

Creatures of the Night

A Coven Expansion

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Chapter 1: The Night Curses

MIDNIGHT. The witching hour, many say. But when the sun goes down, and the moon rises, there are far more terrible things abroad than witches.

Rabid beasts with wicked claws, howling their anger at the full moon. Dead men walking, stalking their prey by night, drinking the blood of the innocent. Victims of the Night Curses. Werewolves and vampires.

The two curses—lycanthropy and vampirism—are, truthfully, unrelated. In fact, while lycanthropy only afflicts the living, vampires are a variety of undead. But the two are often treated together, as a result of their similarities. Both creatures emerge at night: vampires to avoid the sun, and werewolves as they are changed by the moon. Both can turn innocent, friendly people into bloodthirsty monsters. And both curses are spread, more or less, by a bite.

A Mixed Curse

Some people might find the idea of lycanthropy or vampirism to be appealing. A transformed werewolf is a mighty beast, capable of taking on several armed men. And a vampire is immortal, without any of the drawbacks of being a skeleton.

But it is important to remember that they are still curses. The drawbacks almost *always* outweigh the benefits. A transformed werewolf loses its mind—it becomes worse than a mere animal; bloodthirsty, almost rabid. A vampire arguably has it worse. At least a werewolf’s curse only afflicts it once a month; a vampire can never venture outside during the daytime. And sunlight is far from their only weakness: garlic, running water, wooden stakes, even the inability to enter a place uninvited.

Those who rail against the curses tend to find that they grow quickly worse. A werewolf can’t re-

sist the urge to transform under a full moon for any longer than it can resist the need to breathe. Those who try often find themselves transforming unprepared, and might slaughter their whole family, or village, before the sun rises again. A vampire who tries to resist the bloodthirst will inevitably find itself driven insane, to similarly murderous effect. There are tales of a few who tamed the beast inside for long enough to find a cure, but they are far outnumbered by the tales of those who failed.

Those who embrace the curse, however, often find that they can make it work *for* them. They can derive strength from it, ameliorate its weakness, and even derive entirely new abilities from its power. They will always suffer the worst of its drawbacks—these are unavoidable—but they can soon come to live with it. They may even, eventually, come to count it as a blessing.

Using the Night Curses

Frankly, this would be a rather boring expansion book if it added nothing but two new kinds of monster for the player characters to run up against. You can certainly use vampires and werewolves this way; either as antagonists, or as tragic victims in need of the protagonists’ help. However, becoming a vampire or werewolf is also designed to be a valid option for a player character.

Lycanthropy and vampirism are primarily curses, so they will, on the whole, hinder a character. As such, there is no XP cost for becoming a werewolf or vampire. Players may choose, with GM permission, for their witches to already be cursed at character creation as part of their backstory. They may also be cursed during play, willingly or unwillingly, by another vampire or werewolf. The means by which the curses are transmitted are detailed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

Note that this willingness or unwillingness refers to the *character*. Inflicting lycanthropy or vampirism on a character against the player's will can lead to discontent. Lycanthropy is not so bad—the curse only comes around once a month, and can be handled with the help of the coven—but vampirism is more potent, and can ruin a character. With an enthusiastic player, however, a character contracting one of the Night Curses can make for a potent piece of plot.

A character afflicted with a Night Curse has a few options. They may simply try to live with it, perhaps employing the help of the coven in avoiding its most terrible consequences. They may seek a cure, and advice to those doing so is presented in the following section. Or they may embrace the curse, working to tame and enhance its powers, while ameliorating its greatest weakness. To this end, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 present a variety of feats, available to werewolves and vampires respectively. These feats may be taken as normal by a character with the appropriate curse, and do not count as part of any discipline of magic.

These feats are the main reason, besides providing drama and plot hooks, why a character would choose for their witch to be afflicted with a Night Curse at character creation. Being cursed in such a way always requires express permission from the GM, however. The GM should always consider such requests carefully, and shouldn't feel guilty about declining them.

Player characters with a Night Curse certainly do not fit the tone of every game. In fact, such a character could very easily come to define the tone of the game, as it revolves around their struggles to live with the curse, or to cure it. There's nothing wrong with such a tone, as long as it doesn't steal the spotlight from the other characters. In the extreme, a game where every member of the coven is subject to one Night Curse or the other could certainly prove fun. But a game without any Night-Cursed characters at all should probably still be the norm.

In general, a vampire character will have a more profound effect upon the game than a werewolf character. A vampire's weakness are far more numerous, and far more prevalent, than silver and full moons. Similarly, the vampire feats provide far more widespread benefits; a werewolf will be

almost entirely normal as long as they remain in human form.

Curing the Curses

Chapter 2: Werewolves

THE barest sliver of moon utterly failed to light the village beneath. This did not trouble the man who strolled down its streets, heels clicking on the cobblestones. The blackness rather matched his cloak as it rustled in the breeze behind him. And his boots, trousers, and cloak. Only his shirt—white, crisp, recently starched—stood out. There was blood on it. It wasn't his.

The streets ran red, too. It was something of a waste, he mused. But he didn't mind. He'd had his fill already, had it hours ago. And there would be other villages, for next time.

He passed the inn. No laughter echoed from within, like it had when he'd arrived. One of the shutters hung wide open, but no light spilled out. The barkeep hung over the windowsill. His face was deathly pale, his eyes blankly staring. The man strolled on.

Ahead, a young girl rounded the corner, walking into his path. She wore a grey nightgown and a pointy nightcap, and pushed a broom in front of her. The man smiled. Perhaps the night's fun was not yet over.

"Shouldn't you be in bed, little miss?"

The girl looked up. Her face was untroubled, seemingly oblivious to what had been going on in her village. "Shouldn't you, too?"

"Ohh, I'm sure my parents won't be missing me. But—"

The girl looked him up and down before cutting him off. "No, I don't imagine they would be."

The smile dropped from the man's face, replaced with a look of annoyance. "Why don't you run home to your mummy and daddy?" he snipped.

"They're dead," replied the girl. Her face remained a mask of utter unconcern. "But I imagine you knew that."

"Who are you?"

"I could ask you the same question."

"Who am I?" The man drew himself up to his full height. "I am—"

"Kurt." The girl cut him off again. "Spawn of Skew, spawn of Varian."

The man smiled again. "Ahh, I see. You've done your research. A Hunter, at your age? I'm impressed."

"Spawn of *me*." The girl smiled at last, showing her teeth. Her long, pointed teeth.

The man's smile fled, and he died with horror plain upon his face.

Chapter 3: Vampires

BLOODSUCKERS. Night-stalkers. Burning in daylight; casting no shadow. Unholy fiends, preying upon the innocent. Vampires are all this, and worse. But not all of them.

Some skulk in darkness like rats, feeding while their prey sleep. Some are refined gentlemen, living in towering castles, and inviting young maidens to dinner. Some are savage beasts, leaving whole villages awash in blood. Some even try to maintain the life they once had, hiding their curse from friends and family, or seeking help to deal with it.

Although vampirism is a curse of undeath—Necromancy without any necromancer—it falls halfway between mere reanimation and true resurrection. In truth, vampires are a kind of haunt. They are dead, but they retain their memories and personalities from life. Even their souls are returned to their bodies.

Befitting vampirism's nature as a curse, however, the process is flawed. The lack of a reflection betrays it the most. The vampire's soul is twisted in some indefinable way. It is hollow, lacking substance.

A vampire has a hard time feeling fulfilled. The bloodthirst is the most obvious manifestation, but it subtly penetrates all aspects of the vampire's being. Vampires are often greedy, jealous, or depressed. However much they acquire in their eternal lives, it will never quite feel like enough. They will never feel content. It's a steep price to pay for immortality.

Becoming a Vampire

Vampire Traits

Vampirism is generally the more alluring of the Night Curses. It isn't *all* drawbacks; at the very least, it offers immortality. Those traits that are

specifically weaknesses are described in the next section, while this section describes more general traits.

Undeath

A vampire is a walking, talking corpse; one of the undead. She has almost no biological processes. She does not need to eat, breathe, or drink water. She can ingest food and water if she wishes, but gains no benefit from it. She is immune to diseases and poisons, and cannot be affected by potions, or other such mixtures.

She does not heal naturally; she can only heal by drinking blood. Unlike most undead, she must still sleep. She still suffers from exhaustion, and recovers from it in the usual fashion.

A vampire's body does not rot like a zombie's. In fact, she does not age at all. A child who becomes a vampire remains a child indefinitely, although she continues to learn, and her mental development is normal. Vampires do not suffer from senility, although any atrophy or memory loss that they suffered before they died is not repaired. In fact, vampires are immortal as long as they are not killed.

Vampire Weaknesses

Mythology is rife with tales about the weaknesses of vampires. Many of them are false, but, unfortunately for the vampires, most are actually true. The worst of these are burning in sunlight, and the inability to enter a dwelling without an invitation, but there are also several other annoyances that can quickly prove fatal.

Many of the purported weaknesses of vampires—fire, or a stake to the heart—are a little unremarkable in that they will kill non-vampires just

as well. There is still an element of truth in these tales however. Powerful vampires can develop a resistance to more conventional methods of murder, but these methods might still work against them. These weaknesses are not listed here, as they are irrelevant to a newly-cursed vampire, but are detailed in the feats that make them relevant.

Sunlight

Invitation

A vampire cannot enter a dwelling, or other building, without an invitation. A physical barrier seems to exist at the threshold for her; she can even be thrown against it. Furthermore, she is prevented from influencing anything, or anyone, inside in the building through most mundane or magical means. Items she throws, or arrows that she fires will bounce off the same barrier that she would, unable to enter the building or to damage it.

Nor can any magic she works affect anything inside: wind she is Willing stops at the barrier; her sympathetic links transmit nothing while one end is inside; she cannot place a Scrying sensor inside; she cannot even work Headology upon the inhabitants. The barrier even stretches into the mental realm. Her influence is essentially limited to mundane communication; the barrier does not block sound or light, so she can talk to the inhabitants as normal. The vampire's familiar, golems she has animated, and undead under her control suffer from the same limitations that she does. An Animal Companion is its own creature, however, and is unimpeded. A vampire's brew also continues to work if taken inside; she is working no magic upon it after its creation.

For a vampire to enter, the invitation must come from someone who would typically have some right to offer an invitation into the building. The homeowner will certainly suffice—as will other invited guests, in many situations. Someone who has, themselves, entered without an invitation certainly does not count. Interestingly, this leaves some buildings without anyone who could validly invite the vampire in. For example, the owner of a tomb is typically too dead to offer an invitation. Consecrated ground requires the permission of the god to whom it is dedicated, and gods aren't known for being talkative. Consecrated ground is a special case

in that a vampire cannot cross it even if no building stands on it.

The invitation need not be verbally explicit—someone holding the door open, and standing aside to let you in will suffice—but it must be communicated to the vampire in some fashion. The invitation remains valid until it is revoked. It can be revoked by anyone with the power to grant a valid invitation; it need not be the person who granted the invitation in the first place. An invitation is also revoked if the person who granted it would no longer be able to do so; if they no longer own the house, for example, or if their own invitation into the building is revoked.

If the vampire is inside the building when her invitation is revoked, she may remain there as long as she likes, but cannot re-enter once she leaves. As long as she remains in the building, she is not subject to any of the other limitations on affecting the inhabitants. Her familiar, golems, and undead cannot re-enter, however, even if she remains inside.

Despite all the rules, there will still come a time where it is ambiguous whether a vampire can enter a building or not. Is this construction really a building? Is this person allowed to offer invitations? Was that gesture really an invitation? This limitation exists largely in a vampire's mind, so resolving ambiguous cases is largely a matter of convincing herself that her invitation is valid. Treat this similarly to the rules for improvising magical equipment: have the player provide a justification, use it to set a TN, and call for a Will test.

Reflection

A vampire cannot be seen indirectly; she doesn't appear in mirrors, she doesn't cast a shadow, and she can't be seen by Scrying. This may seem like an advantage, but the fact that her clothes still appear means it does little more than give away her vampiric nature.

Garlic

A vampire is dangerously allergic to garlic (common herb). Against the skin, it merely burns a little, dealing a 1d damage test. Biting into a clove, however, deals a 5d damage test. This damage test sends the vampire into shock as normal; it doesn't cause immediate death, like sunlight. If she swal-

lows any garlic, however, it continues to burn inside her. This is typically lethal.

Garlic-based potions, such as Garlic Solution, are also normally lethal. Remember that the vampire is only affected by the garlic, and not by the normal effect of the potion.

Running Water

Chapter 4: Feats of the Night

IN a world where werewolves and vampires run rife, there are many more who suffer than those directly afflicted by the Night Curses. Prey to a rabid werewolf; cattle to a thirsty vampire; the friends, family, and neighbours of the afflicted. There are even those who style themselves as Hunters, dedicating their lives to ridding the world of the Night Curses. Many of these people get by on hopes, prayers, and, if they're very lucky, a silvered sword. Some, however, are witches. And witches are not known to take these matters lying down.

This chapter provides a few feats that may be helpful to werewolves, vampires, and the friends and enemies of these creatures. However, these feats do not rely upon contracting one curse or another; they may be taken by any witch, whether she is a werewolf, vampire, or neither.

Each of these feats counts as part of an existing discipline, listed alongside the feat name. If that discipline has a governing skill, the feat provides, and benefits from, the same skill discounts as any other feat in the discipline.

