duration:** 6d10 + 120 minutes
**Effect:** Masque is a localized, temporary mutagen that renders the imbiber's face unrecognizable. During the alchemical solution's reaction time, the imbiber's face takes on a plastic texture not unlike fleshy clay that may be shaped and smoothed with touch. Facial features may be moved, stretched, distended, or otherwise altered. Masque can be used to create some extraordinary effects, though most imbibers simply use the solution to conceal their appearance. Identifying the character after such alterations requires a successful Wit – Perception roll (DR 16).

Masque is extensively used throughout Neo-Victorian theatre, and a number of talented artists make their living shaping faces for the stage. A character with the Disguise skill can attempt to literally sculpt his face after imbibing a dose of the solution. Creating a passable human-like appearance requires a successful skill roll (DR 11). Enhancing the character's physical beauty or altering his facial structure in a minor way requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 14. Altering the character's appearance to duplicate another's requires a successful skill roll versus a DR of 20. If the character does not have the Disguise skill, or if the character fails the roll, the face will not be recognizable as belonging to the person who is being disguised, but the appearance of the features will be unnatural.

After the reaction time passes, the flesh of the face holds its new visage for the duration of the solution's effects. Once the duration expires, the character's face quickly returns to its normal shape, but remains tender to the touch for 24 hours. If Masque is used again during this period, the character suffers a Flesh Wound as the fabric of his face begins to tear.

Masque has no effect on half-lifers.

**Alterations:** Creating a permanent version is very difficult (DR 20) and highly illegal (£10).

Thorn, (DR 14 or 10s). Instead of causing the face to become plastic, Thorn causes bony projections to grow from the face, horribly distorting the drinker's appearance. Thorn is used to quickly give extras a monstrous appearance.
**Note:** Producing a fast acting antidote to Masque requires 3s in raw materials, one hour of production time, and a successful Alchemy skill roll (DR 11). The imbibed liquid reverses the effects of Masque within d10 minutes. The antidote also counteracts the permanent version of both Masque and Thorn. The antidote is available at the cost of 10s.

### Nectar

**Formulation:** Ingested or injected
**Substance Type:** Drug
**Appearance:** Thick, viscous black liquid
**DR:** None
**Material Cost:** None
**Production Time:** None if consumed orally. 1 hour if heated and diluted for injection
**Purchase Price:** 5s per dose
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 minutes
**Duration:** 4d10 hours
**Effect:** This unusual drug from the Wastes has animal

origins. The creature from which the drug is extracted, informally called the "nectar swampcat," resembles a large cat in size but possesses the sleek oily fur of a sea mammal and the smoothly mechanical locomotion of a water-dwelling lizard. The creature secretes a pungent musk, called Nectar in the trade parlance, from the base of the coarse hairs of the underbelly. When consumed or injected, this highly addictive substance slows the metabolism of the user dramatically, producing a state of semi-torpor filled with weird and vivid dreams.

The creature is air-breathing and moves easily on land but prefers damp places, being most frequently found in and near swamps and other bodies of water with little motion. Attempts to raise the creature in captivity to create a consistent source of the drug have failed, as the creatures will not carry a pregnancy to term in captivity, and vat-grown specimens lack the ability to produce the drug. Synthetic variations are available, but they are decidedly inferior in quality and associated with a rapid onset of epilepsy.

Addicts spend most of their time in the dream state produced by the drug, their slowed metabolisms allowing them to dream for days at a time without feeling the need for sustenance. Addicts eat rarely, losing track of their bodily needs in the euphoric coma of the drug. Over time, the body becomes cadaverously thin, marked by bedsores from the endless hours of motionless half-sleep. Long-term addicts lose the ability to enter normal sleep or experience true REM dream states, dying, ironically, in an insanity brought on by sleep deprivation.

A character under the effects of Nectar can do nothing until the substance wears off. Any time a character uses the substance he must make a Will roll versus DR 14. If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the character becomes addicted to Nectar. On a critical failure, the character never comes fully out of the drug coma; he is incapable of taking coherent action and will die raving within a month as a result of sleep deprivation if he does not expire sooner of starvation or thirst.

An addicted character must continue to make Will rolls versus DR 14 each time the drug is taken. On a failed roll the character permanently suffers –1 Vitality as his body wastes away. On a critical failure the character never comes out of the drug coma as above.

If an addicted character goes a week without taking a dose of Nectar, his addiction will begin to get the better of him. All he can think about is his next fix. Soon he will begin to lose sleep. At the end of each week, the character must make a Will check versus DR 14. If he fails the roll, the character suffers –1 Will. Once the character is reduced to 0 Will, he will be virtually incapable of doing anything, including feeding himself, until he receives a dose of Nectar. The character's Will is only restored once he receives a dose of Nectar.

**Alterations:** None

## Orpheum

**Formulation:** Ingested or injected

**Substance Type:** Drug

**Appearance:** A milky liquid with a distinct odour of butterscotch

**DR:** 14

**Material Cost:** 5s per dose

**Production Time:** 4 hours

**Purchase Price:** Highly illegal (£1+ per dose)

**Reaction Time:** 6d10 minutes

**Duration:** d10 +2 hours

**Effect:** Orpheum is a distillate of Styx, the fruit of a spindly plant of the Wastes called the "forgetting tree" (see below). Orpheum is used by some secretive religious organizations and by some professional clairvoyants to induce visions. The refined substance is highly illegal and extremely dangerous; frequent users will develop a strange sort of "sleeping sickness" and a creeping insanity, culminating in savage self-destruction.

A character imbibing or injecting Orpheum must make a Will roll (DR 20) once the reaction time has been reached. If the character succeeds, he experiences only minor hallucinations. A character experiencing minor hallucinations suffers –1 Wit, Will, and Intellect and –2 on skill rolls until the effects of the drug expire. If the character fails the roll, he succumbs to the full effects of the drug and is lost in a dreamscape of his own creation. Until the duration of the drug expires, the character is beset by intense and virtually overpowering visions; he suffers –3 Wit, Will, and Intellect and cannot make any skill rolls. A character's attributes cannot be reduced below 1 as a result of the effects of this drug. The visions will be recalled in every detail upon waking. Users of this substance have been known to experience precognitive visions of distant places while under the drug's effects.

If the character rolls a critical failure, he develops a permanent psychosis of a peculiar variety. The character grows morose and spends more and more of his time lost in dream. The waking world and its inhabitants become intolerable. The character must succeed in a Will roll (DR 14) to interact with the waking world in any way. If he fails, he immediately drifts off to sleep.

**Alterations:** None

### Ravager

**Formulation:** Injected
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** A pale blue, odourless liquid with a slippery feel.
DR: 16
**Material Cost:** 10s per dose
**Production Time:** 8 hours
**Purchase Price:** Illegal (£3+ per dose)
**Reaction Time:** Instantaneous
**Duration:** 6d10 + 60 minutes
**Effect:** Usually fired from a syringe gun, Ravager is a powerful but temporary mutagen used to incapacitate a target. Within seconds after the solution enters the target's blood stream, his body undergoes a catastrophic metamorphosis: limbs painfully twist and seize, bone spurs tear through skin, and flesh covers the eyes. In the end, Ravager's victim is left twitching on the ground in silent horror.

Once Ravager enters the blood stream, the affected character must make a Vitality roll (DR 16) each minute. If he succeeds, nothing happens, but each time the character fails a roll, he suffers -1 Coordination, Wit, and Charm. When one or more of the character's attributes is reduced to 0 as a result of Ravager, he is completely incapacitated for the rest of Ravager's duration. Ravager cannot reduce a character's attributes below 0.

Once Ravager's duration has expired, the character's body begins to slowly revert to its former shape. The character regains 1 point of Coordination, Wit, and Charm when Ravager's duration first expires. The character regains 1 additional point of Coordination, Wit, and Charm each day. Because the character's body remains painfully distorted, he suffers –1 on skill rolls until his attributes completely return to normal.

Ravager has no effect on half-lifers.
**Alterations:** None
**Note:** Producing a fast-acting antidote to Ravager requires 5s in raw materials, two hours of production time, and a successful Alchemy skill roll (DR 14). The imbibed liquid reverses the effects of Ravager within d10 minutes, but the character will still only gain back lost attributes at the rate of 1 point per day. The antidote is available at the cost of 15s.

### Remembrancer

**Formulation:** Ingested
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** A thin fluid, black and opaque when at rest, but extraordinarily iridescent when disturbed. It smells curiously of moths' wings.
DR: 14
**Material Cost:** £5 plus the cost of obtaining the subject's fresh cerebral fluid
**Production Time:** 8 hours
**Purchase Price:** Never for sale and highly illegal, but services can be rendered for £25+
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 minutes
**Duration:** d10 + 2 hours
**Effect:** Remembrancer is a distillate of cerebral fluids intended to give the drinker insight into the mind of a dead man. The memories, skills, and affectations of the deceased are imparted to the imbiber. Despite the danger of mental fragmentation, Remembrancer is powerfully psychologically addictive; after all, the solution literally allows the drinker to live vicariously through the memories of another.

Only the cerebral fluid of a human or half-lifer corpse will do, and then only if the subject has been deceased no longer than 48 hours. Once distilled, Remembrancer retains its qualities for 10 + d10 days, after which it deteriorates too much to be of use.

After the reaction time has passed, the drinker must make a Will roll versus DR 11 + the former Will and Intellect of the distilled intelligence. If the character succeeds, he is able to maintain control of himself while awash in the memories of another. If he fails, he is infected by the memories and can never be sure if his memories are his own or those of another. The character permanently suffers -1 Will.

On a critical failure, the character is overwhelmed. He will forever be two minds in one body. The two psyches remain distinct; the host gains none of the abilities of the distilled brain. The second personality maintains its Wit, Will, Intellect, Charm, and skills. Each time the character sleeps or enters a stressful situation, the two personalities make a contested Will roll. The highest rolling personality becomes dominant and takes complete control of the body until the next roll. While controlled by the personality of the deceased, the character is an NPC under the Narrator's control.

Regardless of the results of the roll, the character gains cursory insights into the mind of the deceased, especially strong memories and thoughts at the time of death. The character cannot control what insights he gains at this point. If the dead man had any skills at a higher rating than the imbibing character, the character permanently gains +1 to those skills. If the deceased had a skill of rank 4 or greater that the imbibing character does not have, the character gains the skill at level 1. Additionally, the character will take on personality traits of the deceased such as physical tics

and mannerisms, qualities of speech, and alien ideas. If the character succeeded in the Remembrancer Will roll, these affectations last only for the duration of the drug's effect. If the character failed the Will roll, these affectations are permanent.

A character with at least one level of Concentration can delve deeper into the corpse's mind by making an additional Will roll versus a DR of 11 + the former Will and Intellect of the distilled intelligence. If the roll succeeds, the character gazes into the deepest recesses of the dead man's mind. He can pick and choose the areas of the mind he looks into, gathering the secrets of the deceased. If the roll fails, he enters a comatose state for the duration of the solutions effects and suffers a permanent -1 Will upon emerging. On a critical failure, the character's psyche is permanently supplanted by the deceased, the character becoming a NPC under the Narrator's control. The NPC uses the character's Vitality and Coordination and the deceased's Wit, Will, Intellect, Charm, and skills.

There are also potential gender and morality issues that could arise from taking on the memories of an alien mind. The Narrator is encouraged to explore these avenues as well.

**Alterations:** None

### Repose

**Formulation:** Ingested or injected
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** Repose is a clear fluid with a slight chemical taste and odour
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 3s per dose
**Production Time:** 1 hour
**Purchase Price:** 10s per dose
**Reaction Time:** Instantaneous
**Duration:** 6d10 minutes
**Effect:** Repose is a powerful sedative commonly used by Neo-Victorian physicians. An individual who takes a dose of this drug must succeed in a Vitality roll (DR 16) or be rendered unconscious for the duration of the drug's effects. Upon waking, the victim has no memory of anything that transpired while he was under the drug's effects but is otherwise unharmed.
**Alterations:** The duration can be extended to 2d10 hours (DR 16).

### Stitch

**Formulation:** Injected
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** A translucent brown fluid with a slightly bitter odour
**DR:** 14
**Material Cost:** 5s per dose
**Production Time:** 6 hours
**Purchase Price:** £1 per dose
**Reaction Time:** Instantaneous
**Duration:** 6d10 minutes
**Effect:** Stitch is a miraculous healing drug and powerful coagulant that drastically decreases the body's natural recovery time. A character that receives a dose of Stitch is immediately stabilized (see Chapter 2, pages XXX-XXX), but Stitch can only stabilize a given character once per day. If an injured character receives a dose of Stitch, any character treating his wounds gains +2 to his skill rolls. A character that receives a daily dose of Stitch during convalescence will recover in half the normal time.
**Alterations:** None

### Styx

**Formulation:** Ingested
**Substance Type:** Herb
**Appearance:** A small, mottled, orange-red fruit with a slippery skin, very sweet, white pulp, and a sweet and rich smell accented by a buttery note
**DR:** None
**Material Cost:** None
**Production Time:** None
**Purchase Price:** Highly illegal (5s per dose)
**Reaction Time:** 6d10 minutes
**Duration:** d10 + 2 hours
**Effects:** The fruits of a drab and spindly plant known as the "forgetting tree," were found to generate a toxin, named Styx in the modern pharmacologies, that would plunge a person into a deep and dream-filled sleep. Upon waking, the memories of his old life would be gone, replaced by the visions of the poison-dreams. Most of the forgetting tree's victims fall irretrievably into psychosis, driven mad by the shapes of the tree's dreaming.

A character who consumes the forgetting tree's fruit or its juice must make a Will roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds, the character slips into a dream-filled sleep lasting 1d10 hours; upon waking, he is somewhat disoriented but otherwise suffers no ill effects. Otherwise, the character will sleep for 1d10 hours and will wake with complete and permanent

amnesia rendering him unable to remember anything about his old life. All Academic skills are lost, and the character gains a chronic Mental Disorder of the Narrator's choosing (see Mental Disorders, Chapter 3, pages 189–194).

Anyone convicted of intentionally using Styx to destroy another's memories will face life imprisonment or deportation to the mines.

**Alterations:** None

### Truth Seeker

**Formulation:** Injected
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** An odourless, pale yellow liquid that faintly glows in the dark
**DR:** 16
**Material Cost:** 15s
**Production Time:** 8 hours
**Purchase Price:** £4/10s/-
**Reaction Time:** d10 minutes
**Duration:** 5 + d5 hours
**Effect:** Truth Seeker is a powerful cognitive enhancer that drastically increases the clarity and speed of thought. The drug is mildly mutagenic and powerfully addictive. The skin of an addict has a strange, luminous quality, almost a translucence. When startled, the addict's eyes flash with a pale inward light and his flesh ripples as though to move off the bone. These addicts are invariably highly skilled academics and professionals.

A character taking Truth Seeker gains +1 Intellect and +1 on all Academic skill rolls for the duration of the solution's effects.

Any time a character uses the substance, he must make a Will roll versus DR 14. If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the character becomes addicted to Truth Seeker. On a critical failure, the character has a massive stroke and permanently suffers –2 Coordination. If his Coordination is reduced to 0, the character is paralyzed. If the character's Coordination is reduced below 0, he dies.

If an addicted character goes a week without taking a dose of Truth Seeker, he will be unable to sleep or think clearly and suffers –2 on skill rolls. Over time, his mind will begin to disintegrate without the solution. At the end of each additional week, the character must make a Will check (DR 14). If he fails the roll, the character suffers –1 Intellect and Will. If the character is reduced to 0 Intellect or Will, he enters a comatose state lasting d5 days after which he awakens. Upon waking, the character recovers 1 point of Will and Intellect but must make another roll after a week. If the character receives a dose of Truth Seeker, these penalties are instantly removed. There is no known cure for Truth Seeker addiction.

**Alterations:** None

### Vitriolic Shell

**Formulation:** Topical
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** Clear liquid in a glass vial
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 10s per application
**Production Time:** 30 minutes
**Purchase Price:** Illegal (£1/10s/- per application)
**Reaction Time:** Instantaneous
**Duration:** 16 seconds or 4 combat rounds
**Effect:** The solution is a highly corrosive chemical carried in glass vials intended to break when thrown at a target. When the vial breaks, anyone within a five-foot diameter will be covered with acid. In the first round, a victim suffers a +8 damage roll. Every round thereafter, the Damage Modifier is reduced by 2. When Damage Modifier reaches 0, the chemical's efficacy is exhausted.

This solution may not cause side effects. If the initial roll fails, the synthesis must begin from scratch with fresh materials.

**Alterations:** None

### Warlock

**Formulation:** Ingested
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** Foul-smelling, red-black solution that pulses with a bloody inner-light.
**DR:** 14
**Material Cost:** 2s per dose
**Production Time:** 2 hours
**Purchase Price:** 10s per dose
**Reaction Time:** d10 minutes
**Duration:** d5 hours if consumed, d10 hours if injected
**Effect:** Warlock is a powerful psychoactive alchemical solution that renders an imbiber utterly fearless. While affected by the substance, a character's eyes glow faintly red in the dark and his breath smells of blood. A character under the influence of Warlock automatically succeeds at all Will – Fear rolls and gains +1 on Charm – Intimidation rolls.

**Alterations:** None

### Watcher

**Formulation:** Ingested or injected
**Substance Type:** Drug
**Appearance:** A distilled liquor, pale green in colour

**DR:** 14
**Material Cost:** 5s per dose
**Production Time:** 1 week
**Purchase Price:** £1
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 minutes
**Duration:** d10 hours if consumed, 2d10 hours if injected
**Effect:** Some Mourners and Undertakers make use of a refined form of Jack's Blessing, a distilled liquor known as Watcher, to sharpen their senses when on business. Aristocrats of the decadent stripe make use of this drug in various forms to better enjoy their debaucheries. The substance may be imbibed or injected, the latter of which is by far the most potent.

A character under the effects of Watcher gains +1 Prowess and +2 on Wit – Perception rolls for the duration of the drug's effects. However, each time a character uses Watcher, he must make a Vitality roll (DR 14) after the drug's duration expires. If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, he will suffer a painful headache for d10 hours that renders him intolerably sensitive to light and noise. The character can do little more than lie still until the pain passes.

On a critical failure, the character contracts Usher's Syndrome: the senses gain a painful and increasing acuity, making ordinary sensations intolerably intense and forcing the sufferer into a deepening isolation (see Hypersensitive, Chapter 3, page 187). Furthermore, the metabolism slows, resulting in an altered perception of time. Ultimately, the consumption of food becomes intolerable, and the afflicted slips into a comatose state. The condition is invariably fatal.

The drug has no effect on half-lifers.
**Alterations:** None

### Werther

**Formulation:** Injected or ingested
**Substance Type:** Drug
**Appearance:** Pale pink in colour, possessing a thick herbal flavour and a penetrating tarry odour
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 5s
**Production Time:** 2 hours
**Purchase Price:** Highly illegal (£1+)
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 seconds
**Duration:** Permanent
**Effect:** Werther was originally the product of an ill-fated attempt to use Maiden's Heart as the basis for a new combat drug. The experiment failed spectacularly. When distilled, the beneficial properties of the plant are destroyed. The resulting drug causes massive systemic haemorrhaging, resulting in "blood sweats" and bleeding from the orifices of the body. A character injecting or imbibing the substance must succeed in a Vitality roll (DR 20) or die within three minutes of receiving the dose.
**Alterations:** None

## Opiates

*"Opium! dread agent of unimaginable pleasure and pain! I had heard of it as I had of manna or of Ambrosia, but no further: how unmeaning a sound was it at that time! what solemn chords does it now strike upon my heart! what heart-quaking vibrations of sad and happy remembrances! Reverting for a moment to these, I feel a mystic importance attached to the minutest circumstances connected with the place and the time, and the man (if man he was) that first laid open to me the Paradise of Opium-eaters."*

—*Thomas De Quincey,* Confessions of an English Opium Eater, *1821*

In the Neo-Victorian world, use of opium is widespread. The miseries of the slums of London are overwhelming, and those with the funds necessary to obtain some escape provide an insatiable market for the cheaper products of opium refining. The drug is less expensive even than slap gin, being classified as a medicinal substance and therefore exempt from the taxes levied on alcohol. The upper classes, particularly the aristocrats subscribing to a more decadent philosophy, make the enjoyment of opiates into a virtue. The small middle class, ever sensitive to fashion, strives to emulate the aristocracy in their quieter pleasures. In all, the profits to be made in the production and refining of opiates are immense. There are traditional fields still devoted entirely to the growth of the poppy and to wormwood; the poppy and its sister crop appear to have some immunity to the blight corrupting these lands, producing apparently normal harvests where no other crops will grow.

The primary operative powers of opiates are twofold. In the brain, opiates act to dull pain, induce euphoria, and control wakefulness. In the body, opiates act directly on the muscles of the intestinal tract, freezing intestinal operation and thereby causing rapid-onset constipation. Despite this, the suite of properties of opiates recommend them for many of the ailments generally suffered by the poorer classes; the symptoms of respiratory disease, dysentery, and cholera may be tolerably controlled by opiates, and the euphoria induced by these drugs is useful in alleviating the many sufferings

of the patient and inducing a state, however temporary, of repose.

Despite the advent of synthetic palliatives, opiates have retained their popularity. There are a number of reasons for the continued ubiquity of opium-based remedies. First, the inexpensiveness with which opiates can be obtained and processed into useful forms remains a significant factor in its favour. Second, the drug's suite of effects is eminently suitable for the treatment of many of the ailments of the slums, which would otherwise require a series of separate medications. Third, addiction is of relatively little concern; the need is easy to fill, and in some circles, opiate use is a fashionable social vice. Finally, many within Neo-Victorian London, especially among the poor, have little trust of doctors; opiate use is often a form of self-medication practiced by those unable or unwilling to make recourse to the dubious skills of the surgeons.

Neo-Victorians have access to opiates in a wide variety of forms. Crude tar-opium is the most readily available form of the drug. Available for purchase at any well-stocked apothecary, this form is cheap, if not terribly potent. Laudanum is likewise readily available on the apothecary's shelf and is often recommended by surgeons to their patients as a remedy for moderate pain and nervous tension. Higher-quality opium may be obtained readily from the apothecaries that make a business of supplying the moneyed classes, if sufficient funds are available. Medicinal-grade morphine is consistently available to physicians and the military, including licensed Undertakers, and tends to be manufactured under the supervision of a physician. Black-market sources exist, but the supply is often of questionable quality, and the price is high. Heroin is difficult to obtain; no legitimate sources exist, and though there is a black market thriving in the East End, the quality of the goods available is highly variable. Aristocratic and highly moneyed families may have private sources for their drugs of choice, and the goods obtained through one of these connections are likely to be extremely potent and of high quality.

### Opium, Refined

**Formulation:** Ingested or Inhaled
**Substance Type:** Drug
**Appearance:** Dark-coloured, waxy resin, usually in the form of a pill or brick
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 10s for 30 doses
**Production Time:** 72 hours
**Purchase Price:** 2s per pill
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 minutes if eaten or seconds when smoked
**Duration:** Varies, see below
**Effect:** Raw opium must be processed and refined before it is suitable for smoking or eating. Refined opium may be consumed, though its harsh, bitter taste is generally masked by combining the opium into pills with herbs or mixing the substance into wine or liquor. More often, the cooked opium is smoked. To do so, the smoker puts a pea-sized pellet of opium into his pipe and heats it indirectly until the intoxicating alkaloids, including morphine, are released. While a first-time user may find the drug causes nausea, this unpleasant effect rarely returns more than once. More regular users often smoke several pipes consecutively before falling asleep. When the smoker awakens, he is calm and relaxed but lethargic.

The duration of the opium-induced sleep depends on the amount the character ate or smoked. The effects of a single pill or pipe last for 14 + d10 minutes. Each additional pill or pipe adds an hour to the duration. During this time, the character falls into a deep, trance-like sleep from which he cannot be awakened.

After the drug's duration expires, the character will suffer severe lethargy for d10 hours. During this time the character suffers –1 Wit, Will, Intellect, and Charm and –1 on skill rolls.

A character using opium once or twice is not at risk of addiction. However, if the character takes the drug more regularly, he must make a Will roll (DR 11) each time he indulges. If the roll fails, the character becomes addicted to opium. If the character goes 24 hours without taking opium, his addiction will begin to get the better of him. Withdrawal sets in and the character experiences muscle and stomach cramps, vomiting, insomnia, anxiety, irritability, depression, diarrhea, headaches, and constant sweating. The character suffers –3 Vitality, Wit, Will, Intellect, and Charm and –1 on skill rolls until either he takes a dose of opium or he detoxes over a week. A character cannot have an attribute reduced below 1 as a result of opium withdrawal. Once the character takes opium in any form, this penalty is immediately removed.

If the character makes it through detox, he will be free of the effects of withdrawal. However, should the character ever use the drug again, he will immediately become addicted once more.
**Alterations:** None

## Morphine

**Formulation:** Ingested or injected
**Substance Type:** Drug
**Appearance:** A white, crystalline solid cooked to form a thick, viscous liquid for injection
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 10s for 20 doses
**Production Time:** 4 hours
**Purchase Price:** 2s per dose
**Reaction Time:** Instantaneous when injected or 10 + d10 minutes when ingested
**Duration:** 6 hours + 6d10 minutes
**Effect:** Morphine, like the Opium from which it is derived, is an extremely powerful and addictive pain killer. In addition to numbing pain, Morphine also alters mood, induces sleep, decreases hunger, and inhibits coughing. Undesirable effects include hallucinations, nightmares, and insomnia. At the onset of the drug's effect, the character must make a Vitality roll versus DR 14. If the roll succeeds, the character enters a dull stupor for the duration of the drugs' effects. During this time, the character suffers –3 Coordination, Wit, Will, Intellect, and Charm and –3 on skill rolls. If the roll fails, the character goes unconscious for the duration of the drugs' effects. On a critical failure, the character overdoses and dies. Those who remain conscious complain of dizziness, confusion, drowsiness, lethargy, constipation, itching, sweating, agitation, stiff muscles, double or blurred vision, chills, shallow breathing, fainting, hives, and swelling of the extremities.

Addiction and withdrawal for this substance follow the same rules as for opium, except that rolls to avoid addiction use a DR of 14. Addiction to morphine is particularly common among physicians due to the consistent access to the drug that their profession affords.

## Heroin

**Formulation:** Inhaled, ingested, injected, or smoked
**Substance Type:** Drug
**Appearance:** White, off-white, or brown powder with a bitter taste
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 10s for 20 doses
**Production Time:** 8 hours
**Purchase Price:** 2s per dose
**Reaction Time:** Varies, see below
**Duration:** 4 hours + 6d10 minutes
**Effect:** Heroin, an opium derivative made from morphine, is a highly addictive pain killer. It may be taken in a variety of ways including inhaling the drug itself, or "chasing the dragon," breathing in the vapours produced by heating the drug. It may cause less nausea than morphine, and its sedative and euphoric effects are stronger.

The speed and intensity of the effects of the heroin are dependent on the method of use. Smoking and inhalation produce rapid but relatively gentle results; the user feels a sense of overwhelming relaxation immediately if the drug is smoked, or within fifteen minutes if inhaled. Injection causes more profound drug effects within fifteen minutes.

After the euphoria passes, the character will go "on the nod," drifting off and then waking up repeatedly. The character will be unable to concentrate or think clearly, and his respiration and pulse will be depressed. Users may also feel nauseated. The character can take no actions while under the effects of the drug.

At the onset of the drug's effect, the character must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds, the drug affects the character normally. If the roll fails, the character becomes nauseated and vomits profusely. On a critical failure, the character dies of overdose.

Addiction and withdrawal for this substance follow the same rules as for opium, except the roll to avoid addiction is versus a DR of16.
**Alterations:** None

## Laudanum

*"Who was the man who invented laudanum? I thank him from the bottom of my heart.... I have had six delicious hours of oblivion; I have woken up with my mind composed; I have written a perfect little letter .... and all through the modest little bottle of Drops, which I see on my bedroom chimney-piece at this moment. 'Drops,' you are a darling! If I love nothing else, I love you."*

*—Wilkie Collins,* Armadale, *1866*

**Formulation:** Ingested
**Substance Type:** Drug
**Appearance:** Generally a port-coloured or pale brownish liquid, with an acrid odour and bitter taste
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 10d for 20 doses
**Production Time:** 4 hours
**Purchase Price:** 1s per bottle (20 doses or drops)
**Reaction Time:** 10 + d10 minutes
**Duration:** 3 hours + 6d10 minutes
**Effect:** Laudanum, also called opium wine, is a tincture of opium and alcohol, generally mixed with herbs or other

liqueurs to improve palatability. The usual recipe is a mixture of opium tincture and wine, flavoured with spices. It is a favourite cure-all, widely prescribed throughout Neo-Victorian society for everything from pain relief to cough suppression. The broad availability of the substance has resulted in a lack of stigma attached to its use and made addiction to it very popular.

A character under the effects of laudanum suffers –1 Wit, Will, Intellect, and Charm and –1 on skill rolls. If the character takes a greater dose, double or triple these penalties. If any stat is reduced below 0, the character overdoses and dies.

The character suffers no penalties after laudanum use if he is not addicted; the lower doses prescribed medicinally to relieve pain in an unaccustomed metabolism do not have the same after effects as the doses habitually used by the addict.

Addiction and withdrawal for this substance follow the same rules as for opium.

### Paregoric

**Formulation:** Ingested
**Substance Type:** Drug
**Appearance:** Clear, anise-flavoured liquid
**DR:** 11
**Material Cost:** 5d for 80 doses
**Production Time:** 4 hours
**Purchase Price:** 4d per bottle (20 doses or drops)
**Reaction Time:** 10 + d10 minutes
**Duration:** 3 hours + 6d10 minutes
**Effect:** Paregoric is a flavoured, much less potent form of laudanum, which can also be used as a pain killer and cough suppressant. Confusion between paregoric and laudanum, both tinctures of opium, can lead to accidental overdoses in self-medicating individuals. Because it is less potent than laudanum, paregoric is generally harmless when taken in small doses, but it too can lead to opium dependence. Paregoric addiction and withdrawal for this substance follow the same rules as for opium.

## Neo-Victorian Medicine

Neo-Victorian medical technology is extremely advanced. Principles of anaesthesia and antisepsis are well understood, and the anatomy and biochemistry of the human organism has been thoroughly catalogued. Corrective and optional surgeries of nearly any imaginable type are possible, and even the limitations of the healing power of the human body can be extended to permit more radical procedures.

It is possible for a determined and well-funded individual to change his appearance almost completely through surgery. Appearance-altering procedures from modest local plastys to alterations of large-scale bone structure are possible, though the most drastic of these procedures will require considerable time and resources to complete. An individual can alter his facial features, the colour of his skin, his height, and even the proportions of his limbs through surgery. Healing can be accelerated artificially within specially constructed suspended animation chambers in which the vital functions of the body are supported artificially while the healing of physical trauma is encouraged; it is possible to repair damage in this manner that would otherwise be fatal.

Transplant surgery is also possible, and materials can be modified to decrease the risk of rejection, though the receiver of a transplant will almost certainly need to take anti-rejection drugs for the remainder of his life. If an excellent physician operates in a state-of-the-art surgical facility with access to high-quality cadaverous materials, he can replace limbs and organs with high rates of success. However, it is difficult to obtain access to good-quality donor materials, and the condition of the material is of extreme importance: tissues that have decayed too far or that have been taken from a body infected by the Plague will result in aggressive sepsis and death.

Medical care in the Neo-Victorian world is not egalitarian. The miracles of medical science come at a price, and the services of the gentleman physicians of Britain are seldom within the means of any individual less wealthy than an industrialist. Most of the surgical establishments are staffed and attended by common apothecary-surgeons, anatomists who possess an extensive working knowledge of human anatomy but seldom have access to the clean-room operating conditions and battery of advanced drugs available in the professional hospitals.

### Medical Practitioners

Much of medical science, now as ever, is devoted to the day-to-day maintenance of the human body. The physicians in academia's ivory towers pursue the dreams of the alchemists, searching for the perfect medicine. Meanwhile, down in the streets of the city, a legion of common surgeons mends the fractures and closes the wounds of the teeming crowds of London.

The gentlemen graduates of the Royal College of Physicians are the paragon of the medical field. These learned scholars are required not only to have studied the modern masters as well as the alchemists but also to have interpreted select works from the first through seventeenth centuries.

The finest of these gentleman physicians are, in general, too highly bred and refined to dirty their hands with public medical practice. They spend their time in pursuit of the true prize, the coveted Elixir Vitae. Many, however, make the bulk of their living providing the discreet medical services demanded by the elite.

It is the surgeon, the practical anatomist of the medical trade, who is left with the hands-on work of cutting open bodies, mending broken bones, and diagnosing diseases. The surgeon additionally functions as an apothecary, both prescribing drugs and rare herbs and formulating medicines. An average surgeon has managed to pay the fees to attend some number of medical lectures, but he many have not completed the course for full certification as a physician. Though surgeons are no longer the working-class grave robbers they were thought to be during the Victorian Era, they are still looked down upon by the physicians, who eagerly point out that most reanimators come from among the ranks of surgeons. Nonetheless, surgeons are, over all, well-respected and necessary members of the middle class.

A number of quack "pill-men" who lack the training even of a common surgeon make their living selling patent medicine on the streets of the metropolis despite the official censuring of this practice. Though sometimes referred to as the "poor man's doctor," many are little more than drug pushers who dull the pain of the lower classes or snake oil salesmen peddling worthless remedies to the ignorant and unwary. The treatments dispensed by these merchants are at best mildly efficacious and at worst poisonous. Their patent pills and ointments, provided as remedy to a number of common ailments ranging from cough and rash to infertility and zombie-bite, are resorted to with some frequency by the lower classes despite their near-universal inefficacy, as these unfortunates have no other recourse to even the humblest of medical care and find consolation, if not physical relief, in the hope of a cure.

In addition to relying on these hucksters, the poor also rely on home remedies to cure even the most dire of illnesses. Principles of basic care are commonly known, and folkloric remedies are popular among the uneducated. Home remedies, being by large cheaper than attendance by even a common leech-surgeon, enjoy unrestricted popularity among the lower classes.

## Hospitals

The hospitals of the present day are thoroughly modern, sanitary establishments, heavily involved in research as well as clinical practice. Many are linked to the medical schools, providing opportunities for young clinicians to assist in diagnosis and treatment during the course of their training. Diagnoses are quick and sure. Cure rates are high, and rates of secondary and opportunistic infection are low. A range of efficacious pharmaceuticals – from antimicrobials and antivirals to courses capable of completely re-engineering the human metabolism — are available to the patient. For those who can afford to avail themselves of the services of the medical establishment, most disease is little more than an inconvenience. However, the benefits of modern medicine are not obtained cheaply, and admittance to the medical hospitals of London is very rarely possible for the working poor.

The metropolis does have any number of sick-houses, medical and surgical institutions supervised by the city's surgeons. There is no licensing process for these houses, and the quality of care varies according to the skill of the supervising surgeon. Quality of equipment and pharmaceuticals available in these institutions likewise varies: some of these public hospitals are very well equipped, capable of complex surgeries and able to provide medication and care for a wide variety of conditions, while others are little more than field hospitals, lacking even the equipment to maintain sterile conditions and staffed by uneducated barber-surgeons and bloodletters. Thanks to the widespread use of antiseptic principles, most of these surgical houses are not the abattoirs and repositories of disease that they were in the nineteenth century, but secondary infection is not uncommon in these places because the overcrowded conditions facilitate pathogen exchange. Complications resulting from operations occur fairly commonly, depending on the calibre and experience of the surgeon, and in a poorly equipped medical centre, these complications are not infrequently fatal. In all cases, cure is far from certain.

Many of the poor of the city come to their end in the lowest of the medical establishments, the Hospices of the Quiet Sleep. These houses offer little in the way of medical care and offer no hope of recovery or cure. Rather, they are establishments where the old, sick, and dying are taken to live out their last few days in relative comfort. Wounds may be mended and simple emergency procedures performed, but few of these institutions possess operating facilities more sophisticated than those of an average military field hospital. The Hospices are provided as a public service and so are made use of heavily by the indigent and the working poor. Transients and vagrants found on the street in poor condition are generally remanded to these places by the police as a service to public health. All Hospices have large crematoria on the premises to which all the departed are delivered as soon as possible after the final breath.

The Hospices are run and maintained by the Sisters of the Quiet Sleep. Despite the religious connotations of the order's name, the Sisters do not belong to any particular faith. Some

# Medical Procedures

**DR:** Each procedure lists a Medicine skill DR. If a character attempting the procedure fails a roll, he may immediately reroll. Each time the character attempting the procedure fails, the patient suffers –1 Vitality and his recovery time is increased by 50%. If the patient's Vitality is reduced to 0, he enters a coma for 10 + d10 days. If a patient is reduced to below 0 Vitality, he dies. Vitality lost due to failed procedure rolls is regained at a rate of 1 point per week. Reduce the DR of operations performed in state-of-the-art hospitals by 4. Increase the DR of operations performed without proper operating facilities by 2 or more.

**Hospital Stay:** This is the length of time the character must remain in hospital or under round-the-clock professional care.

**Recovery Time:** This is the length of time that the character has to remain off his feet while recovering from surgery. If the patient is infirm or aged (a physical age greater than fifty-five years, with effects of any anti-agapics considered), recovery times are doubled; if patient is young (less than fifteen years), recovery times are halved.

**Cost:** The costs and recovery times below are for basic medical procedures, performed on an individual in good health. State-of-the–art medical care costs three times the amount listed and recovery time is cut in half.

| Procedure | DR | Hospital Stay | Recovery Time | Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Depilation, Small Area, Permanent | Auto | 1 hour | 1 day | 5s |
| Facial Reconstruction | 16 | 1 month | 3 months | £100 |
| Liposuction | 14 | 4 hours | 6 weeks | £10 |
| Plasty , Large-Scale | 16 | 1 month | 3 months | £100 |
| Prosthetic Implantation – Oraculum | 16 | 3 weeks | 3 months | £35** |
| Prosthetic Implantation – Rattler | 14 | 2 weeks | 1 month | £5** |
| Prosthetic Implantation – Ticker | 20 | 1 month | 3 months | £50 |
| Reconstruction, Bone | 14 | 2 months | 6 months | £75 |
| Reconstruction, Skull | 16 | 6 months | 1 year | £120 |
| Replacement, Hip | 14 | 1 month | 3 months | £50 |
| Repigmentation, Eye | 14 | 1 month | 3 months | £30 |
| Repigmentation, Facial | 11 | 1 week | 1 month | £10 |
| Repigmentation, Full Body | 11 | 2 weeks | 2 months | £25 |
| Rhinoplasty | 11 | 6 hours | 6 weeks | £10 |
| Ribectomy | 14 | 1 month | 3 months | £10 |
| Transplant, Eye | 14 | 3 weeks | 3 months | £75*+ |
| Transplant, Finger | 14 | 2 weeks | 3 months | £30*+ |
| Transplant, Limb | 14 | 2 months | 6 months | £100*+ |
| Transplant, Organ | 16 | 3 months | 6 months | £100*+ |

* This includes the cost of the transplanted body part. Reduce the cost by half if the character does not have to pay for the replacement part.

** This is the cost of the implantation surgery. The prosthetic costs extra (see Prosthetic Grafts, Chapter 4, pages 231-232).

Add £3 for each week of the character's hospital stay.

are very young Mourners who have not yet completed their formal training and accepted a more lucrative post, and many are retired Mourners, continuing their life's work by training the succeeding generation. Service in the Hospices of London forms an important part of the training for young Mourners, allowing them to inure themselves to the constant company of the dead and dying and to gain a practical acquaintance with the mechanics of reanimation. Here they can receive the benefit of instruction by the most experienced Mourners, who frequently return to the Hospices when the strength required by their profession begins to fade. These women, well trained and familiar with undeath, excel at detecting the departure of life from a body, allowing rapid disposal of the corpses and minimizing incidences of reanimation within the institution. When a reanimation does occur, it is generally dealt with swiftly; however, as the Mourners who find employment in these establishments are generally past the prime of their strength or young and inexperienced, Hospices have occasionally been lost to infection from within.

### Transplants and Organ Harvesting

The medical technologies of the Neo-Victorian Age include the capabilities for surgical modification and replacement of nearly any portion of the human anatomy, including replacement with mechanical substitutes (see Biomechanicals, pages 361–363). However, some of these devices fall short of the ideal, and, when possible, most patients prefer to receive the seamless transplantation of new flesh rather than the jarring mechanical alternative.

The organs used for transplantation must be obtained from a reliable source. Organs that are contaminated – whether by the Plague or by some more mundane impurity – are of no use for transplantation, as the host will suffer from the contagion introduced by the foreign tissues. Plague-tainted tissues, in particular, will cause aggressive sepsis in the patient which quickly culminates in death and reanimation.

Much transplanted material is taken from human cadavers. Hospitals are a preferred source, as the cadaver can be examined for signs of the Plague and other contagions after the tissues are collected. Some of the Hospices of the Quiet Sleep possess operating wards in which limited trauma surgery is possible; these centres can be used for collection and temporary preservation of cadaver tissues, but transplant operations are never done at these locations and would, indeed, be nearly impossible. Hospices located in or near hot zones do not process tissues for transplantation due to the high levels of infection among their clientele.

The difficulty of locating sufficient clean materials to meet the medical needs of the populace has led to the creation of a black market. The same body-parts market that supplies the needs of illegal reanimators has adapted itself to the requirements of the legitimate medical community. Body parts obtained from dubious sources can be given false paperwork and sold to legitimate medical institutions. The operating hospital is not always complicit in the fraud, and individual surgeons are only rarely aware that the materials with which they are working may be hazardous. Hospitals frequently test transplant materials for mundane contagions; however, there is no way to test individual organs for the Plague.

It is possible to grow tissues and even entire organs under laboratory conditions. The resulting materials will ordinarily be free of contamination, and it is possible to type the engineered tissues to avoid the risk of rejection by the host. However, the process requires extensive operator expertise and equipment that is unavailable outside of the finest of medical institutions, and the tissues produced in this way are extremely expensive. Only the wealthiest within London have access to this technology.

#### Laboratory Grown Tissue & Organs

*To create vat-grown tissues, a character requires both the Alchemy and Medicine skills. The creation of vat-grown organs requires a Homunculus-grade artificial womb and a large amount of ALS2(0). The initial set-up time is one week of research and preparations, concluding with six hours of concerted laboratory work. The developing tissues must be attended to at least another five hours per week throughout the entire incubation period.*

*At the end of the incubation period, the character makes an Alchemy skill roll (DR 14-18 depending on complexity of desired tissues and +2 for tissues typed to a particular recipient). If the roll succeeds, the character produces viable tissues. If the roll fails, the tissue is non-viable.*

## To Render Man Invulnerable

*"I entered with the greatest diligence into the search of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life; but the latter soon obtained my undivided attention. Wealth was an inferior object; but what glory would attend the discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death!"*

*— Mary Shelley,* Frankenstein, *1818*

If the medical advancements made by the Victorians were astounding, the feats of the Neo-Victorians are noth-

ing short of miraculous. The anti-agapic technologies of the Neo-Victorian world, offshoots of research in pursuit of the Elixir Vitae sought after by alchemists for a millennium, have extended the human lifespan far past its natural boundaries. These miraculous rejuvenation treatments are thought to be capable of extending the lifespan of those wealthy enough to undergo them to three hundred years and more. These medications are prohibitively expensive, but the more philanthropic researchers of the time dream of a day where the true Elixir is discovered and these medicines of immortality become within the means of every man.

These treatments, true miracles of science, can successfully retard physical aging to an extraordinary degree, essentially preventing the aging process from progressing altogether for years or decades at a time. Moreover, the treatments are actually capable of reversing aging to some degree, depending on the state of cellular degradation already present. When applied to the already young, the age-reversing effects are seldom readily apparent, but an aged gentleman can often be restored to the form of a healthy young man by a single successful course of modern anti-agapics.

Still, limitations on the human lifespan remain. Over time, the tissues become less able to receive rejuvenation. The effects of the anti-agapics diminish with each succeeding course, and the necessary interval between treatments becomes shorter as aging within the tissues accelerates. Ultimately, the anti-agapics will fail altogether: the tissues will slide inexorably into senescence and the long-delayed death of the body will come.

Modern anti-agapic science finds its origins in the work of Dr. Howard Bryant, a scientist of the Reclamation Era, whose research was devoted to unravelling the mysteries of the "half-life condition." In the half-life state observed in the ghoul and the thrope, though the creature was observed to be essentially "alive" in that it possessed a working metabolism, the aging process was arrested to an extraordinary degree. These creatures appeared to possess the ability to repair their physiology such that the cellular effects of aging were minimized. Dr. Bryant, based on observations of the peculiarities of ghoul and thrope biochemistry, developed a theory of cellular rejuvenation for human tissues. Ultimately, he succeeded in coaxing human cells in culture to temporarily undergo a reversal of senescence. This initial success paved the way for the development of the first clinical anti-agapics, which preceeded the modern science of anti-aging medicine.

Today, the Bryant Centre at Cambridge Medical represents the cutting edge of anti-agapic research. The finest minds of Britain can be found in this institution, labouring ceaselessly toward new and finer medicines to stave off the ravages of age. The wealthiest Neo-Victorian families make use of the Bryant Centre's anti-agapic clinic exclusively; no finer care is to be had in the known world, and nowhere are the attending physicians more educated and refined. To be accepted as a patron of the Bryant Centre is something of an honour among the nation's elite.

The quest for the perfect anti-agapic, a serum imparting eternal life and perpetual youth, continues in earnest. Wealthy matriarchs and patriarchs of the great houses, fearing death, give handsome endowments to the medical universities in the hope of sponsoring some great discovery. The less scrupulous of the great families are whispered to have retained the services of private physicians, researchers shunned by the academic community for the extremity of their practices. The families are rumoured to allow these scientists access to their extraordinary largess in pursuit of unspeakable researches and to conceal the resulting horrors from the attention of the law.

# Anti-Agapic Treatments

### Basic Treatment

This therapy is capable of restoring some of the vigour of youth to a person of middle age. The treatment is a continuous regimen of specialized drugs, most delivered topically, and the effects last only as long as the treatment can be maintained. If the character's treatments are interrupted, his body rapidly ages over the following three months as it returns to its natural physical age.

Individuals undergoing the basic treatment appear and function as if fifteen years younger than their actual age. This treatment cannot cause a character to appear younger than eighteen years of age (see Age and Aging, Chapter 3, page 135). This therapy does not actually prolong the lifespan of the recipient directly, though quality of life is improved.

**Cost** – Basic treatments cost £10 per monthly visit.

### Broad-Spectrum Anti-Agapic

This treatment is capable of reversing some of the effects of aging on a cellular level. This treatment cannot be given to individuals who have not yet achieved middle age. In young patients, effects will be minimal, and there is a significant danger of resuming the growth process, resulting in malformations, gigantism, or aggressive carcinogenesis. The initial treatment will "set back" the aging process by twenty years over approximately six days of therapy, which must be spent under the care of a supervising physician. Following treatment, the aging process will resume as normal from the new

effective age. The treatment cannot be repeated within a five-year period. The character's second treatment removes 15 + d5 years. The third treatment removes 10 + d5. The fourth, 5 + d5 years. After the fourth treatment, the character must make a Vitality roll (DR 11) after each subsequent treatment. If the roll succeeds, the treatment removes d5 years from the character. If the roll fails, nothing happens.

This treatment cannot lower the character's apparent age below eighteen years.

**Cost** – Broad-spectrum Anti-agapics cost £300 per six-day treatment.

### Bryant Centre Specialized Anti-Agapic Therapy

This treatment is capable of reversing significant aging effects. A single treatment will set back the aging process by thirty years. The treatment cannot be given to individuals who have not reached middle age for the reasons described above. The initial therapy requires a full three weeks under the supervision of a qualified physician to ensure that the manipulation of cellular processes is accomplished safely. Preservation of the initial effect requires monthly maintenance at the hands of a qualified physician who is personally familiar with the medical history and metabolism of the patient. This maintenance can further stall the effects of aging for ten years. Once the maintenance period is ended, or if maintenance is discontinued, the aging process resumes as normal from the new effective age. The treatment cannot be repeated within a ten-year period. Repetition of the treatment is resisted by the cells, each subsequent treatment reversing five fewer years of aging. After the fifth treatment and any subsequent treatments, the character must make a Vitality roll (DR 11). If the roll succeeds, the treatment reverses 5 + d5 years. If the roll fails, the character receives no benefit from the treatment.

**Cost** – A three-week treatment costs £1000+. The character must undergo monthly anti-agapic maintenance at the cost of £100 per visit.

— *Advertisement,* Ladies' Home Journal, *June 2089.*

## Madhouses

Insanity is commonplace in Neo-Victorian London. The squalid and overcrowded conditions of the metropolis wear away at the stability of men's minds. The daily drudgery in the poorest of conditions weakens the mind of the unfortunates who labor in the city's depths, and the horror of the reanimations and the eternal, inescapable fear born of a world of monsters continues to gnaw away at the sanity of even the hardest men. Those driven to insanity by the conditions within the metropolis frequently become violent and sociopathic, destroying blindly until they can be captured and subdued. These semi-human monsters, murderous and obscene, fill the asylums of London.

The common madhouses of the metropolis exist for the containment of the insane. Touted as houses of reform where the "nerve case" and the invalid can find rest and cure, in reality these institutions are often little better than workhouses and prisons. Principles of restraint are once again in vogue within the medical establishment; inmates of the madhouses may be confined in small rooms or kept in straitjackets and shackles for years on end, ostensibly to prevent self-injury or attacks against doctors and staff. Drugs are used extensively to ensure the good behaviour of the patients. Tranquilizers are in common use: both hyoscine and opiates are popular for the difficult cases (see the Catalogue, above).

Those inmates who are physically and mentally capable are expected to work. Their labour is used extensively in

the day-to-day maintenance of the madhouse itself. These workers are sometimes rented to the city for use in menial employments, such as the maintenance and repair of the scop processing plants, and the funds are used to defray the cost to the public of maintaining the asylum. The inmates are fed exclusively on scop harvested from the city's tanks. Bland but sustaining, this diet is sufficient to keep the body alive through the expected course of confinement.

Despite the efforts of modern psychological science, rates for real and lasting cures are disappointingly low. The physiological theories of insanity popular in the early Victorian Age have given way to a more thoroughly psychological understanding of insanity, permitting the establishment of psychotherapy and therapeutic neurochemistry as clinical sciences. Prior to 1900, theories of "degeneracy" maintained a solid foothold in the medical canon; it was believed that heredity was a deciding factor in the onset of madness and that the lower classes, being of poorer stock, were particularly prone to developing disturbances of the mind. In the early days of the Plague, the extraordinary number of traumatized survivors forced a reevaluation of the etiology of madness. It is presently understood that upbringing and living conditions contribute enormously to the psychological makeup of an individual and that the various stressors of civilization are important in understanding the fall of the human mind into psychosis. However, once the break has been made, it remains tremendously difficult to reconstruct the mind such that a full return to the chaotic world of the metropolis is possible. Some few of the milder or more acute cases can be repaired via psychoanalysis, hypnotic therapies, and judicious neurochemical adjustment and released. Most of the inmates of these asylums, however, remain chronic cases, wards of the mental hospital for life.

Madness among the rich is not less common than among the poor. Secluded from the filth and insanity of the city streets, the decadent wealthy are nonetheless subjected to a stultifying moral environment. Many carry on double lives, exemplars of virtue in the public eye who indulge a taste for depravity in secret. Kept in the darkness and permitted secret indulgences, the immoral and irrational sides of human nature blossom, drawing the spirit into a downward spiral of decadence. When the façade cracks, the monster is revealed.

However, those who can afford better care can avoid the asylums. Many wealthy families keep an alienist on retainer to deal with incidences of nervous behaviour (and outright insanity) within the family; the private nature of the arrangement ensures that the family is not needlessly embarrassed. In the case of chronic insanity, the patient is often removed to a privately maintained sanatorium by the consulting physician.

These homes, while not less confining than the common asylums and offering no better hope for a cure, are provided with a variety of amenities and luxuries that are not made available to the madmen of the lower classes. Furthermore, the rigid social divisions of the day make it unacceptable to incarcerate

the mad of the upper and lower class in the same environs.

The services of the prominent alienists are not, however, exclusively devoted to the care of the wealthy insane. Sanatoriums also remove individuals whose frailties and inappropriate behaviours prove to be an embarrassment to their families from high society; the individuals thus consigned to the physician's solicitous care are not always infirm of mind. Inconvenient relatives – expensive dowagers, meddlesome parents and in-laws, challengers to heirdoms, socially unacceptable eccentrics of all sorts – are frequently committed to the sanatoriums by family members powerful enough to purchase the appropriate diagnosis.

Moreover, many of these sanatoriums maintain an experimental ward, separate from the therapeutic wards where the rich are kept in luxury. It is in these less-fortunate places where common lunatics are contained for research. The prominent alienists who oversee these institutions have little difficulty in securing the choicest research subjects from the city's chronic wards. Many conduct regular tours of the city's public asylums in search of new material for their experiments. The acute and chronic cases are kept separated in these wards, and no one cares much to know what takes place in the dark rooms where the incurables are kept.

These hopeless cases are subjected to a battery of treatments over the course of their internment. Psychotherapy is rarely used here, as few of the incurables are capable of relating rationally to a physician, but hypnotherapy is used regularly, as it has proved invaluable in partitioning the mind of the patient to erase aversion patterns acquired over the course of therapy. The hypnotic partitions are unstable in the psychotic mind, and if removed from the care of a physician, an individual who has undergone this treatment will begin experiencing "flashbacks" to the horrors of the experimental treatments and will re-develop any phobias that had been blocked. Even more common are experimental physical treatments. Sensory deprivation and convulsive-shock therapies are commonplace, as are "therapies" that more closely resemble primitive tortures: showers, extreme forms of restraint, sleep deprivation, aversion therapies, direct neural stimulation, surgeries, and even simple beatings. Some alienists pursue this line of treatment under the questionable belief that the entire psychology of the chronic mental invalid must be broken down before the reconstruction of a healthy psyche can begin. Others, less concerned with the salvation of individual minds, inflict traumas on minds already cracked and unstable in the hope of inspiring a breakthrough of another sort.

Psychic abilities, particularly psychokinesis and pyrokinesis, have spontaneously manifested in individuals undergoing particularly intensive experimental therapies. Individuals who manifest in this manner tend to be extremely powerful psychics, but the manifestation seems to cement and deepen the preexisting psychoses. The result is a true monster – a psychic of extraordinary ability and fractured mind, plagued with delusions, often murderous, and always destructive. These individuals, despite being highly dangerous and very difficult to control, are greatly valued as research specimens by those seeking to uncover the roots of psychic power.

Rules for the treatment and cure of mental disease are found in Mental Disorders, Chapter 3, pages XXX – XXX.

## Disease

In the crowded and squalid conditions of the streets of the metropolis, a wide array of contagions thrive and vermin are as common as the diseases they spread. Tuberculosis claims countless lives every year among the denizens of the metropolis, and zymotic plagues spring up with regularity in the filthy conditions endured by the working poor. Lung cancer is found ubiquitously in the impoverished neighbourhoods. Smallpox, once nearly eliminated in Britain, was revived by the waves of refugees that found their way to the British compounds in the first days of the Plague. The disease makes periodic appearances in the poor quarters; outbreaks are followed by large-scale public vaccination, but due to widespread distrust of the technology, few inoculations can be given between epidemics. Influenza sweeps through the city at least once every year, killing the weak and the old. The inoculations are unable to keep pace with the disease, which mutates at an astonishing rate in the overcrowded boroughs inhabited by the working class. The use of modern plumbing systems in even the poorest districts of the metropolis has been instrumental in containing outbreaks of cholera, which once swept through London in periodic tides, killing untold numbers. Venereal diseases are common among the working poor and epidemic among the unlicensed prostitutes of the slums. The provisions of the reinstated Contagious Diseases Act allow the spread of venereal disease to be controlled to some degree. However, many of the prostitutes persist in operating outside the law, and it is far from unknown for individuals of the working class, not consistently prostitutes by trade, to take an occasional trick if the money offered is high enough. Syphilis is rampant in the lower sectors of society, and many a wealthy gentleman has presented the well-known symptoms of the disease after years of debauchery in the lower districts of the metropolis.

Worse, some of the whores in the low-rent districts carry an infection more fearful than the pox. The vampires of the city come here to feed, taking their glut of blood from these

unfortunate and jaded young women, who protest no irregularities of treatment if the price is high enough. Those who do not quickly meet some messy demise by some whim of their patron acquire the infection before long. The prostitutes who do not lose their reason when the transformation takes them will generally conceal their condition and continue in their accustomed way of life. They take their pleasure and their sustenance from those who seek their services, eventually transmitting the vampiric infection to the customers who they do not murder for food or sport (see Pathology of the Vampire, Chapter 5, pages 258-265 for more information on this infectious disease).

# Sciences of Sex and Gender

## Reproductive Technology

The Neo-Victorian understanding of reproductive physiology and biochemistry, as with other aspects of human biology, is extremely advanced. The old-fashioned diagnoses of "hysteria" and "wandering womb" have vanished from the medical lexicon. Although the traditional fascination and abhorrence toward sexual matters still holds sway, at least among the moralists and reformers of the middle class, discussions among medical men in the era are frank and direct, reflecting a vast working knowledge of the human condition.

Methods of assisted fertility are feasible with present-day technology. Fertility drugs, chemicals that encourage gamete production, are available for both males and females. It is possible to preserve sperm artificially and to perform artificial insemination, and many couples in Neo-Victorian London have conceived in this manner. The technology for in vitro incubation and the creation of embryos outside the womb is also available. However this technology skirts perilously close to legal and moral boundaries on the creation of artificial life, and few physicians will risk their reputations by performing such procedures.

For those not wishing to bring life into these dark times, a variety of contraceptive techniques are available. Barrier methods, from the condom to the diaphragm, are well within the technology of the age, as are topical spermicides. Prophylactics and spermicidal substances can be purchased from many apothecaries and are made available to customers in many of the city's brothels. Hormonal methods for maintaining temporary sterility in both the male and female can be formulated by any well-trained apothecary. Permanent and semi-permanent surgical sterilization can be performed by any competent surgeon with the proper equipment and a sterile operating suite. Artificial termination of pregnancy is possible through both chemical and surgical methods.

Despite the availability of contraception, its use is widely associated with "loose morals." Many of the city's moral reformers oppose discussion of contraceptive measures on the grounds that even the risk of unwanted pregnancy and disease should not be considerations in the life of a "proper" individual. Some physicians and apothecaries will refuse to dispense contraception to unmarried women on moral grounds; men rarely encounter this difficulty. Surgical sterilization is treated somewhat more leniently in public opinion, particularly in the case of married individuals who have already have children.

## Psychology and Sociology of Sex

Neo-Victorian conceptions of the psychology of sex and gender are somewhat advanced from the narrow preconceptions of their ancestors. However, despite certain rather revolutionary changes following the Plague Years, much of the relationship between male and female gender roles has remained remarkably traditional. The view of females as inherently fragile and incapable of active physical or mental exertion, already cast into serious doubt at the end of the Victorian Era by the activities of female reformers and suffragettes, was destroyed by the Plague. During the Plague Years and the Reclamation, every pair of able hands was needed for reconstruction and defence. Motherhood was no longer a barrier to work and an active life, and women were expected to be knowledgeable, strong minded, physically fit, and able to defend themselves and their families with force of arms if necessary. However, the need for population growth following the Reclamation had the effect of reestablishing traditional gender roles. Increasingly, women were expected to devote all of their energy toward bearing and raising a multitude of children, only maintaining a public life before marriage and after the children were grown.

The woman's role in Neo-Victorian culture has changed yet again over the past several decades. As the emphasis on female fertility declined after the Reclamation, in response to lower mortality rates, the average age for a woman's first pregnancy has risen from seventeen (during the Reclamation) to twenty-three. A small but significant percentage of women, primarily among the highly educated and those working as Mourners or Undertakers, never marry. While many women, particularly of the poorer classes, work outside the home out of necessity, most women of the middle class do not seek careers, but women within the upper classes often seek activity outside the home. Work for pay is slightly unusual among upper-class women, many preferring to take on social duties or establish themselves as active persons

of leisure in the sciences, politics, and philosophy. A slight majority of female professors, writers, politicians, scientists, physicians, and engineers hail from the wealthier families, where the opportunities for education are greater.

Failure to marry and have a domestic life, while tolerated in some circumstances and within certain social groups, remains a social aberration. Marriage and childbearing are the norm within the population. Common-law arrangements are the rule within the lower classes, who often cannot afford to legally and ritually formalize their unions. Among the upper classes, marriage is expected and is more often an arrangement between families than a love-match between individuals. In these families, younger children with married older siblings may be suffered to remain single and devote themselves to the pursuit of some profession.

Homosexual behaviour in either gender is generally treated as aberrant. While there are no longer laws against homosexual activity, traditional binary attitudes toward sex and gender are the general rule in the populace, and a sizeable portion of the population retains a personal aversion to the concept of homosexuality.

## Sexuality, Gender and Society

In 1885, under the provisions of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, all sexual behaviour between men, whether public or private, was made a crime under British law punishable by up to two years imprisonment with hard labour. In 1962, following the Reclamation, British lawmakers instituted a series of bills known as the Social Order Acts intended to encourage procreation and restore "a wholesome and normal moral order" to the kingdom. Under these acts, the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act was reaffirmed, lesbianism was made a criminal act punishable by not more than one year's imprisonment, and nonprocreative sexual activities between men and women were made an offence punishable by fines and public censure.

The unenforceability and negative social impact of these laws quickly became clear. In the first year, a large number of divorce cases were brought forward with one party alleging "unnatural activity" as grounds for separation. The police saw a rising number of cases of blackmail and extortion; the threat of public allegations of homosexuality was often sufficient to persuade men and women of position to pay for silence, regardless of whether there was any truth to the allegations. Policemen who had not made quota would raid public toilets and baths, arresting anyone who "looked queer"; the resulting legal tangles ruined reputations and marriages. A series of journalistic investigations in the 1970s revealed that criminalization had not reduced the number of incidences of "unnatural vice" within the city, and liberal reformers pointed to the absurdity of punishment for private sexual acts in a city where prostitution was an acknowledged industry. In 1979, nonprocreative male-female sex was decriminalized, and in 1987, laws prohibiting consensual homosexual activity between adults were removed from the British legal canon.

Social attitudes toward homosexuality vary significantly within the population. For most of the upper class, personal taste is a matter of indifference provided that the appearance of a conventional life is maintained. It is expected that marriage will be public and liaisons private, and so long as excessive scandal is avoided, the nature of the liaisons is of little concern except as colourful gossip. If, however, an individual refuses to marry and persists in flaunting unconventional affections, he is likely to find himself shunned by much of polite society, and if he has powerful enemies within the family, he may find himself cloistered away in the chronic wards of a private sanatorium. Within the middle and lower classes, this "free" attitude does not prevail. There are some liberally minded individuals who adopt a tolerant disposition. However, the more numerous conservative elements range in attitude from mild distaste to outrage, some even calling for the reinstatement of criminal penalties for homosexual behaviour.

Transsexuality occupies a shaky social and legal ground in Neo-Victorian Britain. The operations of the sex change, male to female or female to male, are feasible under modern technology. There are no laws penalizing surgeons who perform the procedures or those who undergo them, largely due to the reluctance of lawmakers to confront the matter. However, prevailing social attitudes are intolerant of those who would step outside the prescribed gender roles, and transsexuality is seen as a social and moral transgression. A physician or surgeon who is discovered to have performed these procedures will often be ostracized socially and professionally, and threats of violence are not uncommon; there are few even within London who would risk their reputations in this manner. The aristocratic families are especially intolerant of transsexuality within their ranks because a change of gender renders an individual "unmarriageable" and plays havoc with established traditions of inheritance. However, in the Neo-Victorian world, it is fairly easy to "pass" with the right clothing and practice; the recognized garb and mannerisms of men and women are distinctive and can be easily mimicked by a motivated individual.

# Forms of Man

In a world where near-human monstrosities plague the cities and the formless wastes, the concept of humanity has gained a certain sacredness, and the unfettered experimentation of mad science has given the Neo-Victorian world ample opportunity to learn to fear the not-quite-human. Research involving the creation or modification of human life, whether embryonic or post-mortem, is banned, and punishments are severe. Nevertheless, for many scientists, the lure of curiosity or the potential rewards of the research are too great, and so it continues. Even within the official halls of academia, work in prohibited areas of experimentation is relatively commonplace. The existence of these research programs, while never officially acknowledged, is something of an open secret within the scientific community.

## Children of Science

**From the notes of Dr. Wilhemina Hardie, from her days as a postdoctoral assistant at Oxford Medical.**

*...Upon entering the private laboratories, I was momentarily shocked. Cages upon cages of animals screaming, clacking, burbling, rattling the bolts upon the doors... The assistant who had led me here smiled and opened one of the small cages on the far end of the row. What hopped out onto his twisted arm was a creature unlike any I had seen... The whole body was perhaps two feet long, including a muscular and well-articulated tail held behind the body and moving in counterbalance. The hind limbs were slender but powerful like those of a lizard but articulated like a dog's. The front limbs were elongated, and a membrane stretched along their length, connecting the arms with the torso. Manifestly an adaptation for gliding... The head and face were most peculiar, being curiously flattened, with large luminous eyes like those of a human child. Upon drawing closer, I observed five digits on each of the tiny hands... The animal made a leap into the air, extending its arms and gliding to the floor at my feet. It looked up at me curiously and made a queer sound. There was more than animal intelligence in those eyes... I picked up the animal to examine it. It was warm to the touch, covered in a fine, soft, reddish fur – not at all unpleasant. There could be no doubt, upon examining the muscle structures and the fine bones of the little hands, what the creature's origins were. I looked at the lab assistant, now shoving trays of pellets into the cages, and saw with new eyes. What extraordinary work this was! The creature I carried, the malformed "orphan boy" with such dexterity in his twisted limbs – works of genius.*

*I moved past to the far doors, eager to see what I had not yet been shown....*

The purposeful manipulation of the stuff of man – genetic modification of human embryos – is considered Anathema by both the law and Neo-Victorian culture. It is felt that such a child, a thing created in sterile glass and

incubated in a metal womb, must be unnatural and monstrous, a thing somehow both more and less than human. Such researches are discouraged even within the medical community.

Nevertheless, the research continues. Artificial wombs capable of incubating a human foetus are extant but rare, difficult to construct and dangerous to possess. The wombs are sufficient for their purpose, but the technology is as yet imperfect; the products of the incubation are invariably malformed or defective in some fashion. Physical handicaps are common, in these vat-grown children, and dysfunctions of the brain are distressingly ever-present.

## Anathema

The most sophisticated products of embryonic science are superficially nearly indistinguishable from naturally born humans. The technology and expertise necessary to create a creature of this sophistication are not easy to find and are costly. A surpassing knowledge of genetics, chemistry, and early development, backed by vast resources of materials and energy, are required to successfully bring such a marvel into the world. The materials required to construct a sophisticated artificial womb are not available easily or cheaply, and the womb must be relatively undisturbed over the nine to ten months involved in incubation. The necessary draw on resources is difficult to camouflage in a university setting. Most such efforts are therefore private, funded by wealthy families unable to conceive naturally or bear a child to term.

Employment of a renegade scientist is a risky endeavour. Vast sums of money are generally required to secure their expertise and ensure their loyalty. Additionally, few scientists are able to resist the urge to "tinker." Though few prospective parents have the desire or the nerve to breach the taboos around human genetic manipulation, most offspring created in this manner will have some number of genetic "improvements" made at the whims of the creating scientist. Many parents never realize that their child's unusual attributes are the results of deliberate engineering.

The nature of these "improvements" will vary by case. It is common for the bioengineer to begin by building in aspects that would, in their eyes, improve the quality of the finished product; augmentations of strength, intelligence, and healing ability are common, as are immunities to poisons and the smog. Each set of modifications introduces instabilities into the germ-plasm, increasing the odds of inviability and developmental instability. Frequently, a bioengineer will opt to focus on a small suite of enhancements for a specific purpose. Attempts to create technological geniuses are fairly common as are attempts to engineer a perfect athlete or a perfect beauty.

It is difficult to determine for certain that an individual is a product of this sort of engineering. The physical and physiological oddities that arise in the artificially grown humans are not unknown to medicine, though they do tend to occur at unusual frequencies in the vat-grown, and few normal humans will be unfortunate enough to experience the number or severity of afflictions that regularly occur in a vat-grown human, particularly in later life. Genetic testing can reveal the marks of tampering, but most standard genetic screens are not intended to discover them. Unfortunately, the difficulty of detection can mean that any individual possessing physical or psychological aberrations may fall under popular suspicion, and most communities will not tolerate a suspected vat-grown in their midst for long.

Popularly and legally, the vat-grown are Anathema. Under the law they are semi-human, corrupt products of an unstable and illegal technology who pose a threat to the social order by their very existence. The Anathema do not have the rights of human beings; if discovered, an Anathema may legally be destroyed, though the law does not absolutely require this, or taken into custody for research purposes. Popular imagination paints them as insidious monsters, unnatural creatures of hideous appetites, all the more appalling for their uncanny resemblance to natural man.

This characterization is not entirely without merit. These Anathema are frighteningly prone to mental aberrations as well as physical defects. Dissociative disorders and social pathologies are extremely common, as is psi-null status, a condition in which the mind is incapable of psychic development and is even somewhat impervious to the effects of these powers. Some Anathema develop sociopathic personality traits as they grow through childhood, committing small atrocities in their earliest youth and progressing to greater outrages as they achieve adulthood. It has been

### Genetic Screening

*A character with the Medicine or Alchemy skill, access to screening equipment, and a genetic sample can make a skill roll to determine if a given human organism bears the signs of genetic tampering. The DR for screening an Anathema is 10. For a Homunculus, it is 14, and for a Lesser Homunculus, it is 11.*

*On a successful roll, the character has incontrovertible proof of the creature's origins. On a failed roll, the results are indeterminate.*

hypothesized that the inadequacies of the artificial wombs prevent full development of the higher functions of the brain. Some have proposed that the process of genetic modification currently used may alter later developmental processes. Observations of increased susceptibility to mutations in the Anathema's adult life, indicating potential instability in the biological matrices induced by the engineering process, lend credence to this theory.

### Homunculi

Simpler versions of their Anathema brethren, the Homunculi are creatures grown from human genetic stock but bearing less resemblance to it. The most complex of these creatures begin, like Anathema, as a human zygote. These Homunculi receive a more extensive set of modifications prior to incubation. Extraordinary strength is common, as is a suite of toxin resistances. Many Homunculi are engineered to possess metabolisms reliant on a specific substance, generally difficult to obtain or synthesize, to ensure their loyalty to their creator. The process of incubation is simpler than for Anathema because the incubation chamber need not be as sophisticated, energy needs are moderately less, and the developmental process is often accelerated to allow removal of the Homunculus from incubation in as little as five months. The resulting creature often possesses a number of physical deformities. These complex Homunculi are generally created for use as lab assistants or skilled labour. Obviously human but badly disfigured, they are generally explained away as "orphan wards" and kept largely away from public view.

Lower-order Homunculi are created from less-plastic raw materials. The scientist uses genetic material from somatic or gametic cells to create the seed material for the Homunculus, often combining his own cellular material with that from other animal sources. These creatures rarely bear any strong resemblance to humanity, possessing instead an animal-like form with variable humanoid aspects. The overall effect can be disquieting. Incubation is simple, requiring only a basic laboratory setup, and may be easily abbreviated to a matter of weeks in the simplest forms. These lower-order creatures are commonly above animal intelligence, capable of accepting moderately complex commands, but their ability to reason is low, and their capacity for abstract thought is virtually nil. These creatures are commonly kept as laboratory menials, pets, or experimental subjects; many are created to test some new principle and disposed of once the experiment is complete.

## The Rules: Manufacturing Life

The creation of artificial life remains more art than science. A suitably motivated character may attempt to create his perfect bride, engineer a race of subservient troglodytes, or mock his creator in any fashion he so chooses. However, success is far from assured.

There are three basic types of artificial life. Anathema are the highest order of vat-grown life and may appear indistinguishable from naturally born humans. An Anathema will generally share a familial resemblance with the parents that provided its genetic material unless it was specifically tampered with to take on a different appearance or suffered disfiguring mutations in the creation process.

Homunculi are relatively simple artificially created life-forms. Though the form will be extensively modified, a Homunculus will generally pass for human and will share a passing resemblance with its genetic parent.

Lesser Homunculi are the simplest form of artificial humanoid life-forms and the easiest to create. Most Lesser Homunculi will have a composite animal form with only minor contributions from the human germ-plasm. The features a Lesser Homunculus shares with its human genetic parent will be nearly impossible to identify without a proper autopsy.

### Basic Attributes

Created life forms have basic attributes based on their classification. These basic attributes can be further modified by intentional tampering or flaws in the creation process.

### Anathema

In most aspects, an Anathema is a human character, and thus there are no hard and fast rules on assigning its stats. Unless the Anathema has been genetically tampered with or suffers a disability, it will grow up to have attributes of 1-5, with an average of 2, depending on its education, environment, and lifestyle. The Anathema may have one attribute greater than the ordinary human maximum (max 6). Anathema that have been modified should have an appropriate set of Impediments reflecting developmental irregularities arising from its modifications. At the Narrator's discretion, an Anathema's stats may mirror those of its genetic parents to some degree.

### The Half-Men's Club

*Many of the higher-order Homunculi are kept by their creators as lab assistants and menial servants. Under these circumstances, even those who are not outright told of their origins will manage to piece together the story of their creation. These unfortunates are the more isolated for the knowledge of their unnatural origins, and if the crimes of their creator are revealed, their own lives are forfeit by law.*

*The nature of these creatures ensures their ostracism by the society of natural men. Many of the scientists who employ them consider them to be little more than manlike tools or clever experiments. Even students know enough of the principles of artificial incubation to suspect something irregular in these creatures, and most will avoid the Homunculi when possible, only the rare student regarding him with a clinical curiosity. Those who do not know enough of the science to develop concrete suspicions are put off by the strange collection of physical abnormalities exhibited by these artificial men as well as by their intimate association with the professional physicians, a class regarded with some suspicion by the city's uneducated.*

*In the face of this isolation, the Homunculi band together, meeting away from the eyes of their masters and the inquisitive loathing of the masses. The hospitals and universities that are home to these creatures universally possess secret passages and laboratories, false walls that open into hidden dissection rooms, concealed stairways into the illegal mortuaries and the labyrinths of the Underground. Use of these passages allows the society of Homunculi to communicate even between institutions. There are few secrets in the hospitals and universities that the Homunculi do not know. This secrecy makes them indispensable, and their knowledge keeps them safe. The Homunculi are not inclined to cooperate with anyone outside their secret society, though the secrets they keep would no doubt be of great interest to many within the metropolis.*

### Homunculi

Homunculi and Lesser Homunculi have more narrow attribute spectrums that may be further modified by intentional genetic engineering or constrained due to disabilities. Homunculi created by player characters begin with the average base stats below.

**Homunculus**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 3 (2-6) |
| **Coordination:** | 3 (2-6) |
| **Wit:** | 2 (1-4) |
| **Intellect:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Will:** | 2 (1-4) |
| **Charm:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Prowess:** | 5 (3-10) |
| **Actions:** | 2 (1-3) |

Attributes: In addition to the average Homunculus' attribute ratings above, the numbers in parenthesis show the normal range of a Homunculus' attributes.

**Lesser Homunculus**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 3 (2-6) |
| **Coordination:** | 3 (2-6) |
| **Wit:** | 2 (1-4) |
| **Intellect:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Will:** | 2 (1-4) |
| **Charm:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Prowess:** | 5 (3-10) |
| **Actions:** | 2 (1-3) |

**Attributes:** In addition to the average Lesser Homunculus' attribute ratings above, the numbers in parenthesis show the normal range of a Lesser Homunculus' attributes.

## The Creation Process

A character attempting to create an artificial life-form must have at least Medicine 3 and Alchemy 3, access to a lab capable of carrying out the experiment, the necessary alchemical solutions, and suitable genetic material. In addition to the obvious tools of the trade, most scientists delving into this field of exploration keep a small arsenal in their labs for dispatching experiments that go awry.

The creation of Anathema requires a complex genetics laboratory, including a sophisticated Anathema-grade artificial womb. The creation of an Anathema also requires a vast amount of ALS2(6) that must be regularly filtered and refilled. The cost of these fluids is generally £25 per month of incubation. The initial set-up time for creating an Anathema is one month of research and preparations, during which the appropriate modifications are inserted into the germ-plasm of the zygote and a stable version of the desired template is obtained. The preparatory period concludes with twelve hours of concentrated laboratory work for the creation of a viable zygote. The Anathema must be attended to for at least another thirty hours per week throughout the entire incubation period.

The creation of a Homunculus is somewhat simpler, requiring a Homunculus-grade artificial womb. Though a Homunculus could be created in an Anathema-grade womb, most would agree this is a gross waste of resources. The quantity of ALS2(6) required to sustain the proto-life form during incubation is generally £10 per month. The initial set-up time for creating an Anathema is three weeks of research and preparations, concluding with eight hours of concentrated laboratory work. The Anathema must be attended to at least another twenty hours per week throughout the entire incubation period.

Lesser Homunculi can be created under much simpler conditions, requiring only a basic lab and incubator. Most require only a few weeks of incubation and a small amount of ALS2(6) that is seldom filtered or refilled. The cost of these fluids is generally £1 per week of incubation. The initial set-up time for creating a Lesser Homunculus is one week of research and preparations, concluding with six hours of concentrated laboratory work. The Lesser Homunculus must be attended to at least another ten hours per week throughout the entire incubation period.

Once the preliminary research and preparations have been completed, it is a simple matter to allow the established zygote to divide and separate the undifferentiated cells, providing up to eight seed embryos which may be grown in separate wombs. Though the cost is prohibitive, it is the easiest way to ensure the production of a viable organism. Further divisions are inadvisable, as the cellular matrix becomes unstable as the cells begin to differentiate. If the character divides the zygote into more than eight seed organisms, make one additional roll for each organism on the Mutation Table (below), regardless of the result of the initial roll for that organism. Each of the organisms produced from a given zygote will have the modifications built into the original design and therefore the same set of modifiers, but each will require a separate skill roll to determine the outcome of incubation.

Attempts to replicate a given experiment may skip the research and preparations phase, beginning the experiment immediately with the laboratory setup (twelve hours for Anathema, eight or six hours for Homunculi). Incubation occurs as normal.

## Skill Roll

Once a character has access to the proper equipment and necessary genetic material and has spent the time setting up his experiment, he makes a Medicine or Alchemy skill roll (using the higher of the two skills) to determine the success of the experiment. The base DR for the experiment is determined by the class of life being created: 16 for

an Anathema, 14 for a Homunculus, and 11 for a Lesser Homunculus.

If successful, life has been created. All intelligent creations (Intelligence greater than 0) begin with one minor mental disorder chosen by the Narrator (See Mental Disorders, Chapter 3, pages 189 – 194).

If a character's initial roll fails, he can make a second roll to salvage his experiment. If the second roll succeeds, the character has succeeded in creating Flawed Life. To determine the product of the flawed experiment, the Narrator should roll on the Flawed Life Table below. Do not share the results of the roll with the player. Let him discover the fruits of his labour as his experiment comes to term.

### Modifiers

**Careful Preparations** – If the character takes extreme precautions, double and triple checks his calculations, and takes supreme care in the creation of an artificial life-form, he gains +2 on his skill roll, but the set-up time is increased by 50%. If the character is interrupted during this time, he loses this bonus.

**Rush Job** – A character can rush the set-up process, completing it in up to half the time listed, but he suffers –4 on his skill roll.

**Sub-Optimal Conditions** – A character attempting to create a life-form without access to a proper lab suffers +2 to the DR of his skill roll. Attempting the experiment without the proper artificial womb is impossible.

**Mutagen** –The character is willing to take chances with experimental therapies to ensure the survival of his creation. The creature is monitored throughout the incubation period, and any abnormalities that threaten the continued development of the creature are treated in vitro by flooding the embryo's life-support solution with vector containing code for a hopeful "fix." This continued engineering, while effective, is imprecise. The character gains +4 on his skill roll, but if his creation survives, make one additional roll on the Mutation Table (below) for the creature.

## Genetic Tampering

Few scientists adept in the mysteries of these renegade arts can resist some degree of genetic tampering. Modifying the organismal code allows the scientist to tailor his creation to his own needs or desires.

Tampering with a life-form modifies the DR of the skill roll.

### Alterations

**Accelerated Decrepitude:** Cutting genetic corners to expedite the creation process, the character did not build his creature to last. The unfortunate product of this experiment suffers from Accelerated Decrepitude (see Chapter 3, page 181). Homunculi suffer the first effects of the decrepitude after ten years.

Decrease the DR of the skill roll by 2.

**Accelerated Maturity:** The artificial life-form will be spawned from the womb fully mature, effectively between the ages of sixteen and twenty. The artificial womb required for such a procedure must be specially prepared at three times the normal cost. The incubation period is doubled. The creature will be unable to walk at the time of its birth, and its attributes will not reach full capacity without three or more months of exercise and experience.

Increase the DR of the skill roll by 2.

**Ambidextrous:** The creature is Ambidextrous (see Chapter 3, page 180).

Increase the DR of the skill roll by 1.

**Animal Appearance (Lesser Homunculi only):** The Lesser Homunculus has been engineered to look like a normal animal. Though it is physically an animal, the creature has an Intellect of 1.

Increase the DR of the skill roll by 1.

**Clone (Anathema only):** The character creates a creature physically identical to its genetic parent. The personality will be different than that of the original, but the physical resemblance will be uncanny.

If the creature is harvested for limbs or organs that are transplanted to the donor, the character performing the operation gains +2 on his Medicine skill roll for the operation.

Increase the DR of the skill roll by 3.

**Flawed Senses:** The creature lacks one or more of the five senses. Perhaps it is blind because it was engineered to have no eyes, or it feels neither pain nor touch because its nerve endings are deadened.

Increase the DR of the skill roll by 1.

**Gigantism:** The creature has Gigantism (see Chapter 3, page 180). The artificial womb required for such a procedure must be specially prepared at three times the normal cost. The incubation period is doubled.

Increase the DR of the skill roll by 2.

**Haunting Beauty (Anathema only):** The Anathema is a Haunting Beauty (see Chapter 3, page 180).

Increase the DR of the skill roll by 2.

**Immunities:** The creature is immune to ordinary disease and toxins, including the smogs.

Increase the DR of the skill roll by 2.

**Mindless:** The creature was intentionally engineered to have little or no brain function (Intelligence 0).

Decrease the DR of the skill roll by 3.

**Tailored Addiction:** The life-form's creator intentionally fostered a substance addiction in the creature. The creature may be addicted to a common substance, like opium, an alchemical solution of the character's own creation, or any of a number of other substances. Substance addictions are used to ensure loyalty in created servants.

The necessary interval between doses varies according to individual designs. Frequently, daily or weekly doses are required to ensure that the creature does not wander far from home. If the creature misses a dose, withdrawal sets in, and the creature suffers –1 Vitality, Wit, Will, Intellect, and Charm and –1 on skill rolls until it can feed its addiction. Each missed dose results in an additional –1 penalty. If any attribute is reduced below 0 as a result of withdrawal, the life-form dies. It is not possible to overcome an addiction that has been hard-coded into the germ-plasm by ordinary means, though it may be possible for the creature's metabolism to be re-engineered later in life.

Increase the DR of the skill roll by 1.

**Tailored Attributes:** The life-form has been engineered with modified attributes. These modifications represent the creature's attributes upon reaching maturity. A created life-form's attributes cannot be increased beyond its normal maximum attributes detailed under Basic Attributes above (see page 317).

When increasing a Homunculus' or Lesser Homunculus' average attributes, the character suffers –1 on his skill roll for each 1 point of increase in an attribute. The attributes of Anathema are slightly harder to modify. For each attribute increased, the DR of the skill roll is increased by 2.

For example, Marcy's Doctor, Dr. Baye James, decides to create a Homunculus with an unnaturally high Wit. The range of a Homunculus' Wit is 1 to 3 with an average of 1. Since Marcy's character is increasing the Homunculus' Wit by 2, she will suffer –2 on her skill roll to create the creature.

## Flawed Life

2 **Horror**

The creature is an inhuman horror; a monstrosity that should not be; a gurgling, slithering, buzzing horror; a living blasphemy; a beast that virtually defies description. Despite its jigsaw anatomy, the creature refuses to die. It is unable to freely move or feed itself. In the long run, the creature is fit only for dissection and fodder for a preventative tale.

Anyone seeing the creature must succeed in a Will – Fear roll (DR 16) or take flight.

3 **Crib Death**

The creature manages to survive the incubation period, but expires suddenly 2d10 days later.

4-5 **Monstrosity**

Somehow, the creature survives incubation long enough to draw its first unaided breaths. Having achieved this hurdle, the rest of its life is an uphill battle. The creature has five mutations (roll on the Mutation Table below).

6 **Complications**

The creature survives the incubation period but just barely. Once the incubation period is over, it needs round-the-clock care for the first month of life. Each day, an attending character must stay by the creature's side and succeed in a Medicine roll (DR 11) to keep it alive. If the roll fails, it soon dies. If the creature lives, it has one mutation (roll on the Mutation Table below).

7-11 **Flawed**

The creature is close to perfect, but not quite right. Roll once on the Mutation Table below.

**Tailored Appearance:** The life-form's creator may tailor the creature's appearance to his will. He can choose the creature's eye or hair colour, give it wildly patterned skin, or just about anything else that comes to mind. This alteration cannot change the gross physiology of the creature.

Increase the DR of the skill roll by 2.

**Wild Mutations:** This category covers the seriously bizarre physical alterations that may be imposed on a life-form. The Narrator always determines what alterations are feasible, though he does not have to tell the character creating the life-form that his experiment is doomed to failure until his spider-baby mermaid is still-born in its artificial womb. When in doubt, commit the abomination to the flames.

If a character insists on Wild Mutations, the DR for the skill roll is increased by 4-6 at the Narrator's generosity.

## Flawed Life (continued)

12 **Complications**

The creature survives the incubation period but just barely. Once the incubation period is over, it needs round-the-clock care for the first month of life. Each day, an attending character must stay by the creature's side and succeed in a Medicine roll (DR 11) to keep it alive. If the roll fails, it soon dies. If the creature lives, it has one mutation (roll on the Mutation Table below).

13-14 **Mutant**

The creature's physiology is unstable (roll twice on the Mutation Table below). Furthermore, the creature will develop new irregularities as it grows. After the creature reaches the age of twenty, it suffers an additional mutation. Roll another mutation for the creature after every five years thereafter.

15-16 **Little Monster**

Before the creature completes its natural incubation period, it escapes confinement, wrecking the artificial womb in the process. A creature of tremendous natural cunning, it will exist on a diet of sewage and rats, if it has to, until it starts to grow. If the creature lives, roll twice on the Mutation Table below.

17-18 **Psychotic**

Imperfections in the mechanical incubation process result in irregularities in the physiology, particularly the fine structures of the brain. The Narrator should select a chronic Mental Disorder (see Chapter 3, pages 189-194) and roll once on the Mutation Table below; if Mental Disorders is rolled, select a second disorder.

19 **Brain Death**

The creature survives incubation, but its higher brain functions did not. It will remain in a vegetative state for the rest of its life.

20 **Killer**

The creature appears physically and mentally normal in every way for the first six months of its development. The usual Mental Disorder and Mutation Table roll are not imposed. After this time, the creature developes an uncontrollable compulsion to kill. As soon as it is physically able, the creature will begin to kill for pleasure, generally beginning with small animals that pose little challenge to its still-developing physique. It will move on to murder as soon as is practicable. After the creature makes its first human kill, the compulsion grows stronger. If the creature goes a month without taking the life of a human victim, its compulsion will begin to get the better of it. All it can think about is finding a new victim. Soon it will begin to lose sleep. At the end of each week the creature must make a Will roll (DR 16). If it fails the roll, its Will is reduced by 1 point. Once the creature is reduced to 1 Will, it will be incapable of doing anything but seeking a victim. If the creature's Will is reduced to 0, it will go berserk and kill the next victim that crosses his path. The creature's Will is only restored once it has murdered a victim.

## Mutation Table

When a character succeeds in creating flawed life, his creations often have obvious and terrible mutations. If the same mutation is rolled twice or if the roll results in a mutation already inflicted by genetic tampering, reroll the mutation until an original result is rolled. All mutations are Impediments detailed in Chapter 3.

### Flawed Life Table

| | |
|---|---|
| 2 | **Gigantism**<br>Due to its Gigantism, this creature is very likely to die during the incubation period. Roll 1d10; on a roll of 6 or less, the creature does not survive incubation. |
| 3 | **Blind** |
| 4 | **Haunting Beauty** |
| 5 | **Crippled** |
| 6 | **Deaf** |
| 7 | **Evil Eye** |
| 8 | **Albinism** |
| 9-12 | **Defects**<br>The character has a Defect chosen by the Narrator. |
| 13 | **Fits** |
| 14 | **Lame** |
| 15 | **Leper** |
| 16 | **Lost Limb** |
| 17 | **Mental Disorder**<br>The creature has a Mental Disorder chosen by the Narrator. |
| 18 | **Dim** |
| 19 | **Midget** |
| 20 | **Haemophilia** |

### Flawed Life

*"It's not a flaw. It's a feature."*

When a character succeeds in creating flawed life, the Narrator rolls 2d10 and consults the Flawed Life Table below. Do not inform the player of the result of the roll; let him experience a parent's joy in the fullness of time.

# Calling: Anathema

The Anathema is a vat-grown, artificially created human, the product of genetic tampering. An Anathema can be exceptionally gifted, but the improvements on the human line built into the germ-plasm carry a price.

By their nature, Anathema are both mentally and physically unstable. Madness and degenerative diseases are common, nearly ubiquitous, among these artificially created beings. The inconsistencies in the creature's psychological and physical matrices are seldom entirely apparent at creation, instead unfolding over the developmental process and into adulthood.

There is a great deal of variation between individual Anathema. Some are engineered for incredible strength, others for unnatural beauty or powerful intelligence. Some are perfect replicas of their genetic parent, while others are a mélange of features, crafted to appeal or repel. Each of these creatures has its own talents and modifications that set it apart from others of its kind.

### Playing an Anathema

Though unquestionably the product of the Neo-Victorian world, the Anathema is an outsider. It is nearly human, yet irrevocably other than human – a child of science, condemned by law and taboo, feared and hated for the crime that brought it into being. Should society learn the truth of its existence, its life may easily be forfeit.

### Features

**Anathema** – The character is an Anathema. If anyone discovers the truth of the character's origins, it is likely to be sent under the scalpels of the vivisectors.

**Genetic Engineering** – As a result of genetic tampering, the character may have one attribute with a maximum of 6, which must be selected during character creation. The character also begins with 30 attribute points (instead of 25).

**Mentally Unstable** –The Anathema begins with one minor Mental Disorder (see Chapter 3, pages 189-194). The character does not gain Custom Points for this Impediment.

**Physical Impurities** – The Anathema begins the game with one additional point of initial Physical Corruption that cannot be removed by any means (see Original Sin, Chapter 2, page 89).

**Starting Qualities & Impediments**

Anathema may start with two of the following: Ambidextrous, Bad Tasting, Disease Resistance, Gigantism, Haunting Beauty, Immunity – Smogs, Immunity – Toxins, Long Lived, Photographic Memory, Savant, Strong Man, Synaesthesia.

Anathema must start with one of the following: Accelerated Decrepitude, Albinism, Blind, Deaf, Evil Eye, Haemophilia, Hypersensitive, Fits (Severe), Lame, Melancholy, Midget, Mute, Uncontrollable Temper.

Anathema must start with one Defect. Further Defects may be taken for Custom Points.

Details on Qualities and Impediments may be found in Chapter 3.

**Starting Skills**

Medicine 1, Unarmed Combat 2

Choose four Basic or Criminal Skills. These skills begin at 2.

Details on Skills may be found in Chapter 3.

**Assets**

Regardless of its upbringing, an Anathema will have a hard time keeping steady employment. Not only does the character suffer from at least one potentially disruptive mental disorder, but it is also likely to suffer a whole host of physical disabilities that may make work difficult. The assets belonging to an Anathema therefore depend very much on its family situation.

Many Anathema are born to aristocratic families incapable of bearing children by natural means, or created as scions by scientists desiring a perfect heir. These Anathema are likely to have lives of relative comfort and be well provided with the necessities and even luxuries of life. However, they are likely to have somewhat circumscribed lives, dissuaded from excessive public life "for their own good" by relatives. An Anathema from this background should take Qualities and Impediments reflecting its situation; the Patron Quality and Ward Impediment, for example, are appropriate.

Orphaned or escaped Anathema face considerably worse prospects. These creatures, bereft of funding and deprived of the medical care available to their more fortunate counterparts, may easily find themselves unable to maintain a standard of living. These Anathema are likely to live in a rundown apartment in a largely uninhabited building from which it can come and go without attracting much attention.

An Anathema begins with Wealth 5, which should be altered to fit the desired background of the character. An Anathema begins with £40 that may be spent on weapons, armour, and equipment. Up to £5 may be kept as savings.

# Mercury, Sulphur, and Salt: The Mercurials

**From the correspondence of Professor C. G. Miller, obtained following the unfortunate events at the Medical School at Cambridge.**

*Death is a transformation. A chemical reaction, no more, no less, wherein the mercuric vitality is dissipated and the body is reduced to a mass of inanimate salts. The sulphuric qualities, however, remain within the body more or less undiminished. If the sulphuric qualities are dominant, the sulphur will overbalance the salt and a secondary reaction will occur as the body cools. The corpse will corrupt, become unstable, and rise. If the salt overbalances the sulphur within the body, the corpse will resist the reaction and therefore remain inert.*

*The balance of the organism relies on the establishment and maintenance of a balance between the mercuric and sulphuric principles within the stabilizing matrix of salts. Where the mercuric principle has dissipated, due to the nature and complexity of the reactions that occur subsequent to the cessation of the natural processes, it is a problem of no small difficulty to reinfuse the mercuric principle into the unreactive body.*

*Reinfusing the mercuric principle into a corrupted body presents a problem considerably different from that presented when attempting to restore a body that is fresh and inert. The sulphuric potential, held in check by the vital forces of the living body, becomes a rampant contamination. The body becomes more vulnerable to fire (though retaining varying degrees of resistance due to the fixity of the underlying salts), and the colour is altered, reflecting the increased influence of the sulphuric elements within the system. In these cases, the sulphuric principle must be sub-*

*dued and the contamination brought under control before there can be any hope of reestablishing the mercuric influence. This poses a number of extraordinary difficulties and to my knowledge has not been accomplished without damaging the body past any hope of restoring function. Though I know you are determined to continue to pursue this line of study, I am convinced these efforts are sheerest folly. The restoration of a contaminated corpse to full humanity is simply beyond the means of our science. If there is to be any hope of restoring life, it must be in an uncontaminated body – a "clay corpse," as your colleagues would have it.*

*The ability of the body to undergo reaction is greatly reduced in all such cases due to the remaining solid, salt nature of the body once the malleable mercuric factor is lost. For this reason, it is desirable to obtain access to the body as soon after the departure of the vital principle as possible in order that the reactions resulting in fixity may not have progressed to their completion...*

It is still hoped by some within the scientific community that it will prove possible to restore full humanity to the monsters of the world, correcting the half-living and unliving conditions permanently. The major medical institutions continue to pursue programs in humanity restoration, subjecting some portion of the animates and vampires received under the new Contagious Diseases Act to experiments designed to remove the taint of the Plague. The scope of these experiments is smaller than in previous years, and every year fewer researchers incline their efforts in this direction. The continued failure of these experiments over the years has led to the deemphasis of humanity restoration as a viable field of study, and though the discovery of a cure for the Plague would undoubtedly reshape the world, most of the scientific and medical community of Britain no longer believes that a true cure is possible.

The consensus opinion of the scientific community, however, does little to dissuade the activities of the ambitious. There are practitioners of these sciences, both professional men and self-educated amateurs, for whom the lure of glory is sufficient to override all considerations of reason and propriety. Within the medical and scientific institutions of Britain, excessive enthusiasm for these studies is considered a mark of eccentricity, but the research is treated with tolerance so long as no unforgivable intellectual excesses are committed. Many researchers in this field, however, do not remain long in these rigid environs; frustrated with lack of results, they turn to more extreme experimental procedures than can be tolerated by their more respectable peers. Many turn to the outright purchase of unliving specimens to fuel their research, uncaring of the origins of the materials they buy. Others, believing their attempts thwarted by the corrupted material of the unliving specimens, seek to illegally procure exanimate corpses for their experiments in the hope

of banishing death itself. Any researchers who are found to be engaging in these practices are consequently removed from their positions in order to spare their orthodox colleagues the embarrassment of their association.

Experimentation in the restoration of life to an exanimate corpse is forbidden under law. Following the Reclamation of London, experimentation in this vein became commonplace as the practitioners of anti-agapic medicine sought for a means of banishing death completely from the human form. As anti-agapic medicine flourished and this experimentation became more extensive, it became apparent that these investigations were not producing the desired results. These experiments did not simply fail to make progress toward creating the perpetual human life, they brought forth new horrors from the engines of science, once-human creatures that mocked the purity they sought to establish within the human form.

It was indeed possible to chemically restore animation to a body where life had previously departed. However, the resulting creature was invariably somewhat less than human. In the majority of cases where any success was made, the resulting creature was merely a weakly animated corpse, capable of some muscle movement but incapable of speech or locomotion. Of the remainder, the overwhelming majority were monsters – unliving predators similar in type to the naturally occurring animate and also driven to consume the flesh of men.

These creatures show a high degree of variability which corresponds to the variety of theories and methods driving their creation. Small variations within an individual serum frequently produce drastically different results. The resulting creatures behave erratically over their generally short existences, often losing vitality rapidly with time. Even the best of these creations are highly unstable, degenerating at random into mindless hunger and turning on their creators. This unpredictability of functionality together with the alchemical underpinnings of the anti-agapic sciences fuelling the research of perpetual life, led to the label of "Mercurial" for an artificial undead created in this fashion.

### Detecting Plague Infection in a Corpse

Any character with the Medicine skill can make an incision to examine the jaw of a corpse and a successful skill roll (DR 11) to determine if it has been affected by the Plague.

## Physiology of the Mercurial

The Mercurial is a true undead, a corpse imbued with unnatural life. These creatures are only created from corpses previously exanimate because a corpse already animated by the Plague will not be affected by the necessary alchemical serums. Even an extremely fresh, still-exanimate corpse in which the processes of the Plague are already active is useless for reanimation. Likewise, excessive toxins in the tissues will interfere with the reanimation; a corpse produced by poisoning, intentional or otherwise, cannot be used with any success. It is therefore of critical importance for a reanimator to assess the quality of his raw materials prior to beginning the experiment. The easiest method for determining the presence of Plague in a corpse is to examine the muscle and bone morphology of the face and jaw. A corpse that will reanimate naturally will begin to show characteristic thickening in the bones and tendons of the jaw prior to rising. Many reanimators examine these structures directly through the simple expedience of making a number of small incisions at the juncture of the jawbone and skull and along the ridge of the jaw. The stitched-up wounds along the jaw line are characteristic of the appearance of the Mercurial.

In the Mercurial, any alterations made to the body prior to reanimation are minor and generally reparative in nature. The goal of these studies is to restore a perfected life force to a body where the life has departed. Extensive modification of the cadaver prior to reanimation is characteristic of a more mechanistic viewpoint than is common among the practitioners of the anti-agapic sciences. Furthermore, all attempts to chemically restore life to extensively altered corpses have met with failure.

Most Mercurials are weakly animated, having rather less strength and speed than a comparably fresh zombie. Even when fresh, most Mercurials are slower and weaker than they had been in life, and decomposition serves to further weaken the body. Most of these creatures possess the same level of intelligence as a zombie. These creatures are essentially unintelligent, if persistent, predators, seeking blindly after food. Some rare specimens possess a reasoning ability of a similar level to that observable in a zombie lord (or a reasonably bright dog), exhibiting some cleverness in the hunt, use of tactics, and occasionally, even the use of simple tools.

Records indicate that a very small percentage of Mercurials maintain some fragment of human intelligence after the reanimation. Most of these accounts have been lost, destroyed by those responsible for the reanimation, but the few that remain extant are horrifying. Though some portion of the personality may survive death, the human will is not stronger than the appetites that drive the reanimated flesh. The undead

are hungry, driven to destroy and take sustenance; a newly wakened undead will, in all cases, seek desperately for its first meal. When a spark of human intelligence remains within the animated corpse, powerless to control the hunger that drives its decaying frame and forced by its own foul needs to commit acts worse than murder, insanity must be the result. These creatures, driven mad by the horrors of the transformation and the price of their unnatural existence, frequently become violent in the extreme, lashing out to destroy those perceived to be responsible for their condition or to erase from the world the warm, living bodies that wake their hunger. Others become self-destructive, seeking desperately for oblivion. Despite the tragic results of these cases, the fact that limited survival of the intelligence is possible has given hope to some researchers, lending credence to the idea that full restoration of the personality may be possible.

None of the abominations produced in these experiments have proved to be fundamentally similar to the naturally occurring zombie. The process of decay, very much slowed in the natural zombie, generally proceeds in these synthetics at a normal pace, and in some notable cases, the process of decomposition is considerably accelerated by the action of the reanimating serum. Though the synthetic undead tend to show an appetite for human flesh reminiscent of the habits of their wild counterparts, the ability of these artificial undead to assimilate the flesh of their victims is generally much less than that observed in the natural undead. These creatures are largely unable to undo the ravages of decomposition, falling rapidly to decay regardless of the number of victims consumed. Moreover, the diet of these creatures is not invariably restricted to the living flesh of men. Some preferentially consume specific organs, the brain, heart, and liver being particularly common, and many will not cease worrying the body of a victim even after life had departed.

Few of the Mercurials have demonstrated the "prey sense" of the naturally occurring animate. When the prey sense does manifest, it appears to be both more fallible and more limited in range in these creatures than in their wild-type conspecifics. The reasons for this are not known, as the prey sense remains poorly understood. Some theorists of the spiritualist and galvanic schools hypothesize that the prey sense operates on principles of animal magnetism, the living magnetic aura being in some way perceptible to undead, and that these artificial creatures are in some way "out of tune" with the magnetic aurae of humans. Most researchers of the alchemical paradigm reject this theory, as it has so far failed to provide a satisfactory, empirically validated mechanism for the prey sense itself.

Most importantly, these artificial undead were not always capable of creating new undead. In the early days of this research, when the risks were not yet well understood, there were a large number of casualties among scientists and technicians, and the results of these accidents are well documented. The bite of these creatures was rarely observed to result in the reanimation of the victim, and most of the incidences of reanimation were attributable to spontaneous cases of Plague rather than to the transmission of the unique undead condition.

**From the notes of Christopher Pasipha, assistant to Dr. Daedalus Atychia, Professor Emeritus in the Medical School at Cambridge, obtained upon the arrest of the former on 7 February 7 2092 in the matter of Professor Atychia's death.**

*12 January. Extremely promising results in the last series of experiments. Professor Atychia has succeeded in restoring a high degree of functionality to the last specimen. Resulting creation had high levels of motor function, able to walk unassisted and make use of the arms and hands, though fine scale manipulations of objects were not possible. Cognitive levels were unfortunately not to the scale of motor function -- specimen lacking speech function or higher reasoning ability. The specimen was obtained from one of the usual freelancers, apparent time since brain death under one hour, but degradation of neural material was apparently too severe to permit full reactivation. Nevertheless, the new serum shows considerable promise. We will try modifying the technique with the next specimen. The professor has some remarkable ideas concerning how to more quickly restore oxygen flow to the brain.*

*20 January. A new specimen was obtained last night, via one of our freelancers; a female this time, of small build, ideal for the new technique. Time since brain death appeared to be less than one hour. The operation was performed at 3:20 AM, with results evident within thirty seconds of injection. Professor Atychia's new procedure improved the results remarkably. Specimen showed increased cognitive ability as compared with previous results, making attempts at speech and displaying some degree of self-awareness. We have projected several modifications to the procedure that we believe will further improve the process.*

*3 February. A tragedy... I hardly know where to begin. We were reworking the apparatus in preparation for the next set of experiments when the professor collapsed. I brought him to the operating suite and attempted revival — to no avail — a sudden seizure of the nervous system had seized him, killing him almost instantaneously.*

*Seized with inspiration, I hastily completed the modifications to the apparatus and prepared the professor's body for injection. It had been only a few minutes — the body was very fresh, the brain deprived of oxygen for only a few minutes — it was possible he could be restored! I measured the dose, trying to keep my hands from shaking, and delivered the injection directly into the heart.*

*Reaction was almost instantaneous. Heartbeat and shallow respiration were evident within ten seconds of the injection, with evidence of nerve function within thirty seconds and large muscle movement in under a minute. Eye movement was visible beneath the eyelids, indicating brain function. I believed the serum had finally had a true success! Jubilant, I continued to monitor the professor's life signs, waiting for him to return to consciousness.*

*Then the readings changed… brain function became suddenly erratic, and life signs began to decline. I gave him an injection to stimulate the heart and fitted the artificial respiration device, but to no avail; heart and lung function settled and ceased altogether. I hurried to the slab, a second dose of the reanimating compound in my hand, then was shocked off my feet when the professor suddenly sat up!*

*He set to work extricating himself from the apparatus, moving somewhat clumsily and apparently taking no notice of me whatsoever. For my part, I was too startled to make a sound. The instruments must have been wrong, I thought… then he turned to face me, and I saw that face, removing all doubt from my mind. The face was slack, lifeless — I had seen it a hundred times before, on the abortions we produced on that slab — but for a moment, the professor's eyes, intelligent and confused, looked out at me from that wreck of flesh. I called him by name, extending a hand, still somehow hoping that it had worked; then the face went blank and the creature, perhaps understanding the syringe in my hand, fled from the laboratory and escaped into the night.*

*It has been three hours, and I have not yet dared to venture from this room. The sun will rise soon; I will leave this place then and begin my search. Many of the others putrefied quickly; it may be that the professor will have no time to do harm. Dare I hope that, after all, the treatment has been a success? That he was merely confused following what must have been an extraordinary ordeal? I will wait here some time yet. It may be he will recover his senses and return.*

*4 February. How abruptly hope dies. In the news this morning was a report of a young woman mauled to death in the street late on the night of the 3rd, not ten streets from the laboratory. The coroner suspects animate attack. I fear he is correct.*

*5 February. Searched all night, to no avail. The dailies report another death in the area. I must engage the services of a freelancer if there is to be any hope of finding him – and it must be I who finds him or it will be the disgrace of this great man.*

*6 February. I can hardly think… I can hardly write. What have I done? Would that I could die rather than see the things I have seen.*

*I engaged the services of an ancient Undertaker, a known drunk and less of a hunter than he once was, but a well-known liar and taleteller, unlikely to be believed and likely in any case to succumb shortly to the bottle. He went armed with a brace of heavy revolvers, I moving before him with a concealed pistol. I was to be the bait and he the hunter.*

*We walked through the darkening streets, seeking out the places where the light was least. I stumbled often in the shadows, the Undertaker encouraging the noise, saying it would draw our prey. At last there was a noise in the shadows, and I saw a familiar form stagger out of an alley and lurch toward us; my companion leapt forward with a yell, pursuing the figure back into the gloom of the alley. I stumbled but followed on. There was a shot, a scream, then silence; I reached the mouth of the alley and pulled a torch from my coat, my pistol at ready in my other hand.*

*In the light of the lantern, I beheld Professor Atychia, my friend and mentor, with the fresh track of a bullet across his grey-haired skull, chewing into the brain of the unfortunate old drunk I had hired. The pistols had fallen to the ground and sat in a growing pool of blood. I stared, unable to move, my heartbeat thunderous in my ears, as the professor had his gruesome meal. Then a change came over that face – so decayed and distorted I hardly knew it, one eye lost to putrefaction, jaw exposed through a fissure that had made its way across the flesh of the cheek – the creature dropped the body of its victim and turned to face me, passing one rotted hand over its head in a familiar gesture, and I saw my friend once again. He staggered towards me, hands extended; there was a plea in his eye that I did not understand. I stood transfixed as the creature came up to me; a wave of stench washed over me, nearly causing me to gag. He took my outstretched hand in both of his and raised my pistol to his head, fumbling at my hand with his fingers. That eye, that horrible half-*

*rotted eye, caught mine and held it, and in a voice that was half a gurgle he called me by name. I shut my eyes and pulled the trigger.*

*I must believe that in this deed I have redeemed myself in some small measure for what I have done to my friend. I believed I could restore him; instead I sentenced him to the worst hell that can be imagined on this earth. His remains, and the remains of the Undertaker, have been consigned to the flames. Soon this volume will follow them into the fire, and I will see if it is within the power of man to forget horrors such as these. I will leave Cambridge tonight, before the Undertaker is missed, and lose myself in the teeming crowds of London. God have mercy on me.*

(Christopher Pasipha was arrested the next morning while trying to book passage to London. These notes were found on his person. Two days later, the prisoner experienced a total psychotic breakdown and was subsequently committed to Bethlehem Hospital.)

## Mercurials and the Law

Reanimation and attempted reanimation are crimes under British law, punishable by life imprisonment or transportation to the mines. Moreover, the activities often required as a precursor to these experiments are themselves illegal. The reanimist requires exanimate corpses on which to practice his trade, and fresh, undamaged corpses are preferred for this work. Even a small amount of decomposition will make the body less able to accept the revitalizing force of the reanimist's injection, and the chemicals used in preservation tend to poison the tissues. It is important that the corpse be as fresh, wholesome, and free from contamination as possible. This need for high-quality raw materials frequently requires that a would-be reanimator seek outside the usual channels to obtain the objects necessary for his research.

It is possible for physicians, particularly those in the employ of a hospital or medical research centre, to obtain some cadaverous materials legally. However, cadavers obtainable through the provisions of the Contagious Diseases Act seldom meet the stringent requirements of the reanimator. The bodies are generally the corpses of paupers obtained from the plague carts or Hospices, having no families to attend their cremations or inquire into the fate of the body. In consequence, the bodies are generally diseased and in overall poor condition. Additionally, it is common practice to destroy the brain by spiking the skull prior to consigning the body to the hands of the anatomists. These specimens are entirely suitable for dissection but are unfortunately useless for the reanimator's needs.

Thus, most of the materials required by the reanimator must be purchased clandestinely. The meat markets can provide some of the necessary supplies, but even the dealers in human flesh are somewhat reluctant to handle intact materials, as the risk of reanimation is considered to be bad for business. In order to obtain a steady supply of fresh, sound specimens for research, it is often necessary to deal directly with the independent operators of the body trade – the resurrectionists.

Most reanimators prefer to remain ignorant of the origins of the materials offered for sale by the "sack-em-up men." When pressed, these entrepreneurs will insist that their goods were bought from "a friend on the plague carts" or obtained by some fortunate "accident." In truth, there are some men on the plague carts or at the crematoria who are susceptible to bribery or who turn to the resale of bodies to supplement their income. However, "burking," the commission of murder to procure corpses for sale, is certainly common. The most common methods of murder in this case are drowning and smothering, as both methods produce a largely undamaged corpse; poisons are used occasionally, but as poisoned bodies are generally useless for reanimation, resurrectionists who employ this method often find themselves short of repeat business.

The theft of bodies is punishable under Neo-Victorian law as a felony offence for "endangerment of public health." Anyone convicted of this crime faces a term of not less than three years imprisonment with hard labour, though aristocrats and physicians convicted under these laws are often given no further punishment than the revocation of any professional licenses. Those convicted of burking or of purchasing the corpses of murder victims are subject to extreme penalties under the law.

## Mercurials and the Occult

Among the practitioners of reanimation, there are those who believe wholly, even religiously, in the search for the perfected human form. Among these is a sect of rogue reanimators, shunned even by their less-extreme peers in the outlawed science, for whom the art of reanimation has become the cornerstone of cultic activity. They refer to themselves as the Lux ex Morte. The society is well organized and pervasive but extremely secretive by necessity, with few low-level members being aware of the names of more than two or three local collaborators. These scientists believe that the ultimate outcome of their experiments must be the salvation of the world – that the creation of purified man must set into action a course of events to purify the world of the evils of the Plague - and therefore that every extremity of action is permitted them in the pursuit of their goal.

This reanimation cult is convinced that freshness of materials is the basis for all hope of success in restoring humanity. Towards this end, they have developed a series of practical innovations that allow them to secure the freshest raw materials possible.

## The Body Collectors

A number of private aristocratic collectors have purchased medical degrees or licenses enabling them to privately own bones, bodies, and all manner of cadaverous materials. Many institutions make a tremendous profit reselling preserved anatomical specimens to wealthy collectors once student curiosity has reduced the body to component parts. These sales are treated as "endowments," "gifts" of money to the institution for which the benefactor is rewarded with the specimen as a token of the beneficiary's esteem. For his money, an aristocratic collector can expect to deal with only highly trained medical professionals, rather than drunken and potentially murderous resurrection men. He receives a clean, embalmed specimen, professionally potted and attractively sealed in a container of preserving fluids, bearing papers of authenticity stating that the corpse is his property, legally obtained.

Those who desire materials that cannot be traded openly instead deal directly with the meat markets. The risk is much greater for a collector in this case: the materials obtained are illegal, the quality is not assured, and there is a distinct chance that one unused to London's underworld will fall afoul of criminal elements considerably more dangerous than himself. This alternative is generally resorted to by those who seek quantity rather than quality, do not want their corpses preserved prior to the exchange, or desire the brains of their cadaverous materials intact.

What happens to these corpses after they reach private hands is anyone's guess. Some may end up on display at private parties or badly mangled during amateur autopsies performed for the amusement of the jaded. Some, especially those with fine tattoos, may end up as the leather binding of a medical journal. Some may even become silent paramours in a gentleman's bed.

Particularly rare specimens, such as those possessing uncommon mutations such as gigantism or cyclopism, often sell for many times the usual rate. Collectors often enter bidding wars with medical institutions, driving prices to astronomical heights. Theft of exotic bodies is not uncommon. Individuals possessing sought-after physical qualities often sell their bodies in life, bequeathing their mortal remains to the paying institution to avoid the ignominy of a bidding war or theft, or arranging for their friends to ensure their cremation as soon as possible after life has departed to avoid the hands of the dissectors entirely.

Despite their genteel airs, collectors of cadaverous material generally rely on the same exchange rates for corpses as resurrection men and their clients. Generally speaking, a large is a male, a medium is a woman, and smalls are a child, smalls often being sold by the inch. Connoisseurs who prefer to obtain their specimens from the medical institutions may expect to pay considerably more; however, the quality of the specimens will be very high, and the paperwork for the items will be indisputably legal.

**Sample Suggested Donations for Anatomical Curiosities**

| | |
|---|---|
| Animate Head, Preserved: | £100 |
| Corpse, Large: | £25 |
| Corpse, Medium: | £12 |
| Corpse, Small: | 15s per inch |
| Eyes, Pair, Preserved: | £2 |
| Heart, Preserved: | £5 |
| Skull, Articulated: | £5 |

One of these is a serum developed by the cult and referred to only as #29. The solution has the effect of shutting off the conscious functions of the mind for a time. The drugged individual retains some muscle control and can walk if assisted but is not capable of independent action; the muscles react sluggishly, those of the face in particular going slack. The victim will move about if led but will otherwise sit or stand motionless until disturbed. The drug can be consumed or introduced by injection. Since the drug is clear and only slightly bitter and a small amount will suffice to produce the effect, introduction of the drug to an unsuspecting person can be very simply done. Once the dose is delivered, the full effect occurs within a matter of seconds, and the reanimator can simply lead the unprotesting precadaverous material back to his lab. If spotted by the law, the drugged victim is explained as a "drunken friend." If a victim of the drug is permitted to live, the effects

### Serum #29

**Formulation:** Injected or ingested
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** Clear liquid
**DR:** 14 (Lux ex Morte members), 20 (non-members)
**Material Cost:** £3 per dose
**Production Time:** 12 hours
**Purchase Price:** Not available for sale
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 seconds
**Duration:** 5 + d5 hours
**Effect:** Serum #29 is an alchemical drug used exclusively by Lux ex Morte members to abduct precadaverous material for the purpose of Mercurial experimentation. The drugged individual loses all volition while under the effects of Serum #29. Once the reaction time passes, a character that has imbibed or been injected with Serum #29 must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds, the character becomes extremely lethargic for the duration of the solutions effects and suffers –1 Will and –1 on skill rolls. If the roll fails, the character's Coordination, Intellect, Wit, Will, and Charm are reduced to 0 for the serum's duration. An affected character cannot make any actions or communicate. A character that fails the Vitality roll will have no memory of his time under the effect of the drug.
**Alterations:** None

### Serum #57

**Formulation:** Injected
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** A pale yellow-green liquid that appears to glow faintly
**DR:** 16 (Lux ex Morte members), 20 (non-members)
**Material Cost:** 10s per dose
**Production Time:** 8 hours
**Purchase Price:** Not available for sale
**Reaction Time:** 1 week
**Duration:** 2d10 minutes in a corpse, 2d10 seconds in living creature
**Effect:** Serum #57 is a powerful preservative used exclusively by the Lux ex Morte. The serum halts putrefaction, preserving a clay corpse for months after death. When injected into a living victim, the serum instantly kills and preserves the victim. Repeated doses of the serum must be introduced into the tissues of a corpse if preservation for more than a week is required.

When the serum is neutralized by a dose of Serum #59, the corpse may be treated as being perfectly fresh.

This solution may not produce side effects. If the initial roll fails, the synthesis must begin from scratch with fresh materials.
**Alterations:** None

will wear off in approximately eight hours, and the victim will remember nothing of what happened while he was under the effects of the drug.

Another of these innovations, Serum #57 is a very recent creation designed as an unusual preserving agent. A small amount of this serum in a neutral liquid medium can be injected through the circulatory system of a fresh corpse to preserve the body completely, keeping the corpse perfectly fresh for months after death. A dose amount introduced into the bloodstream of a living person will kill and preserve simultaneously as the serum works its way through the body. Unlike previously used embalming chemicals, #57 does not interfere with reanimation because it does no damage to the cells of the body and can be easily neutralized prior to experimentation by flushing the circulatory system with a saline solution of Serum #59. Serum #57 is extremely difficult to synthesize, and one key ingredient must be distilled from the toxic root of a small flowering plant, called Butcher's Breath for the distinctive odour of its blossoms, found only in thickly wooded areas of the Wastelands.

The Lux have created a unique method of administering their compounds. The device, called the Tiger's Claw, is strapped to the forearm and hand and covered by sleeves and gloves. On the forearm, underneath the cuff, a metal-reinforced canister holds the toxin to be administered. Thin tubing extends from the canister across the palm and along the lengths of each finger, held in place by an articulated metal frame. At the end of each finger, a slender needle is similarly held in place. Sharply flexing the fingers extends the needles and triggers the injection, and a quick finger extension withdraws the needles again. In this manner, an injection can be delivered surreptitiously, with the victim hardly having time to feel the injection before the drugs begin to take hold. The Claw is a specialized weapon, requiring long practice before the user can be certain of his control.

## Tiger's Claw

The Tiger's Claw is the signature weapon of the Lux ex Morte. Strapped to the hand, the Tiger's Claw is used to inject all manner of alchemical solutions into victims via needles strapped to the assailant's fingers and fed by a canister strapped to the forearm.

**Cost:** Not for sale. Only available to members of the Lux ex Morte.

**Skill:** Melee Weapon

**Damage Modifier:** -3

**Features:** A character without the Preferred Weapon – Tiger's Claw stunt suffers –3 on attack rolls with the Tiger's Claw.

If the Tiger's Claw inflicts a Flesh Wound or greater, it injects a dose of the drug or alchemical solution inside the canister into the victim.

The canister is large enough to hold 3 doses of a drug or alchemical solution.

## Serum #59

**Formulation:** Injected

**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution

**Appearance:** A pale brownish fluid, entirely unremarkable

**DR:** 16 (Lux ex Morte members),
20 (non-members)

**Material Cost:** 10s per dose

**Production Time:** 1 hours

**Purchase Price:** Not available for sale

**Reaction Time:** Instantaneous

**Duration:** None

**Effect:** Serum #59 is used to neutralize the effects of #57. If delivered within seconds of #59's application to a living human, the progress of the drug is arrested, and death is averted. In a corpse, the serum removes #59's influence from the tissues, allowing reanimation to proceed. Toxicological investigations of a person or corpse that has been treated with both serums will reveal the presence of neither substance. This solution cannot cause side effects. If the initial roll fails, the synthesis must begin from scratch with fresh materials.

**Alterations:** None

## Lux ex Morte and the Order of Reason

**From the Metropolitan Police files on the case of Harvey Wold.**

*The incident on 27 June involved one Harvey Wold, a former MD candidate at Oxford expelled for performing experiments in violation of the University's ethical code. Wold was known to maintain quarters and a small medical practice near the largest of the Hospices of South London. Records indicate a number of complaints over the course of his residence from patients and neighbours. Families of several patients complained that the bodies of their loved ones were cremated without their even being informed of the death. A report was made to local licensing boards, but no follow-up is evident. Complaints were made of the smell proceeding from Wold's premises, described as "worse than that of the crematorium," and records indicate Wold was given a number of warnings about disturbances of this nature. Responding officers indicate Wold appeared cooperative, and no indications of suspicious activity were reported.*

*On the night of 27 June 2099, witnesses report two individuals, one slim and tall and the other rather large, disembarking from a coach down the street from Wold's clinic and entering the darkened building. Thirty-five minutes later, according to witnesses, a bolt of lightning blew out most of the building's façade, and three figures emerged from the building, two moving quickly, the third struggling between them.*

*The first constables on the scene reported "a scene of tremendous carnage." Not less than a dozen Mercurials were counted scattered about the cellar, some riddled with bullets and others half-burned. The notes discovered on the premises removed any lingering doubt as to the extent of Wold's crimes.*

*In all, not less than sixty instances of illegal possession of cadaverous materials and fifteen counts of murder were attributed to Wold. The laboratory and all the contents thereof were ultimately destroyed. Wold himself was turned in to the authorities several hours later by a person or persons unknown and is presently confined to the chronic ward of Bethlehem Hospital.*

The transgressions of the Lux ex Morte have not gone unnoticed in scientific circles. Many within the institutions of Britain are outraged at the excesses of those who persist in this unlawful research. The occasional appearances of the Lux in the newswaves and dailies are an insult to these respectable figures of science, the overt homicidal behaviour and religious foolery of the Lux an unbearable affront to principles of reason. Most believe that the methods of the police are hopeless against this organization; a few operators may be caught when their operations fail catastrophically or their creations escape into the streets, but the leaders of the Lux are unlikely to be captured through routine police investigations.

To this end, the Order of Reason, an active society of philosophers, engineers, scientists, and physicians, have turned their energies toward the eradication of the Lux ex Morte and the capture of rogue reanimators throughout Britain and the known world. The Order was originally established in London following the Reclamation as a society of the learned and skeptical devoted to scientific exploration and elucidation of the apparently paranormal phenomena of the post-plague world. However, most of the modern public activities of the Order are instead devoted to scientific demonstrations of psychical and spirit phenomena in retaliation against the charlatans, profit-minded mediums, sideshow seers, and faith-healers of the modern world. In reaction to the threat posed by the Lux and other manifestations of science gone rogue, the Order has

### Order of Reason Membership, 4 point Quality

*The Order of Reason is a scientific and philosophical society. The organization is, in the main, not secretive; the Order's existence is well known by the public, and chapters of the Order may be found in every major academic and scientific centre in the known world. Membership in a public chapter requires submission of an application, which will be reviewed by the board of that chapter. Most applicants are scientists, engineers, or natural philosophers of some stripe, and membership in the public chapters is fairly easily granted.*

*The public chapters are largely useful as forums for discussion and investigation of pseudoscientific activity. Members may be called upon to perform various tasks, generally low risk, from letter campaigns in the press denouncing enemies of the Order to infiltration of various pseudoscience organizations. Members at this level will be generally aware of the identity and status of the various pseudoscientific organizations identified by the Order, though further detail will not usually be available.*

*The active cells within the Order of Reason recruit their membership largely from the elite of the scientific world. Membership in an active cell need not imply a public association with the Order. Members of these cells are responsible for the serious activity of the Order, including high-level investigations and active prosecution of the Order's targets. Most activity at this level is performed in small groups, not often consisting of more than five or six individuals. These teams are rarely aware of the identities of their compatriots, excepting those with whom they are personally associated: collaboration at this level is performed by correspondence, and real names are rarely used.*

*Only characters with at least one Academic skill of rank 4 or greater can take this Quality.*

begun operating covertly, seeking to ensure the scientific community's adherence to the law from within.

The heads of the Order are Dr. Katherine Beauchamp, Chair of Engineering at Oxford, and Lord Arden Lost, gentleman scientist and professional sceptic. Together, they make an imposing pair: Dr. Beauchamp is tall and thin, possessed of a palpable strength of will, and frequently seen in the field with a massive lightning rifle apparently of personal design and Lord Lost. The pair has operated as a team for many years, each having experienced their first course of anti-agapics during their tenure in the Order.

## The Rules: Mercurial Reanimation

*"The thing actually opened its eyes, but only stared at the ceiling with a look of soul-petrifying horror before collapsing into an inertness from which nothing could rouse it."*
*—H.P. Lovecraft, "Herbert West—Reanimator," 1922*

The chief factors in the reanimation of a corpse are the reagent, the condition of the corpse, and the skill of the attending physician.

Whether or not the experiment succeeds, the reanimator is left with the chore of disposing of the body. Most reanimators are careful to terminate their experiments with a revolver or hatchet to ensure the secrecy of their work. Those who fail to do so live in constant fear of both discovery and the vengeance of their accursed creations. After the experiment concludes, the corpse is generally dissected so that the attending reanimator can observe changes wrought by the reagent. Once the reanimator has finished his interrogations, the corpse may be disposed of in a deep, unmarked grave or stuffed into an incinerator.

## The Reagent

Before a character can begin reanimating a Mercurial, he must first get his hands on a reagent. Since the reanimation of the dead carries very stiff prison sentences, reagents are virtually impossible to find on the black market. Most reanimators are forced to create their own solutions.

While the creation of reagents follows most of the rules for alchemical solutions above, there are a few notable differences. First, the effect of the reagent can vary widely each time it is used because the success of a reanimation is dependent on more than just the quality of the reagent. Second, when a character succeeds in creating an imperfect reagent, do not roll on the Side Effects Table above. Instead, roll of the Reagent Side Effects Table below.

### Mercurial Reagent

**Sometimes called the Corpse Reviver**
**Formulation:** Injected
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** Most are thick, oily liquids that glow ominously but can vary widely
**DR:** 16
**Material Cost:** £1 per dose
**Production Time:** 20 hours
**Purchase Price:** Highly illegal (£10+)
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 minutes
**Duration:** Varies depending on the outcome of the experiment
**Effect:** This is the basic alchemical solution required for Mercurial reanimation. Literally thousands of different reagents have been developed over the years, each deviating slightly from the master formula.

When a dose of the reagent is injected into a clay corpse, the solution reanimates the corpse as a Mercurial. Reagents have no effect on corpses that have been infected by the Plague, undergone extensive post mortem alterations, had their brains destroyed, or died of poisoning.

Injecting a corpse with double or greater dose of the reagent reduces the Reaction Time by half, but the Reanimation Roll (see below) is made at –2.
**Alterations:** The solution may be altered so that it looks and smells like formaldehyde (+1 DR).

A slow-acting version with a reaction time of d10 hours may be made (+1 DR).

### Imperfect Reagent

When a character succeeds in producing an imperfect reagent, the Narrator rolls 2d10 and consults the Reagent Side Effects Table below. Unless the side effect rolled specifies the reaction is immediate, do not inform the player of the result of the roll until he tests the solution on a corpse.

In addition to the effects rolled on the table, an imperfect solution may differ in appearance from the solution intended. The Narrator should use this difference for dramatic effect.

### Revivification, or Science Applied

For best results, the reanimation of a corpse cannot be rushed. The reagent must be carefully administered to a very fresh corpse according to exact calculations based on the size, weight, and state of the corpse. Should the thing receive too much of the solution, it will reanimate too quickly, potentially damaging the muscle structure or mental faculties of the Mercurial. If it receives too little, the reanimation will

## Reagent Side Effects Table

| Roll | Effect |
|---|---|
| 2 | **Mutagen** When injected, the reagent causes unexpected side effects in the physiology of the corpse. It may change colour, grow scaly, slough off flesh, or sprout sharp bone spurs. The Mercurial's orifices may faintly glow and its eyes turn milky white or coal black. Whatever the case, the appearance of a Mercurial created by the reagent will be dramatic and terrifying. Anyone encountering the mutant Mercurial must pass a Will – Fear roll (DR 14) or flee from the sight of the thing. |
| 3-4 | **Putrefier** Instead of creating a reagent, the character succeeds in manufacturing a putrefier. When injected into a corpse, the solution quickly and messily liquefies its flesh and bones, reducing it to a grey-yellow sludge in 2d10 minutes. |
| 5-6 | **Fast Acting** The solution's reaction time is 2d10 seconds. |
| 7-13 | **Weak Solution** The reagent has only a fraction of its intended potency. When using the weak solution, the character suffers –4 on his reanimation rolls. |
| 14-16 | **Slow Acting** The reaction time of the reagent is d10 hours. |
| 18-19 | **Localized Reagent** When injected into a corpse, the reagent does not move through the entire body. Instead it only animates a localized part of the body. If the solution was injected into the corpse's arm, the arm reanimates and begins to move independently of the rest of the corpse. Do not roll for reanimation when using a localized reagent. All attempts to use the solution are doomed to failure. After d10 hours, the affected portion of the body ceases animation. |
| 20 | **Gas** The solution becomes a gas that rapidly fills the lab. All corpses in the area are affected by the reagent. Do not add a character's Alchemy or Medicine rolls to gas reagent reanimation rolls. |

be incomplete or fail completely, wasting time and valuable resources.

Thus, preparing a corpse for an injection of reagent is a time-consuming task. The necessary calculations take at least an hour once the corpse has been secured and the character has had the chance to look it over. Remember that the corpse will be aging while the character prepares for the experiment.

Only the freshest bodies are useful to the reanimator. After death, the nervous tissues quickly deteriorate, especially in the heat of the London summer. A corpse that is too decayed is useless for reanimation.

### The Reanimation Roll

When a character injects a reagent into a clay corpse, the Narrator makes a Reanimation Roll by rolling 2d10 and adding the character's Medicine skill. The roll may be further modified by several factors (see Corpse Condition Modifiers and Additional Modifiers below). Compare the total to the Reanimation Table below to determine the outcome.

### Corpse Condition Modifiers

Corpse Condition Modifiers are not cumulative: only the greatest modifier should be used.

**Perfect** – A corpse that has been dead for only a few minutes or that was preserved properly immediately before or after death is in perfect condition. Attempts to reanimate a perfect corpse are made at +2.

**Fresh** – A corpse that has been dead for less than 3 hours and was kept out of the elements is a fresh corpse. Some powerful preservatives can keep a corpse fresh for a much longer time. There is no modifier for animating a fresh corpse.

**Recent** – A recent corpse is any corpse in relatively good condition that has been dead for less than twelve hours. Attempts to reanimate a recent corpse are made at –2.

# Reanimation Table

Roll Effect

**3-Less Failure**

The reanimation is a complete failure. The corpse does not stir.

**4-7 Mindless**

The corpse exhibits signs of a successful reanimation and may even open its eyes and move its limbs, but it is ultimately mindless. The Mercurial exists in an unliving state, blissfully ignorant of its own existence. The corpse decays faster than normal; the body will decay to uselessness in one week.

**8-10 Death Rattle**

As the reagent takes effect, the corpse begins to twitch. Rapidly, this twitching grows more violent as the reanimated corpse begins to shake itself to pieces. By the end of the death rattle, the corpse has torn itself apart, throwing blood and gristle over a wide area.

**11-13 Screamer**

Once the reagent takes effect, the corpse's eyes open wide and it begins to scream in a voice wholly inhuman. Even the most callous creature will remember the grisly sound for the rest of his life. After 2d10 minutes, the corpse screams itself into silence and never moves again.

**14-16 Plague Spawn**

The Mercurial rises from the dead hungry for the flesh of the living. The creature feeds indiscriminately from the flesh of a victim and will not cease its meal upon the death of the body unless there is further living prey nearby.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Coordination:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Wit:** | 1 (1-2) |
| **Intellect:** | 0 |
| **Will:** | 0 |
| **Charm:** | 0 |
| **Prowess:** | 3 (2-7) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-2) |

**Attributes:** In addition to the average plague spawn's attributes above, the numbers in parentheses show the normal range of a plague spawn's attributes. A plague spawn's Vitality and Coordination are based on the creature's attributes in life. The Mercurial's Wit is reduced by 3 from its while alive (to a minimum of 1). Its Wit represents the sharpness of its senses and reflexes rather than its speed of thought. The plague spawn's Intellect, Will, and Charm are reduced to 0.

**Skills:** None

**Features:** *Fast Deterioration (see below)*
*Feeder (see below)*
*Plague Carrier (see below)*
*Undead (see below)*

**Attack:** *Grapple or Bite* – The plague spawn cannot grapple and bite as part of the same action. Instead, the plague spawn will attempt to grab hold of a victim with an attack during one round and then bite its victim during the next round (see Bite and Grapple, Chapter 2, pages 97-98). When the plague carrier makes an attack roll, use its Coordination instead of the Unarmed Combat skill.

**17-19 Berserker**

The experiment is a partial success, producing a viable Mercurial. However, the creature is a homicidal abomination that exists to prey on the living. The Mercurial possesses an animal cunning tempered by a hatred for all living things. The berserker retains no knowledge of its previous existence and cannot be reasoned with in any way. This type of Mercurial usually cannot transmit the Plague.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 3 (2-6) |
| **Coordination:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Wit:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Intellect:** | 1 |
| **Will:** | 1 |
| **Charm:** | 0 |
| **Prowess:** | 4 (2-10) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-3) |

**Attributes:** In addition to the average beserker's attributes above, the numbers in parenthesis show the normal range of a berserker's attributes. The berserker's attributes are based on its attributes in life. A berserker gains +1 Vitality and retains its Coordination as a Mercurial. The creature's Wit, Intellect, and Will are reduced by 3, to a minimum of 1. Its Wit represents the sharpness of its senses and reflexes rather than its speed of thought. The berserker's Charm is reduced to 0.

**Skills:** None

**Features:** *Fast Deterioration (see below)*
*Feeder (see below)*
*Undead (see below)*

**Attack:** Grapple and Bite

Resolve a berserker's unarmed combat attacks using its Coordination attribute rather than the Unarmed Combat skill. The berserker will always attempt to grapple its target

before biting if possible. If the grapple succeeds the Mercurial will immediately attempt to bite its victim during the same turn as part of the same action (see Bite and Grapple, Chapter 2, pages 97-98).

Notes:At the Narrator's discretion, the beserker may also possess Limited Prey Sense or Plague Carrier (see below).

**20-21 Revenant**

The Mercurial retains a large portion of its former memories and can act almost human for a short period of time. The revenant is dominated by an overpowering hunger for human flesh and will feed like a true animate, devouring tissues indiscriminately from a living body. The uninitiated will assume the Mercurial is just another zombie.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Coordination:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Wit:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Intellect:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Will:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Charm:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Prowess:** | 3 (2-8) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-2) |

**Attributes:** In addition to the average revenant attributes above, the numbers in parenthesis show the normal range of a revenant's attributes. A revenant retains its Vitality and Coordination from life. The creature's Wit, Intellect, Will, and Charm are reduced by 2, to a minimum of 1.

**Skills:** The revenant retains the skills it had in life, but the rank of each skill is reduced by 2. Any skill reduced to 0 or less is lost. Revenants may fight with weapons and are capable of using tools.

**Features:***Deterioration (see below)*

*Feeder (see below)*

*Limited Prey Sense (see below)*

*Madness*— Between the physical deterioration and the shock of being returned to life, the Mercurial's mind is riddled with pathologies. The Mercurial is likely to have dementia, paranoia, phobic disorders, and just about anything else the Narrator cares to add. The creature's morbid tendencies are disturbing in the extreme.

*Undead (see below)*

**Attack:** Grapple and Bite

If the revenant is unarmed, resolve attacks using its Coordination or Unarmed Combat skill, whichever is higher. If it is unarmed, the revenant will attempt to grapple its target before biting if possible. If the grapple succeeds the Mercurial will immediately attempt to bite its victim during the same turn as part of the same action (see Bite and Grapple, Chapter 2, pages 97-98).

Notes: At the Narrator's discretion, the creature may be a Plague Carrier (see below).

**22-23 Lunatic**

The Mercurial, though consumed by its hungers, does retain some portion of its memories and human intelligence. This recall is not constant, rather waxing and waning, but the sight of a familiar person or place can temporarily waken the creature from its mindless hungers. When the human portion of the creature is waking, it is able to restrain its hungers for a time. Some seek their own destruction during these brief windows of rationality.

The creature suffers from a hunger of a very specific type, requiring for its sustenance a particular portion of the human body. The brain and heart are common. The creature will continue to consume the desired portion of the victim even after the victim has died.

The Mercurial lacks the prey sense and cannot transmit the infection.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Coordination:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Wit:** | 1 (1-4) |
| **Intellect:** | 1 (1-4) |
| **Will:** | 1 (1-4) |
| **Charm:** | 1 (1-4) |
| **Prowess:** | 3 (2-9) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-3) |

**Attributes:** In addition to the average Lunatic attributes above, the numbers in parenthesis show the normal range of a Mercurial's attributes. A Lunatic retains its Vitality and Coordination from life. The creature's Wit, Intellect, Will, and Charm are reduced by 1 to a minimum of 1.

**Skills:** The Mercurial retains the skills it had in life, but the rank of each skill is reduced by 2. Any skill reduced to 0 or less is lost. The creature may fight with weapons and is capable of using tools.

**Features:** *Feeder (see below)*

*Madness* — Between the physical deterioration and the shock of being returned to life, the Mercurial's mind is riddled with mental disorders. The Mercurial is likely to have dementia, paranoia, phobic disorders, and just about anything else the Narrator cares to add.

*Memory* — At the Narrator's discretion, the creature's human memories will resurface. During this time, the creature will be able to restrain itself from feeding with a successful Will

## Reanimation Table (continued)

roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds, the Mercurial can restrain itself for d10 minutes, after which it must make another Will roll or return to its mindless feeding.
Slow Deterioration (see below)
Undead (see below)
**Notes:** At the Narrator's discretion, the Lunatic may have Fast Deterioration (see below) rather than Slow Deterioration.
**Attack:** *Grapple and Bite*
If the Mercurial is unarmed, resolve attacks using its Coordination or Unarmed Combat skill, whichever is higher. If it is unarmed, the creature will attempt to grapple its target before biting if possible. If the grapple succeeds the Mercurial will immediately attempt to bite its victim during the same turn as part of the same action (see Bite and Grapple, Chapter 2, pages 97-98).

**24+ Reborn**
The Mercurial returns to life as if from a deep sleep. Amazingly, it has retained most of its personality and memories. At first the reanimate will be terrifically confused, but after an adjustment period, it will calm down. The creature may have also lost the ability to speak but soon picks it back up. The Mercurial will be relatively slow acting and thinking. It will have a tendency to prefer the company of the dead and may spend long periods of time alone. The Mercurial will seem to have lost any true spark of creativity or life.
People and places the Mercurial knew in life will remain familiar, but indistinct. The creature may tenaciously latch onto some aspects of its former life as if looking for an anchor to reality. Deep down, the thing knows it is an abomination and that the world has no place for it. It wishes to be returned to death and forgotten once and for all.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Coordination:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Wit:** | 1 (1-4) |
| **Intellect:** | 2 (1-5) |
| **Will:** | 1 (1-4) |
| **Charm:** | 1 (1-4) |
| **Prowess:** | 3 (2-9) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-3) |

**Attributes:** In addition to the average attributes above, the numbers in parenthesis show the normal range of a Mercurial's attributes. A Mercurial of this type retains its Vitality, Coordination, and Intellect from life. The creature's Wit, Will, and Charm are reduced by 1, to a minimum of 1.
**Skills:** The Mercurial retains the skills it had in life, but the rank of each skill is reduced by 1. Any skill reduced to 0 or less is lost.
**Features:** *Habitual Feeder*
The creature is able to sustain itself off of any living flesh and does not require the flesh of living humans, though the craving remains. The creature hungers for living flesh, but it is able to control its need when in the presence of a potential victim with a successful Will roll (DR 14). For every week the creature goes without feeding, the DR is increased by 1.
*Melancholic*
The creature has the Melancholy Impediment (see Chapter 3, page 188). Suicidal compulsions occur on a roll of 2-4 rather than on critical failures only.
*Slow Deterioration (see below)*
*Undead (see below)*
**Attack:** Attacks may be unarmed or with weapons.

**Stale** – A stale corpse has been dead for up to twenty-four hours. A stale corpse is also any that has sustained minor damage that must be repaired before reanimation may begin. Attempts to reanimate a stale corpse are made at –4.

**Ripe** – A ripe corpse is an unpreserved corpse that is up to seventy-two hours old. Deterioration of the body may be severe. There is little point outside mere sadism to reanimating a ripe corpse. Attempts to reanimate a ripe corpse are made at –6.

**Past Due** – Attempts to animate an unpreserved corpse over seventy-two hours old automatically fail.

### Additional Modifiers

**Rush Job** – If the character does not spend any time preparing for the experiment and simply injects the corpse with the reagent, do not add his Medicine skill to the Reanimation roll.

### Mercurial Traits

#### Deterioration

All Mercurials deteriorate over time, though some deteriorate at a slower rate than others. Though the reanimation process can retard the natural process of decay, the Mercurial continues to lose mass and brain tissue over time. Eventu-

ally, the thing is destined to return to the dust from which it came.

The Mercurial must make a Vitality roll (DR 11) once each week. If the roll fails, the Mercurial suffers –1 Vitality and Coordination. If either attribute is reduced to 0, the vitalic spark flees the animate and it returns to its previously inert form.

Fast Deterioration — The Mercurial must make the Vitality roll to resist decay (DR 11) each day.

Slow Deterioration — The Mercurial must make the Vitality roll to resist decay (DR 11) each year.

**Feeder**

A Mercurial feeder is a wretched thing that pointlessly attempts to feed on human flesh. Though the Mercurial will attempt to stuff itself, it cannot actually process its meal as a true animate can and gains no benefit from it. The flesh is simply left to rot inside the creature.

**Limited Prey Sense**

Some Mercurials have a chance to detect the presence of living humans in their vicinity regardless of whether the targets can be seen, heard, or smelled by the creature. A Mercurial can make a roll to detect any living human within 25 yards x the character's highest Corruption Path rating. If a living character is within detection range, the Narrator makes a Wit – Perception roll (DR 11) for the Mercurial. Add the character's highest Corruption Path rating to the Mercurial's roll. If the roll succeeds, the Mercurial determines the character's exact location, but not necessarily the fastest way to reach him. If the roll fails, the Mercurial does not detect the character.

Because a Mercurial's Limited Prey Sense does not require sight or hearing for detection, it is not modified by the Shadow skill.

Limited Prey Sense cannot detect half-lifers.

**Plague Carrier**

If the Mercurial inflicts a Serious Wound or greater on a living victim with a bite attack, the victim will be infected with the Plague. Transmission works identically as with a true animate (see Infection, Chapter 5, page 247).

**Undead**

All Mercurials are undead. Though they may seem alive, they have no vital signs and do not need to eat, sleep, or breathe.

# To Create the Perfect Soldier: Thropes

*"Had I approached my discovery in a more noble spirit, had I risked the experiment while under the empire of generous or pious aspirations, all must have been otherwise, and from these agonies of death and birth, I had come forth an angel instead of a fiend."*

— *Robert Louis Stevenson,* Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, *1886*

In the first years of the Reclamation, military casualties were enormously high. Bites were unavoidably common among reclamation men, and many of these soldiers were lost to the contagion. Military scientists sought to create a serum that would make an average soldier invulnerable, strong, fast, tireless, and, most crucially, immune to the contagious effects of the zombie bite. This alchemically perfected soldier was to be fearless, efficient, brutal, and entirely reengineered to withstand the horrors of the Wastes and the teeming nightmares of the infested cities.

Ultimately, these experiments succeeded in bringing that vision of perfected man into reality. The thropes, as they came to be called, were created by the injection of a serum into ordinary soldiers. In the resulting transformation, the soldier more than doubled in mass, increasingly tremendously in strength and gaining inhuman stamina and toughness. The resulting creature was a super soldier: fearsome and brutal, incredibly resistant to toxins and disease, extremely difficult to damage, careless of his own mortality, and dedicated to the kill. Even when the soldier appeared normal, his form proved tougher and quicker to heal than before the injection was given. Animate bites failed to infect and healed as rapidly as any other injury, regardless of how many bites were inflicted. When the soldier was to be deployed, the change could be brought on at any time by use of injectable battle drugs. When the soldier was not in combat, the alteration was designed to be controlled by suppressant drugs.

The first field tests of the serum were encouraging. The altered soldiers were released singly to reclaim several smaller towns, clearing the animate populations with astonishing speed. Once the effects of the serum faded, the soldier would make his way back to the home encampment, hungry and tired but unharmed. The soldier's memories of the interval between triggering the transformation and returning to human form were indistinct, but sufficient detail generally remained to determine the success of the mission. The serum was judged to be a success and full field tests were

planned that would incorporate the altered soldiers into the regular reclamation units.

Unfortunately, in the expanded tests, the soldier's altered form proved intractable. Commands were simply ignored and pain proved useless as a system of control, making the creatures impossible to manage in battle. Worse, in the strength of his fury, the thrope did not distinguish between the comrades at his back and the monsters he was sent to destroy. Several reclamation teams were lost in these tests before the serum-altered units were recalled.

Then, it was discovered that many reclamation soldiers who suffered bites from a thrope but survived the initial attack would begin to manifest the thrope form. These soldiers would recover at an extraordinary rate, healing Serious Wounds in a matter of days. The first transformation would occur spontaneously within one to three months following the bite in response to some incident causing anger or stress. These thropes appeared to function identically to the original, serum-created thropes in every respect. It was hypothesized that the active properties of the serum were expressed in the bodily fluids of the thrope and that fluid exchange with an altered human could result in contagion. Further experiments and observations indicated that any substantial fluid exchange was associated with a chance of contagion; blood-blood contact offered the most significant hazard, and as the Thrope would often do some injury to his own mouth and teeth with the ferocity of his attacks, bites were very frequently infectious. No incidences of sexual transmission or infection by casual contact were recorded; the blood-blood contact was determined to be by far the surest mode of transmission. The active component of transmission could not, however, be isolated.

Despite the clear danger, the serum-altered soldiers had proved too effective to be removed from reclamation duty. Special teams were formed to allow the deployment of these unpredictable human weapons and to make observations of their performance in the field. In practice, the thrope soldier would be brought to the perimeter of an infested area by a full reclamation team. The team would withdraw, leaving the soldier to advance into the contagion zone. The serum would be self-administered, inducing the transformation into the thrope form. Progress would be monitored from the outside, and once the area was sufficiently clear, the reclamation team would close in. The altered soldier would be subdued at a safe distance by a sniper-fired syringe of suppressant drug and retrieved.

These teams were initially highly successful. The unusual abilities of the thropes allowed them to be sent into areas that would have been suicide for human teams to enter. These units were used heavily in the early reclamation of the cities, clearing out infection hotspots in the labyrinthine urban centres. At the peak of their use, nearly a thousand serum-altered soldiers were employed in the Reclamation.

Over the first three years, irregularities began to crop up in the transformation process. The transformations, initially painful and traumatic, became progressively less difficult with time. After the first eighteen months, most soldiers could transition into the thrope form with minimum discomfort. At first, this was regarded as a very positive sign, indicating acceptance of the serum by the body. However, further evolutions of the properties of the transformation proved more disquieting.

After the serum was administered or a soldier infected, the change always occured spontaneously at irregular intervals. At first, the changes were linked exclusively to incidences of stress or anger, but over time it became apparent that transformations could occur in the absence of any trigger. The transformations, which lasted a few hours in a newly transformed soldier, grew longer and longer with time. The increasing frequency and duration of transformation was noticeable in altered soldiers with more than a year of service, and the phenomenon appeared to worsen over time. Heavier and heavier doses of suppressant drugs were used to maintain the human form outside combat, and constantly increasing doses of the Reversion Serum were required to take the thrope down in the field.

The first total failure of the Reversion Serum occurred five years after the onset of the thrope program. A thrope deployed to clear out an old civilian encampment failed to return to human form despite being hit with a massive dose of suppressant. The thrope turned on the reclamation team attempting to retrieve him, destroying a quarter of the unit before the snipers could concentrate their fire. Under the force of the sniper's barrage, the thrope fled the encampment, disappearing into the surrounding wilderness. More failures followed, the thrope effecting his escape in nearly every instance. Altered soldiers began disappearing from their barracks in the night, and reports of thrope packs in the Wastelands began to come in from far-ranging units.

The remaining thropes were withdrawn from active duty and remanded to the care of physicians for study. It was discovered in the course of the ensuing investigations that approximately four to five years after the initial dose, the thrope would transition into his altered form permanently; new suppressants were engineered and massive doses were administered but to no avail. All trace of the original personality was apparently destroyed in the final transformation, leaving behind a monster of animal intelligence and strong killer instinct. Observations of the tissues of the thrope form revealed that the process of aging had been almost completely arrested in these creatures. The extraordinary self-repair mechanisms of the thrope body apparently were capable of repairing even the ordinary damage consequent to cellular senescence. These observations opened the way for the courses of research that ultimately resulted in the creation of the modern anti-agapics.

The fully transformed thropes proved extremely difficult to contain, and after a number of bloody escapes, the remainder of the thrope-soldiers were destroyed. None of these reanimated, nor have any thropes destroyed in the wild done so. It is believed that the thrope serum renders the human form completely immune to whatever factors cause the reanimation of the body.

In all, several hundred of the original thropes managed to escape to the Wastes. The unusual resilience and unnatural lifespan of these creatures would presumably allow them to survive in these hostile conditions for spans of time far exceeding the ordinary human lifetime. Few of the inhabitants of the Wastelands can threaten a single full-size thrope – zombies pose little threat to these brutes and even a ghoul clan would hesitate to make an attack on a thrope – and they have been observed to travel in packs. It appears likely, therefore, that many of the thropes who escaped from the original experiments in the early Reclamation days are still roaming the Wastes. Additionally, some reports from sightings over the past hundred years indicate that thropes of varying sizes may be present within the packs; the alterations to the genetic code induced by the thrope serum may have proved to breed true.

Following the destruction of the original thropes, research into the super-soldier program was suspended indefinitely. In modern times, however, the research has resurfaced clandestinely. The potential wealth and fame that would come with the discovery of the perfect serum that would render man immune to the effects of the Plague is a tempting reward for many a young scientist. Others see in this line of research an opportunity to create a perfected man, the pinnacle of human achievement, thus purifying the world and securing their own place in history. As the research is officially censured, it is impossible to obtain funding for such a project. Many of the scientists who embark on the quest for this serum are those who can rely on their own financial resources: young physicians of wealthy family whose name and reputation are sufficient to deflect any inquiries into their activities and whose fortunes are vast enough to secretly supply them with the equipment and alchemical solutions necessary to complete their work.

The original formulation of the serum has been lost, destroyed at the conclusion of the thrope experiments. Modern physicians perform their researches blindly, reconstructing the thrope serum from first principles. Under

# Flawed Serum Table

Roll Effect

2 & 20 **Killer Transformation**

The serum is a catastrophic failure. By the time the solution begins to take effect, a gruesome tragedy will be impossible to avoid. The character sputters, claws at his own eyes, and then falls to the floor, spasming uncontrollably as his body explodes into a flurry of spontaneous mutation. Bones rip through distended flesh, and breathing passages and neural pathways are choked by cancerous growths and tumours. In the end, the resulting unspeakable monstrosity twitches silently into death.

3-4 **Weak Thrope**

Though the serum appears to be completely successful at first, it is weaker than a true thrope serum. The character continues to age naturally, cannot infect others with his bite, and lacks Regeneration. However, the character retains complete control over himself. The character's Wit and Intellect are not reduced while in thrope form, and the creature does not suffer from the wild rages common to most thropes. The character is also sterile and smells weak to true thropes who will never accept him as one of their own.

The character suffers a Serious Wound each time he reverts to human form.

For the initial effects of the serum, see The First Transformation below.

5-6 **Mutagen**

The flawed serum fails to transform the character into a thrope. However, it does alter his physiology. His flesh may become grey and flabby, or his face may become a swollen mass of tumours. Spurs may grow from his bones, painfully distending flesh. The character may sprout a useless tail or fifth limb or, more horrifically, a parasitic conjoined twin. The limits of the transmogrification are those of the Narrator's imagination and sense of the perverse.

Whatever form the mutation takes, roll a d10. On a result of 1-3, the character suffers –1 Vitality and Coordination. On a roll of 4-6, the character suffers –1 Vitality. On a result of 7-9, the character suffers –1 Coordination. On a roll of 10, the character suffers –1 Coordination and Wit. If the result of this roll would reduce one of the character's attributes to 0 or less, the character enters a coma from which he will never awaken. The character also gains the Defects Impediment (see Chapter 3, page 183).

7-8 Partial Transformation

The serum begins to work normally. The character's body is covered with thick hair. The muscles in his jaw thicken. His bones increase in mass. His hands grow to enormous size... then the transformation halts. The character is permanently in a partial thrope form, though not truly a thrope. The result is a lumpy, awkward, ugly creature with a poor disposition. The character is still fully living but cannot return to human form.

The character gains +1 Vitality but suffers –1 Charm and acquires the Defects Impediment (see Chapter 3, page 183). A character cannot have his Charm reduced to less than 1 by this sad state of affairs. The character can never again be affected by a thrope serum.

9-11 One Shot

Though the thrope transformation appears to be a success, the effects are only temporary. Once the character reverts to human form after his initial transformation the serum wears off and he does not transforms again. The character can later be affected by another thrope serum.

For the initial effects of the serum, see The First Transformation below.

## Flawed Serum Table (continued)

**12-13 Berserker**

The serum transforms the body of the imbiber into a form resembling that of the thrope, increasing the size and power of the body. However, the new form is somewhat awkward (+1 Vitality but –1 Coordination). Furthermore, the creature's Intelligence and Will are reduced to 0 for the duration of the transformation, and the creature becomes uncontrollably violent. It will attack anything and everything in his vicinity, living or not, until subdued or transformed back into the human form.

The imbiber is still fully living. He gains no bonuses to healing and no additional immunities. The character remains in this bestial form for 10d10 minutes, after which he the character suffers a Serious Wound when he reverts to human form. This transformation occurs only once. The character can later be affected by another thrope serum.

**14-15 Degenerating Form**

Though the serum seems to take effect, it has some unforeseen side effects. The character becomes a thrope and gains all the abilities of a true thrope except that he ages naturally and cannot infect others with his bite. However, his existence is plagued by irregular and destructive transformations. His transformations are not stable: he will not always experience a full transformation into the thrope form nor will all aspects of the altered form disappear when he reverts to human form. The effects of the serum are permanent, and there is no known treatment.

Ultimately, this condition will be fatal. Each time the character reverts to human form after the first transformation he must make a Vitality roll (DR 14). If the roll fails he permanently suffers –1 Vitality. The character's body, worn out from the stress of recurrent transformations, will begin to break down. The connective tissues will begin to fail. Walking will become difficult, then impossible, and the rest of the limbs will break down in turn. Once he is reduced to 0 Vitality, the character will be unable to move under his own power or even make use of his hands. Once this stage is reached, organs will begin to fail, overworked by the trauma of the transformations; the character will begin to vomit blood and an indeterminate ichor as cell death sweeps through the body. Physicians called in to deal with the final stages of this dissolution often have significant difficulties in identifying portions of the anatomy during autopsy.

The character will never be accepted by other thropes. If given the chance, another thrope will certainly put the character out of his misery.

For the initial effects of the serum, see The First Transformation below.

**16-17 Crippling Transmogrifier**

The flawed solution succeeds in inflicting disastrous mutations on the character's body, permanently twisting and distending limbs, though the character never truly transforms into a thrope. The character acquires the Defects and Lame Impediments (Chapter 3, pages 183 and 184).

**18-19 Weak Serum**

Though the serum appears to be a complete success, its effects are only temporary. The character becomes a thrope for 2d10 months after which his transformations abruptly and permanently come to an end. At this time the character becomes a normal human. While under the effects of the serum, the character is effectively a true thrope, and as a result, he is made permanently sterile.

For the initial effects of the serum, see The First Transformation below.

these conditions, working in relative ignorance outside the moderating influences of the greater scientific world, it is unsurprising that the researches occasionally go awry.

A human experimental subject is required for final testing of a serum. Often, this need is supplied by the purchase of some numbers of labourers for "laboratory assistance," though a researcher will not infrequently test the most promising refinement of a class of serums on himself. In many cases, the stress of the resulting transformation is too severe for the body to withstand, resulting in the messy death of the experimental unit.

Even when the transformation is successful, the results are often volatile. As with the original serum, the resulting thrope is frequently mindlessly violent and uncontrollable. These creatures often escape the laboratories in which they were created, wreaking havoc in the streets of the metropolis until they can be overpowered. Undertakers are often called in by the civic authorities to deal with these situations, and there is a heavy bounty offered to anyone who takes down a rampaging thrope.

There is, however, a great deal of variation in the results of these experiments. Some serums currently in existence are more stable, generating a thrope form that retains some human intelligence and discretion. These serums tend to create a final form of somewhat lower strength and stamina than in the original experiments, though the physical characteristics of the thrope form are substantially improved over those of the human form. Healing is accelerated, though never to the degree observed in the original experiments, and the aging process is not significantly slowed. In the original thropes, the massive trauma of the transformation was compensated for by the extraordinary ability of the body to heal itself; in the lesser serums, the damage is never wholly compensated for, leading to a gradual breakdown of the muscular and skeletal structures over time. Most critically, few of these lesser serums appear to provide any resistance against the bite of the zombie. Despite their disadvantages, the short-term benefits of increased endurance and power provide these serums with some demand on the black market. Undertakers have been known to make use of these serums to give themselves an edge in their work, as have police in the poorer and more dangerous districts of the metropolis. Some formulations are designed to be single-use, initiating a single transformation only. Most, however, carry a significant risk of recurrent uncontrolled transformations. These serums require the use of drugs to control the transformations, and as with the original serums, suppression of the transformation becomes more difficult over time. Ultimately, the thrope form will become permanent, after which point, degradation of the physical form follows rapidly. The resulting death is singularly unpleasant.

# Physiology of the Thrope

The thrope is considered to be a half-living organism and possesses two forms: the original human body and the serum-induced thrope form. In both states, the thrope requires food, water, and oxygen.

The thrope transformation is a profound alteration of the physiology of the human. The entire body increases greatly in height and bulk, achieving easily twice his original mass. The bones become long and thicker in proportion to length than in the human form; the muscles become large and powerful and the sinews thick and tough. The bones of the arms become disproportionately long, and the curvature of the spine is altered, permitting the creature to move in either a bipedal or quadrupedal fashion. The skull elongates through the jaw and the dentition increases in size, creating a powerful, short muzzle reminiscent of the lesser apes. The skin becomes coarse and discolored, and a layer of hair appears over the limbs and torso. Claws emerge from the hands, extending from the natural fingernails. This entire process is completed in a matter of seconds.

Reversion to the human form occurs with similar rapidity. The hair and nails vanish as if reabsorbed into the body, and the form shrinks and folds in on itself in a series of unpleasant contortions. Even in the human form, the thrope retains his unusual healing abilities and immunities.

## The Rules: Unleashing the Beast Within

### The Serum

Since it was lost during the Reclamation, the thrope serum has become something of a holy grail among Neo-Victorian alchemists. In addition to its own potent merits and mysteries, it is widely speculated that the serum holds clues to the creation of the Elixir Vitae itself. Not only does the serum halt the aging process, but it is also proof against the Plague.

The creation of thrope serums follows the rules for Manufacturing Drugs and Alchemical Solutions (see above); however, if the alchemist fails in his initial attempt to create the serum, the DR for creating an imperfect solution is reduced to 20. If the character succeeds in creating an imperfect serum, roll on the Flawed Serum Table below rather than the Side Effects Table above.

### The True Serum

**Formulation:** Injected
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** Unknown
**DR:** 25
**Material Cost:** £10 for 1 dose
**Production Time:** 32 hours
**Purchase Price:** While there are many serums on the market claiming to be the true thrope serum, so far all have been no more than pale imitations. All thrope serums are highly illegal.
**Duration:** Permanent
**Reaction Time:** d10 minutes

**Effect:** The True Serum is a legendary alchemical solution that permanently alters the imbiber's physiology. In addition to the transmogrifying qualities of the serum, it gives the drinker an immunity to all known contagions, including the Plague, and virtual immortality. The downside is that the character's personality is doomed to be overwhelmed by the animal side of his nature when he inevitably permanently transforms into a brutish thrope.

The character is now a thrope.

The serum does not affect half-lifers.

For the initial effects of the serum, see The First Transformation below.

**Alterations:** None. Accept no substitutes.

### Imperfect Serum

When a character succeeds in producing an imperfect serum, the Narrator rolls 2d10 and consults the Flawed Serum Table below. Do not inform the player of the result of the roll until he tests the solution on a human guinea pig.

# Transformations

### The First Transformation

Whether the alteration is the product of a true thrope serum or a flawed serum, the first transformation is the same. Once the character drinks the serum, he quickly begins to transform over its reaction time. A double dose of the serum cuts the reaction time in half, but mixing different serums produces a toxin. A living character ingesting such a cocktail must succeed in a Vitality roll (DR16) or die painfully.

The process is not pleasant to endure or observe. While suffering indescribable pain, the character's mass increases dramatically, dark hair covers his body, and his limbs grow to a massive size. Once the transformation is complete, the character has become a savage hulking brute driven by rage and animal instinct.

While in this state, the thrope is incredibly violent and unpredictable. The thrope will fight tirelessly to the death until every creature in his vicinity has been killed or fled. If two thropes encounter one another, they will immediately fight for dominance. Dominance is generally established once one thrope inflicts an Incapacitating Wound on the other.

The thrope will revert to human form 10d10 minutes after this initial transformation.

### Subsequent Transformations

After the character's first transformation, his form will become unstable. His transformations will become easier and more natural over time until the excruciating pain of the character's first transformation is a distant memory. As his thrope form becomes more natural, the character will spend less and less time as a human until eventually transitioning into his thrope form permanently.

After his first transformation, any time the character feels threatened, suffers a Serious Wound or greater, or is put in a stressful situation, he must make a Will roll (DR 11). If the roll succeeds, the character retains control of himself and nothing happens. If the roll fails, the character begins to transform into his thrope form. Instead of attempting to resist the transformation, the character can ride it out, wilfully undergoing the transformation. If the character elects to wilfully transform, it is considered a failed attempt to resist transformation. Each time the character fails a roll to resist the transformation, the DR for his next roll to resist it is increased by 1.

The transformation takes d10 turns minus 1 turn for each time he has failed to resist a transformation roll. If the number of turns it takes the character to transform is reduced to 0 or less, the transformation is instantaneous.

The character remains in thrope form for 10d10 minutes, plus one additional d10 minutes for each of his failed attempts to resist transforming. Once the character has failed to resist transformation 10 times, he will remain in thrope form permanently.

*For example, Mark's Aristocrat Regis has become a thrope. He has failed 3 attempts to resist transformation previously, so the next time he has to resist transformation, he must succeed in a Will roll versus a DR of 14 (11 + 3 previous failures). If he fails a fourth time, Regis will transform into thrope form in d10 – 4 turns. Once the transformation is complete, Regis will remain in thrope form for (14d10) minutes.*

By the time the character has failed five rolls to resist transformation, he will be able to transform at will rather than waiting for a stress trigger. If the character transforms completely by his own volition, it is not considered to be a failed roll to resist transformation. At this point, the Narrator also may initiate the transformation in the absence of

### Thrope Reversion Serum

**Formulation:** Injected **Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** A thin, odourless liquid with a grey-blue tint. **DR:** 16 **Material Cost:** 10s for 1 dose
**Production Time:** 6 hours **Purchase Price:** £1/10s/- **Reaction Time:** Instantaneous
**Duration:** Instantaneous
**Effect:** The Thrope Reversion Serum is a powerful alchemical solution that forces a thrope to revert to human form virtually instantaneously. The serum was developed during the Reclamation in hopes of giving the military a means of controlling the serum-transformed super soldiers once they had engaged and destroyed all animates in the vicinity.

The Thrope Reversion Serum is available throughout the metropolis. The Metropolitan Police keep large amounts of the substance stockpiled at all times in case of an outbreak in the streets. Few experienced Undertakers would consider leaving home without at least a dose of the stuff, but it is of little to no use in the Wastes where pure-bred thropes are the rule.

The introduction of the serum is generally performed using a syringe gun (see Chapter 4, page 221). The advantages of this method should be immediately apparent. If the shot succeeds at inflicting at least a Flesh Wound on the monster, the dart has penetrated the skin and delivered its dose.

Once the serum enters the thrope's blood stream, he must immediately make a Vitality roll (DR 20). If the thrope succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, he immediately transforms to human form and cannot return to thrope form for d10 hours. The Reversion Serum has no effect on thropes who cannot return to human form, whether originally human or purebred.
**Alterations:** None

### Thrope Suppression Drug

**Formulation:** Injected
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** A notoriously bitter, white pill with an aftertaste not unlike penicillin
**DR:** 14
**Material Cost:** 3s
**Production Time:** 6 hours
**Purchase Price:** 10s
**Reaction Time:** Instantaneous
**Duration:** 24 hours
**Effect:** The Thrope Suppression Drug is another product of the Reclamation. Once military scientists realized that thrope transformations caused permanent changes in the human body, they rushed to find a method of stabilizing the system. As with the Reversion Serum, initial tests were promising, but it soon became apparent that no amount of the substance would be able to continue suppressing transformations forever.

While under the effects of the Thrope Suppression Drug, a thrope cannot voluntarily transform or choose to fail a Will roll to avoid transformation. A character under the effects of the Suppression Drug gets a +5 bonus on Will rolls to resist transformation.

Every 3 times the character has failed an attempt to resist transformation, he must take an extra dose of the Suppression Drug to get the same effect, and the duration is reduced by two hours. If the character takes less than this amount, the Suppression Drug will have no effect. Once the character is unable to return to human form, the drug will have no effect. Purebred thropes are unaffected by the suppressant.
**Alterations:** None

### Thrope Tranquilizer

**Formulation:** Injected
**Substance Type:** Alchemical solution
**Appearance:** A translucent, slightly yellowish liquid
**DR:** 14
**Material Cost:** 10s
**Production Time:** 4 hours
**Purchase Price:** £2
**Reaction Time:** 2d10 seconds
**Duration:** d5 + 1 hours.
**Effect:** This drug is a heavy-duty tranquilizer, initially designed for bringing down rogue thropes in the field. The tranquilizing agent is extremely powerful, intended to subdue an angry thrope within seconds; a full dose of the drug may easily prove fatal to a normal human.

The drug is normally loaded into a syringe gun and delivered via injection. If a shot from the syringe gun hits and inflicts at least a Flesh Wound, the syringe has successfully delivered its payload. A thrope must make a Vitality roll (DR 14) upon exposure to the compound. If the roll succeeds, nothing happens. If the roll fails, the thrope falls unconscious.
A living human or non-thrope half-lifer who is injected with the solution must make a Vitality roll (DR 16). If the roll succeeds, the character falls into a deep sleep for d10 hours from which he cannot awake. If the roll fails, the character goes into respiratory arrest and will die within four minutes if an antidote is not administered.
**Alterations:** Producing an antidote to the Thrope Tranquilizer requires 5s in raw materials, two hours of production time, and a successful Alchemy skill roll (DR 11). Once injected, the antidote immediately neutralizes the effects of the tranquilizer. The antidote is available at the cost of 15s.

a trigger; the player has the option to make the Will roll to resist (DR 11 + number of failed attempts to resist).

# General Thrope Rules

A true thrope is only created when a living human imbibes the true serum or is bitten by a true thrope. The various flawed thrope forms described above are only pale shadows of the true thrope. The true thrope has all the abilities and penalties associated with being a thrope and one day will undergo a transformation from which there is no return.

### Purebred Thropes

When a pair of true thropes mate, their pups will be purebred thropes. True to their human origins, thropes generally produce a single pup, though a higher percentage of multiple births than normal occur. Purebred thropes live their whole lives in thrope form and do not have a human form. These creatures are generally only encountered in packs in the Wastelands. Purebred packs will accept true thropes who are no longer capable of returning to human form into their ranks.

### Half-lifer

Thropes are half-lifers. Though they are alive and can breed, they are no longer wholly human. A thrope must eat, sleep, and breathe like a mortal man but is more or less immortal. At the time of infection or, for purebred thropes, upon reaching physical maturity, thropes cease aging altogether. A thrope can only be killed by accident or violence.

Thropes are immune to all known diseases, including the Plague. Thropes ignore the choking effects of London's smogs.

### Regeneration

Thropes regenerate physical damage at an incredible rate in both thrope and human form. The thrope's muscles will re-knit, bones will fuse together, and lost limbs will even grow anew. Without treatment, the non-Fatal Wounds suffered by a thrope are reduced by one wound level per day. If a thrope has suffered an Incapacitating Wound, the wound level will be reduced to a Serious Wound after a day. Complications are fully healed after three days. A thrope will regenerate lost limbs within d5 + 5 days.

When a thrope changes from human form to thrope form or vice versa, he keeps any wounds suffered in his other form.

## Thrope Form

### Attributes

While in thrope form, a character's attributes are dramatically altered. He gains +3 Vitality and +2 Coordination, but suffers –3 Intellect, -2 Will, and his Charm is reduced to 0. A character's Intellect and Wit cannot be reduced to less than 0 as a result of thrope transformation.

### Animalistic

While in their thrope forms, these creatures are comparable to starving wolves or bears of great size. They have a primal, vicious animalistic nature that is readily apparent in even the smartest of their breed. When angered, hungry, or surprised, a thrope will attack any living non-thrope in his vicinity. If he is in a particularly cantankerous mood, a thrope will assault and may even attempt to devour smaller thropes. If a thrope is encountered and for some reason does not immediately attack, the best thing to do is start taking big steps backward while being as silent as possible and hope he does not take offence.

What skills and stunts a character maintains while in thrope form is based on his modified Intellect. A thrope with Intellect 0 is a creature that operates utterly by instinct. He loses all skills and stunts, cannot use tools or weapons, and uses his Coordination attribute when making unarmed attacks.

A thrope with a modified Intellect of 1 retains his unarmed combat stunts and uses either his Coordination attribute or Unarmed Combat skill, whichever is higher, when making unarmed attacks.

A thrope with a modified Intellect of 2 is capable of using simple tools. He can fight with melee weapons and retains his melee combat stunts as well as his unarmed combat stunts. While in thrope form, the character uses his Melee Combat skill when fighting with a melee weapon and either his Unarmed Combat skill or Coordination attribute when making unarmed attacks.

### Senses

While in thrope form, the character's senses are exceptionally acute. A thrope gains +3 on all Wit – Perception rolls. Thropes are also able to visually perceive farther into the infra-red spectrum than humans, see recent heat signatures, and follow trails in the dark.

### Indestructible

While in thrope form, the character is virtually indestructible. He can shrug off damage that would easily kill or cripple lesser creatures. When a thrope is hit by any attack – whether melee, ranged, or unarmed – reduce the damage roll by the Thrope's current Vitality. Thropes also ignore skill roll penalties from wounds.

### The Bite

A thrope's jaws are a powerful weapon capable of crushing bone and rending plate steel. In addition to his other actions, a thrope may make one additional bite during his turn. A thrope gains +2 on bite damage rolls (See Bite, Chapter 2, page 97).

Any bite from a thrope inflicting a Serious Wound or greater is capable of transforming the victim into a thrope. Once bitten, the character makes a Vitality roll (DR 16). If the character succeeds, he is not infected. If the roll fails, he is infected. Once infected, there is no cure. After twenty-four hours, the character becomes a half-lifer and his new regeneration abilities will begin to repair the damage to his body. Once the bite that caused the infection has been healed, the character has the chance to transform whenever he gets into a stressful situation with the same effect as Subsequent Transformations above.

Thrope Stats

| | |
|---|---|
| Vitality: | 5 (4-8) |
| Coordination: | 4 (3-7) |
| Wit: | 2 (1-5) |
| Intellect: | 1 (1-2) |
| Will: | 1 (1-3) |
| Charm: | 0 |
| Prowess: | 6 (4-12) |
| Actions: | 2 (1-3) |

**Attributes:** In addition to the average Thrope attributes above, the numbers in parentheses show the normal range of a character in thrope form. These statistics are appropriate for purebred thropes as well. True thropes should modify their human stats as indicated in Attributes, above. Stats for imperfect thropes should be modified as described above in the Flawed Serum Table.

**Skills:** A thrope may maintain some combat skills and stunts depending on his Intellect (see Animalistic above) .

**Features:** See above

**Attack:** *Bite* -- In addition to unarmed combat or melee weapon attacks, a thrope has one additional bite attack. A thrope gains +2 on bite attack damage rolls.

# The Galvanists

*"When I placed my head on my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. . . . I saw--with shut eyes, but acute mental vision,--I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion."*

—*Mary Shelley, Introduction to* Frankenstein, *1831*

## Of Clay Reborn

The beginnings of the bioelectric sciences are in the work of the man from whom these disciplines draw their name – Luigi Galvani. In the course of his experiments with static electricity, Galvani touched the sciatic nerve of a dissected frog with a charged metal scalpel, causing the frog's leg to kick as if the animal had still been alive. Further experimentation confirmed the relationship between electricity and animation of animal tissues. Galvani came to believe that an electrical fluid, which he called "animal electricity," carried impulses through the nerves to the muscles, causing the

muscle to move. Galvani believed that all life was essentially electrical in nature.

Alesandro Volta, an intellectual successor to Galvani, conducted works that, while ideologically opposed to that of the elder scientist, ultimately acted to refine and redefine the theory of animal electricity. Volta claimed that there was no specific "biological electricity" — external electrical charges merely triggered the "dead" muscles into motion. His body of work confirmed that the electrical impulse could be carried by metals and that certain pairings of dissimilar metals could produce an electric current. Volta was responsible for the creation of the "voltaic pile" a precursor of the modern electric battery.

However, it was Giovanni Aldini, Luigi Galvani's nephew, who first began in earnest to apply the principles of galvanic biology to humans. Galvini and Volta had both been correct: living things do produce and use electricity but biological processes are not the only way to generate electricity. In fact, the basic principles underlying both biological and constructed electric systems are the same. Galvani set out to see if the two could be interfaced. That is, if electrical current could be artificially applied to biological materials to produce an effect or if biologically obtained electricity could be utilized within a non-biological machine. Aldini engaged in a series of bioelectric experiments and "demonstrations" in France and England in the early years of the nineteenth century, attempting to use bioelectric principles to revive the dead. A series of his experiments, entitled An account of the late improvements in galvanism, with a series of curious and interesting experiments performed before the commissioners of the French National Institute, and repeated lately in the anatomical theatres of London, by John Aldini. To which is added an appendix, containing the author's experiments on the body of a malefactor executed at Newgate, was published in London in 1803. Although the galvanic apparatus available to Aldini was far too primitive to permit real success in returning life to the human frame, his flamboyant public demonstrations effectively exhibited the effect of the forces within the voltaic pile when applied to human corpses, helping to cement the idea of galvanic reanimation in the public and scientific mind. Though Aldini's experiments failed to confirm the feasibility of galvanic reanimation, his work with living psychiatric cases provides some of the earliest demonstrations of mental cure through therapeutic electric shock.

In 1816, with the writing of *Frankenstein; or The Modern Prometheus*, galvanic biology was written irrevocably into the public consciousness. Shelley used both the new sciences of chemistry and electricity and the older Renaissance tradition of the alchemists' search for the elixir of life to conjure up the Promethean possibility of reanimating the bodies of the dead. Her brilliant tale of human monstrosity gave a name to the fear of trespass into the powers with which man was not meant to interfere, giving concrete form to the horrors promised by a science that threatened to sweep away the old world and remake man in its image. This work was a promise and a warning, foreshadowing the scientific innovations that would bring the secrets of death almost within the grasp of the physicians, yet also bringing forth the shadows of the price of that knowledge. It was not until after the Reclamation that the idea of galvanic restoration of life to the human body was seriously revisited. Once the discovery was made that the animating principle within the zombie is seated in some way in the central nervous tissue, serious attention was again paid to electrical stimulation of the brain as a method for restoration of life. According to galvanic theories, the body itself was merely a machine, a respectably complicated biochemical and biomechanical automaton in which the brain was the only truly irreplaceable component. A damaged body could be restored, missing portions of the anatomy replaced, inferior organs upgraded. With proper equipment and sufficient surgical skill, almost infinite variations on the initial human form are possible.

The modern galvanic reanimators use their surgical and mechanical skill to create a new framework for the human organism. The mechanistic view of the human biology espoused by this school allows for more flexibility in technique than is found in alchemical reanimation; where the alchemical reanimists strive to reinfuse an existing body with the lost vital spark, restoring what death has taken, the galvanic reanimator seeks to harness the power of creation itself. Intermingling of the organic and inorganic is commonplace, the surgeon mingling the vital spark of living energy with the power of circuits traced in metal.

The present-day science of galvanic reanimation is founded in the work of Professor Greta von Funken, whose research provided the first genuine reanimations as a result of galvanic stimulation. She is also known for her brilliant surgical innovations, which laid the groundwork for much of modern transplant surgery and provided inspiration for the anatomical modifications that have become the trademark of the galvanic creation. Professor von Funken was educated at Cambridge, becoming a full physician in 2034 and continuing her research at that institution. As with many young scientists of the period, she was greatly interested in the phenomena of undeath and the manipulation of the unliving state. Believing the initial pathology of the unliving state to be fundamentally neurological in nature, the professor

initiated a series of detailed dissections and nerve-stimulus experiments to detail the behaviour of the nervous system in the undead.

Ultimately, these studies moved from observation to engineering as Professor von Funken began exploring methods for inducing animation into exanimate bodies by means of galvanic stimulation of the brain and major nerve clusters. By 2060, she had successfully produced temporary animation in a corpse heavily modified with pieces from other cadavers by repeatedly subjecting the hindbrain and heart to galvanic induction. This first success remained animated for several minutes, showing brain activity, breathing, and a heartbeat that propelled an improved circulatory fluid intended to chemically preserve the tissues and transmit oxygen to the brain. The creature was capable of moving under its own power but appeared to lack volition, a shortcoming attributed to temporary oxygen deprivation of the brain during the final surgery, when the brain was integrated into the engineered body and removed from external life support. Further operations followed, and further refinements to the surgical procedures and the sustaining fluid were made, firmly demonstrating the feasibility of galvanic reanimation with a series of improved unliving creations. These creatures, idealized biomechanical automata preserved in perpetuity, unliving and undying, were dubbed Prometheans

The first fully intelligent Promethean was produced in 2072 at Cambridge, within the laboratories of Professor von Funken. In the beginning, the innovation was hailed as a major triumph. For the first time, the real possibility of a fully restored human intelligence after death had been established in the laboratory. The Promethean was physically a composite of numerous individuals, mainly casualties from the trauma wards of the hospital, and the brain of a promising young scientist who had died tragically months before and had been preserved artificially in an interface jar. The creature was named Charlie, after Charles Andrews, the former possessor of the brain.

Immediately following the reanimation, the Promethean was confused and clumsy, requiring round-the-clock monitoring and caretaking as it proceeded through this second infancy. In the weeks following the reanimation, the new Promethean showed remarkable progress in acclimating physically to the new form, calling the various portions of the body into co-ordination, and recovering from the confusion it had exhibited in the early days. The emotions of the creature were unpredictable, however, and it showed profound tendencies toward melancholia and rage. Few of the memories of its old life seemed to be accessible, though the creature's unconscious habits and mannerisms were eerily reminiscent of those of the young scientist, and hopes were high that the living memories and personality of the young man would begin to return.

Contrary to the hopes of the Neo-Victorian world, the Promethean's mental condition did not improve. The creature's moods worsened, becoming progressively wilder and more violent. It would sink into periods of deep melancholy, punctuated by terrible rages in which it would lash out indiscriminately at anyone who came near. The creature was confined to a cell and various therapies were used to attempt to restore a more normal mental balance but to no avail. On 7 March 2073, Charlie escaped from his cell, killing six technicians and twelve hospital employees in the course of his escape from the building. In the streets of Cambridge, ten more people were brutally murdered before Charlie could be subdued. Following the police investigation, the exanimate body was returned to the university for autopsy and disassembly. In the aftermath of the disaster, creation or attempted creation of intelligent Prometheans was criminalized under British law. In subsequent years, the legal position on this research was relaxed slightly, allowing for the construction of simple galvanic reanimates in a small number of specially accredited laboratories. Experimentation in the creation of fully human galvanic reanimates, though illegal and punishable by transportation to the mines, doubtless continues in secret. The previous near-successes of the science have lead many in the scientific community to speculate, however quietly, that a full success in reanimation may be within reach.

Presently, the science of galvanic reanimation is imperfect at best. The products of reanimation science vary widely. Though some experiments have produced amazing results, the outcome of each experiment depends on the quality and properties of the raw materials used to create the body, making individual experiments difficult, if not impossible, to repeat. Most of these creatures are mindless automata, mechanical men crafted from flesh and metal, requiring the constant effort of galvanic science to maintain. Some few are nearly half-living, creatures capable to some extent of sustaining their own existence. There have been a handful of these creatures, more perfect than their brethren, who possessed something akin to human thought, but even the best of these creatures bears only a passing resemblance to humanity. Intelligent Prometheans live out their frequently short lives under a shadow, obsessed with mortality and the memory of the death from which they were recalled.

Galvanic reanimators themselves are a strange and varied breed. Many approach their studies with the express intention of usurping the grand powers of creation, bringing

forth new life from the inanimate clay of dead human flesh. An equal number position themselves as adversaries against the forces of death and decay, intent on reclaiming spoiled flesh from the worms and granting a perfect and perpetual life to humanity.

### Professor Greta von Funken

*Professor von Funken, the scientist widely hailed as the originator of modern galvanic biology, is currently an honoured Professor Emeritus at Cambridge. The professor, though retired, continues to guest lecture in classes for advanced medical students and to maintain experiments in laboratories technically belonging to long-time colleagues at the University. She is one of the handful of researchers within Britain currently licensed to produce galvanic undead.*

*The professor has undergone a number of anti-agapic courses over the course of her career. Recently, these treatments have begun to fail, and the professor has begun to show the effects of age. Her recent retirement is a public acknowledgement of her failing health. It is expected that the professor's body will not survive many more years. However, unsurprisingly given the focus of her past research and the increasing secrecy that surrounds her present scientific efforts, there are rumours that the professor may have other plans.*

## Physiology of the Promethean

The classification of the Promethean is variable, depending on the methods used to create the creature, the quality of the raw materials, and the calibre of the surgeon. Despite the extraordinary variability in results, there are some notable constants in construction. Biological materials used in the construction of a Promethean are ideally as fresh as possible, though slightly sub-ideal materials may be useful if the quality of the finished product is not a strong consideration. The body is often extensively modified, weak or damaged portions being replaced with higher-quality cadaverous materials or mechanical substitutes, resulting in a stitched-together patchwork of mismatched skin tones and metal grafted into flesh. Biological materials must be entirely of exanimate sources; materials from an animated corpse, or one not yet animated but contaminated by Plague, will be rejected by the cadaver and will cause the reanimation to fail.

The most common variety of Promethean is an almost wholly mechanical creature, the post-cadaverous automaton. This construct is maintained and moved by the continual application of artificial impulses, drawing its power not from biological or supernormal sources but from the intervention of technology. The body is constructed in part using biological materials, but the final form often represents a severe departure from the standard humanoid model.

In these creatures, only the brain is truly living. The body is equipped with a galvanic centre, generally installed in the abdominal cavity in the former position of the useless intestinal tract. Electrodes reach from that centre to access the muscles and integrated machineries of the body. This centre may be charged manually, though most specimens are able to draw energy directly from the ambient Tesla field within the city. The activity of the galvanic centre is largely under the control of the conscious brain, allowing it to direct the motor movements of the body, though some functions such as breathing and electrostimulation of cardiac tissue are hard-coded through the medulla. The heart, whether of flesh or a mechanical substitute, is thereby induced to beat continuously, propelling the preservative fluid through the body and maintaining the supply of oxygen through the vessels that feed the brain. The head itself is generally largely or completely artificial for practical reasons related to the delicacy and rapid decay of the sensory tissues; the senses are mechanical, the sense organs largely constructed rather than cadaverous. Few of these creatures are equipped with voices, as the ability to speak is considered to be generally unnecessary.

The brains used in the creation of these creatures are of an inferior grade, deprived of oxygen in the preservation process or otherwise damaged but still usable, as these creatures are not expected to be of high intelligence. Engineered neural networks may be used in place of harvested nervous tissue; the expense is greater, but the artificially grown nervous tissue can be engineered to the specifications of a particular task. Most operate at approximately the intellectual level of a reasonably intelligent laboratory rodent. These biological robots are difficult to construct and maintain and are therefore used mainly for extremely dangerous but indispensable jobs in laboratory and industrial work.

The fully biological Promethean, or rimmon, named in honour of a demon of lightning and storms, is far more rare. Within this category, the functionality of the creation varies more than with its mechanized counterpart. In this case, the body is constructed exclusively or almost exclusively of cadaverous tissues, and the humanoid design is maintained, though various improvements may be made in the course of

construction. These creatures are classified as "half-living," possessing a working metabolism and requiring food, oxygen, and rest. Most are constructed to be considerably stronger than an average human and can endure much harsher conditions than can a human. These creatures are not affected by the smogs of the city or the zymotic diseases of the slums and can move unprotected through areas where a human could not survive. Creation of a creature of this kind is not legal under British law, though a small number of research exemptions have been made.

Most of these creatures are lacking in higher-level cognitive function. It is extremely difficult to ensure that the raw materials, neural materials in particular, are preserved perfectly from death through construction and animation of the body, and the construction of a rimmon is fraught with peril from a technical standpoint. If the materials are degraded or if there is some error in the process, the quality of the finished creature will suffer accordingly. These creatures behave erratically and are generally unstable and prone to fear-type responses due to their extremely limited understanding of the world around them.

Some rimmons possess a human intelligence. Within the better-than-human physiology of these well-made rimmon, the brain is maintained at the peak of its power, not infrequently allowing the rimmon to possess a mental acuity greater than it had in its former life. Though the intellect has survived the transition into the new form, the creature possesses no memory of its previous life, requiring months or years of education to grow from mental infancy into full sentience. Their emotions are extremely unstable: they are prone to sudden moods, fits of great sorrow and rage, and becoming violent and self-destructive by turns. Many destroy themselves in unreasoning moments, incapable of understanding the rejection of the world of men and their own terrible isolation. Others turn their rage toward their creators, the ones responsible for their tortured existence.

## The Promethean and the Law

Galvanic reanimation is strictly limited by law, though not all applications of this technology are illegal. A small number of the lowest order of post-cadaverous automata are commissioned every year for civic deployment, and a certain number find use in non-nationalized industries. There are a few universities and industrial complexes scattered through Britain who have dispensation to create these creatures. Construction or attempted construction of a higher-functioning rimmon is generally proscribed under law and is treated under the same legal codes that govern other illegal reanimations.

Creation of a Promethean requires that the raw materials be in some way preserved or sustained until animation of the whole body is restored. Regardless of the intended quality of the end product, it is important that the materials be maintained in a condition as near to living tissue as possible, as grafting and reassembly surgeries become more difficult as the tissues and structures degrade. This requirement necessitates a fairly complex apparatus for monitoring the condition of specimens and maintaining circulation of the various preserving and rejuvenating fluids that may be used in storage. Equipment intended for the preservation of human tissues for transplant is readily modified to suit the needs of the would-be reanimator (see Anatomical Preservation System, Chapter 4, page 229 and ALS2(1), page 292).

The brain is the most vulnerable point in the construction because it must be as close to perfect condition as possible, and this delicate structure is exceedingly difficult to maintain after the death of the body. The alchemical reanimists are limited to an extremely short window following bodily death due to the necessity of keeping the body largely intact, but not so for the galvanic reanimist and the composite target of his art. An extremely fresh cadaver brain may be abstracted from the corpse and preserved, though it is necessary to work with great speed and accuracy to preserve both the integrity of the tissues and the quality of the peripheral nervous attachments. It is possible to maintain a healthy brain from some time in an interface jar, though the apparatus is expensive to produce (see Chapter 4, pages 230-231).

Due to the requirements in equipment, materials, and technical and surgical expertise, individuals without extensive medical training rarely are rarely involved in attempts at galvanic reanimation. These activities are primarily confined to individuals trained as physicians and having access to extensive laboratory facilities, either within some medical or research institution or privately owned and maintained at some considerable expense to the reanimator. Most unlicensed reanimators of the galvanic stripe are of the moneyed or aristocratic classes, highly educated and from respectable family, making prosecution a delicate matter.

The needs of these unlicensed reanimists are served by a growing number of black-market chop shops. These same "meat markets" provide the materials for the anatomy theatres of the major medical centres of London, food for hungry ghouls that dwell within the city, and experimental subjects for amateur reanimators. Even the few licensed creators of Prometheans must sometimes turn to these markets to obtain their materials when their legitimate needs cannot be met through other channels. These flesh markets are well

stocked by the burkers and resurrection men of the city. None will admit to the possession of illegal goods, of course, insisting that their operations are stocked by the plague carts and unfortunate circumstance, but the bodies of the murdered have been found in raids by the police.

## The Rimmon and Society

The rimmon, so recently the subject of headlines concerning the massacre at Cambridge, are hated and feared by the populace at large. The unusual nature of these creatures makes them extremely difficult to conceal. Unlike another half-lifer within the city, the ghoul, it is rarely if ever possible for these creatures to pass for human. As a result, each of these creatures must be maintained in isolation by its creator and kept carefully away from the eyes of the public.

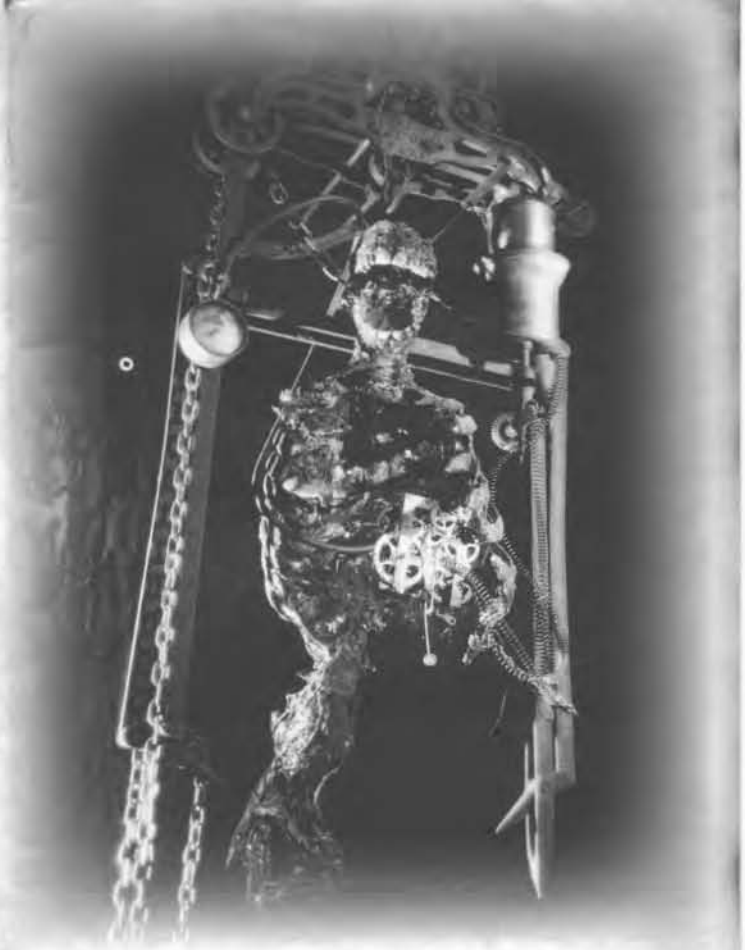
There have been laboratory raids in which a large amount of galvanic equipment was secured, but despite evidence of extensive activity in the lab, no creations could be found. It is rumoured that some few of these creatures have escaped beyond the walls of the cities. If this is true, these creatures, hardier and stronger than man and presumably immune to the poisonous effects of the Wastelands, may have been able to survive. No firm evidence for these creature's presence in the Wastes exists, though there have been several near-dark sightings of what appeared to be groups of humanoid forms, smaller than the thropes, at a careful distance from the train lines that pass through the Wastes.

## The Rules: Galvanic Life

There are two varieties of galvanic reanimate. The first and technically simplest is the post-cadaverous automaton, a primarily mechanical construct that houses a living brain in a shell of metal and mismatched flesh powered by the city's Tesla array. The post-cadaverous automaton is comparably simple to produce once the requisite materials have been obtained, but is unintelligent and fairly time consuming to repair and maintain.

The more refined of the two classes of Promethean is the rimmon, or biological reanimate, a creature formed from the finest exanimate parts available, painstakingly sewn together to create the semblance of natural life. Though the creature is initially restored to life with the application of the vitalic spark, it is a semi-living organism requiring sustenance and air. The creature will be physically powerful and extremely tough and will possess the virtual immortality characteristic of the half-living condition, but if deprived of life's necessities, the creature can be ended.

A character attempting to create a Promethean of either



type must have the Galvanics and Medicine skills, access to a lab capable of carrying out the experiment, the necessary galvanic parts, and fresh or properly preserved corpses to work from. The creation of a Promethean requires a complex operating room and galvanic laboratory. The Promethean's body must be carefully assembled from flesh, bone, and galvanic parts; the biological components and the Promethean's incomplete flesh frame must be carefully preserved at every step in the process. Once complete, the creature requires a powerful jolt of energy to return it to the semblance of life.

### Modifiers

These are modifiers to the galvanist's skill rolls depending on the conditions under which he works and how he applies himself. These modifiers should be applied at each stage of the creation process and may change depending on the character's access to equipment or the constraints of time he works under.

*Obsessive Labours* – Pushing himself beyond human endurance, the galvanist works around the clock. Each day of obsessive labour will count as three days of ordinary work. Every twenty hours, he must make a Vitality roll versus DR 14. If the roll fails, he suffers –1 Vitality and Coordination.

If he is reduced to 0 Vitality or Coordination, he passes out and sleeps for at least twelve hours. The character regains lost Vitality and Coordination at a rate of 1 point per week. If he completes the current step of the creation process before passing into unconsciousness, the galvanist gains 3 on his skill roll.

*Perfectionism* – The reanimist takes supreme care in the construction of the Promethean, adding two weeks to its creation time. The character adds 2 to his skill rolls at this step of the process.

*Rush Job* – The character attempts to accomplish the current stage of the creation process in half the time listed thus suffering –2 on his skill roll.

*Sub-Optimal Conditions* – A character attempting to assemble a Promethean without access to a proper lab suffers +2 to the DR of his skill roll. Attempting the experiment without the proper artificial preserving solutions and galvanic apparatus is impossible.

## The Brain

The brain is the most important component of any Promethean. If the brain is damaged or has deteriorated, the final product of the experiment will be of poor quality. Whether the creature's creator is intending to manufacture a post-cadaverous automaton or a rimmon, the brain must be removed from its housing as soon as possible and placed in an interface jar (see Chapter 4, pages 230-231). Every hour the brain remains rotting outside an interface jar, it suffers –1 Wit and Intellect. If either attribute is reduced to 0, the brain has deteriorated too far to be of any use.

Removing the brain in such a way that preserves its structure for galvanic reanimation requires a successful Medicine skill roll (DR14). If the roll fails, the brain is too damaged to be of use. The operation itself takes 1 hour. The brain may be sustained over the course of the operation by the artificially-sustained movement of the appropriate ALS2(1) solution through the vessels of the body.

The traumatic process of galvanic reanimation strips the brain of virtually all of its former memories. Though the Promethean may exhibit some of the qualities of its former personality, it lacks all knowledge and memories of its earlier existence. After undergoing the creation process, the Promethean will initially be nearly an infant: clumsy in walking, unable to speak, and limited in its understanding. Months of effort will be required to return the creature to an adult's functional level.

A Promethean's Wit, Intellect, and Will are based on the stats of the corpse from which the brain was taken. The physical stats are based on the creature's new form. Its Charm will depend on its physical appearance and "upbringing" post reanimation. Post-cadaverous automata have Charm 0.

## Assembling a Post-Cadaverous Automaton

The body of a post-cadaverous automaton requires no less than four weeks of labour to construct As much of this time is spent calibrating the sensitive Anatomical Preservation System (Chapter 4, page 229) as is sewing the thing together, reinforcing its limbs, and rewiring its nervous system. While the creature's body is being assembled, its organic parts must be carefully preserved in regulated ALS2(1). Once the body has been assembled, it must be preserved whole in the solution until the creature receives the spark of reanimation. The character must spend no less than £5 on parts to construct the creature.

Once the galvanist has completed the construction of the body, he makes a Medicine roll (DR 14) and a Galvanic roll (DR 14). If both rolls succeed, the body is capable of accepting the galvanic spark. If one roll fails, the body is flawed but may still be salvaged. If both rolls failed, the galvanist is forced to acknowledge defeat and start his experiment again from scratch.

If the Medicine roll fails, the cadaverous material was improperly preserved or integrated. The character must replace all the creature's organic parts. After two additional weeks of labour, he may make another Medicine skill roll (DR 14). If this roll fails, the experiment is a failure and the character must start again.

If the Galvanic roll fails, the body was miswired. The character must spend an additional £2 for replacement parts. After two additional weeks of labour, he may make another Galvanic skill roll (DR 14). If this roll fails, the experiment is a failure and the character must start again.

## Post-Cadaverous Automaton

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 4 (4-8) |
| **Coordination:** | 2 (1-4) |
| **Wit:** | 1 (1-2) |
| **Intellect:** | 1 (1-2) |
| **Will:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Charm:** | 0 |
| **Prowess:** | 3 (2-6) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-2) |

**Attributes:** In addition to the average attributes above, the numbers in parentheses show the normal attribute range for a post-cadaverous automaton. Its Wit, Intellect, and Will are based on its brain. Each of these attributes is reduced by 3 from what it was in life, but they cannot be lowered below

1 as a result of this modifier. Increasing the attributes of an automaton requires significant mechanical alterations.

**Skills:** At the time of creation, a post-cadaverous automaton has no skills. It may learn a few basic skills up to rank 2 over a period of months or years.

**Features:** *Machine Body* – It is assumed that the post-cadaverous automaton is built on a primarily mechanical framework, incorporating some percentage of cadaverous materials into the design. The creature is assumed to have a Hardened Skeleton. The post-cadaverous automaton may not have any biological alterations.

*Maintenance* – The brain of the creature is not dead and must receive care. The nutrient solution sustaining the brain must be refreshed once per week or the brain will die. The other organic portions are maintained by a cocktail of preserving agents such as ALS2(1), which must be flushed and replaced once per month or the organic components will decay. Decayed components can be replaced with a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 14 to 20 depending on extent of damage).

*Mute* – Generally, Prometheans of this type are unable to speak but are equipped with other means of communication. Some will generate printed media, and others relying on flashed or tapped-out codes. At the Narrator's discretion, the automaton may be equipped with a Rattler (Chapter 4, pages 231-232) and be able to communicate verbally as far as its intelligence allows.

*Undead* – The creature's body is not living. It has no metabolism and cannot reproduce.

**Attacks:** A post-cadaverous automaton uses its Coordination rather than a Combat skill when it attacks. The automaton's great strength makes it extremely dangerous in combat, though it is a clumsy opponent. Most are limited to unarmed attacks, but those with integral industrial equipment, like saws or drills, can put them to horrific application.

**Notes:** None

## Assembling a Rimmon

The bioelectrical reanimate is a masterpiece of the galvanic arts and requires no less than three months of labour to complete. Often the body is completed in advance of locating a viable brain. The body must be carefully preserved in a solution of ALS2(1) and the heart artificially stimulated to propel preserving fluids through the completed body until the galvanic reanimator can locate a suitable brain. The character must spend no less than £5 on parts to construct the creature. The rimmon generally has fewer mechanical parts than the post-cadaverous automaton, and the required parts are of higher quality and thus more expensive.

Once the galvanist has completed the construction of the body, he makes a Medicine roll (DR 20) and a Galvanic roll (DR 14). If both rolls succeed, the body is capable of accepting the galvanic spark. If one roll fails, the body is flawed but may still be salvaged. If both rolls failed, the galvanist is forced to acknowledge defeat and start his experiment again from scratch.

If the Medicine roll fails, the cadaverous material was improperly preserved or integrated into the Promethean's form. The character must replace all the creature's organic parts. After one additional month of labour, he may make another Medicine skill roll (DR 20). If this roll fails, the experiment is a failure and the character must start again.

If the Galvanic roll fails, the body was miswired. The character must spend an additional £2 for replacement parts. After two additional weeks of labour, he may make another Galvanic skill roll (DR 14). If this roll fails, the experiment is a failure and the character must start again.

## The Rimmon

| | |
|---|---|
| **Vitality:** | 4 (4-8) |
| **Coordination:** | 2 (1-4) |
| **Wit:** | 1 (1-2) |
| **Intellect:** | 1 (1-2) |
| **Will:** | 1 (1-3) |
| **Charm:** | 0 |
| **Prowess:** | 3 (2-6) |
| **Actions:** | 1 (1-2) |

**Attributes:** In addition to the average attributes above, the numbers in parenthesis show the normal attribute range for a rimmon. The physical stats can be greatly modified depending on the galvanist's access to fresh, physically perfect cadaverous material. The creature's Wit, Intellect, and Will are based on the brain placed into the body. The Promethean's Charm increases over time as the creature learns to fit into human society. Its appearance may further influence its Charm.

**Skills:** At the time of its creation, a rimmon retains no skills from its former life. The rimmon does not even have the ability to speak a language at the time of its creation. However, learning new skills is just a matter of time because the rimmon is effectively immortal.

**Features:** *Brain* – Many of the properties of the reanimate are determined by the quality and freshness of the brain. At the Narrator's discretion, the rimmon may retain some or all of the Mental Qualities, Mental Impediments, and Mental Disorders the creature had in its former life (See Chapter 3, Pages 186-194).

*Half-Lifer* – The creature is a half-lifer. It possesses a working metabolism; it needs to eat, breathe, and sleep. Ordinarily, the creature is not constructed to be reproductively viable. The creature does not age and is effectively immortal. It is immune to the smogs and to all known diseases.

*Melancholic* – The creature is emotionally unstable, and this instability will become increasingly violent with time (see Melancholia, Chapter 3, page 188).

*Shadow Memories* – The creature has few, if any, memories of its former life. The memories that do surface are fragmentary and half-hallucinatory, the brain working together scraps of memories and dreams into images of a life that never was.

*Stitched* – Unless the rimmon has benefited from the Beautiful or Dead Ringer alterations (see below) the creature will appear to be exactly what it is, a stitched together amalgamation of multiple corpses. The rimmon suffers –1 on Charm rolls not based on Intimidation versus any character that can see him. A character with the Galvanics or Medicine skill can make a skill roll (DR 14) to identify the creature as a rimmon on sight.

**Attacks:** Whether armed or unarmed, a rimmon fights like a human.

**Notes:** None

## Alterations

### Mechanical Alterations

The creator of a Promethean may greatly modify the creature's body for different purposes. These alterations are generally mechanical rather than biological in nature in the post-cadaverous automaton.

*Armoured Form:* The Promethean's creator armours the creature's body with form-fitted plate steel. The creature may have up to 2 points of armour in each location. It may be armoured in individual locations or its entire body may be armoured. Each point of armour on any location costs £3. A single point on all locations costs £18.

An armoured Promethean suffers –1 Coordination. If the creature's Coordination is reduced to 0 as a result of this alteration, it cannot move or perform any actions.

Like plate armour that is worn, the value of the Promethean's integral armour is reduced by 1 each time it suffers an Incapacitating or Fatal Wound. Each point of damaged armour in one location may be repaired with two hours time, the proper tools, and a successful Trade – Metal Working skill roll (DR 11).

This alteration does not add to the DR of the Galvanics skill roll, but does add one week of labour.

*Hardened Skeleton:* The rimmon's body undergoes extensive mechanical alteration to increase its brute strength. This modification requires the integration of a reinforced mechanical skeleton. As a result, the rimmon gains 2 Vitality.

This alteration adds £3 to the material cost of the rimmon and one week of labour. It also increases the DR of the Galvanics skill roll by 1.

Only rimmon may benefit from this alteration because all post-cadaverous automata are all built with such.

*Heightened Senses:* Some or all of the creature's organic sensory apparatuses have been replaced with more sensitive mechanical devices. Each sense replaced gives the creature +1 on Wits – Perception rolls pertaining to that sense. For example, replacing the creature's eyes with a complex optics array adds 1 to Wits – Perception rolls involving sight.

The creature's sight, hearing, and smell may all be replaced. Each sense that is replaced adds £1 to the cost of the creature.

Regardless of the number of senses replaced, this alteration only increases the DR of the Galvanics skill roll by 1.

*Industrial Equipment:* The Promethean's creator integrates industrial equipment into its body, such as a wench and cable, buzz saw, or drill. These modifications generally replace a limb. For a rimmon to have this alteration, its creator must also give it the Hardened Skeleton alteration.

This alteration adds £1+ to the material cost of the reanimate and increases the DR of the Galvanics skill roll by 1.

*Tailored Attributes:* The galvanist may take great care to build the strongest or quickest Promethean possible. The Promethean may have its Vitality or Coordination increased by up to +2 each.

For each attribute altered by 1 point, increase the DR of the Galvanics skill roll by 1.

### Biological Alterations

The creator of a rimmon may greatly modify the creature's body for different purposes. Unlike the alterations made to post-cadaverous automatons, these alterations are

generally biological in nature. A post-cadaverous automaton may not be given biological Alterations.

Tampering with a life-form modifies the DR of the character's Medicine skill roll.

*Beautiful:* The galvanist goes to great lengths to preserve the natural beauty of his subject. Instead of producing a jigsaw mockery of life, the surgeon is careful to hide any evidence of his ministrations. Over time, the wounds will heal, leaving the Promethean's beauty intact. Add +2 to the rimmon's Charm. A rimmon with this alteration does not have the Stitched Feature (see below).

Increase the DR of the Medicine skill roll by 2.

*Dead Ringer* – The reanimator goes to considerable trouble to engineer the creature to bear a resemblance to a particular individual. The body is scaled carefully to the original model, and the flesh used to create the features is chosen and shaped to produce the best likeness possible. Special care is taken to produce a lifelike appearance. The telltale stitch marks are made carefully and will fade over the first few weeks of life; the rimmon does not have the Stitched feature (see below). Individuals who knew the model must make a Wits roll (DR 16) upon meeting the Promethean. On a failure, the Promethean is taken to be the original.

Increase the DR of the Medicine skill roll by 2.

*Reproductively Viable* – The rimmon has been designed with the capacity for reproduction. If the rimmon is male, it is capable of impregnating living human women. If the rimmon is female, it is capable of carrying a human child to term.

Increased the DR of the Medicine skill roll by 3.

*Tailored Attributes:* By assembling a body made from the best available parts, the galvanist may create an exceptional physical specimen. If all the parts assembled are in good condition and came from donor corpses that had a Vitality or Coordination of 3, the rimmon will have a Vitality or Coordination of 3. If all the parts assembled are in good condition, and came from donor corpses that had a Vitality or Coordination of 4, the rimmon will have a Vitality or Coordination of 4, and so on. Tailoring the Vitality and Coordination of a rimmon may be accomplished without an increase to the DR of the skill roll, but the character must take the time to gather the superior parts. Assembling these parts can greatly increase the time spent to create the rimmon's body.

After determining the make-up of the creature's base stats, the galvanist may further increase any of the rimmon's attributes by up to 1. For each attribute altered by 1 point, increase the DR of the Medicine skill roll by 1.

### The Spark

Once the character has succeeded in constructing a galvanic reanimate, he must then prepare it to receive the voltaic spark. It takes an additional two hours to prepare the body to receive the spark. The character must then succeed in a Galvanics skill roll (DR 14). If the roll succeeds, the galvanic reanimate lives! If the roll fails, the creature remains inert, and the character must spend two weeks repairing the body and tinkering with the design before attempting the reanimation again. If the roll fails a second time, the spark goes wild; the Promethean's body is destroyed along with all the galvanic parts integrated into it, and the experiment must begin anew.

# Therapeutics and Biomechanics

## Therapeutic Galvanism

It is known that the cells of the somatic and nervous tissues of the human body are regulated by bioelectric principles. In accordance with this understanding, various electrical and magnetic therapies have been developed over the years to address the various debilities of the human machine. As with other fields of medical endeavour in the Neo-Victorian world, the quality of care to be had is variable; there are therapies wielded by esteemed physicians in their marvellous operating suites that are capable of performing miracles as well as quack cures peddled on the streets of the metropolis that are as likely to end a life as to preserve it.

The most popular galvanic therapy in London is the "violet massage." The principles of alternating current were well known in the late Victorian Era, and even in that period, applications of charge using a conducting glass apparatus were used popularly as a topical treatment for various ills, mainly of the skin and scalp. These old cures have resurfaced in the barber shops and beauty salons of London, the tools of the "violet massage" being used primarily as an invigorating treatment said to restore vitality and a youthful appearance to the skin. The youth-restoring effects of the treatment are dubious, but the massage remains popular as an invigorator. Some lower-class apothecaries peddle violet cures as a remedy for headaches caused by exposure to the emissions of the Tesla array; as both the disease and the cure are psychosomatic, efficacy of this method is wonderfully high.

### Galvanic Therapy Costs

*Violet Wand* – The device used to perform these therapies, which costs approximately £5.

*Violet Massage* – A single therapy will run 2d to £2 depending on the calibre and reputation of the administrator.

*Violet Happy Ending* – This "therapy" generally costs an additional 5d-1 guinea and is administerd at massage parlours of ill repute. Unlucky customers may be overshocked and rolled for their purses.

The finest asylums of Britain make extensive use of galvanic principles in their therapies as well. Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation, in which a powerful electromagnet is used topically for the application of brief, strong, focused magnetic pulses to specific areas of the brain, is commonly used in the treatment of melancholia and hallucinations unresponsive to other treatments. This treatment has some utility in altering the functions of the brain beyond these therapeutic uses, causing continued increased or decreased activity in areas of the brain to which the magnetic pulses are applied for minutes to weeks depending on the subject and the skill of the physician.

Simple electroconvulsive therapy, while of some utility in the treatment of chronic depressive and catatonic cases, is a more common treatment in the poorer madhouses where facilities for more complex procedures are lacking. Unlike the magnetic therapy, electroconvulsive treatments require general anaesthesia of the patient and chemical paralysis of the muscles to ensure that the body is not damaged during the seizure. Modifications of the electroconvulsive treatment are used in the chronic wards as corrective measures and as ways to modify the memory structure of the more difficult patients, rendering them temporarily confused and docile.

Particularly difficult cases are treated with direct neural

### Galvanic Psychotherapy

Electroconvulsive therapy, a relatively primitive form of galvanic therapeutics, requires access to medical facilities and successful rolls in Galvanics and Medicine (both DR 14) to establish the patient in the apparatus and to be certain the electrodes have been correctly aligned. These rolls do not need to be made by the same character: a physician and a technician may work together to complete the task. The patient must be treated with a muscular paralyser before beginning the therapy to avoid injury.

If the rolls are successful, the character receives a +2 to Mental Disorder control rolls for the next week. This therapy can be repeated once per month. If either roll fails, there is no effect from the treatment. If either roll fails critically, or if the character is not properly treated before the shocks are given, he suffers internal damage. When determining internal damage, roll 2d10 + 2 and consult the Wound Table (see Chapter 2, page XXX). Do not subtract the patient's Vitality from this roll.

Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (RTMS) is a more sophisticated procedure. This procedure requires access to a high-quality medical facility and successful rolls in Galvanics (DR 16) and Medicine (DR 14). As above, these rolls do not need to be made by the same character. The patient need not be medicated to undergo therapy.

If the rolls are successful, the character receives a +2 to Mental Disorder control rolls for the next week. This therapy can be repeated once per week. If either roll fails, there is no effect from the treatment. If either roll fails critically, the patient receives a new Mental Disorder of the Narrator's choosing (see Mental Disorders, Chapter 3, pages 189-194).

The RTMS can be used to make other alterations to the brain. It is possible, for example, to disrupt short-term memory storage (Medicine roll, DR 16) or alter the patterns of emotional response temporarily (Medicine roll, DR 16, duration one day).

Direct Neural Stimulation is a dangerous but highly efficacious procedure. Construction of the electrode array requires a successful Galvanics roll (DR 16); failure of this roll produces a nonfunctional array. Installation requires a successful Medicine roll (DR 16). See the Neural Stimulator sidebar for failure rules. Once the array is installed, small impulses can be delivered almost continually to alter impulses and thereby behaviour. The patient receives a +3 to Mental Disorder control rolls for as long as the device is in place.

### Neural Stimulator

The neural stimulator is an extremely dangerous device. Implantation is hazardous, carrying a high risk of death from the trauma inflicted during the surgery or from secondary infection. The operating physician must make a successful Medicine skill roll at the time of implantation (DR 14). Each attempt at treatment takes thirty minutes.

If the roll fails, the patient suffers an immediate −1 to Vitality and Intelligence and will continue to lose Vitality at the rate of 1 point per hour unless treated by a competent physician with a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 16). If the roll fails, the attempt at treatment may be repeated.

After a successful treatment roll, the attending character must make an additional Medicine roll (DR11) to prevent the character getting an infection. If the roll fails, the patient will acquire an infection subsequent to the operation, and every twenty-four hours after the operation, the patient suffers Vitality losses until treated for the new infection with a successful Medicine skill roll (DR 14). Each attempt to treat the infection takes two hours. Determining success takes another eight hours.

If the device is installed successfully, those who have the device installed for pleasure rather than medical treatment must make a Will roll (DR 14) every twenty-four hours to carry on with the normal activities of life: eating, sleeping, and working. Every time this roll is failed, the patient suffers a−1 Will permanently. Once the character reaches Will 0, he becomes a slave to the shock and is incapable of taking even the simplest action. He becomes completely consumed by the pleasures of the nerve-stimulus. In one week, the patient will die of dehydration unless cared for by some outside agency. Within one month, the patient will suffer neural burnout and be reduced to a permanent vegetative state.

stimulation. This procedure involves the securing of electrodes in the skull of the patient, allowing direct electrical access to portions of the brain. The patient's brain can then be stimulated to control motor activity and other nerve responses, inducing fear, pain, or pleasure. This procedure is particularly important in the treatment of violent chronic cases, rendering the use of harmful physical restraints generally unnecessary, and in the employment of aversion-based personality reformation therapies. Great care is necessary in installing and maintaining these electrodes to ensure the continued health of the patient.

As the use of direct neural stimulation has increased in the institutions of London, a recreational market has arisen within the metropolis. There are surgeons within the city who run so-called "shock-shops" to cater to this need. Secret operations are performed to install the necessary electrodes, during which the surgeon introduces small pulses of electricity directly into the brain until he pinpoints the pleasure centre. The electrode is then attached to a small device designed to draw energy from the Tesla field and provide regular stimulation to the pleasure centre of the brain. The user can control the pleasure stimulus by attaching or disengaging this power source. The procedure is extremely dangerous; secondary infections are common, and the casual manner of the electrode's installation not infrequently does some damage to the tissues of the brain. If damage resultant from the operation itself does not prove lethal, the subject will drift into a downward spiral, neglecting duties, hygiene, and even food and drink in the pleasure-haze induced by the electrode. Most of those who undergo the procedure are dead within a matter of weeks or months from infection, starvation, or sudden systemic failure. This surgery is illegal, carrying a penalty of up to five years imprisonment for the operating surgeon.

## Biomechanicals

Extensive interfacing of biological and mechanical materials is possible with the technology of the day. Transplant surgery is extremely advanced, allowing surgeons to interface existing tissues with foreign tissues or mechanical substitutes, even if rejection of the foreign materials must be suppressed by courses of drugs that must be taken for the remainder of the patient's life (see Anti-Rejection Drug, pages 292-293). Most transplants are biological, as these transplants tend to be higher functioning and have a less jarring appearance than mechanicals. However, there are some who find that mechanical limbs have certain advantages. There are labourers in the scop plants and the factories whose metal limbs are an asset to their work and scientists in the finest research institutions who find a reassurance in replacing anatomy damaged in a laboratory accident with less vulnerable materials.

Maintaining materials for transplant requires artificial preservation, often by biomechanical means. Transplant materials are harvested from a cadaver as soon as possible

after the death of the body and then examined and typed to find a suitable recipient while the truncated cadaverous head and spine are examined for signs of the Plague. Often to be certain the transplant materials are not contaminated, the truncated materials are kept under observation for several days to be certain that the body is fully exanimate. All of this takes time, and the transplant materials must be kept alive and fresh during this period. The advances in galvanic reanimation required the development of systems for the artificial maintenance of anatomical specimens. The tissue is kept in tanks supplied with nutrients and oxygen and flushed regularly to remove any cellular waste (see ALS2(1), page 292). These advances allow cadaverous tissues to be maintained in perfect condition for days or weeks until their viability can be confirmed and a suitable recipient found.

The same principles apply to the interface jar (see Chapter 4, pages 230-231), one of the most contested technologies of the present day. Developed in 2066, the interface jar is a method by which the brain of an individual may be kept alive and functional for some time after death. In this method, the brain is placed into a jar of ALS2(1), and the blood vessels are attached to a network of tubes for the transport of the same fluid into the tissues of the brain. The jar itself is equipped with delicate sensory devices which can be interfaced directly into the appropriate centres of the brain, allowing the brain to hear and see its surroundings and to communicate with those on the outside. The jars are generally equipped with a rattler (see Chapter 4, pages 231-232). However, the effect of the artificial voice can be unpleasant, and most communication is conducted by means of text produced by a typing apparatus under the control of the brain.

The first fully successful interface jar was produced in 2066 at the University of London, as a massive collaboration effort within the Biomechanics department. Early experiments in the artificial maintenance of neural matter had successfully retained nerve function in the excised brains of lower animals, from the simple nerve-clusters of insects to the nearly-human complex brains of apes, but this experiment represented the first successful maintenance of a conscious human brain in an artificial environment. The brain of a terminally ill laboratory worker by the name of Benjamin Abrams, remanded to science by his own wish, was transferred immediately on the death of the body to the finished jar. The jar's interface was simple by modern standards, allowing interaction with the outside world only by means of a two-way text interface and a simple acoustic receiver wired directly into the brain, but the jar itself, with its intricate and robust integrated life-support systems, represented a major innovation in biomechanical science.

After an initial adjustment period under the careful supervision of the University's premiere neurosurgeons, it was determined that the personality of the donor was intact in its new apparatus, and the brain was trained to make full use of the capabilities of the interface jar. The jar was given basic ambulatory capabilities in the form of two rotating belts resembling tank treads and sufficiently flexible to allow navigation of most of the campus. Following an unveiling ceremony introducing the University's newest marvel, the jar was permitted to remain at liberty on University grounds. The student body quickly adopted it as a sort of mascot, giving it the moniker "Smiley" for the curious face-like appearance of its sensory interface board.

Smiley remains a presence on the University of London campus into the present day, though the original jar was replaced twenty-five years ago and again fifteen years ago to allow the brain increased sensory capabilities. The new jar, though in many aspects similar to the old, allows for visual capacity at a moderate resolution and has improved auditory capabilities. There are rumours that Smiley is scheduled to go under the care of the biomechanics again in the near future. He has been seen on campus with decreasing frequency in recent years, leading to some speculation on the nature of the procedures to be performed.

The interface jar holds some promise as a technology for the prolonging of life. It has been proposed that prominent minds of the present day – scientists, poets, statesmen, and philosophers – be maintained in these jars after the death of the body so that their unique gifts may be preserved. Some of the wealthiest men of London are known to have made arrangements for their own preservation in this manner. However, the technology is imperfect, and what is known of the long-term effects of the interface jar is troubling. To date, only a few brains have been preserved in this fashion for extended periods, but of those brains that have spent more than twenty years in the interface jar, none are free of the troubling symptoms of decay. The personality begins to dissipate over time, becoming increasingly forgetful and irrational, and false memories begin to appear. Sensory echoes caused by the interface of the neural tissue with the artificial senses propagate, expanding into full-fledged hallucinations. The brain becomes uncommunicative for extending periods of time, withdrawing into its developing insanity. Technicians and psychiatrists have attempted to correct the problems of the interface jar and reverse the deterioration of the stored brains, but limited progress has been made.

## Constructing the Interface Jar

The construction of the interface jar is a delicate, involved process. The jar must be capable of sustaining a human brain for an extended period of time, providing the tissues with the appropriate balance of oxygen and other nutrients while providing complete protection from the environment. There must be some means provided by which the brain can receive information from the outside world and transmit information to some outside receiver. The senses and capabilities of individual jars will vary. The base cost for creating an interference jar is £20.

Creation of the interface jar is an extensive project, requiring approximately one month of effort. The first stage of the project is the establishment of the structural framework, requiring one week of labour and a successful Galvanics roll (DR 16). If the roll fails, it may be repeated after two additional days of labour.

The second stage is the establishment of the interface that will connect the nerve processes to the jar. This stage requires another week of labour and a successful Medicine roll (DR 16) and Galvanics roll (DR 16). If either roll is failed, it may be repeated after an additional two days of labour.

The third stage is the construction and integration of the input/output system, requiring one week of labour and a successful Galvanics roll (DR 16). If the roll fails, it may be repeated after two additional days of labour.

The fourth stage is the construction and integration of the life support system, requiring one week of labour and successful Medicine (DR 16) and Galvanics (DR 18) skill rolls.

The final stage, integrating the living brain into the established jar, may be accomplished any time after the completion of the previous four stages. Obviously, before this stage can take place, the attending galvanist must first acquire his subject's brain (see The Brain, page 355 for details on successfully removing a brain). This stage requires an operation lasting two hours and followed by successful Medicine (DR 18) and Galvanics (DR 18) skill rolls. If either roll fails, it may be rerolled after one additional hour of operating time.

The ALS2(1) alchemical serum required for maintenance of the brain can be bought or synthesized. The serum will be maintained in the short term by the life support apparatus, but the system will need maintaince at least every other day, requiring one hour of labour, and the fluid must be entirely replaced twice monthly.

## The Wells Project

*Within the Bryant Centre for Anti-Agapic Science at Cambridge, there is a division devoted entirely to the perfection of the interface jar. The workings of this group are little publicized, and few outside the Bryant Centre are even aware of their existence. They conduct their work quietly, working toward the day when their efforts will bear fruit and their technologies open the way to a new human immortality.*

*This group, referred to internally as the Wells Project, consists of physiologists, psychologists, neurosurgeons, and engineers who work collaboratively on the problem of the interface jar. Some of the finest minds in Cambridge have been drawn into this project. Their facilities are located deep within the Bryant Centre, far from the wards where the living patients are treated, where the eyes of the curious even among the Bryant Centre staff are unlikely to find them. This secrecy is necessary less because of the controversial nature of the technology than because of the need for perfectly controlled conditions in which to operate on the subjects of the Project.*

*The latest innovation of the Wells Project is the Interface Collective. Within the laboratories of the Wells Project, in a room kept in carefully dimmed light, ten brains in interface jars sit observing a mass of neural tissue in a central jar. Each jar is connected to the central mass with a tangle of wiring, and a faint but audible hum can be heard throughout the room. The central mass is an engineered switchboard-brain, a forum through which the others can speak mind to mind. Each jar is additionally equipped with voice and text output, through which it is able to communicate with the researchers. It is hoped that this communion of minds will help delay the onset of psychosis in the interfaced brains. There are plans to add more brains to this group in the near future, in order to study the group dynamic.*

# Chapter Seven - Smoke & Mirrors

*"Only a cynic can create horror – for being every masterpiece of the sort must reside a driving daemonic force that despises the human race and its illusions, and longs to pull them to pieces and mock them."*

*—H.P. Lovecraft, Letter to Edwin Baird, 1923*

This chapter is an introduction to narrating Unhallowed Metropolis. New Narrators will find a wealth of suggestions and tips for running the game as well as a tool box of setting materials that can be integrated into games.

Remember that the Narrator is first and foremost a storyteller. It is the Narrator's role to devise and run scenarios, or the storylines for play. During play, the Narrator brings the scenario to life, describing the action of the game as it unfolds. While players dictate the actions of their characters, the Narrator directs the supporting cast throughout the story. Along the way, the Narrator adjudicates the rules, assigns difficulty ratings, and assesses the accomplishments of player characters.

### Online Support

*Narrators may find additional materials for download at* ***newdarkage.net****, the official website of Unhallowed Metropolis, and* ***eos-press.com****. From time to time, the writers will add new Callings, weapons, creatures, NPCs, sample scenarios, and other useful Narrator aids.*

## Themes

The Unhallowed Metropolis world is populated with a profusion of monsters for your characters to hunt and be hunted by, and gore-soaked, combat-heavy games suit the system well. However, intrigue, mystery, exploration, and horror are as central to the game as combat. These elements can, and should, overlap in an interesting and rich story. Horror should be a constant element of play. Of course, not all horror is supernatural in origin. There is horror to be found in human misery and depredation as surely as in the walking dead.

To add elements of intrigue, a Narrator might focus on dark secrets, unseen manipulations, and hidden agendas. Neo-Victorian London is built on powerful machinations, and stories of intrigue give players and their characters insight into the forces that drive society. This is a world in which the aristocracy will go to terrible extremes to keep their skeletons in the closet, good men are forced to take desperate actions in the name of queen and country, and the future is shaped in smoke-filled back rooms. Tales of intrigue may not regularly bring characters face to face with ravening hordes of animates, but they do shed light on the horrors and corruption of society itself. Worse yet, the characters often will not be able to reveal their findings to the world at large without risking dire repercussions. Shedding too much light on the secrets of the state or the nobility can bring down the crushing heel of the establishment, resulting in a one-way ticket to the bottom of the Thames or worse.

Alternatively, a story that does not focus solely on combat may instead focus on elements of mystery in which characters must gather clues, interview witnesses, and apply deductive reasoning to resolve the scenario. Mysteries are great fun but require careful planning. The Narrator must know where each clue leads and which NPCs have what pieces of information. In a mystery, the stakes of dice rolls may not be whether the players find a vital clue, but whether they find it before the killer strikes again. Carefully unravelling a well-woven mystery can be every bit as exciting for players as doing battle with the legions of the undead. However, if the mystery lacks internal consistency, it will fall apart under the sceptical eyes of the players. If it is too obvious, players will solve it in no time. If it is too difficult, the players may become discouraged or bored. A good mystery challenges the wits of the players and draws them into the action of the story, granting them a sense of accomplishment as the events of the scenario are resolved. Often, mysteries and tales of intrigue blur together to form the fine lattice of a story.

Unhallowed Metropolis is also a game of exploration – geographically, personally, and metaphysically. The metropolis is a massive fortification. Beneath the city is a vast labyrinth of tunnels, sub-basements, ancient foundations, and subterranean rivers populated by untold masses of ghouls, animates, vampires, and the dispossessed from the world above. Outside the walls of London is a death-haunted Wasteland seldom travelled by sane men. Rising from the Wastes are the sepulchres, or plague cities, vast ruins hiding untold wealth and lost lore from a bygone time. Between stretches of Wasteland are smaller cities linked by a complex system of rails. A truly intrepid Narrator may also set his stories on the Continent, in the Americas, or anywhere else within or beyond the reach of the Neo-Victorian Empire

Players will go through personal exploration through the trials of their characters, and Corruption and Experience Points guarantee that characters will undergo transformations during play. A player may embrace his character's dark side, accepting it as a part of the story, or he may struggle against it, seeking redemption in a corrupt world. An astute Narrator can pick up on a characters' story arcs, working the development of the characters into the material of the campaign.

### Horror in Unhallowed Metropolis

It is easy to think of this as a game of "horror." The metropolis is a city under siege from without and within. No one knows when the next Plague outbreak or full-scale animate attack will force the Deathwatch to lock down the city. The streets are filled with the desperate and the mad, living in Dickensian squalor while being preyed upon by a host of inhuman abominations. However, zombies and vampires alone do not constitute horror. It is unlikely those playing combat characters will feel more than exhilaration at the thrill of combat, even when their characters come across animates hungrily devouring the flesh of their victims. Horror, real horror, is something different. It is a combination of helplessness, fear, isolation, and the unknown; in short, it is a lack of control coupled with an unfamiliar threat.

Inventive Narrators will undoubtedly discover many methods for terrorizing their players, but such devices should be used sparingly. If the instruments of horror are abused they will become both tedious and commonplace. An overly oppressive game can build tension for a while, but this atmosphere can only be sustained for so long before it is no fun to play. Your players will need minor victories, elements to give them a false sense of security, to sustain interest and involvement. Once they feel as though they can draw a safe breath, the rug can be pulled out from under them again.

# Dynamics of Play

When you decide to narrate an Unhallowed Metropolis game, it is worth considering the sort of stories you wish to tell. Having a firm grasp of the type of game you intend to run will enable you to help your players tailor their characters to the game. For example, it would be easier to tell stories about the highest echelons of Neo-Victorian society if one or more player characters in your group have the Aristocrat Calling. On the other hand, if you wish to tell grisly stories about Undertakers hunting down animates for fun and profit, your players should understand that characters without vital combat skills may find their lives greatly shortened.

One possibility is to play a game with a group of players devoted to a single purpose. The player characters should not all have the same Calling, but they should be able to easily work together. Characters in such a group may have a shared history, making introductions amongst the characters relatively easy, or they may only know each other by reputation.

For example, a Narrator may request that his players create a group of characters for games centred around high society. Several of the players may create characters with the Aristocrat Calling. Another may play a Mourner or a Criminal who works as a driver employed by one of the aristocratic characters or his character's family. Still another player could create a Doctor that is a childhood friend or half-sister of one of the aristocrats. In this way, all the characters will be tied into the storyline and should be able to support one another during play.

Another group may be focused around a consulting detective's office, a Neo-Victorian Sherlock Holmes. The detective might be a Doctor with a keen eye for deductive reasoning. He could be joined by a character or characters with the Criminal or Undertaker Callings, taking on the role of his Watson or the chief of his Irregulars. Throw in an Aristocrat who participates in the doctor's adventures for the excitement of it all, and you have the start of a good group.

While requesting that players create certain types of character is the most restrictive of the options for creating a group dynamic, it is also the easiest for Narrators to work with. Characters in devoted groups will have roughly equivalent combat abilities, with possible exceptions like the Mourner mentioned in the example above. Additionally, all the characters will have some excuse to be in the same place at the same time and to interact with each other.

The second option is the mixed party. This style of group dynamic allows for the most variety among the characters. Players are generally allowed to play any sort of character they wish with little or no guidance on how the party of player characters will actually work together. While this dynamic allows players complete creative license when creating their characters, it also means the Narrator will have to work a little to fit all the players into his stories. If the characters have a wide range of combat abilities, threats will have to be tailored for individual characters. It may also be difficult to figure out how all the characters know each other and why they would interact.

During play, different character types will need to be given different opportunities to shine. In combat, Under-

takers, Mourners, and Dhampiri will take centre stage while Aristocrats, Doctors, and Criminals lay down fire from cover or simply keep their heads down and wait for the action to pass. If a story descends into the metropolis' underworld, the focus of the action will switch to Criminals as they guide the rest of the group through rookeries and back alleys. If the story takes player characters to the most exclusive gentlemen's clubs in London, the Aristocrats may have to leave the rest of the party in the waiting room. While a diverse group means the Narrator can tell virtually any kind of story, it can be real work involving everyone.

A third play dynamic is troupe style, in which each player plays two or more characters. Troupe style allows a Narrator to tell a wide variety of stories and keep all the players equally involved. If one character is not suited to the action of the night's story, the player can just play his second character. Likewise, if a story largely revolves around social interaction, but suddenly turns to combat, the players can switch from their social characters to their combat characters.

While this style of play has its advantages, rapidly switching between characters can keep players from developing well-realized characters. A player's investment in his character will be less than that of a player who plays the same character consistently. It can also be hard for players to keep other group members' characters straight, causing some difficulty in establishing interaction between player characters.

Troupe style is well suited to extremely combat-heavy games. Each player simply brings three or four characters to the game. When one character dies, it is time to move on to the next character. A game of this sort is generally run for a small number of sessions. The sheer level of carnage must be the main appeal because there will be little, if any, character development in a game of this type.

# Scenarios & Campaign Play

A scenario is a single story told during play. A campaign is a series of linked scenarios chronicling the adventures of a particular group of characters. A scenario may be played during a single game session or it may be played over multiple game sessions. Single-scenario play is generally less formal than campaign play because the emphasis is on the story at hand and not on building long-term interactions and developing characters. This short-term play has the advantage of allowing players and the Narrator to experience the game without the serious time commitment required to play a campaign. Single scenarios may also allow for more intense play and a number of player-character fatalities that would be unacceptable in a campaign. This style of play allows both the Narrator and players to try out new things that they may be unwilling to do in campaign play.

A campaign can encompass a major storyline or simply a series of scenarios played with the same characters. Campaigns generally offer the best potential for character growth and involve wide-arcing storylines not suited to quick play. In a campaign, a scenario is only a chapter in the lives of the characters.

## The Scenario

A scenario is basically a plot for an Unhallowed Metropolis game. Generally a scenario centres around a mystery or challenge that players will have to solve or overcome. The first part of a scenario is the introduction. During the introduction, player characters are brought together by an event or common purpose. They may be hired for some task by an outside agency, initiate their own course of action, or stumble into a situation completely by accident. The introduction should give the players some idea of what is to come, as well as providing one or more clear paths of action for the characters. Be careful not to telegraph the entire story at this time. The plot should unfold during play.

The introduction should lead into the middle of the scenario, wherein the players will complete the leg work required to discover what is really going on. Following the clues and seeds of information planted in the introduction, the players will decide on a course of action, begin doing research and gathering information, and generally start to put the pieces of the scenario together. While there is no guarantee the information they gain is accurate, this is where they determine the true scale of the threats they face. It is only then that they may resolve the crux of the scenario.

Of course, if the scenario is as simple as "enter the workhouse, destroy the animates, save those people still alive within," the middle may be fairly simple. The players may simply gather their weapons and go in with their guns blazing.

A scenario should wrap up with some sort of climax and resolution. This could be a final show down with an elusive enemy, the solution of a complex mystery, a mass melee with a horde of animates, or a daring escape from a seemingly hopeless situation. This is the big payoff the players have been working toward. Keep in mind that not every story has a happy ending. The players will not always save the victim in the nick of time. Sometimes the truth leads to new woes. Being alive is not always better than the alternative. Of course, if every resolution is an endurance test, you may soon run out of players.

Before beginning a game session, the Narrator should take time to write out the scenario he intends to run. Some Narrators may prefer to work from loose notes broadly outlining the action, while others may write full descriptions of each character and environment encountered during the scenario. Taking notes on the names and attributes of major non-player character will be a great asset during play. In general, the more work that is done up front, the easier the time the Narrator will have while running the game and the richer the play experience will be for all. Nothing is worse than struggling through a poorly realized storyline while players look on dumbfounded.

While narrating a game, it is important not to railroad players through the scenario. If your scenarios lack options they will feel very linear. If your players cannot take independent action, they are bound to get bored or, worse yet, start to feel detached from the story. The trick is to give players the freedom to play while steering them through the scenario.

### The Campaign

Because a campaign spans more than one scenario, it allows players to fully realize their characters, developing personalities for them that change over time. Players will also learn to interact with one another's characters. They will come to know what to expect of each other, how to best operate as a team, and, generally, what each character brings to the table.

The campaign itself may simply be a collection of unrelated scenarios linked only by the player characters that play through it, or it may be a series of scenarios that build upon each other to tell a single grand storyline. As with developing scenarios, a Narrator that takes the time to outline his campaign will be able to provide a much richer play experience for all involved. The entire campaign need not be mapped out from the start, but having a good idea of what events will transpire will give you a solid foundation for developing scenarios. Likewise, a Narrator should not feel bound to his initial concepts if they do not fit into the campaign as it develops. The more flexible and inventive you can be, the better time your players will have.

A single storyline campaign may, for example, centre on a group of vampire hunters taking on a well-established Legacy of vampires. Throughout the campaign, players root out members of the "family," continually working their way up the food chain until they inevitably have a showdown with the progenitor of the line.

Ideally, there will be some link from one scenario in a campaign to the next. Examining the evidence left behind after one scenario may provide a great lead to the next. Of course, such threads and plot seeds need not be simple or clear-cut. The resolution of one scenario may lead to a crossroads for the characters, providing players with two or three paths to choose from. Campaigns, like scenarios, should not be too linear.

Most campaigns will develop reoccurring non-player characters. These characters may be introduced in scenarios with the expectation of a single appearance, or they may be major antagonists that are intended to threaten players for some time. These characters constitute the supporting cast of the campaign. If you introduce a character that works well, bring him back. This reinforces the fabric of the campaign and keeps interesting and beloved NPCs around for you and the players to enjoy.

## The Antagonists

Unhallowed Metropolis has no shortage of threats to challenge your players. The streets are haunted by Plague-spawned zombies and blood-starved vampires who compete with human serial killers for prime hunting grounds. Anarchists continually plot ever more spectacular attacks on

the society they have sworn to bring down. Mad scientists and amateur reanimators unleash all manner of loathsome abominations upon the unsuspecting population. Beneath the streets, ghoul tribes and human refuse battle for supremacy in a lightless world.

This section gives a rough outline of what threats you can reasonably throw at a group of player characters without ripping them all limb from limb... Unless that is your intention, of course. With experience, a Narrator will better know how to stack the odds to make sure players are challenged but not outright annihilated.

Both the average attributes and the range of possible strengths and weaknesses are provided for each type of monster detailed in this book. If your players become accustomed to a certain type of creature, change its attributes to give them a whole new experience. Your players will certainly remember an encounter with the spontaneously animated remains of a burly dock worker towering over them at nearly seven feet tall.

While narrating Unhallowed Metropolis it is important to remember that combat is deadly. Virtually every attack has the potential to inflict a lethal or crippling wound. Your players may grow accustomed to dispatching zombies with ease only to be stunned when an exceptionally high die roll results in a beloved character's throat being ripped out. There are mechanisms in the system, such as Second Chances, to help the PCs survive the dangers of the world; however, your players should not be permitted to become complacent. PCs in this world are not immortal, and your players may need to be reminded of this fact.

Over the course of a campaign, your players will develop tactics for dealing with the various abominations. For example, your players may rely on explosives to blow the legs off vampires before closing in for the kill. They may learn to use the Fast Aim stunt to great advantage by choosing accuracy in their attacks over quantity of bullets. It has been observed that this is a game of head-shots, appropriately so for a game with a major zombie hunting element. As your players learn to deal with greater threats, you will be able to provide them with more serious and interesting challenges.

## Anarchists

Depending on the storyline of your game, the threat presented by anarchists may be fairly minor or the city could be a powder keg of rebellion ready to blow. Anarchist attacks may cause little damage to the infrastructure of the city and psychology of the masses, or they could be dire threats every bit as paralyzing as full Plague outbreaks.

### Predicting Player Response

*If you're planning a scene where a powerful enemy forces the PCs to flee, think carefully. Some players are not afraid of character death and enjoy a rousing last stand. Others are so tactically skilled, happy to take risks, or downright stubborn that they won't even think of running away. Conversely, groups will sometimes lose their mettle and run from threats you know to pose little real danger. It can be difficult for a Narrator to predict how players will react! Thus, Narrators must remain flexible and be willing to change tactics when their players make an unexpected decision.*

Neo-Victorian anarchists tend to be paranoid and insular. Their bombing and assassination campaigns have turned the vast majority of the population against the anarchists, and Special Branch has successfully waged a small-scale war on them. Most effective anarchist leaders are quickly killed, imprisoned, or actually recruited into the government. The saboteurs are occasionally turned on their own kind or foreign powers. Those that remain at large spend far more time hiding than executing attacks.

Police reports and the dailies are rife with harrowing tales of firebrands stoking the ire of the working classes, hidden bomb factories producing untold stores of munitions-grade explosives, and secret schools devoted to the black arts of murder and rhetoric. Not only does such fear mongering sell copy, but it is also a convenient excuse for increasing police budgets and extending the power of law enforcement. Though the threat is certainly exaggerated, there are anarchists within London working to destroy the state. Once every few years, a cell accomplishes a truly newsworthy feat of destruction that results in months of brutal crackdowns as the police round up the usual suspects. After a time, things quiet down again, and new plots are hatched in secret.

Though anarchists are not a central threat in Unhallowed Metropolis, they can offer an interesting diversion from the undead. Anarchist cells can be portrayed as crack paramilitary units that leave nothing to chance, disorganized libertines with too much time and money on their hands, or somewhere in between.

## Anathema & Homunculi

Anathema and Homunculi (See Chapter 6, page 317-318) can be utilized in a number of ways. They may be sympathetic characters trying to live their lives in peace or merely objects of curiosity. However, they could also be killer

mutants with a taste for human blood or a secret army of monstrous soldiers completely dominated by the will of their creator.

These creatures tend to be mentally and physically unstable. Most develop serious mental disorders over time due to psychological traumas and chemical imbalances. Many suffer severe physical disabilities due to flaws in the creation process. An unlucky few continue to mutate throughout their short lives, growing ever more monstrous with each passing year.

Anathema are the most complex of these created life forms. The creation of these creatures is strictly prohibited by law, and so the creature lacks any legal standing. When discovered, an Anathema is generally hunted and destroyed. Such hunts are the stuff of great scenarios: the lone human monster railing at its unjust creator as it prepares to make its last stand... Anathema are only marginally more dangerous than ordinary humans. They may have slightly higher attribute scores, but these are intelligent creatures: their skills, weapons, and plans will be more important than any single attribute.

While Anathema are fairly human-like, Homunculi may deviate considerably from the human norm. A Homunculus may be exceptionally loyal to its creator, or it may hate him with every fibre of its existence. Such creatures can prove to be useful assistants or deadly enemies, especially if the Homunculus knows secret ways in and out of its master's laboratory. A Homunculus may be more physically powerful than a human character, but it will generally lack combat skills. Two or three Homunculi may be a threat for a single player character who specializes in combat.

### Animates

Animates are among the most common threats stalking the streets of the metropolis. These creatures can be found wherever a corpse is left to spontaneously animate or a bitten victim is left to die. Within the metropolis, the most commonly encountered animate will be the ravener, the fresh animate (for zombie types, see Chapter 5, pages 249-254).

Animates are primarily dangerous in numbers. One or two may be a reasonable threat for a single Aristocrat or Doctor, but an Undertaker or Mourner should be able to cut down five or so without breaking a sweat. If your group has a lot of combat characters, between five and seven animates per character will provide an adequate challenge for your players. More than that and you risk overwhelming them.

The real threat from animates is that after a character is grappled by one, he will be an easier target for the others that will attempt to pull him down and gnaw on him. Familiarizing yourself with the Unarmed Combat rules will be invaluable when adjudicating combat with animates (see Chapter 2, pages 96-98). Remember, up to five animates may grapple a single victim.

Animates are generally not smart enough to attack weaker victims over heavily armed and armoured targets. An animate will go to the nearest living thing, even if that living thing is fully capable of decapitating it with an Exculpus strike. Weaker player characters can hide behind more adept combatants to avoid certain death.

Hiding from a horde of animates is virtually impossible. Prey Sense ensures that at least some of the zombies will be able to locate the characters. Matters only become worse if the animates are controlled by a zombie lord. Zombie lords are vastly more intelligent than ordinary zombies, and they have the strange ability to telepathically control their lesser brethren. Zombie lords have been known to dominate vast hordes of animates and launch them against the walls of Neo-Victorian cities. In combat, a zombie lord will prove to be a cunning opponent, and lesser animates in its presence will benefit from its control. These animates may wait in ambush, target weaker victims with their attacks, or even capture victims to bring unbitten to the lord.

The final animate type is the modular zombie. The modular zombie behaves very much like the standard animate except that it is harder to destroy. If the creature is cut to pieces, the individual pieces can move under their own volition. In practice, this ability seldom comes into play. Most attacks will either not inflict sufficient damage to severe a limb or will quickly dispatch the modular zombie.

The effects of the fear animates cause will only hinder some player characters. Combat-oriented characters often have Features and Qualities that enable them to face zombies without much risk of flight. Fear may be further mitigated by a high Will score or the Concentration skill. Still, when a PC or important NPC flees from animates, it can provide a difficult situation for the characters to deal with. Obviously, someone will have to go after them... Bolting from animates may cause a character to helplessly flee into the clutches of even more dangerous predators.

The hours following a battle with animates will often be as tense as the fight itself. If any character suffered a bite that inflicted a Serious Wound or greater, he may be infected by the Plague. Often, a bystander will be bitten and refuse to acknowledge it. Every citizen knows an animate bite is an almost certain death sentence. When someone suffering the infection eventually succumbs to the Plague, the animate subsequently spawned may potentially cause a new outbreak.

During his last hours of life, an infected character will suffer the full ravages of the Plague as his body fights to throw it off. These are the times when having a Doctor around can make all the difference. Assuming the character fails to shake off the infection, he will be faced with certain death. He may take his own life or may turn to his comrades to administer the mercy killing in his hour of need.

## The Criminal Element

Scenarios may involve London's criminal element in many different ways. Because of their connections, criminals often learn information unavailable to those outside their class. The police have long relied on informants within the criminal class to keep tabs on the goings-on within the Family. Occasionally, player characters may have reason to visit criminal informants. A player character will need to apply leverage to get answers, either in the form of bribes or intimidation, or, more likely, both. Sometimes informants, motivated by revenge or a professional interest in removing a rival, will be more forthcoming with information.

Players may also find themselves the victims of crime. Aristocrats and Doctors make excellent targets for pickpockets and robbers. A character's home may be burglarized. Sheer odds dictate that eventually a player character will be a target. A relatively minor crime can be a good introduction into a complex story as characters attempt to track down stolen goods or a particular witness to a crime. These are times when a criminal insider is invaluable to the player characters.

Individual thieves and robbers will seldom harass obviously well-armed Undertakers or Mourners, but criminal gangs are far more brazen. A character walking into the wrong pub or rookery can easily find himself outgunned ten or more to one. If player characters run afoul of a powerful criminal boss, they can expect a visit from a pack of nobblers bearing "holy water sprinklers" (clubs with nails driven through them).

A gang may avoid direct confrontation with a dangerous player character by sending a message rather than facing him directly. Such messages may include, but are not limited to, kidnapping, intimidating, or killing friends and loved ones; vandalism of personal property; or frame-up jobs.

Players should be advised to think twice before following criminals into their home territories. Well-established thieves employ extensive networks of lookouts that keep track of the comings and goings of everyone in the neighbourhood. These spies are adept at knowing trouble when they see it and can alert their employers within minutes. Most criminals will have planned escape routes that can be utilized to avoid capture or confrontation. Once a thief knows he has someone on his tail, it is a simple matter to go to ground and wait for trouble to pass him by.

On occasion, players will desire goods that are not available for lawful sale, and their character will have to deal with the black market to buy them. Player character reanimists may require clandestine meetings with resurrection men to procure bodies for experimentation. Undertakers may constantly be on the look-out for military grade weaponry. Such arrangements require criminal contacts to locate a seller for the goods sought. Often such meetings end in a double cross or robbery.

## The Deathwatch

While the Deathwatch is generally thought of as the last line of defence against the ravages of the Plague, they can also be extremely dangerous antagonists. The Deathwatch is made up of highly trained soldiers armed with the most dangerous weapons known to man. In times of Plague outbreaks, their first priority is containment, followed closely by elimination.

### A Note on Super Weapons

*There exist some extremely powerful galvanic and alchemical weapons in this book. These weapons are far too powerful to find general use in Unhallowed Metropolis games. Alchemical solutions like Styx can destroy a character. Military-grade galvanic hardware can level city blocks with a single blast. These weapons may be seen in the hands of Deathwatch personnel during major Plague outbreaks and, very rarely, in the hands of a villainous super-scientist.*

*The writers strongly discourage Narrators from allowing player characters to run around with death rays, lightning guns, and the like. If you allow one of these weapons to fall into the hands of a player, it should be for a purpose, such as the deus ex machina that allows them to survive against impossible odds. Once they are safe, the weapon should be removed from the possession of the players. Luckily this technology is extremely delicate and can easily break down. The government may even offer rewards for the return of such dangerous arms.*

During Deathwatch crackdowns, massive steel gates seal off whole neighbourhoods. Heavily armed Deathwatch forces sweep the area, annihilating any animates they come across. Deathwatch personnel are notorious for their zealousness, often killing anything in their path to ensure the safety of the metropolis as a whole.

Players in the wrong place at the wrong time may find themselves on the receiving end of heavy fire during a Deathwatch sweep. Returning fire in such situations will be discouraged by massed firepower. Those characters who do not quickly adapt to the situation will be permanently pacified (read as "reduced to fine ash"). Deathwatch sweeps can be used as a dramatic tool to herd player characters off the street, but such tactics should be used sparingly.

At other times, confrontations with Deathwatch personnel will be less one-sided. Characters may encounter off-duty soldiers in pubs throughout the city. Most often soldiers stick to establishments that cater to their kind. These places may be unwelcoming to non-service men, especially to freelancers like Undertakers. Drunken brawls are fairly common but do not generally lead to armed conflict.

Deathwatch veterans, especially those who served with the Penal Corps, may have learned a great deal about life outside the walls of London. These old soldiers can provide first-hand accounts of sepulchres, reclamation duty, and the Wastelands. Some may have even ventured to the Continent.

## Ghouls

Ghouls are deceptively dangerous opponents, especially in their home territory where they can count on overwhelming numbers, planned ambush points, and clever traps (see Chapter 5, page 281). These creatures are not especially intelligent, but they do possess a frightful cunning. Ghouls will seldom attack an opponent unless they are certain of having the upper hand.

Many ghouls make their homes in the slums of London, preferring the city streets to the warrens of the Underground. Some ghouls venture daily from the Underground in search of food or short-term employment. Such creatures may become unsettling allies or guides through the world below.

Between two and three ghouls make a good match for a character specializing in combat. A ghoul should be armed with at least a knife or cheap pistol. Due to the poor eyesight of ghouls, they seldom carry rifles and will prefer to fight in melee combat rather than at a distance. If a character falls in combat while fighting ghouls, the ghouls will do their best

to make off with the body, even if it is still breathing. Not only will the body make a fine meal, but the ghouls will be concerned with disposing of evidence. This will occasionally be the fate of those fighting alongside ghoul allies as well.

## Mad Scientists

"Mad scientist" is a grossly simple term for those men and women who have shaken free of the usual ethical constraints in their drive to pursue forbidden knowledge. The actual sanity of such scientists varies greatly by the individual. Some suffer from a great number of chronic and acute mental conditions, while others seem to function normally aside from a complete lack of a conscience and moral compass. Whether succeeding in their experiments or failing dramatically, mad scientists of every conceivable stripe make excellent antagonists.

From time to time, they will need raw materials from which to work. These materials can be anything from rare herbs that can only grow in the Wastelands to extremely fresh corpses or the distilled life-essence of innocent children. Sometimes, a mad scientist will have a subtle method of procuring these components. At other times, he will have to take procurement into his own hands, possibly placing the scientist at odds with the law, the local population, and very likely the player characters.

Once a mad scientist succeeds in creating a fresh atrocity, he must concern himself with whether to introduce the creature to the world at large, chain it up in small, dank room in some forgotten cellar, or promptly execute the thing as being too dangerous to exist. At the Narrator's discretion, the scientist can always be spared such difficult choices by the unfortunate escape of his creation. This is generally when the rampaging begins and is quickly followed by the torches and pitchforks.

Mad scientists are not particularly dangerous on their own. Certainly anyone classifiable as "mad" may be driven to desperate acts, but few have the proficiency with arms to be a true physical threat. The danger comes from the products of their maniacal labours. Some succeed in creating loyal servants who will do anything their master asks. These scientists will occasionally be accompanied by the hulking forms of, for example, powerful man-pig-bear homunculi or brutish post-cadaverous automata of immense size.

## Mercurials

Mercurials are alchemically reanimated corpses (see Chapter 6, pages 334-339). It is important to note that no two Mercurials are exactly alike. The potency of reagents, the skill of the reanimator, and the condition of the corpse all affect the outcome of experiments in reanimation.

Most reanimators practice their craft in hopes of restoring the dead to true life. In times of stress or moral weakness, a reanimator may act with less lofty goals in mind. A bereaved reanimator may be tempted to return his true love to life. Another may reanimate a rival's corpse in hopes of stripping it of its secrets. A monster of a man may even reanimate a hated enemy to exact a terrible revenge on the family of the deceased.

## The New Killers

In addition to the inhuman threats that stalk the Neo-Victorian world, there are also human killers who hunt their own kind. Every killer is different. Some are fastidious in their rituals, adhering to a strict modus operandi from which they will never vary. Others are compelled to seek quantity over quality. Many who appear outwardly normal until their homicidal predilections are triggered by outside agencies. While most killers work alone, a few prefer to work together in small groups. It is not unknown for larger groups to gather for particularly gruesome parties, such as for cannibal dining or to observe a vivisection in the round.

A killer may blame a certain class or race for all society's ills and believe that he is freeing the world of their taint through his killings. Some may enjoy the actual "chase" of hunting down a victim more than anything, while others may be primarily motivated by the act of torturing and abusing the victim whilst they are alive. Still others may kill the victim quickly, almost as if it were a chore, and then indulge in necrophilia or cannibalism with the body. Usually there is a strong sexual aspect to the crimes, even if it may not be immediately obvious.

The new killers often run afoul of vampires, who see the streets as their exclusive hunting grounds. Random killings draw a lot of attention, raise the vigilance of the public, and alter the behaviour of those individuals who go out after dark. When a vampire finds a human killer, it generally executes him swiftly. Human killers seem to take a certain satisfaction from hunting vampires in return.

Those killers who take to the streets to find their prey should be approximately on par with a player character combat specialist. Most killers are lightly armed, preferring knives and hatchets to firearms, but there are always exceptions to the rule. No matter how insane, few killers would be willing to face down a heavily armed Undertaker.

## Prometheans

Prometheans are the galvanically reanimated dead (see Chapter 6, pages 354-358). There are two basic types of Promethean, which are distinguished by their complexity and status of undeath.

The post-cadaverous automaton is a relatively simple creature constructed from mechanical parts and cadaverous materials. Automatons are generally slow and clumsy but can be incredibly powerful. An automaton will seldom attack a human unless it malfunctions or is ordered to do so.

The rimmon, or biological reanimate, is more complex. Like the automaton, a rimmon is a composite of cadaverous material and mechanical parts. However, the rimmon's body is significantly more organic than mechanical. It is generally assembled from the best cadaverous parts available. These creatures are often misshapen patchwork men covered in hideous seams and swollen scars. A tiny percentage are created with beauty in mind, but most are constructed for sheer mental or athletic ability. Assuming it has some combat skills, a rimmon is generally a match for a single player character who specializes in combat. A rimmon may have physical attributes beyond what is considered human.

## Thrope

Thropes are among the most dangerous creatures inhabiting the Neo-Victorian world. These hulking brutes are powerful enough to rip a grown man limb from limb. The most intelligent are able to utilize both the Melee Weapon and Unarmed Combat skills. They have a natural resistance to damage that borders on the indestructible. When a thrope is hurt, its body instantly begins to heal the damage. Unless a thrope suffers catastrophic damage, it is effectively immortal.

Luckily there are very few thropes within the confines of the metropolis. Those that do exist inside the walls of the city are either survivors of a thrope encounter in the Wasteland who were bitten, or they are the products of an alchemical

experiment. The true serum was lost during the Reclamation, but generations of scientists have sought the serum as a possible key to eternal life, an imperfect version of the Elixir Vitae itself. A researcher who believes he is close to a significant breakthrough may test a final serum on himself or another... always with disastrous results.

When a thrope turns up in a scenario, it should always be a dramatic event. The creature is more like a force of nature than a mutant monster. Humans in its path will be pitched aside like rag dolls. Its huge fists can knock the head off a grown man with a single punch. A single thrope is a good threat for two or more player characters who specialize in combat. There is little hope of player characters standing their ground and fighting against a pack of thropes.

### Vampires

Vampires are extremely dangerous antagonists because even loathsome and animalistic vampires possess a terrible cunning. The most common variety is the feral vampire (see Chapter 5, pages 265-271). Though it lacks the cognitive resources of a rational creature, the feral vampire is nonetheless a frighteningly proficient killer. Feral vampires pose a mostly physical threat to player characters.

Most feral vampires carry melee weapons to supplement their formidable natural capabilities. A feral vampire has roughly the combat ability of an Undertaker or Mourner player character, and a group of player characters should have little trouble dispatching a lone vampire. However, the creature is immensely more dangerous on its home ground than while hunting prey. It may set all manner of sadistic traps for pursuers and will know dozens of hidden exits, entrances, and tunnels from its lair.

A feral vampire is far more likely to attempt to transfix a victim than it is to rely on vampiric mind control. Though the creature is fully capable of seizing control of the minds of others, its own thoughts are too erratic to use this ability to its full advantage. If it is clearly losing a fight, a feral vampire may attempt to issue simple orders such as "stop," "come," or "go."

Unlike mindless animates, the feral vampire is intelligent enough to pick out easy targets. The feral vampire may attempt to split up a group of characters and hunt them down individually rather than face them all at once. Feral vampires see each other as natural threats and seldom, if ever, work together.

Sentient vampires are a different breed altogether. While still driven by extremes of hunger and passion, these creatures retain their intellect and are capable of long-term planning. Those that survive may become immeasurably powerful with age. They tend to perfect their social and combat abilities and to surround themselves with networks of servants, bodyguards, and slaves. The most dangerous have managed to insinuate themselves into the height of Neo-Victorian society. In addition to their own resources, these creatures are capable of calling upon the assistance of powerful friends among the aristocracy.

Individually, sentient vampires are physically very powerful and extremely quick. Most carry weapons at all times, including firearms, and their punches can deliver enough force to shatter bone and pulverize flesh. Despite this, the creature is likely to use its transfixing stare to hold a single victim in place while it feeds. If confronted by a group of adversaries, however, the vampire may mentally command individuals to attack each other, thus cutting down the opposition. If a vampire faces insurmountable odds, it will use every ability at its disposal to effect an escape. Once it recovers and gathers reinforcements, it will certainly return to hunt down its enemies.

A single sentient vampire is roughly a match for two or three combat characters. The creature will have access to a fair number of combat stunts and will utilize dodges and parries to great effect.

The most powerful sentient vampires are generally those who have existed for thirty or more years in this unliving state. These creatures are likely to have vassals, both vampiric and human. The creature may be served either by younger vampires it created through a stable Legacy or those who have come to the aged vampire begging its protection. The humans that serve these creatures are generally slaves whose wills have been crushed over years of continuous vampiric manipulations. Sentient vampires may also be attended to by paid bodyguards, servants, and agents. Their lairs tend to be well fortified and sometimes very lavish, though each vampire lives by his own means.

Sentient vampires maintain private hunting grounds that they ruthlessly protect from feral vampires, human killers, and their own kind. Only the dominant vampire and his vassals are allowed to hunt within a territory. The humans that live in these areas are regarded as cattle, but are provided a certain amount of protection from outside threats. Trespassers that hunt within these territories or who disrupt the relative peace of the hunting grounds can expect to be dealt with harshly.

A vampire will seldom feed in combat unless it is close to starvation or has sustained a crippling wound. Most vampires prefer to feed daily and are likely to have the bonus +2 Vitality and Coordination when they meet the characters. After feeding, most vampires are likely to kill their

victims rather than risk infecting them. Occasionally, sentient vampires will attempt to infect a human with vampirism intentionally. In these cases, if the vampire created is feral, it will quickly be destroyed rather than be allowed to roam free.

### The Monster Within

In campaign play, your players battle against the corruption within may become a significant element in the game. As your players begin utilizing Second Chances and their Corruption ratings climb, you will need to negotiate the treacherous territory of personal horror, helping your players determine if their characters will walk the fine line between human weakness and total corruption, seek redemption and purification, or embrace the darkness as it grows.

As the game progresses and the characters' personal demons develop more clearly, the Narrator should use the material he is given. The Narrator is encouraged to draw the players out with regard to their approach to Corruption; the more the Narrator understands about the individual paths developing within his game, the more he will be able to make those paths manifest in play, personalizing the campaign to the developing personas of the characters. Some Narrators may view this solely as an exercise in responding to the needs of the players. Others may choose to find this aspect of the game a unique challenge in personal psychology. It can be a difficult to draw out the developing pathologies of the characters, lead the characters farther down the roads they are devising for themselves, and adapt the strategy as the characters begin in earnest to struggle against their downfall.

Corruption should not be static. It should develop constantly as characters succumb to the need for Second Chances or make their way slowly onto the harder, higher road of redemption. The Narrator is encouraged to provide characters with a "push" if it is needed to remind them of the perpetual nature of the struggle within. The development will, in general, not be all in one direction; characters are expected to develop through cycles of redemption and corruption. It is more interesting for everyone concerned if the fight is not an easy one.

# Plot Seeds

The following plots seeds are sample scenario concepts that may be further developed for use in Unhallowed Metropolis games. A Narrator interested in using these plot seeds should tailor the scenario to suit his needs. You will need to add your own non-player characters to fill in the supporting cast.

**Bad Medicine** – A player-character Doctor or Aristocrat receives a letter from an old friend, Sir Abram Alexander Scott, a well-respected London physician. The fellow has become concerned by the behaviour of a colleague, Dr. Reiner von Stahl, chief physician and administrator of the Ravensdale Institute, a private sanatorium. Dr. Scott has reason to believe that Stahl's research into "extreme bio-regenerative therapy" has taken a dangerous turn. One of Dr. Stahl's assistants first alerted Dr. Scott to Stahl's alarming practices. The young man has since disappeared without a trace. Dr. Scott has decided to take action personally and would appreciate the character's support when he goes public with his findings.

This is the last time the character ever hears from Dr. Scott. The next day, the man's wife, the venerable Clara Ann Scott, calls on the character. The old woman is clearly beside herself with worry. It seems Dr. Scott has not yet returned from his appointment at the Institute. Worse yet, he seems to have planned for such an eventuality and has left a letter for the character in the case that some maleficence befell him. Lady Clara has brought the letter.

The letter details Dr. Scott's professional opinion that Dr. Stahl has gone quite insane. The once brilliant man now firmly believes in the rehabilitation of the most hopeless cases through cessation and reanimation of the vital spark through alchemical intervention. Worst yet, Dr. Scott has come to believe that Dr. Stahl has ventured beyond the hypothetical and has begun to put his theories into practice. According to Jeffrey Whitehead, Dr. Stahl's assistant and the young man who came to Dr. Scott with these revelations, the staff at the Institute are completely under Dr. Stahl's sway, and the place has degenerated into complete bedlam. The treating physicians systematically murder and resurrect their patients, and any who speak out are horrifically silenced.

Of course the accusations are completely true. Though a cursory examination of the place will only reveal an idyllic hospital setting, literally beneath the surface, the place is a house of horrors. Dr. Stahl and his staff have been experimenting with alchemical reanimation, and the subbasements of the hospital are full of the results of their labours. Some scream constantly; others spew blood and bodily liquids as they beg for the release of death. A few are completely berserk, lashing out at anything or anyone who crosses their path. In a dank, dark room, Dr. Scott sits staring blankly out from dead eyes.

The tone of play will depend on the Narrator's group of players and their characters. If the group is geared toward

combat, the scenario could be run as a splatter-fest with the players cutting through hordes of Mercurials as they make their way through the hospital, finally bringing Stahl to justice. If the group is made up of investigators or detectives, the tone of the story will be much different, focusing on the mystery surrounding the Ravensdale Institute. The players may start by investigating Dr. Stahl's background before ever venturing to the site.

**Family Tradition** – It has been years since Dr. Malkinde passed away in his sleep. Following the good doctor's death, his sister Meredith moved into the Malkinde estate to act as caretaker and to take over the tutelage of the doctor's young son, Victor. Over the years, Victor has grown into a strange and vicious young man, and people have begun to talk. The boy has developed predilections that verge on the sadistic, including the torture of nurses and mutilation of neighbourhood animals. Meredith Malkinde began to suspect the boy's unnatural origins after an inexplicable growth spurt on his tenth birthday left him with the body of a grown man. His mental growth likewise accelerated at an exceptional rate, and the boy surpassed his tutors in the fields of mathematics and natural science by the age of twelve. Soon Victor took a keen interest in his father's laboratory and began to spend more and more time in self-imposed isolation while pursuing his own experiments.

On the night of the boy's eighteenth birthday, a hysterical Meredith Malkinde entered a police station and claimed she had been attacked by an unseen assailant in her home. Lacerations across her face and arms led constables to conclude she had been assaulted by some sort of wild animal. A policeman was dispatched to investigate the house in an attempt to locate the creature, as well as the boy Victor. The constable never returned. Overnight, reports of man-like beasts in the vicinity flooded nearby station houses.

An associate of one of the player characters will call on him to discuss the Malkinde case. There should be some sense of urgency. Not only is this a potentially dangerous situation, but if there are bounties to be paid, the player characters must hurry to the site before it is picked clean by competing Undertakers.

Clearly, this is a monster-hunting scenario. Young Victor is an Anathema who was created by his "father." The youth has been busy resurrecting a number of Doc Malkinde's experiments. The results are ape-like monstrosities with huge claws and a taste for raw human flesh.

Several of these ferocious creatures are loose on the street, and more still are confined within the walls of the Malkinde estate. Should the players manage to fight their way through the house, they will find Victor Malkinde at his father's desk in the middle of a destroyed laboratory reeking of kerosene. Victor is about to set fire to the house and himself. In addition to his wounds, it is obvious the years have not been kind to the boy-thing. He bears the marks of wild and horrific mutations. Bone spurs protrude from his flesh. His arms bend in unlikely directions, and he moves with painful spasms. When he tries to speak, his throat issues not words but a dreadful gurgling. Whatever the players do, Victor Malkinde is certain to die and take with him the secrets of the life he birthed.

**The Letter** – An Aristocrat player character is summoned to the West End estate of Millicent Evelyn Hallam, the fifth Countess Hallam, an incredibly wealthy society matron with a penchant for splashy scandals. The mysterious Lady H_____ has a delicate problem she is hoping the character can help her resolve. The matter calls for absolute discretion.

One of the Lady's agents, a man named Carpenter, has disappeared while in the process of delivering a letter of an extremely personal and compromising nature. Of the content of the letter she will say no more. She fears that Mr.

Carpenter may have met with foul play at the hands of a particularly violent criminal gang, though she is unwilling to explain her suspicions. She then begs the character to find and return the letter to her unopened.

Lady H_____ should be able to exert enough leverage to ensure the character and his associates help her. She may have some connection to either the character's family or one of his close friends. She could even be able to provide information pertaining to one of the character's rivals. There should be an implication that if the character refuses, life will become difficult for him. Should the character succeed, he will have acquired the good graces of a potentially powerful, if colourful, patron.

Lady H_____ can direct the character to an East End boarding house where Mr. Carpenter was supposed to be meeting with an unidentified contact on the Lady's business, but she can say no more about this matter.

The boarding house is a rundown dive frequented by the worst sort of people: drug-addled whores too tired to walk the streets, crazy vagrants smelling of urine and cheap liquor, and foreign rabble of every stripe. When the characters visit the place to make their inquiry, no one will admit to having seen anything unusual, though the proprietor will seem very nervous at the mention of Mr. Carpenter's name. If his lips are loosened with a bribe or a little blunt force trauma, he may admit to seeing Mr. Carpenter in the company of some very rough looking men and show the characters to the room in which they met.

The room is unfurnished except for a couple chairs, a rickety table, and broken bed frame covered with mouldering bedding. A recent blood stain ominously darkens the floor. The fellow is loathe to admit it, but he knows the "gentlemen" in Mr. Carpenter's company are representatives of a certain criminal enterprise based out of a nearby slaughterhouse... He will then turn pale and refuse to say another word under any circumstances.

With a little research, the players may discover the gang based out of the slaughterhouse are notorious for murdering their enemies and selling them to the underground meat market. A Criminal player character should be worth his weight in gold on this one. Someone has to be able to make his way through the criminal underground, and the Aristocrat just is not going to cut it. The gang may still have the body on ice, or they may have sold it already. Players may now be on a wild goose chase for the cadaver, first having to track it to an illicit butcher shop then to the home of an amateur reanimator, a hellfire club, or ghoul warren.

Once the characters finally get their hands on the letter, who knows what it contains... It may be a scandalous letter written to a paramour, a note from Lady H_____ explaining the details of the contract murder of a rival, or the outline of anarchist plot implicating the Lady.

**The Lost Children** – Children have been disappearing from the neighbourhood at an alarming rate. After weeks of inaction by the Metropolitan Police, a concerned citizens committee has gotten together a reward for any information pertaining to the missing children. The first clue comes when animates spill out of the basement of an abandoned structure. The state of these creatures, all husks, implies they have been underground for some time. It looks as if something, or someone, released the animates accidentally while making a nocturnal visit to the surface world from the Underground.

Players must now venture into that subterranean world to discover who is stealing the children from the streets of the metropolis. It could be marauding bands of ghouls seeking tender prey, a sadistic killer, or a mad alchemist distilling innocence or youth in some misguided attempt to create the perfect elixir. Along the way, players may encounter any of the monsters, human and otherwise, that make the Underground their home.

**Mr. Gaunt** – Dr. Jonas Rue is a pallid spectre of a man known on the streets of the East End by the enigmatic appellation "Mr. Gaunt." A doctor by trade, Gaunt has a Mephistophelean predilection for bartering his services to the destitute rather than demanding coin. The doctor is known to be old... but not just old – antediluvian, even. Though it is uncertain when or why he came to reside in the tenements of the East End, it was certainly more than half a century ago.

One morning a character awakes to find himself not in his own bed, but in a makeshift infirmary within Mr. Gaunt's demesne. The character had suffered an attack on the street and lost a great deal of blood. Someone found him and delivered him to Mr. Gaunt's door, where the good doctor worked through the night to save his life. Gaunt will take no coin for his services. He insists the character rest for at least another night, though he will let the character leave if he must. The character has a concussion and suffered a stab wound resulting in a Serious Wound. His wounds have been expertly treated.

Mr. Gaunt may be the eccentric doctor he seems or something entirely different. He could be an aged vampire hiding in the light, a talented alchemist, or a reanimator come to set up shop where few ask questions. Whatever the case, the character he saved now owes him a favour.

There is a killer stalking the streets of Mr. Gaunt's neighbourhood. He has personally seen the remains of three badly mutilated young girls, and the police have located the remains of six more. A few weeks after their first meeting, the doctor will send for the character, dispatching a servant to deliver the letter asking for an audience. When the character arrives at Mr. Gaunt's home, a converted warehouse, a servant will lead him into the doctor's office. Rather than meeting the doctor in person, the character will be given a sealed dossier that is waiting for him on Mr. Gaunt's desk. Within the dossier are crime scene photos, an address, and a card for a Detective Belmont of New Scotland Yard.

If the character tracks down Detective Belmont, the man will admit he is investigating the murders, but says he has not met Mr. Gaunt, though he knows him by reputation. The detective will be unwilling to discuss the case unless he is shown the address enclosed in the dossier. The address belongs to a rundown old factory within a short walk to all the murder sites. Belmont himself has ridden past the place on numerous occasions while travelling to the various crimes scenes. Then, the detective offers to assist the character in settling this matter. He lets the characters know that these are no ordinary murders. The girls have been virtually drained of all their blood, likely by intentional bleeding while suspended by their feet. Little blood was present at the sites where the bodies were found, leading the detective to believe the girls were killed elsewhere.

The factory should be dark, dank, and dangerous. It is the lair of a particularly clever feral vampire who has avoided detection for some time. The creature abducts young women that suit its tastes, drags them back its lair, tortures, exsanguinates them, and then dumps them like the day's trash. When the characters arrive, an unmoving form will be chained overhead. The floor is covered in fresh blood. The walls of the place are inscribed with esoteric symbols painted in blood. Somewhere amongst the dust and silent machinery, a terrible inhuman things laughs.

The vampire has taken the time to set traps throughout the place: trash conceals pits twenty-feet deep, a thrown lever causes a half ton of steel to drop from a crane, and fires can be set at will. The creature will attempt to lead the characters on a chase, killing as many as it can in the process. When it has finished its fun, it will set the place ablaze and flee into the night.

One way or another, Mr. Gaunt will consider the debt paid. At the Narrator's discretion, Mr. Gaunt could either disappear without a trace or become a reoccurring character.

**Tender Mercies** – Early one morning, two young men of no genteel appearance arrive at the home of a Doctor player character. They claim that their sister has taken ill, and they are very concerned. The brothers have little money, but the matter is urgent. If the doctor refuses, the two will pull pistols and attempt to take him by force. They should succeed in getting the doctor to a waiting cab that will deliver him to an East End rookery. The doctor will be taken to the bedside of an ailing young woman of exceptional beauty.

She has a high fever and hovers at the edge of consciousness. When the doctor bends over to examine her, he hears the hammer of a revolver being pulled back. At this point the doctor will be issued a clear ultimatum: if the girl dies, so does he. The doctor will soon learn that the girl was bitten by an animate. To make matters worse, her youngest brother has also been infected but is too scared to tell anyone. He is hiding in a nearby closet and his condition is growing steadily worse.

The other player characters should be notified of the doctor's abduction either by a servant or constable calling on one of them. An eye-witness should be able to identify either the cab or one of the brothers. In any case, something or someone should direct the players toward the rookery.

Early on, a thick and incredibly noxious fog rolls in. It should soon be evident that this is one of the Lost Days (see Chapter 2, page 115). Over a scant couple of hours, the world turns pitch black and characters enroute to the rookery are only able to see a few feet ahead. Having to progress on foot, they may become lost or disoriented in the darkness. The streets are eerily silent except for the occasional harrowing scream punctuated by sporadic gun fire.

Upon reaching the rookery, the players have to find a way in. The place is heavily barricaded to keep out the smog. Once the characters get in, their troubles are only starting. Inside, all hell is breaking loose. The rookery and its surrounding environs are in the midst of a full-scale Plague outbreak. Inside the crowded buildings, whole families are fighting to keep zombies at bay. Violent clashes are occurring on every floor. Within hours, the streets outside are full of flesh-starved zombies groping for victims in the darkness. Eventually the Deathwatch is forced into action.

With the thunderous crashing of the gates, the neighbourhood is locked down with the players inside. The sound of gunfire outside becomes more terrible as the Deathwatch unleashes its massed firepower. Galvanic blasts flicker in the darkness, only piercing the smogs enough to give a frightening impression of the sort of force being applied to the situation. From here, players are faced with finding the doctor and then taking their chances within the rookery or moving outside during a full-fledged Deathwatch sweep.

### Another Approach

*Try beginning the session in media res, with the doctor leaning over the sick girl, and then have a flashback to how he got there. Make sure you cut back and forth between the Doctor and the rest of the party very frequently so no one has to sit out of play for any length of time; about the same pace as a combat scene will work well.*

**Train Wreck** – The player characters are approached by a solicitor representing the Astor-Machin Company, a major metropolitan pharmaceutical manufacturer. It seems a passenger train has derailed between Brighton and London. On board the train was a senior research scientist employed by the firm who was carrying a new top-secret formula from a secure lab. The solicitor will pay the players a small fortune to venture into the Wasteland, locate the train, and return with the formula. If the scientist can be returned in good health, the Astor-Machen Company will pay a bonus. The crash occurred a day earlier, and the solicitor is very anxious to get the characters on the road. He fears the formula will fall into the hands of the firm's rivals.

The formula could be anything. Very likely, it is encrypted and requires a vast amount of technical know-how to decipher.

The characters have to make the journey on foot. Along the way, they may meet other travellers, possibly including nomadic ghouls, a thrope pack, Undertakers, agents of rival firms, etc.

The site of the crash should be terrible. The train lies on its side. Large portions of it are twisted and burned. Dozens of animates shamble about, feeding on the wailing survivors. The train cars are tombs filled with animates and injured survivors with no way to escape. Perhaps the scientist has succumbed to his wounds and risen as an animate with the formula still shackled to his wrist in an attaché case. Possibly he is alive, hiding in a storage compartment or in a barricaded car. It is possible he was thrown clear in the crash and has managed to wander away from the site.

This scenario should be utilized as an opportunity to introduce players to life outside the metropolis. In addition to the standard creatures described in this book, there are many unique monsters, twisted and corrupted by the forces of the blight, prowling the Wastes.

Note that players do not require respirators while away from the smogs of London.

**Watcher of the Dead** – A Mourner player character is hired for a job. She must watch over the corpse of a wealthy landowner at a manor outside London proper but within the concentric set of fortifications that surround the outlying area. The deceased requested to be buried at his ancestral estate, and his wife intends to honour his last wishes.

The catch is that a monster is said to prowl the lands of the estate. In recent months, the farmers that work the land, some of the most fertile in the region, claim there have been three sightings of the creature. The last time it was seen, it carried off a large dog that was later found half devoured.

Clearly the Mourner will require back-up while she keeps her silent vigil over the body. Characters have only a scant few hours to prepare before they must meet to make their way to the estate.

The wife is actually a thrope. She was unknowingly the subject of her deceased husband's experiments. Evidence of his experiments can be found in a secret lab behind a hidden door in his study. Who knows what will set her off in this time of mourning and trigger a spontaneous transformation...

# Awarding Experience Points

Experience Points represent a character's continual development during play (See Character Development, Chapter 3, pages 194-195). Player characters accrue Experience Points during play. Experience Points are generally only awarded during campaign play because players are unlikely to revisit characters designed for play in a single scenario.

These points may be spent on buying new skills, improving old skills, or increasing attributes. The Narrator awards Experience Points at the end of each game session.

Assigning Experience Points can be a bit tricky. If characters receive too many Experience Points, they may develop too quickly. If the Narrator is stingy, development will be slow and more easily managed, but the players may feel like their characters are progressing too slowly. The Narrator should decide what rate of character advancement he and his players are comfortable with and go from there.

**Game Session** – At the end of a game session, each character that participated in the session gains one Experience Point. This is the only Experience Point a player can always count on for his character.

**Good Role-Playing** – If the Narrator believes the player breathed life into his character and added to the enjoyment of other players, his character should earn one additional Experience Point for the session. This point should not be automatic. A player who breaks character in a way that's disruptive to the group's fun should not be awarded this point.

**Major Events** – A Narrator may assign characters one or two Experience Points per session if they took part in major events that transpired during the session. The character must have played a major role in the event for the experience to impact his development.

**Resolution** – At the conclusion of a scenario, the Narrator may award each participating character one Experience Point. This point represents closure on another chapter of the characters' lives.

**Beyond the Call of Duty** – Some players are willing to go above and beyond the call of duty, taking play to whole new levels. They may dress in costume, physically act out scenes in the midst of role-play, keep detailed in-character journals, etc. Anytime such devotion to the game heightens the experience for all parties involved outside the realm of ordinary role-playing, that player's character should be awarded an additional Experience Point.

# Scandals

*"Nor do they trust their tongue alone,*
*But speak a language of their own;*
*Can read a nod, a shrug, a look,*
*Far better than a printed book;*
*Convey as libel in a frown,*
*And wink a reputation down."*
*—Jonathan Swift, "The Journal of a Modern Lady," 1720*

The Neo-Victorians take matters of discretion and decency very seriously. Reputation and appearances are vitally important to one's social standing. Scandals can divide families, destroy careers, and alienate friends. An aristocrat in good standing can borrow against his family name indefinitely, but if he falls from grace, the creditors will come knocking at his door. Even the hint of scandal can jeopardize livelihoods and derail upward mobility.

The true weight of an accusation is determined by how far it is spread. Though even the implication of scandal can damage one's reputation, the most destructive are those that achieve public notoriety. A documented scandal, heard in court or reported in the dailies, can be disastrous. There are widespread dangers to such public revelations. When great men or women flounder in their social death throes, they are at their most dangerous. Unable to tell friend from foe in their desperation, the most damaging secrets may be voiced in a feeble attempt to deflect persecution.

Most scandals can be squelched before they ever begin. Anyone with a reasonable sense of self-preservation will play blind, deaf, and dumb when an individual above their class acts in a manner unbecoming. Those foolish or brave enough to repeat what they have seen can generally be intimidated or bought off. Irrepressible gossips who refuse to hold their tongues may simply disappear.

Scandal may play as large or small a role in games as the Narrator wishes, but should remain a consideration for the players. The lower classes are far less concerned with the matters that scandalize their betters, though they take matters of personal honour very seriously. Scandals should affect non-player characters as often as player characters and can make fine fodder for scenarios.

## Player Characters & Scandal

Player characters may be directly or indirectly involved in scandals during play. A character is directly involved in a scandal when he is at its centre. A character is indirectly involved in a scandal if he becomes involved on the periphery. Generally, indirect involvement includes helping to

establish innocence or guilt, locating or removing witnesses, or manipulating the events from behind the scenes.

There are countless ways in which a character may find himself at the centre of a scandal. Aristocrats, doctors, Mourners, and any professional character who takes reputation seriously must consider the threat of scandal at all times. Any action a character takes which does not conform to the norms of his society has the risk of provoking a scandal. For example, getting drunk and acting a fool at a society event or having one's love affairs made public are certain causes for scandal. Likewise, player characters should be aware of the company they keep. An aristocrat that publicly gallivants around with criminals and Undertakers through the slums of the metropolis is begging for the wrong kind of attention. It is necessary to practice discretion while in public.

A character who opens himself up to the accusations of more serious scandals should be made to feel the weight of his indiscretions. Remind players once in a while that they do not exist within a vacuum. Neo-Victorian society may make an exception for certain extraordinary individuals, but there are limits to these freedoms.

## Die Rolls

The rules to adjudicate scandals have been intentionally kept to a minimum because the focus of scandals should be on the scope of the scandal and the actions involved parties take rather than on Charm rolls made by characters to establish guilt or innocence. While characters may attempt to manipulate a scandal through careful speech, guile, and treachery, the effects of such actions are up to the Narrator. A Charm – Credibility roll may be used to help determine the success of an impassioned speech in the character's defence. However, the Narrator will interpret the result of the roll in the context of the scandal.

In play, scandals can be a means of bloodlessly destroying one's enemies. Player characters may attempt to gather dirt on their rivals while their rivals do the same in return. The key is to make a scandal public while avoiding the resulting finger pointing and accusations. Revealing a scandal publicly is bad form for an aristocrat and can be downright dangerous for a member of the lower classes. It is best to feed the information through trusted intermediaries who can whisper in the right ears and put the evidence in the right hands. The more details provided and the more public these details are made, the more damaging the scandal is bound to become.

A character who wishes to inflame a scandal may make Charm – Guile rolls to sway public opinion. A character taking such action must be careful to avoid being implicated in the scandal himself, however, especially if his manipulations are too obvious.

### High Stakes Gambles

*Though there are few rules associated with scandals, the tactical application of high-stakes Charm or Etiquette rolls should not be underestimated. Through careful guidance of the characters involved, a social manipulator may be able to ruin his enemies bloodlessly, relying on the crushing weight of public opinion to do his job for him. In addition to careful role-playing, a player attempting such gambits will have to make some important attribute and skill rolls to make sure he bends the right ears.*

*High-stakes rolls help the players of social characters feel as powerful in their own field as a Mourner taking down zombies and create delicious temptations for the corruption-inducing Second Chances!*

## Variables

The outcome of a scandal may be determined by weighing the following questions. Who are the subjects of the scandal? How serious is the scandal? How public is the scandal? How much evidence is there? How does the subject of the scandal react? What actions do the involved parties take? Who are their friends? Their enemies? What outside influences are at work? The truth behind a scandal may become secondary to the perceived guilt or innocence of the parties involved.

## Key Figures

The individuals at the centre of a scandal have a great deal to do with how much attention the scandal will gain. Unless a character is particularly well known, a scandal will only touch his immediate social circle: his peers, family, friends, and neighbours. Though the damage in these arenas can be extensive, the character's name is not likely to be dragged through the gutter by the dailies.

Should a personage of renown end up at the centre of a scandal, the affair can easily spin completely out of control. A prestigious name in a lurid headline can sell a lot of papers. The revelations of a scandal can be even more damaging if one or more central figures are part of the government. The misconduct of prominent members of the government has proven ruinous for political parties on more than one occasion. A government figure may be able to count on some special protections, but once he becomes a liability to his party, he may be asked to resign, or worse, be removed from office.

The nobility and other well-known members of the aristocracy can draw nearly as much attention as politicians. In these cases, the primary damage done will be to the char-

acter's family name. The most severe scandals may damage the reputation of the aristocracy as a whole for a short time, generally resulting in the character's complete and permanent social ostracism. Scandals of this scale tend to occur no more than once per generation.

For example, the Benewick case caused such an uproar at the time that the effects were seen as detrimental to the whole of the aristocracy. For years afterwards, the popular image of the Neo-Victorian nobility was that of a cannibalistic monster literally feeding on the life's blood of the working class. Though Lord Benewick was never actually accused of any crime, he was ostracized by his peers for the rest of his life, forced into seclusion with only his most loyal servants for company.

### Severity

At the heart of every scandal is some real or fabricated disgrace, indiscretion, wrong-doing, or moral outrage. The more severe the subject of the scandal, the less likely it is to be ignored. While wearing last year's fashion to a gala society event may result in a minor scandal, this is a trifle compared to marrying beneath one's station, being caught stealing, or being found out in an act of adultery. Of course, no matter how insignificant a scandal may seem, there are always those who will seize hold of a perceived misstep and bring it up at every opportunity. Provided such action does not harm the gossip's own reputation, it may remain a thorn in the guilty character's side.

Though, in general, more severe scandals have the potential to cause more damage to one's reputation, minor scandals cannot be disregarded. A serious scandal can sometimes be nipped in the bud; witnesses and evidence can disappear, and public attention can be redirected. Conversely, the most minor incidents can be blown entirely out of proportion, especially if a public figure is caught in a cover-up.

Often the denial of a scandal can be more damning than the initial involvement. It is a common tactic to manoeuvre a member of the opposition into a position to publicly make false statements before outing the lies with incontrovertible proof, usually in the pages of the dailies. The appearance of a lie can seriously undermine the credibility of the teller.

### Public Attention

The damage inflicted by a scandal is limited by the public attention it receives. For a secret to become a scandal, its details must be known and circulated, at least among the subject's social circle. For a scandal to garner much public attention beyond this limited group, the details of the scandal must be particularly salacious and nefarious, or pertain to a public personage of some renown. A scandal that inflames the imagination can take on a life all its own. Unusual cases are bound to get more attention. Once picked up in the dailies, a sufficiently interesting scandal can remain the talk of the town for months to come.

Those scandals that do not grasp the public's attention are the first to pass and the easiest to squelch, especially if witnesses and evidence can be removed quickly. While the public's thirst for scandal is bottomless, its attention span is short. There are always fresh scandals to overshadow past affairs.

### Evidence

Generally speaking, a scandal has more credibility if there is evidence of wrong-doing. However, while lack of evidence may hinder the prosecution's case in a court of law, the same is not necessarily true in relation to a scandal. While evidence has undeniable weight, a lack of evidence may not help the accused. Without evidence, the "truth" of the scandal comes down to the word of one character against another, which has more to do with the arguments presented and the reputation of the speaker than it does the event at the heart of the debate. Similarly, a strong argument and a solid public performance may cast doubt on seemingly rock-solid evidence.

### Reaction

The reaction of the accused party will go a long way toward establishing guilt or innocence in the public mind. An accused man who begs for forgiveness is clearly guilty. If the accused remains poised and collected or mounts an impassionate defence, his innocence may be more readily accepted. The key is to weather the storm rather than rail against one's critics. Once the scandal has passed, there will be plenty of time for revenge.

### Friends & Enemies

A character's friends and allies can play a vital role in his defence or social implosion. The continued support of a well-regarded patron can be of immeasurable value to the character, but anyone who would risk his own reputation for the accused character will be helpful. If the character's closest friends stand by him in his time of need, it will throw a shadow of doubt over his presumed guilt.

However, such defences are risky. The character's friends risk being drawn into the scandal themselves and may choose to abandon the character rather than rushing to his aid. Leaving the character in his time of need is clearly dishonourable, and people will certainly talk, but it may be the most

prudent option in the long run. The perception will certainly be that even the character's closest friends believe in his guilt and are leaving him to his own devices.

The wrong friends coming to a character's defence can prove to be equally damning. The last thing an aristocrat who has been publicly accused of adultery needs is a flock of libertines rushing to his defence and attempting to paint him as a martyr for their cause. The character must manage to court the right friends while keeping the wrong ones at arm's length until the scandal blows over.

In times of scandal, one's enemies as well as one's friends will show their true colours. Few can resist kicking a hated rival when he is down. A character's enemies are sure to do their best to destroy the character's reputation when he is at his weakest. Like friends that abandon the character in his time of need, enemies that are too vocal may damage their own reputations in the short term, particularly if the character is ultimately vindicated in the public eye.

## Outside Influences

Outside influences include public biases at the time of the scandal, outside agencies manipulating the scandal for their own purposes, the involvement of the law, etc. These are circumstantial modifiers that are beyond the control of any parties involved in the scandal. If the Narrator is running a campaign, the current events of the campaign may have a great deal of influence on the scandal.

For example, if public opinion has turned against sex scandals among MPs, the reaction toward another such scandal may be exceptionally harsh, possibly damaging the reputation of the ruling party as a whole and prompting a drive for immediate reform. At the same time, if the public's taste for a particular variety of scandal has been recently slaked, they may ignore a lesser scandal in the same vein, allowing it to blow over more easily.

Outside agencies from sewing-circle gossips to unofficial meddling by Special Branch may likewise have a profound effect on a scandal. The aristocracy has an interest in quashing scandals that pertain to their class. A character may discover unlikely allies or anonymous assistance for the purpose of simply keeping his family associations out of the dailies.

Should the matter end up in court, far more information may be revealed than anyone desires. Trials can have escalating and far-reaching effects that damage the reputations of more individuals than just those at the centre of a scandal. Witnesses may disappear or go into hiding due to the threat of potentially damaging revelations being brought to light. Individuals that may have been willing to talk in private or amongst their peers may suddenly develop amnesia where the details of the scandal are concerned.

## Outcome

The Narrator should be prepared to assign a likely outcome once he has determined the scope of a scandal. If the events of play worsen or ease the likely outcome of a scandal, the Narrator should alter the outcome accordingly.

The outcome of scandals may be rated by the effect of the scandal on a character's life. A faux pas is the most minor sort of scandal, an embarrassing misstep that draws little attention. A minor scandal is a serious matter, but one a character may recover from. A major scandal will result in the sort of damage to reputations that can ruin a family forever. An affair of honour is a relatively private matter that may be settled between two characters with a challenge. Such challenges do not necessarily imply a duel, but that is certainly one possible outcome. A character with a perpetually bad reputation is a black sheep; though the character may avoid actual ostracism, those that meet him believe he is up to no good.

## Faux Pas

A faux pas is a social blunder that draws unwanted attention to a character. They are generally ignored in polite company but may be an issue of some embarrassment in the presence of rivals or society matrons. A faux pas may involve misspeaking, wearing inappropriate clothing to a society affair, failure to adhere to proper etiquette, acting in an inappropriate manner, etc. If a character commits any of these rude acts, he should suffer the effects of a faux pas as a reminder of his breeding.

A faux pas is usually pointed out in public as a means of making an outsider feel uncomfortable. A lower-class individual in the company of his betters may have his every misstep pointed out to him as a means of putting him in his place. A gracious host, however, would never dream of such conduct.

Before attending a society event, a character can make judicious use of Intellect – Current Events rolls (DR 11). If the roll succeeds, the character will be able to discern the proper attire for an event, topics to avoid in mixed company, the likely attendees at the event, etc. If the roll fails, the character will either be misinformed or have to play it by ear.

A character that commits a faux pas should suffer a –1 penalty on Charm rolls not seeking to intimidate a target versus anyone of his social class who witnessed or heard about his gaffe. This penalty lasts for a single night.

## Minor Scandal

A minor scandal is one that causes lasting damage to one's reputation, though with time and effort, the damage may be undone. Generally, scandals of this sort are limited to the upper and middle classes. Scandals of this scale may involve publicly ruining a noble woman, divorce, the public acknowledgement of adultery, marrying below one's station, evidence that a nobleman is working for a living, or any other of a countless array of additional wrong-doings. Minor scandals can have serious repercussions, harming the standing of one's family and jeopardizing a character's livelihood.

For example, if a player character's addiction becomes publicly known during play, it could cause a scandal jeopardizing not only the character's personal relationships and livelihood, but also his family name. Close friends will avoid the character out of a fear of being seen with him; his every movement will be met with suspicion, and no one will aid him financially out of fear of feeding his addictions.

For months or years after being at the centre of a minor scandal, a character will automatically fail all Charm – Credibility rolls involving another character of his social class who knows about the scandal. The character will only be heard out if he has something of unquestionable value to offer.

At the Narrator's discretion, the character may suffer penalties to other Charm rolls as well. The character will be invited to few social events until the scandal passes. He will be treated coldly at those events he does attend, though friends and family will still pay their respects. Wherever he or a close member of his family goes, they will be spoken about in hushed voices. Every action taken by those tainted by the scandal will be under close scrutiny.

Eventually a scandal may be simply be forgotten, but not generally in a character's lifetime. However, there are a number of ways to escape. The most obvious is for the character to redeem himself. If he can accomplish a task that brings him widespread acclaim and admirers, his previous indiscretions may be forgotten. The character may also seek out a powerful patron. His service to a powerful lord will effectively put an end to the scandal because to defame the character would be to defame his master. Such arrangements are not without their own repercussions, namely service. Alternatively, the character may ask for forgiveness from those touched by his scandal. Such acts of repentance may sway public opinion if his words and actions are deemed sincere. If no one believes him, his reputation will certainly sink even lower. Should the character be believed, he will still be watched closely for signs of malfeasance. The character may also make amends for his misdeeds. He may make any number of public sacrifices that, if accepted by his peers, will effect a restoration to his former status.

## Major Scandal

Major scandals are those from which full, or in some cases any, recovery is impossible. Those characters at the centre of major scandals will be reviled for the rest of their days. Major scandals may be caused by theft from trusted family or business partners, treason, committing serious crimes, or any other act that turn the stomachs of good men and women.

The worst sort of lurid sex scandals reported in the papers will result in major scandals, not for the details of the acts committed, but due to the shame and embarrassment brought onto the character's friends and family. Such scandals likewise bring down those closest to the character. Those caught in the collateral effects of a scandal can be treated as if they were at the centre of a minor scandal themselves.

The character at the centre of the scandal will be abandoned by virtually everyone he knows. He will likely be disowned, written out of wills, and completely ostracized. His credit will be permanently ruined. He will be shunned by society. If he dares to attend an event, he will certainly be made to feel unwelcome if he is not forcibly removed. The character suffers a heavy penalty on all Charm rolls when dealing with a member of his social class who is aware of the scandal, if the roll does not just automatically fail. If a scion of an aristocratic family goes too far beyond the norms of his society, he may find himself confined to a private sanatorium for the rest of his natural life.

It should be extremely difficult for the character to recover even slightly from such a scandal. No matter what the character accomplishes or to whom he apologizes, its strangling weight will still be about him. Overcoming such notoriety would require an act of unquestionable sacrifice and public benevolence, and then the stains of the scandal will generally be absolved posthumously. A character destroyed by scandal may regain some credibility if his accusers are brought down by scandals of their own, thus calling into doubt the original scandal.

## Affair of Honour

An affair of honour is a personal insult that can quickly grow into a very public scandal. Generally, the aggrieved party will seek satisfaction in some way. Minor affairs of honour can be settled with a prompt apology, but more serious issues may require spilt blood. Duels are by no means common, but they are not unknown in Neo-Victorian London.

Duels are delicate matters. If a character challenges too many men to duels, he will be considered a bully. At the same time, one who refuses a duel is a coward. If the skill levels of the combatants are widely divergent and the victor kills a much weaker opponent, he may find himself in the middle of a full-scale scandal. At the same time, sparing a victim is no service, as it suggests he is simply not worth killing.

Duels are illegal, but those involved are seldom prosecuted. Assuming both men were armed at the time of the duel, the survivor can claim he was defending himself. Duels are generally only prosecuted in the case of obviously premeditated murder or if an innocent bystander is harmed in the action.

The members of the lower class seldom settle affairs of honour with anything so civilized as a duel. Fist fights and armed assaults are common. Often family honour is restored from the barrel of a shotgun in the dark.

### Black Sheep

There are those individuals that seem born to scandal. From an early age, the rebellious nature of a black sheep draws attention to him. Those around him come to expect his unconventional behaviour and scandalous attitudes. As his notoriety grows, he may well appreciate a certain amount of fame for simply bucking the system. Over time, his actions will grow less shocking to those who have become accustomed to them. It is ironic that a black sheep's indiscretions actually grant him a sort of leniency in the eyes of others. The black sheep is able to escape the repercussions of minor scandals with only a raised eyebrow.

A black sheep may suffer penalties on Charm – Credibility or Charm – Guile rolls when dealing with members of his own class that know his reputation. These penalties represent the suspicious nature of anyone dealing with a character that is prone to scandal. Few characters in good standing would consider entering into a business arrangement with a black sheep, but they would certainly invite him to their social events unless they have suffered the sting of one of his indiscretions in the past.

A black sheep may seek redemption to remove this stain on his reputation. Usually, escaping this brand requires the character to turn over a new leaf by taking on new responsibilities and proving he has outgrown his wild and reckless ways. The easiest way to escape this state is to marry a spouse of good reputation and apparently remain faithful. Another means is to take on a position of responsibility within the family, the business world, or the government. Accepting the responsibility is not enough however; the character must excel, proving himself changed.

## Additional Inspiration

Though the writers have done their best to present a full and rich Neo-Victorian world, we have not, by any means, exhausted all available resources. Narrators are encouraged to do their own research in the Victorian Era. No shortage of books has been written on the subject, describing virtually all aspects of that great society. Additionally, there are number of splendid online resources that may be utilized for a wealth of information.

Recommended websites may be found at www.newdarkage.net.

Pulp novels and penny dreadfuls may be tapped for an inexhaustible supply of story elements that may be borrowed or bent to a Narrator's purposes.

### Recommended Reading

Max Brooks, *World War Z*
Caleb Carr, *The Alienist*
Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*
William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, *The Difference Engine*
The works of H.P. Lovecraft
Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend*
Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*
Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell, *From Hell*
Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neil, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*
Jess Nevins, *The Encyclopedia of Fantastic Victoriana*
George Orwell, *1984*
John Pelan and Michael Reaves (editors) , *Shadows Over Baker Street*
The works of Edgar Allan Poe
Daniel Pool, *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew: From Fox Hunting to Whist -- the Facts of Daily Life in Nineteenth-Century England*
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
Bram Stoker, *Dracula*
Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*
Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

### Recommended Films

28 Days Later - The Bride of Frankenstein
City of Lost Children - Dark City
The Devil's Backbone - Fritz Lang's Metropolis
Kafka - Murder by Decree - Night of the Living Dead
The Others - The Prestige
Vidocq

# Appendix A: Glossary

This is a glossary of Neo-Victorian Slang and Terminology.

**Anathema:** Genetically altered, vat-grown humans.

**Animate:** The cannibalistic animated dead. A zombie.

**Barkers or Barking Irons:** Guns, especially revolvers.

**Blight:** The mysterious wasting of the land.

**Bludger:** A nobbler who employs a bludgeon.

**Burke:** To kill with the intention of selling the corpse.

**Chapel, The:** The Whitechapel area of East London.

**Clay Corpse:** Also "exanimate corpse" or simply "exanimate." A dead body that fails to reanimate, or the remains of an animate that have been destroyed.

**Crusher:** A policeman.

**Dead Ender:** Derogatory term for a vampire.

**Deadlights:** Eyes, as in keep your deadlights open. Originally nautical slang.

**Deathwatch:** The Domestic Security Force (DSF). The military branch charged with containment and elimination of animates.

**Dhampir:** A living vampire, a half-lifer.

**Dollymop:** A prostitute.

**Dust Men:** Undertakers who hunt vampires.

**Family, The:** The criminal underworld. Also called Family People.

**Galvanist:** A scientist specializing in the field of electricity. Sometimes refers to reanimators who rely on electricity as an animating force.

**Ghoul:** A type of half-lifer theorized to have descended from human stock and capable of feeding only through cannibalism or human necrophagy.

**Half-Lifer:** Those creatures touched by death; Dhampiri, ghouls, rimmons, and thropes.

**Homunculus:** A simple form of Anathema sometimes used as laboratory assistants.

**Hot or Cold:** Military term for ways of attacking: by shooting (hot) or by bayonet (cold).

**Hot Zones:** Areas where the dead are most likely to spontaneously animate.

**Irons:** Guns or revolvers.

**Lamenter:** A member of the Mourner's Guild.

**Lost Days:** Days of complete darkness when the smog blots out the sun.

**Lurker:** Derogatory term for a member of the Mourner's Guild.

**Mark:** The victim.

**Meat Market:** The black-market trade of corpses.

**Mercies:** The act of killing an individual bitten by an animate, usually with a bullet through the head. A mercy kill.

**Mercurial:** A chemically reanimated corpse.

**Mourner:** A member of the Mourner's Guild.

**Mute:** Slang for a male member of the Mourner's Guild.

**Nibbed:** Arrested.

**Nobble:** To inflict grievous physical harm.

**Nobbler:** A punisher, criminal muscle.

**Nose:** Informer or spy.

**Pig:** A policeman, usually a detective.

**Plague, The:** The mysterious contagion responsible for animating the dead.

**Plague Carts:** The horse-drawn carts driven by plaguemen.

**Plaguemen:** Those individuals who collect London's dead and deliver them to the crematoria.

**Plague Years:** The years between 1905 (the first outbreak of the Plague) and 1933 (the start of the Reclamation).

**Post-Cadaverous Automaton:** A simple undead Promeathean. The automaton is more mechanical than organic.

**Promethean:** A creature painstaking constructed from mechanical parts and clay corpses animated by the galvanic spark. Refers to either post-cadaverous automata or rimmons.

**Punishers:** Superior nobblers. Men employed to give severe beatings.

**Reanimation:** The outlawed science of reanimating corpses.

**Reclamation Team:** Military units sent into to clean out areas overrun by animates.

**Reclamation, The:** The years between 1933 and 1959 during which a large number of British cities were reclaimed.

**Resurrectionist or Resurrection Man:** A grave robber who sells corpses for profit at the meat market.

**Rimmon:** The most complex variety of Promethean. A half-lifer.

**Rookery:** A slum or ghetto.

**Ruffles:** Handcuffs.

**Scalp Hunter:** Unlicensed Undertakers; also a derogatory term for the American equivalent of an Undertaker.

**Sepulchre:** The unreclaimed and unreclaimable ruins of a city, generally overrun with animates. Most sepulchres are located deep in the Wastelands.

**Spike:** Workhouse.

**Surplus Population:** The poor.

**Tail:** A prostitute.

**Terminal, Terminal Case:** Someone bitten by an animate.

**Thrope:** A half-lifer that shifts from human form into a hulking, immensely powerful semi-animal form. Originally created as part of a military supersoldier program but now occurring as feral specimens in the Wastes or as novel alchemical creations.

**Undertaker:** A freelance monster hunter. A bounty man.

**Vestments:** Slang for armour, especially among Undertakers.

**Wasteland, The:** Blighted stretches of land that are uninhabitable by humanity.

**Wastes, The:** The Wastelands.

**Wastelander:** One who lives outside the protective walls of a city.

**Water of Life:** The Elixir Vitae.

**Zombie:** An animate.

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Name: _____ Player: _____

Age & Appearance: _____

Calling: _____

*Experience Points* *Total:* _____ *Unspent:* _____

## Attributes

| | Cost | Rating |
|---|---|---|
| Vitality | | |
| Coordination | | |
| Wit | | |
| Intellect | | |
| Charm | | |
| Will | | |

**Prowess** ☐ **Actions** ☐
(Coordination + Wit)

## Corruption

Physical ☐
Affliction: _____

Desire ☐
Affliction: _____

Drive ☐
Affliction: _____

## Qualities, Impediments & Features

## Skills

| | Rating |
|---|---|
| ↳ *Specialties & Stunts* | |
| Example: Medicine | 2 |
| ↳ *Alchemy* | |
| ↳ *Anatomy* | |

### Tasks & Difficulty Rating

| Task: | Difficulty Rating |
|---|---|
| Simple | No Roll |
| Moderate | 11 |
| Complex | 14 |
| Hard | 16 |
| Virtually Impossible | 20 |
| Impossible | No Roll |

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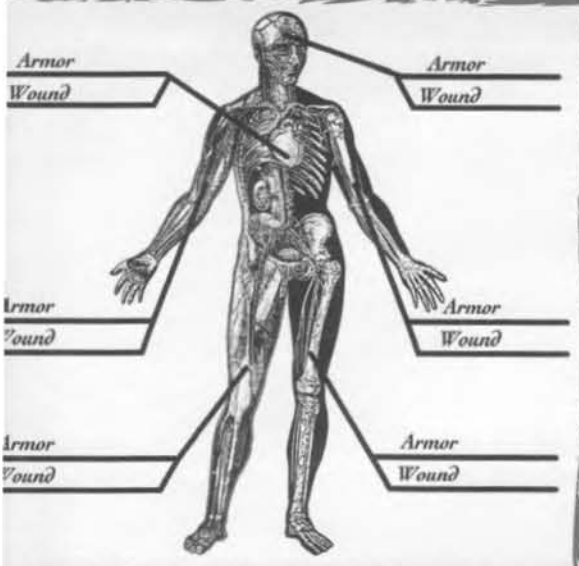


## Damage Roll:

11 or less: Fleshwound

12-16: Serious Wound

17 - 20: Incapacitating Wound

21 + Fatal Wound

## Attack Modifiers: Location

| Location: | Attack Modifier: | Damage Modifier: |
|---|---|---|
| Arm | -3 | 0 |
| Leg | 0 | 0 |
| Hand/Foot | -3 | -3 |
| Head/Throat | -3 | +3 |
| Torso | 0 | 0 |
| Vital Location (Heart) | -5 | +5 |

## Attack Modifiers: Ranged

Attacker Aiming: +5

Off Hand Penalty: -3

Attacker Moving: -2

Poor Visibility: -1 to -3

Long Range: -2

Extreme Range: -4

Target Partially obscured by cover: -2

Target mostly obscured by cover: -4

## Attributes

| Attributes | Rating /Current |
|---|---|
| Vitality | / |
| Coordination | / |
| Wit | / |
| Intellect | / |
| Charm | / |
| Will | / |
| Prowess | / |
| Actions | / |

Initiative = 2d10 + Prowess

Attack Roll Difficulty Rating (DR)

Unaware Target: 11

Aware Target: 11 + Target's Coordination

Target Taking Evasive Action: 11 + (Target's Coordination x2)

## Wounds

## Armor

## Weapons

| Weapon | Skill Rating | Damage | Range | Ammo | Cost | Ammo Cost | Features |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

## Assets, Possessions & Equipment

Wealth Savings:

## Notes

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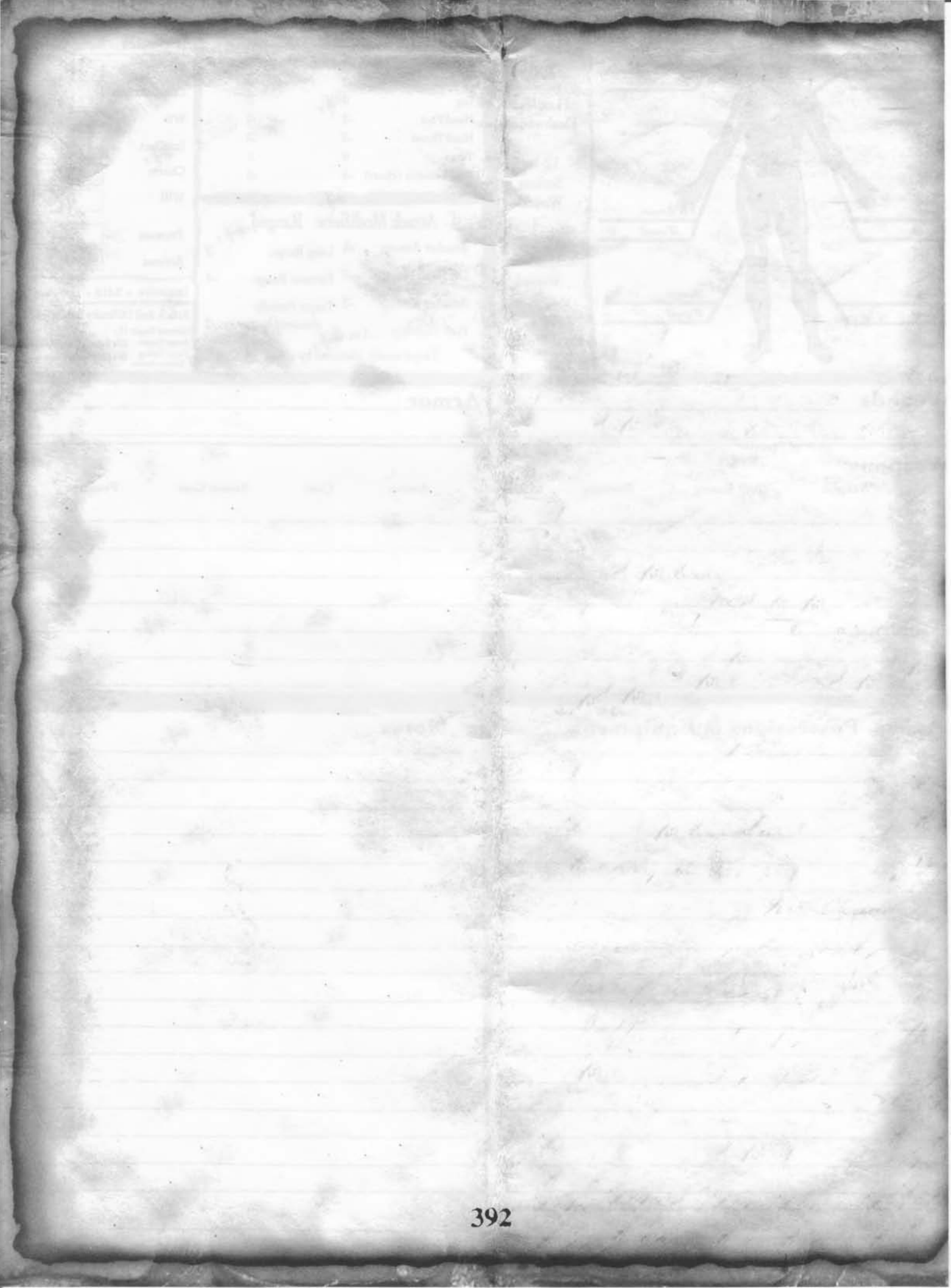

# Unhallowed Metropolis

*"When I placed my head on my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. . . . I saw—with shut eyes, but acute mental vision,—I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion."*
—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

**Unhallowed Metropolis** is the gas-mask chic role-playing game of Neo-Victorian horror.

It has been two hundred years since the first outbreak of the Plague, when without warning the dead rose, spreading undeath through the world. Countless millions perished in the chaos that followed. It was the dawn of a new dark age.

London, the capital of the Neo-Victorian Empire, is a vast, densely crowded, fortified city. Beneath the towering walls and crackling Tesla towers, where the fallout of a thousand crematoria darkens the streets, ten million souls live in squalor, breathing the choking fogs. Predators, human and inhuman, stalk slums and rookeries, preying on the unwary and the helpless. Driven by an insatiable hunger for immortality, physicians search tirelessly for the Elixir Vitae, the fabled alchemical solution that promises life eternal and a cure for the Plague. Above it all, the aristocracy looks down, pristine and enduring behind their walls of privilege, but preyed upon by dangers more insidious than those that infest the street.

Even in this time of darkness there are those with the strength to fight.

Undertakers, Mourners, soldiers, and scientists do battle with the horrors of the age, keeping a solemn vigil over the
**Unhallowed Metropolis**

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