

Vampire 101

Myth, Legend and Anatomy

Kindred are a widely varied bunch, and hard&fast rules are difficult to come by. While the basics are pretty consistent [vampires have fangs] almost everything has an exception [*Salubri* are usually fangless, and though many Kindred see fanglessness as impotence, actually seeing a *Salubri* rip open someone's flesh with their flat dull teeth may contest this stereotype], and almost everything has variations from bloodline to bloodline [while *Vampires* have two long fangs that form and retract at will, *Umpyrs* often have two sets of upper fangs, short & long, and two sets of lower fangs, short & long, *Setites* have long curved serpentine fangs and the grotesque *Nosferatu* usually have a giant maws filled with rows of needle like fangs]; still there are those things that are universal to all Kindred Creatures [all Kindred must feed on the blood, flesh or the life-force of others to animate themselves]

Kindred are **Dead, Undead, Unliving, Immortal**; What-ever 'it' is, it has arrested the decay of a vampire's body and the death of their spirit, they can only animate themselves (act, think or perceive) by using the magic of their Blood, the pool of life-force they've gathered within. Kindred cannot generate this life-force them selves, and thus they must take it from others to be a part of the living world. As fleeting and impotent as mortals may be, it's that self same fleeting mortality that lets them tap the well of life. Still, once that life force is taken in, the vampire transforms, refines and distills it into the magical fluid, *Vitae*. While this immortality means that the Kindred do not age, it can also mean they do not grow (such as the *Ventrue* and *Brujah*). Sexual reproduction, the generation of new life from one's own life-force, is denied to the Kindred; though perverse tales of *Succubae* blood rites and *Viovode*-spawn circulate from the East, Kindred cannot reproduce, they only infect others. Finally, some Kindred, such as the renaissance artist, philosopher, and Kindred scholar Giulietta D'avena, believe that vampires are unable to be truly creative, that they are unable to make a work of true original vision, but this may just be in the jaded elder eyes of the Immortals, as all art is based on earlier works, and all ideas are, at best, recycled and reinvented. The actual truth is more subjective. While the *Ventrue* and *Brujah* can't even dream, many *Toreador* have played muse, falling in



love again and again through the ages. Similarly the underworld witches of the *Umpyrs* weave bone temples, and the *Damned*, the *Setites* and the *Salubri* regularly claim to have divine visions.

Cainites usually say that these limits are part of the Curse of Caine. In exchange for bearing this cross, they gain the blessings of Immortality, walking with the spirits and standing with gods through the ages.

Unliving vampires are not mortal and cannot tap the well-of-life like the fleeting flame of mortality, but they do possess the life immortal, and thus have many of the gifts of life. The immune systems of the *Succubae*, *Salubri* and *Umpyrs* are supercharged and they heal wounds, regenerate flesh, retain tattoos and piercings until the flesh is cleaved and regrown, and retain haircuts and scars for long periods of time. Unliving creatures may experience hair length growth, nail lengthening, sexual arousal, and, particularly in the case of *Umpyrs*, mutation. The Unliving dream in slumber and are affected by drugs and alcohol. Though they can draw no sustenance from it, the Unliving can and do consume food and drink, though only raw flesh and blood can be stomached with ease. Unliving flesh feels both pain and pleasure keenly, as evidenced by





their frequent indulgence in S&M, torture and sex.

Undead vampires have none of the gifts of the living, having left life upon the Embrace, but having been exempted from the pull of death, they are frozen in the great cycle. The Undead have left life, but have not entered death. They cannot heal from wounds or regenerate their flesh. Instead they can only reconstitute their flesh, restoring it to its pristine form, returning it to the state it was in on the night of their Embraced. Every night that an Undead creature rises, upon animating themselves into wakefulness, new piercings push out, new tattoo ink rises to the surface and beard & head hair returns to its original length. Undead hair and skin rejects die every night, Undead flesh cannot scar, and the Undead can even slough off the mutating effects of the *Tzimisce* power of flesh crafting. The Cainites site the passage of the Book of Nod, “forever shall you be as you were in death.” Like the dead, Undead flesh is cold. The Undead have no heartbeats, do not breath, have no nerve impulses, no involuntary reflexes and feel no pleasures of the flesh. The Undead are unaffected by drugs and alcohol and during their slumber they are utterly vacant within. Their guts, are completely inactive, and they cannot digest anything but blood, vomiting up solids with a gush of vitae.

Dead Kindred, like the *Vrykolaka*, feel no pain, as their spirit has slipped into death and is thus more detached from their body than other Kindred, like a

ghost in a corpse shell. They are unaffected by health-level penalties until the reach crippled. They’ve clotted and soured within, and they often have a bit of a smell. The Dead flesh of some Kindred continues to rot over the decades, though it is not the muscle that moves the body, nor the nose that smells. While the supercharged immune system of the Unliving burns away any infection, and the Undead body is too baron to carry disease, the Dead can play host to a legion of diseases and infections, though most *Vrykolaka* leech the life of even these living invaders. Their guts are atrophied and withered, unable to take anything but Blood. In slumber the ghost within flesh slips free into the dark spirit realms of the restless dead.

All Kindred are, however, **Immortal**. They do not age beyond the physical age of their Embrace; they do not wither with the years. They are free from all the filthy excretions and organic muck of mortal creatures. Unlike any earthly creature, Kindred are not destroyed when their body ceases to function. Their spirit withdraws and slumbers till it is strong enough to repair its broken body, and rise yet again. Most Kindred, if they can still cry, cry tears of blood, but that’s because blood will not produce any fluid, but it will bleed. These kindred have a yellowish clear fluid, blood plasma, coating their eyes and mouth. They even sweat blood. The lone exception is the Succubae, who are so close to life that they still salivate, sweat, tear and...



Sunlight and **Fire** are two of the eternal banes of Kindred kind. As the great forces of life and light, sunlight and fire drive the Kindred's nocturnal spirit from its flesh and cause supernatural wounds to the cursed Immortals.

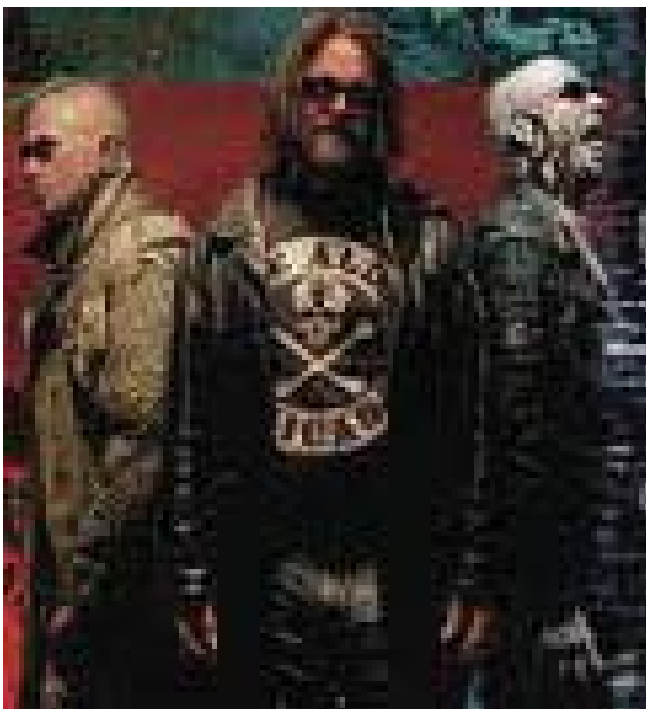
Sunlight alternately burns or rots Kindred flesh. The Unliving are fiery creatures. Though all Kindred blood is flammable, their's is positively explosive. Pickled as they are in this stuff, just a spark and they could go up. Sunlight in particular brings this fiery element out, and the Unliving Kindred burns from the inside-out, often emberring inside themselves before actually catching fire; they are even known to burst in a flaming explosion from particularly severe sunburn. The Succubae even "burn" blood, their body becoming heated and flush as they call on the power of their Vitae or when the Beast of hunger is near to the surface. Umpyres maybe hot-and-cold, but always wet. They decay into a heaping mass of crap and earthy soil after they've been destroyed, and Nosferatu in particular turn into muddy gravel. Though deffinatly Unliving, unlike the fiery *Succubae*, *Serpents*, *Soul-Suckers* and *Djinn*, the creatures of the *Umpyre* Empire shrivel, wither and warp, as if from great age under the light of the sun. The Undead are cold and dry and sunlight burns them form the outside in, drying out and catching like tissue paper as they turn to ash and dust. While, the Dead are cold and wet, and their flesh balckens and rots away in the daylight. There are many Kindred that are resistant to even the horrific touch of the sun, but even the *Venture*, *Gangrel*, *Rakshasa*, and *Old Vrykolaka* are greatly

weakened as their spirits retreat when the sun is in the sky. **Fire** consumes Kindred flesh like tissue paper soaked in gasoline. Kindred blood, vitae, is a highly combustible distillation, essentially marinading the Kindred's flesh in this flammable fluid. While there are many Kindred that are resistant even to the touch of flame, notably the above-mentioned *Ventrue*, *Gangrel*, *Rakshasa* and *Old Vrykolaka*, all Kindred recoil form the Red Fear.

Final Death, the destruction of a Kindred in such a way that it will not rise again, results form burning away or 'finding the sun'. Separating a Kindred's head from its shoulders will bring the true death to it. The final way in which to destroy a Kindred creature is for another Kindred to Diablarize it, consuming it from the inside out.



Crosses, Garlic and Steaks are some of the classic paraphernalia superstition claims as the Kindred's doom. While most superstition is based on old folklore, it's always





more myth than fact. Though the Ancient's will tell you of the Hearth Spirits mortal homes used to harbor, warding the Kindred from entering uninvited, now such spirits are unheard of. While witches used garlic to ward off underworld spirits, including Kindred, it has nothing to do with the herb itself. In fact, many Kindred quite enjoy its lively aroma, and the ways of the wyck are now long gone. Similarly, it's the piety of the wielder of a cross that can empower the object of faith, not the symbol itself. It's the strength of the wielder's prayers that cause pain to the Kindred. Fortunately, such miraculous faith is extremely rare in these modern nights, in part thanks to the Masquerade. Steaks through the heart are a worry for most Kindred. While a Kindred could take a shotgun load to the gut without blinking, place a piece of wood (or metal in the case of *Vrykolaka*) into their heart, and you disrupt their spirit's connection to their body, leaving them torpid and paralyzed until the steak is removed.

In general, vampiric societies consist of two levels: [Sects/Cults](#) and [Clans/Bloodlines](#). Characters within the VtM setting are members of one of the [Clans/Bloodlines](#) offered, and often belonged to one of the archaic Cults or, in modern day, to one of the 2 great Sects.

Sects

Born in the wake of the two great disasters of modern vampiric history, the Anarch Revolt and the Burning Times; The long nights of the Dark Ages were a great age of vampire supremacy, overtly ruling human cities and kingdoms. The hierarchy of vampire societies, particularly in Western Europe, was rigid and controlling, in which Elders ruled as undisputable dictators or gods, while younger vampires were little better than slaves. Humans were cattle. The Elders were able to hold this power because of the Blood-Bond, the absolute addition to the blood of a vampire. Used by the Elders over their progeny and servants, Blood-Bonds were the chains that

held together ranks of vampire society. As the renaissance bloomed across Europe, a strange sect started teaching an eastern blood ritual to any vampire they encountered. This ritual broke any Blood-Bonds its participants were enslaved to. This resulted in the great Anarch Revolt, a period of about 2 hundred years, during which Childe rose up to slay their Sire. The Anarch Revolt was terrifying to the Elders of Europe. It culminated with 3 bloodlines slaying their Eldest (or 3 Clans killing their Antideluvian Founders).

Camarilla

The Camarilla is a strict and rigid organization, enforcing a policy of non-disclosure. Led by a shadowy conclave of old and powerful but anonymous Kindred, the inner council, who are represented by seven powerful vampires known as the Justicar, appointed for a period of thirteen years. The Camarilla sees all Kindred as being part of its organization, and in truth most Kindred are. The Camarilla's dominion encompasses most of the old world, northwestern Africa, and great tracts of north America as well as a small enclave in eastern Asia. The Australian kindred also officially pay allegiance to the Camarilla but in reality they are completely autonomous. A single powerful vampire, the Prince, rules each city that falls under Camarilla control. The Prince presides over all the Kindred in his city, and is the final arbiter in all kindred affairs there.

Sabbat

The Sabbat is founded on the dual principles of freedom and loyalty. The Sabbat believe that every vampire is free to create their own destiny without being hindered by the reputations of their elders, and that no Sabbat has to lay down their life for cowards who cannot take care of their own matters. Of course, it does not always work like this in practice.