VAMPIRE

THE MASQUERADE

STORYTELLERS VAULT
STYLE GUIDE

Credits

Written by: Matthew Dawkins

Art by: Tim Bradstreet, Clyde Caldwell, John Van Fleet, Joshua Gabriel Timbrook

Storytellers Vault Developers: Shane DeFreest & Dhaunae De Vir

Layout and Design: Marcos M. Peral Villaverde

Vampire: The Masquerade Creators: Mark Rein•Hagen with Steven C. Brown, Tom Dowd, Andrew Greenburg, Chris McDonough, Lisa Stevens, Josh Timbrook, and Stewart Wieck

Special Thanks

Mark "The Original Rebel" **Rein•Hagen**

Andrew "Mayor of Atlanta" **Greenburg**

Robert "The Professional" **Hatch**

Justin "'DJ" **Achilli**

Additional thanks to our friends at Onyx Path Publishing as some of the material presented here was originally published in *Beckett's Jyhad Diary*.

This is dedicated to the numerous storytellers who have helped the World of Darkness come alive in the hearts and minds of millions of people. We look forward to watching you share your Vampire: The Masquerade stories with the world. This is for you. We cant wait to see what you create!

For additional information on White Wolf and the World of Darkness, please, visit: **www.white-wolf.com**, **www.worldofdarkness.com** and **www.storytellersvault.com**.

VAMPIRE
THE MASQUERADE
STORYTELLERS VAULT
STYLE GUIDE

VAMPIRE
THE MASQUERADE

Introduction: Vampire: The Masquerade Style Guide

Welcome to the **Vampire: The Masquerade Storytellers Vault Style Guide**. This resource will assist you in creating new material for the horror roleplaying game, **Vampire: The Masquerade**.

Perhaps you are new to writing work for other readers' eyes, or maybe you are an established writer who works freelance contracts for games such as ours. Whatever your experience, this guide will aid you in writing for **Vampire**. Note that this guide does not assume you will only create content for the newest editions of our games. Rather, we hope creators will tailor their writing to the moods and themes of each edition of **Vampire**. The differences between each edition follow this introduction.

Whether you feel it's time your home city received a *by Night* sourcebook, your favorite bloodline had its own *Clanbook*, or a novel was written about your character, or one of the notable cast of **Vampire: The Masquerade** in years past, you will find this guide a useful starting point.

Vampire Editions and Metaplot Timeline

Divided into four editions, the system, tone, and content of **Vampire** has altered gradually, sometimes within a single edition, other times making leaps between major releases. The Storytellers Vault is divided between editions so your creations can best fit within one of the set visions of **Vampire: The Masquerade**. Some writers will prefer to mix edition tone, adding personal horror to one chapter of a book, with grand existential horror in another. Others will desire consistent tone throughout. We do advise you strive to make any creations you submit match a single edition's rules, so readers do not require multiple editions for reference.

The metaplot of **Vampire: The Masquerade** steadily moved along through to **Beckett's Jyhad Diary** (from which some of the following text is taken), and into the newest edition of the game. Writers should be aware of the metaplot as it stood in the era in which they seek to write, but will of course have freedom to write as they choose. There is no reason a book using First Edition rules and committing to that edition's tone cannot be set in 1220 C.E. or even 2017 C.E., but if it is set in the former, the writer should be aware of such fundamentals as the lack of Camarilla and Sabbat, and if in the latter, the writer should think twice about creating a book in which Jaroslav Pascek is still Brujah Justicar.

Note these suggestions are not requirements. We do recommend a certain level of adherence to metaplot, but don't let this stop you making your *What If?* book in which the Tzimisce destroy House Tremere before Goratrix can say "wouldn't this experiment be a good idea?"

When you write for **Vampire**, consider the tone for each edition as follows:

MCMXCVI-II
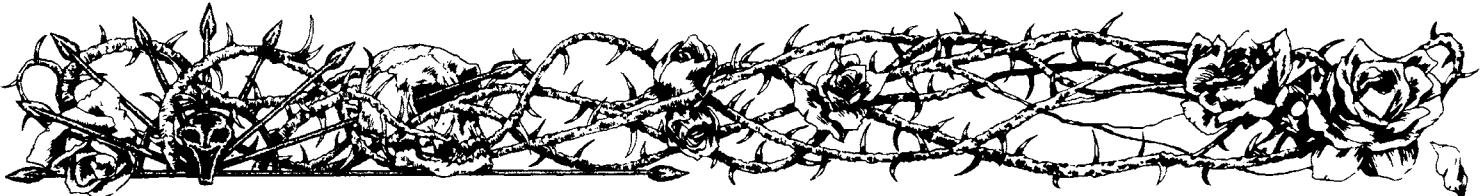
The Becoming
(Vampire First Edition)

Grounded in the real world, the lonely struggle for morality dominates the focus.

Tone: Intensely focused on the city scale, the First Edition of **Vampire** centers on Humanity and the Riddle — "monsters we are lest monsters we become." This edition is all about personal horror, the loss of self to something darker, and the individual journey into the jaws of the Beast.

First Edition focuses on fledglings, neonates, and rebellious childer: making a ghoul or Embracing a mortal is only possible with permission from a nigh-omnipotent Prince. This is the age of the lone vampire trying to find some meaning in an increasingly-dark world, where respect and civility are more important than conspiracy. Domain traditions are paramount, and differ from city to city, though the Camarilla does maintain its own rules. Each city is a point of hazy light in a sea of darkness, and the rule of different Princes never guarantees sanctuary from one place to the next.

The core seven clans receive the flickering spotlight of this edition. Brujah, Gangrel, Malkavian, Nosferatu, Toreador, Tremere, and Ventrue. Each bloodline is a focal point for a different vampiric myth, stereotype, or source from pop culture. The Anarchs and Camarilla are the default Kindred sects, making uneasy bedfellows in most domains. A demonic, insane Sabbat attacks the edges of society, or sends spies to infiltrate Camarilla cities.

Themes: The struggle for morality, transgressive sexuality, extremes between the ages of Kindred, loneliness, **Vampire** setting linked to the real world.

Setting Advice: Settings and sourcebooks for First Edition should keep personal, street-level horror in mind. First Edition had an unpolished veneer to it. You can use this to your advantage, throwing together a really raw, throttling book, in which a city's clans (which were tightly bunched in First Edition) war with each other over roads, tower blocks, and parking lots.

First Edition had an eccentric edge. Methuselahs seemed to exist in every city, and neonates frequently got caught up in millennia-aged romances and rivalries, all leading to control of something as small as a nightclub or museum. Gangrel were uneasily allied with werewolves, Malkavians consorted with changelings, the Sabbat were an unknown, and age was the real fear factor.

First Edition is cool. Do not be afraid of putting your vampires in leather, torn fishnets, and giving them a cigarette to puff on as they ride their motorbikes through the domain.

Movie / TV Influences: The Lost Boys, Cronos, Near Dark, The Hunger, Ganja & Hess, Nadja, Martin, Kindred: The Embraced.

Musical Influences: The Sisters of Mercy, Ministry, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Killing Joke, Skinny Puppy.

Game Design Advice: First Edition doesn't take the concept of game balance into account. Fledglings may interact with Methuselahs, and can even strike a blow against them. In **Diablerie: Mexico**, a coterie of neonates do just that. Do not worry about the math except in cases of Disciplines, where each dot of power should be roughly analogous to that of other Disciplines. Otherwise, throw game balance out of the window.
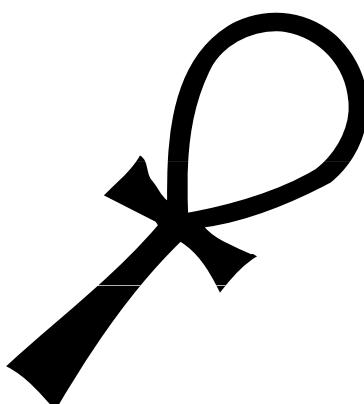
Gothic-Punk (Vampire Second Edition)

Vampires are part of an eternal and secret war between the young and the old.

Tone: Second Edition sees the primacy of the Gothic-Punk world. Institutions are corrupt, culture turns sour, neonates bring down elders, and Methuselahs push ancillae like pieces on a chess board. The sexuality of the previous edition changes to a romantic sensuality. Second Edition is where the **World of Darkness** rises to the fore, as everything becomes connected through shadow conspiracies, dark alliances, and ages-long manipulations.

Protagonists are more sophisticated about their secret world, able to effect change in and of themselves. Elders are now fallible, and neonates are dangerous elements. Even powerful Princes have great flaws and secret masters who know more than they. The clan focuses spread to include the Lasombra, Tzimisce, Assamites, Followers of Set, Giovanni, and Ravnos, though those outside the Ivory Tower are often viewed as outsiders. Even aberrant bloodlines begin to appear in small numbers, as highly exotic deviations of the Blood.

The Masquerade is the chief means of self-preservation rather than an ostentatious display of conspiratorial power. Conspiracies such as the Inconnu and the True Black Hand stride into the darkness, hinting at an even more secret world, and providing options for players beyond the big three sects. Secrecy receives central emphasis; the Masquerade is not just about pretending to be human, but also about fitting into the crush of humanity as a whole. Violent outbreaks are hidden under false reports and mistaken identities by the Camarilla, while the Sabbat plays at breaking the Traditions.

Themes: Sensuality over sexuality, balance between ultra-modern and ancient, clan and sect as community, long-term, large-scale conspiracies.

Setting Advice: Second Edition books expanded the **World of Darkness** to include a broader cornucopia of concepts, themes, clans, bloodlines, Paths of Enlightenment, and approaches to undeath. Your books should do this as well.

Second Edition receives a lot of attention for its "throwing shit against the wall and seeing what sticks" method. Many sourcebooks contain far-ranging concepts, such as a Lasombra masquerading as a Ventrue Prince so he can get his hands on the nuclear launch codes in the White House, or a hidden sect of vampires dedicated to serving the Antediluvians, destroying or enslaving every other vampire, and preserving humanity as feeding stock. Do not be afraid of inventing new ideas for Second Edition books. This is where the idea you've always wanted to write is most at home, no matter how experimental.

Second Edition harnesses the vampire templates introduced in First Edition, and in many ways, expands existing stereotypes. This edition is an excellent playground for exploring single-clan chronicles, or stories starting in the Dark Ages and concluding in the modern nights, all within the same city.

Second Edition is outlandish. Vampires are pierced to the gills, wear fleshcrafted augmentations in public, and receive new tattoos every night. This is the party edition, where vampires in Elysium are as likely to engage in a orgy with mortals and ghouls as they are discuss the increasingly threatening Sabbat over crystal goblets of blood.

Movie / TV Influences: The Crow**,** Highlander, 30 Days of Night, Queen of the Damned, From Dusk Till Dawn, Vampires, Blacula, Daughters of Darkness.

Musical Influences: Joy Division, The Cure, Nine Inch Nails, Depeche Mode, The Clash, Danny Elfman.

Game Design Advice: Game balance is more of a concern in Second Edition, due to the wider world becoming more apparent. City sourcebooks such as **L.A. by Night** contain a plethora of neonates and fledglings to provide an even playing field, while **Montreal by Night** contains some of the most powerful vampires written in **Vampire** in one book.

Balance isn't everything in this edition, as bloodlines such as Necromancy-wielding Kiasyd showed us, but it is crucial to realize this bloodline was written as an exception to the rule.

Be aware that rules-wise, there are few changes between First Edition and Second. In large part, the changes are an alteration of Presence levels, an increase in Health level penalties, a large amendment to the ways Celerity and Potence function, and how Virtues are tested.
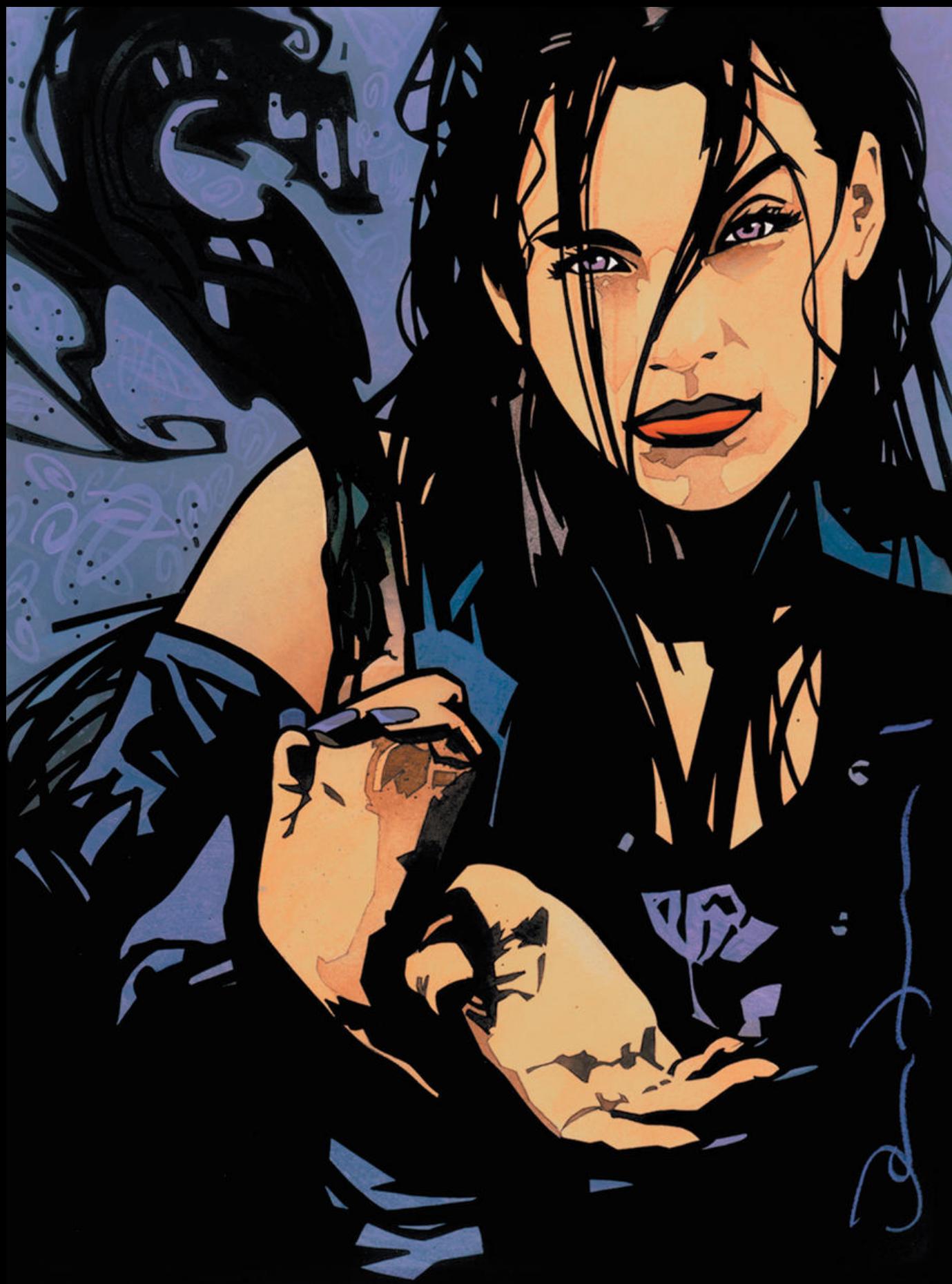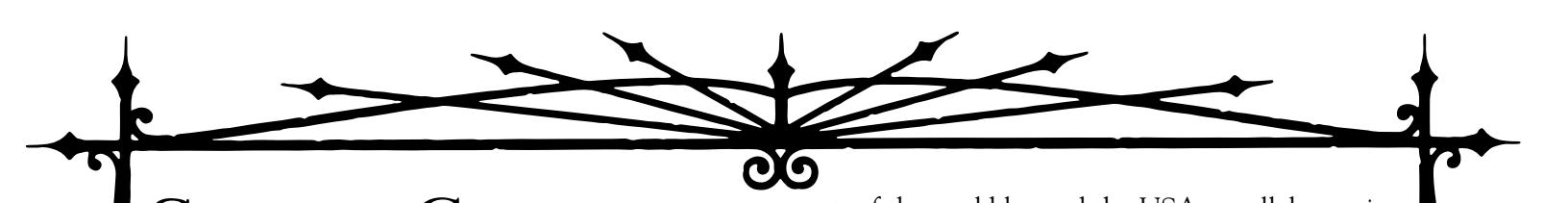
Signs of Gehenna (Vampire Third "Revised" Edition)

The end is near, and all of the Damned fear what is about to come.

Tone: The war between the Camarilla and Sabbat goes global, as domains from Mexico City to Cairo, and Baghdad to Atlanta fall to or close in on conflict, civil or otherwise. The Camarilla finds it increasingly difficult to deny the existence of the Antediluvians, as it appears several rouse from their slumber, or make their presences known after centuries of observing the world. Elders and Methuselahs aren't merely wicked and cruel in Revised Edition; they're revenging themselves for the crimes of your thousand-year-old grandsire. Their grand retaliations are petty movements on the great board of Jyhad, the scale of which is continental in scope.

Gehenna approaches fast, as omens reach fruition, a clan falls, and desperation sets in. How long do Kindred in this edition have left to tie up their affairs, before fate tells them their time is up? The expanding mythology reveals long-held truths are mere stories, making them lose their sacred power. Meanwhile, unheralded events shake the foundations of what Kindred believed they knew. The Camarilla offers unchanging stability in a crumbling society, and the Sabbat promises violent fanaticism with the certitude of victory over the hated progenitors. Midnight sieges and crusades become *de riguer*. Anarchs sacrifice their unity and clarity of purpose for vague notions of individuality and personal freedom, but suffer as the other two sects take advantage of the sect's fragmentation.

The four Independent clans are now distinct political factions with a little pull on their own, but with enough power to sway things between Camarilla and Sabbat on a regular basis. They are noteworthy wild cards in the Jyhad.

The Masquerade frays at the seams. With everything falling apart, there isn't a monolithic conspiracy capable of protecting the **World of Darkness**.

Themes: Biblical apocalypse, the shattering of the status quo, the alienness of the undead, existential angst, ancient wars and the global Jyhad.

Setting Advice: Revised Edition evokes a globe-spanning feel, that should be incorporated in your books for this edition. City sourcebooks should explore parts of the world beyond the USA, parallel vampire cultures on different continents, and tensions between sects separated by an ocean.

In no edition is the approach of Gehenna more apparent than this one, therefore content should take on grandiose, sweeping aspects. Antediluvians wake to command or destroy their clans, while a new generation of young vampires rally to fight back against the tide. War rages across the **World of Darkness**, and only barely stays out of the public eye.

The stereotypes of Second Edition are shattered in Revised, as clans diversify and antitribu become as appealing as the core clans. Consider any characters you write for this edition as being more cosmopolitan.

Revised Edition is global. Vampires wear sharp suits, mirror shades, and never drive their own cars: that's what your ghoul is for. Elysium is less likely to play goth classics and more likely to host a four-piece string quartet.

Movie / TV Influences: Blade, Bram Stoker's Dracula, The Addiction, Underworld, Interview with the Vampire, Shadow of the Vampire, Dracula, Nosferatu.

Music: Garbage, Switchblade Symphony, Nightwish, Marilyn Manson, New Order.

Game Design Advice: Game balance is at its height in Revised, though as with all editions of **Vampire**, it's still possible to walk into Elysium and thumb one's nose at the Prince and then use Celerity to speed away. Importantly, Revised is the first edition to provide full Discipline rules for all 13 clans in the core book, and each Discipline is Revised sufficiently for balance with their counterparts.

Remember with Revised that players may expect Malkavians to possess Dementation as a clan Discipline. Expression, Performance, Crafts, and Academics replace Acting, Music, Repair, and Bureaucracy, respectively, as Abilities. The Linguistics Knowledge shifts so each additional dot provides a geometric progression (+1/2/4/6/16 languages) instead of Second Edition's arithmetic progression (+1/2/3/4/5 languages). This information is important, as power write-ups in previous editions will not refer to use of Abilities introduced in this edition.

Unlike in Second Edition, where many vampires had five or more dots in out-of-clan Disciplines, in Revised published characters have a more natural spread. This lends itself to game balance for play of neonates, and ultimately favors the players as their protagonists gain more power through Experience than most supporting characters possess.

Modern Nights (Vampire Fourth "V20" Edition)

Sexy, deadly vampires toy with mortals as part of their personal, elaborate schemes.

Tone: V20 is a blend of the previous three editions. It leans on setting progression and mythology, but deliberately eschews metaplot proper. The metaplot is intentionally locked at a nebulous point in time, with a uniquely universal feel, until **Beckett's Jyhad Diary** updates it to approximately 2006 in advance of the next edition. The tone varies from deeply personal horror of sexual, body, and psychological natures, through to epic-scale threats emerging from waning clans re-emerging and the Anarchs gaining new clout with the dominance of the technological era.

V20 represents a toolbox approach to **Vampire**, as elements from all previous editions appear throughout its books. Long fallen Princes make returns, classic bloodlines receive coverage, formerly vague Disciplines finally appear in full, and old elements of metaplot are resolved, explored, expanded, or reignited.

Portable technology and widespread Internet render the previous view of the Masquerade antiquated. Modern newsworthy hotspots such as immigration, trafficking, the increasing divide between Right and Left, and the culture war, carry vampires on their bellies as if they were hungry parasites. Some ride it to just stay hidden and out of danger, while others do so to take advantage of humanity's chaos. Vampires move with the times, embracing the idea of "technology as fashion," integrating it into their sensual and sexual excesses. The Masquerade isn't protected by monolithic sects, but by individual Kindred. With silence all but impossible, vampires hide in plain sight, spinning stories and gaslighting with Presence and Dominate to hide.

The Masquerade is a social media smear campaign, a gang of outcast friends banding together in an uncertain world, or the illegal migration to another domain.

Themes: Technology age, bottom-up conspiracy, the illusion of status quo, vampires as apex sexual creatures, evolution rather than revolution.

Setting Advice: V20 celebrates everything from the previous editions: the personal horror, the sweeping rise of Gehenna, the range of character backgrounds, and the diverse domains scattered across the world.

Any books you write for V20 should keep in mind that many of the more raw aspects of previous editions have been refined for this edition. The True Black Hand are now a legitimate threat, the Kiasyd are more than just faerie vampires, and the Anarchs are once again a serious sect.

Stereotyping has all but disappeared in this edition, as vampires emerge from all walks of life and all corners of the world. Members of the Camarilla may be on cordial terms with members of the Sabbat, Followers of Set may opt to join the Ivory Tower, and domains separate themselves entirely from the sects. This is an edition where you should consider each city its own private kingdom, shaped by its ruler and its inhabitants, more than the overriding sect.

Take inspiration from V20 from all modern vampire media. From romance-heavy plots to deep, personal tragedies, vampire moved of the last decade or so have opened up what vampire books such as yours can be capable of, so check out a broad array.

Vampires in V20 blend into humanity as far as possible. Suits, hoodies, uniforms, fetishwear: whatever is appropriate for the setting. A vampire's phone in V20 may play some thrashworthy punk one minute, and a movie soundtrack the next. This is the modern age, and everything is accessible.

Movie / TV Influences: Thirst, Let the Right One In, What We Do in the Shadows, Byzantium, Dracula: Pages from a Virgin's Diary, Only Lovers Left Alive, True Blood.

Musical Influences: Echo & The Bunnymen, VNV Nation, Muse, The Birthday Massacre, Rammstein

Game Design Advice: Due to the collected range of characters, plots, sects, and powers introduced (or re-introduced) in V20, the rules reach their cleanest, most balanced state. V20's rules are fundamentally the same as those in Revised, though some small changes take place: Awareness becomes a Talent, the functionality of Dodge is now a part of Athletics, Security is subsumed into Larceny and Technology, and Linguistics is now a Merit.

Take note of the changes to the Gangrel and Tremere clan flaws, and difference in cost for Humanity / Path at character creation. You should also note the significant changes to Potence and Celerity, which both alter from Second Edition to Revised, and from Revised to V20. Dominate and Presence now test against a victim's current Willpower, instead of against the target's permanent Willpower rating. Split actions also change in V20 in an effort to make multiple actions better balanced.