Bloodsuckers

The Roleplaying Game of Being a Bloodsucker Without all the Angst

—*—

Bloodsuckers, version 1998

©1995-1998 by Mark Damon Hughes

mdhughes.tech/rpg/

Text licensed as **CC BY-NC-SA Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International license**

Rationale

When Vampire came out, I had high hopes for it. A game where you could play an Anne Rice- or Barbara Hambly- or Fred Saberhagen-style vampire, trying to survive vampire hunters, other vampires, and even cross-over films with vampires vs. werewolves like those in The Howling or American Werewolf In London? That'd be great! But no! It's some pretentious crap from Mark Rein*Hagen, and all the cheezy GapGoths are playing it and saying they've found a Real Storytelling RPG, and all other game styles are lame. Pheh.

Anyone who knows their vampire flicks knows that vampires aren't supposed to whinge on like Louis from Interview With The Vampire (and that's even the point of Interview, which Rein*splat*Hagen seems to have missed), they're supposed to run around drinking their victims dry, shooting each other, and hiding from the sun, and at the end of the film the humans always stake or burn all the vampires. That'd be the whole POINT of playing a bloodsucker - to live as hard and fast as you can before you're Really Dead.

For those of us who like good vampire movies and classic vampire fiction, VtM is like turning a John Woo movie into a weepy Barbara Streisand drama. Sure, in a John Woo movie there should be dramatic moments when the characters discuss their feelings and philosophies, but there should also be satchels full of guns, buckets of blood, and mooks using explosive barrels for cover. Leaving those out is just not right. Likewise, sucking blood, hunting your victims, being relentlessly pursued by mortal hunters, and finally getting staked are MANDATORY for a proper game about vampires.

Thus, I stoked up with Near Dark, Dance of the Damned, Dracula, Innocent Blood (all great vampire films, everyone should see 'em), and the entire Howling series (1, 3, and 5 are the best of the series, by the way) for a two-day bloodfest, drank a lot of coffee, and wrote these game hacks to make Vampire work the way I thought it should. After the first playtest game, I hacked some holes in the combat rules and a few other things, but amazingly enough, the system is almost workable as written, it's just loaded down with Rein*Hagen's weird ideas of the genre, and the clans and archetypes and the ranking of skills and attributes make most vampires too generic.

Other good ideas in VtM were the blood pool, the applications of it, and using it to represent age- or parent-derived power; the disciplines as an explanation for the range of abilities ascribed to vampires - though IMO all vampires should have some that are universal to most versions of the myth like strength and speed, and not just from blood; and a logical subset of the many supposed vampiric abilities, limitations, and reproduction methods. With a task system that didn't suck, fewer restrictions, and stricter compliance with the genre, VtM could have been a good game... But it's not.

I think the Kindred TV show summed up everything wrong with VtM: if you didn't know from the cover, you'd have no idea they were supposed to be vampires.



Source Movies

- Near Dark
  The primary source for Bloodsuckers.
- Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens (1922, silent)
  The original Symphony of Horror is STILL an effective bloodsuckers movie, and the bloodsucker puts those White Wolf poseurs to shame.
- Dracula (1931, Bela Lugosi)
- Blade
  A great bloodsuckers movie. VERY stylish and intense. And who could be more vampiric than Traci Lords? What *HASN'T* she sucked?
- Dance of the Damned
  A vampire romance that soon shows that it's *NOT* romantic, and in fact that even a sucky human life is better than being a bloodsucker.
- Innocent Blood
  very witty and cruel. I like.
- Howling 1, 3, 5
  Absolutely essential for my treatment of werewolves.
- From Dusk Till Dawn
- Lost Boys
  "One thing about living in Santa Carla I never could stomach - all the damn vampires."
- Buffy: The Vampire Slayer
  The series is pretty good, but in my opinion the movie was better. Note: not a redeeming trait in any of the vamps, even Pee-Wee.
- Bordello of Blood
- Fright Night, Fright Night II
- The Fearless Vampire Killers, or: Pardon Me, But Your Teeth Are in My Neck
  Very funny, very dark parody of Hammer vampire flicks.
- Oh, hell, go watch every movie ever made about dracula, vampires, nosferatu, living dead, zombies, and werewolves ever made, though personally I thought the Francis Ford Coppola version of Dracula sucked (no pun intended).

Source Books

- Dracula, by Bram Stoker
- **Varney the Vampire**
- The Vampire Lestat, etc. by Anne Rice
  Admittedly, Louis is a wimp, but Lestat and the others are good bloodsuckers. Rein*dingbat*Hagen's misinterpretation of her doesn't diminish these as good books.
- The Dracula Tape, The Holmes-Dracula File,
  An Old Friend of the Family, Thorn, A Matter of Taste, Dominion, by Fred Saberhagen These are just brilliant. Not quite "Bloodsuckers" material, but a lot of fun, and a good poke in the eye of standard VtM players.
- Those Who Hunt The Night, Traveling With The Dead, by Barbara Hambly
  Vampires in Victorian England hiring a mortal investigator to find out who's been murdering them. Again, not quite "Bloodsuckers", but very good, and showing again that VtM completely misses the point of vampires.
- Kiss of the Vampire, by Nancy Baker
  It's a harlequin-romance-with-a-vampire kinda thing, but it's actually quite good. The bloodsuckers are very unsympathetic (as are the humans), and it's pretty honest about the situation. Plus, I like the idea of vampires making porno/snuff flicks.
- Palladium's Vampire Kingdoms
  Portrays an entire civilization of vampires in post-holocaust Mexico. Think Dusk Till Dawn, but with MILLIONS of them. Unlike VtM, it's not pretentious, it's action/horror.
- Avoid GURPS Vampire
  Admittedly, I don't like GURPS, but it's REALLY badly suited to high-powered characters like vampires, and the level of pyrophobia they had was just silly, and it's just not as good as even the broken VtM.
- **Suggested reading for alt.vampyres**

Rules

Vampire, 1st Ed. (2nd Ed. may or may not work, but I've only flipped through it, and I haven't even seen Revised yet - I do plan to get that as it apparently has a better task system).

Dracula and other Vampires

There is no vampire literature in this world; no Dracula, by Bram Stoker, no late-night vampire movies, and most certainly no Interview With The Vampire or Near Dark. For that matter, there isn't much in the way of any horror literature or movies in this world. There are some legends of vampires and werewolves and ghosts, but they're very obscure mythology.

Poseurs

Anyone who uses the word "vampire" to refer to the dead, or uses pretentious phrases like "the masquerade" for "hiding from the living" loses all XP for that session. Likewise for poseurs who actually claim that vampires are real or wear fake fangs to the game. Remember: It's cool to be goth if and only if that's what you really want to be because it fits your personality. It's not cool to be a poseur.

Yes, this is a pretty harsh ruling, but stick to it - Bloodsuckers is supposed to be a brutal horror movie seen from the perspective of the monsters, not a chance for people to be pretentious and annoying, and most certainly not for "exploring the dark side of the human soul".

Life After Death, as explained by your "parent":

Dead Slang (a selection of terms, some from V:tM)

- **Living**
  What you used to be. The living can go out in the sun, have sex, and all that.
- **Dead**
  This is you. Yeah, you're still moving, but you're a corpse. The dead are fast, strong, tough, and never grow old, but need to drink blood from the living fairly often.
- **Really Dead**
  When the living are killed and not turned into the dead, or when the dead are killed with fire or sunlight, they're Really Dead.

- **Parent**
  The dead person who killed you.
- **Child**
  The dead created by a parent.
- **Sibling**
  Other dead made by your parent.
- **Family**
  A parent and children.
- **Gang**
  A group of dead who hang out together, usually a family or two. A gang has a better chance of survival than a small family or an individual does.

- **Blood Doll**
  A victim who's been fed from but not killed. Blood dolls often become addicted to being fed on, but they start to get brain damage from the blood loss. It's pretty cruel, really.
- **Cannibal**
  A dead who feeds on other dead. Don't do it.
- **Casanova/Slut**
  A dead who seduces the living and takes some of their blood, but doesn't kill them.
- **Hobo**
  A dead who does not have a haven, but sleeps in a different place every night. Also refers to the dead who feed off the homeless and other street people.
- **Lush**
  A dead who feeds on drunk or drugged victims for the drug's effects.
- **Murderer**
  A dead who kills other dead. Don't do it.

- **Slave**
  A living or dead person blood bound to you.
- **Stalker**
  A living person who hunts the dead. Kill 'em and kill 'em quick - letting them live is much more dangerous than killing them in a messy or public way.
- **Typhoid Mary**
  A dead who has caught a disease from a victim and now spreads it to all other victims. Only sluts and casanovas can be Typhoid Marys, obviously.
- **Vegetarian**
  A dead who only feeds on animals. Since the blood of animals isn't nearly as nourishing as that of humans, a vegetarian has to feed constantly, and it's never as good as a human's blood.
- **Vessel**
  Something that holds blood - a living human victim, usually, but it could be an animal or another dead person.
- **Victim**
  The living you feed from.

- **Barrens**
  The areas of a city that are more or less devoid of life. Graveyards, abandoned buildings, parks. The barrens make good places to hide.
- **Haven**
  The home of a dead person or the place where you sleep during the day.
- **Ichor**
  What you have instead of blood. It's thick and black. If you've recently fed, you'll have a lot of blood in your veins, but it turns into ichor pretty quick.

Words of Advice for the Newly Deceased

1. Don't let the living find out about the dead. No witnesses. If they find out, they can hunt us down and kill us all. If you have to have living friends or bodyguards know about what you are, bind them to you; no matter how loyal they seem, the living will never trust the dead, and don't go fooling yourself that they will just because they're your kin - my own brother tried to burn me when he found out what I was, and it'll happen to you too if you're stupid.
2. Thou shalt not kill another dead person except in self-defense, and thou shalt not feed on other dead. It may feel good, but DON'T DO IT. All of the other dead will hunt you down and burn your ass, and I'll bring the marshmallows.
3. Feed regularly. Draining a victim a week should be plenty unless you've been fighting a lot. When you're done feeding, lick the bite holes, and they'll seal up, so there's no evidence. If you feed from anyone who's drunk or on drugs, you'll get the same effects, so be careful - a drunk dead person is a threat to himself and everyone around him. If you feed from someone who's been poisoned, you'll be poisoned. Animals aren't as full of the essential vitamins and nutrients as humans, I guess, because they're hard to live on. You can do it, but why?
4. Only feed on living vessels. Stale blood is poison to the dead. Blood banks sound neat, but they're useless to us.
5. You are not immortal. You may not age, and you're harder to kill, but you *CAN* die, and you can't be brought back from real death. You can really die by being burned, by being exposed to sunlight (or those modern sun lamps - they're not quite as bad, but they can still kill you), by being ripped up by another dead's teeth or claws (if they've got 'em), by silver weapons, and sometimes by normal wounds.
6. Get a good day's sleep. You have to sleep somewhere that's totally dark, like inside a coffin, just as long as you did when you were alive. If you don't sleep right, you'll get weaker and weaker.
7. If someone (living or dead) drinks your ichor three times within a week or so, they are bound to you. Be careful with this ability, it can backfire on you, and don't mistreat your slaves - that's a sure way to let them break free, and they'll be pissed.
8. Don't make a bunch of new dead. It's easy to do it - just drain a living person almost to death and then feed them some of your ichor. But unless you choose someone who'll be able to cope with their death and the need to feed, they'll really die soon, and probably expose you to the living. Remember - animals overhunt their area. We're supposed to be smarter than that.
9. There's no way back. The dead cannot become living again. Sorry, that's just how it is. That blood transfusion idea's been tried, and all it does is feed the dead.
10. Sex is irrelevant to the dead. The equipment's still there, and you can make it work, sort of, but it's just not interesting any more. It's also pretty obvious to the living that there's something seriously wrong.
11. The wilderness (anything but cities, actually) is dangerous. There are monsters out there, wolfmen and ghosts and demons, and they don't want our kind among them. Besides, people in the wilderness are suspicious of strangers, and we can be found out easier. I had to burn a little town in New Mexico to the ground once because they found out what me and my gang were, and they were stalking us. I still feel kind of bad about that, but there was nothing else to do.

CHAPTER TWO: RULES

- **Dice**
  Whenever a 10 is rolled, it counts as two successes; tens do not make the roll an automatic success.

CHAPTER FOUR: TRAITS

Character Creation

All characters are recently deceased - within the week, at most. They have no knowledge of dead societies, other dead other than their parent and siblings, or anything occult. All they have learned so far is how to feed and the basic rules of survival for the dead.

Clans

deleted.

Archetypes

deleted (see Willpower below).

Traits

Category	Initial	Freebie Cost (of 19 points)	XP cost
attributes (1)	24	5	(old rating x 4)
skills	27	2	3 / (old rating x 2)
initial disciplines (2)	3	7	(old rating x 3)
new disciplines (3)	-	-	7 / (old rating x 5)
backgrounds	5	1	-
virtues	5	2	(old rating)
willpower	=Courage	1	(old rating)
blood	=1d10	-	-

(1) At least one level must be taken in each attribute.
(2) The initial dots are in addition to the free ones: Celerity, Fortitude, Potence, and Protean. The free ones and any additional disciplines taken during character creation count as "initial" for the cheaper experience cost.
(3) Those gained after character creation.

Attributes

- **Initial**
  You don't need to rank them, just assign the 24 points as desired, as long as every attribute gets at least one level.
- **Specialties**
  Specialties can only be defined if the character has 3 or more levels in an attribute; the character gains an additional die to any action where the specialty applies.

Skills

- **Initial**
  Skills don't need to be ranked, either. The 27 initial points can be assigned as desired.
- **Specialties**
  All skills are specialized. Only one level of a skill applies to any action other than the specialty. If the character wishes to take a skill again to cover more specialties, the first level is free.
  Example: Joe-Bob has Driving: Pickup 3, and now he wants to learn how to drive a semi and make big bucks. His default skill at it is level one, because he already knows the basics of how to drive. To get Driving: Semi 2, he has to spend 2 xp (old level 1 x 2 xp), and to get Driving: Semi 3, he has to spend 4 xp (old level 2 x 2 xp).
- **Occult**
  Only one level can be taken at character creation.

New Skills

- **Pilot**
  Specialties: Helicopter, Light Prop, Jumbo Prop, Jet Fighter, Light Jet, Jumbo Jet, Glider

- **Parachuting**
  Specialties: none
- **Boating**
  Specialties: Rowboat, Sailboat, Motorboat, Large Ship
- **Geography**
  Specialties: by region
- **Area of Knowledge**
  Specialties: by subject

Backgrounds

New dead characters can not have any dead contacts other than their family, and they have no status. Herd and Retainers are pretty unlikely, but are possible (better have a good reason for it based on the character's life, or the GM *WILL* veto it).

"Generation" does not mean the same thing here as it does in the rulebook. There was no Cain, at least not so far as anyone knows. "Generation" is determined by how long you've been dead - the older a dead is, the thicker its ichor is. "Generation" can not be improved. Instead, the newly-deceased are considered to be "13th Generation". Every few decades of death, they improve by one step. Drinking the ichor of an elder can boost the power of a younger dead's ichor for a few days, but cannibals are hated and feared by other dead. Subduing an elder dead to drink their ichor presents other problems, of course - like fighting someone who is naturally more powerful, can heal faster, and probably has more allies than you do.

Beginning PCs cannot improve their "Generation", at least not as recently deceased. For a game where some characters start out older than others, this could be allowed at the GM's option. And given enough time (a long-term campaign could be fast-fowarded over years or decades at a time, if you were to put that much intense role-playing into your "bloodsucking dead freaks with guns and pointy teeth" game...), or a few older dead to suck dry, characters can increase their "generation" during play...

I found that generation was a really powerful trait, and pretty dangerous to let players just buy any level they wanted.

Disciplines

- **Initial**
  All dead characters receive Celerity 1, Fortitude 1, Potence 1, and Protean 1 free at death, and these only cost (rating x 3) xp to improve after character creation.
- **Thaumaturgy**
  deleted (but Blood and Telekinesis become individual disciplines).
- **Blood**
  as the Thaumaturgy path. Rolls are made with Sta + Blood.
- **Telekinesis**
  as the Thaumaturgy path. Rolls are made with Per + Telekinesis. The speed of a thrown object can be doubled for every level not used for its mass, and damage is equal to the number of successes made on a Diff 6 roll.
- **all others**
  unmodified.

Humanity

deleted. The dead aren't human, and morality has nothing to do with your self-control. Even aside from that, dead would by their nature be incapable of having more than a 4 Humanity under Rein*twiddle*Hagen's system. If you don't cause any harm, you die. Most would drop to 2 almost immediately, so it's not only anti-genre, it's useless anyway. And the third and most deadly blow against humanity is: it encourages whinging GapGoth bastards to moan about their lost humanity and act upright and moral, ruining a perfectly good blood-and-guns game. Conscience remains in, though the GM may lower it during play as the character becomes more feral.

Likewise, delete all that stuff about "Golconda". There is no salvation for the dead - you're the way you are, and will be until you're Really Dead.

Willpower

Characters regain 1/2 of their willpower at the end of every session, at the GM's discretion, and all of it at the end of every adventure if they succeeded at whatever they were doing.

CHAPTER FIVE: DEVELOPMENT

- **Blood**
  The raw blood of a vessel is useless without the spirit - the dead feed as much on the "soul" of their victims as on their blood. Blood can only be drunk fresh from a living vessel - if a dead character tries to drink stored blood or feed from a corpse, even one that has just died, it loses three health levels (non-aggravated). Trying to drink non-fresh blood does not gain the character any blood points. If the vessel is not killed while feeding, only half the usual blood points are gained.
  Being fed on has other effects on vessels, too, aside from the blood loss. Every time a vessel is fed on, it must make a Diff 6 Wits roll. If it succeeds, it is fine. If it fails, it loses one point from each mental attribute. If it botches, it goes mad (take a terror derangement).
- **Sleep**
  If a dead character does not rest in total darkness (even a sliver of artificial light disrupts the sleep of the dead) for at least 8 hours in a day, it loses two blood points instead of the usual one, and temporarily loses one level from every discipline. Each day of proper rest restores one lost level to all disciplines.
- **Terror**
  See Frenzy, pgs.121-129, for rules on terror rolls and derangements from botches. Both the living and the dead have to make terror rolls whenever they see something horrifying they've never seen (and succeeded at a terror roll for) before. Once they've succeeded once, they never need to roll for that specific terror again.

CHAPTER SIX: DRAMA

Combat

Soak rolls are not used. All combat damage rolls have a difficulty of Sta + Fortitude + 3, with a maximum difficulty of 9. For each wound, roll another d10 - on a roll of 1, it is an aggravated wound. Silver weapons always cause aggravated wounds.

Multiple Shots

If firing more than one shot in a round, the first attack roll gets (shots fired/2)-1 (round up) additional dice, and each shot thereafter is at one less die per shot. For automatic weapons, break the shots into groups of three, and each three-round burst gets 2 additional attack and damage dice.

Example: Joe-Bob, Billy-Bob, and Bob-Bob Roberts are out hunting. Joe-Bob spotlights Bambi's mom from his rig, and Billy-Bob, armed with a fully- automatic M16A1, and Bob-Bob, armed with his 30-06, open fire. Billy-Bob fires six 3-round bursts, at +4/+2, +3/+2, +2/+2, +1/+2, +0/+2, and -1/+2 bonuses to attack and damage. Bob-Bob fires six individual shots at +2, +1, +0, -1, -2, and -3 bonuses to attack. The deer is shredded by the hail of bullets, and Bambi is orphaned and left with deep psychological scars.

END OF PLAYER SECTION
REMAINDER IS FOR THE GM'S EYES ONLY

CHAPTER SEVEN: SETTING

Lycanthropes

- Lycanthropes can change into two alternate forms: a humanoid animal or a full animal form. In humanoid form, Lycanthropes add 2 to all physical attributes and have Celerity equal to their original Dexterity attribute. In full animal form, they double (or add 3, whichever is more) their physical attributes, halve their mental attributes, and can only use their social attributes on their kind of animal. Lycanthropes have the equivalent of Animalism 4, Auspex 1, and can make a number of attacks per round when in humanoid and full animal forms equal to their adjusted Dexterity.
- Lycanthropes can change at any time, and will always change if wounded while in human form. They always change into full animal form when a full moon rises, and cannot change back until it has set. When the full moon is up, they have almost no control over their actions, acting in a constant blood- lust.
- Animals other than their own kind fear and hate Lycanthropes, and can almost always identify them even in human form.
- Lycanthropes can only be killed by aggravated damage or with silver weapons. They regenerate one normal wound per round, regardless of any other actions, and regenerate one aggravated wound per day. If dropped below Incapacitated by normal wounds, they will appear to die, but as they regenerate their bodies will draw back together. Even total physical destruction may not stop a lycanthrope from reforming.
- Any human bitten by a lycanthrope will become one at the next full moon. There is no known cure. Dead cannot become lycanthropes and lycanthropes cannot become living dead bloodsuckers, even if that was a really good episode of The Real Ghostbusters.
- The scent of wolfsbane revolts and enrages lycanthropes - they are likely to change and rip your throat out if you have some.
- Seeing a lycanthrope change shape or "rise from the dead" call for difficulty 7 terror rolls.
- Lycanthrope blood is as effective as human blood to the dead.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CHRONICLE

I need to write up some of the adventures I've run - there were a couple of political conflict games based on parodies of the Gary/Chicago material, which ended in large chunks of Chicago in flames and dozens of bloodsuckers dead, there was a ghost story/mystery, which ended in another massive gunfight when some stalkers stumbled across the players, after which the players fled the cities and met a communal farm run by werewolves. More carnage ensued, but by the end only two PCs had been staked or received that final suntan.

Feedback

- *I certainly agree re most of the supplementary material and nearly all the enthusiasts. But the idea of being violated and defiled and corrupted and turned into what you most hate is a form of horror, very effective for some people at least. And that is what the first Vampire: the Mumbling was about. If you ignored all that crap about Caine (can't these guys spell?) and the First City, and Antediluvians and Gehenna and prophecies you could run a very fine miniseries campaign of personal horror. I did it twice.* -Brett Evill (b.evill#TYNDALE,APANA,ORG,AU)
  Oh, absolutely - once you make the characters' new states be so offensive and inhuman that any memory of what they used to be is painful, then eventually splatter 'em because they ARE murdering monsters, it's horror (or some kind of dark genre, anyway). But by the time you toss out all that subtle politics and "oh, it's great to be dead" and "I make a much better bloodsucking corpse than I did a living person" and "oh, woe is my lost humanity, you wanna go to the art gallery? I hear Gaugin is on display" crud so you can get to that throbbing chunk o' bone and gristle of horror, there's not much of vamp left.
- *Your vampire variant game is one of the best things I've seen on the web in weeks. Finding stuff like that is the reason I browse the web.*
  I've played Vampire for quite a while and I knew there was something wrong with it. Thanks for putting me straight. :)
  The "no vampire mythos" stuff, no horror novels, etc. stuff is a great idea. The new rules are perfect for books like Vampire$. They only need really small modifications to play a perfect Anita Blake world! I'm really psyched. -Dana Anthony (daanth#unx,sas,com)

History of Bloodsuckers

- 2026-10-17:
  Cleaned up & made a PDF.
- 98Nov20 Update:
  Added more source info and commentary.
- 96Feb12 Update:
  I re-read these while checking for dead links, and realized that I'd left out a couple of sections, notably the Generation and Humanity notes, which are rather important, and I didn't have the trait chart in my original notes, just the changes - so I blindly recopied that in, without thinking that I was copying in the Humanity stuff, too. There were a few other mistakes, too.
- 95Dec28
  Created this document - I wrote the first notes when V:tM came out, but didn't write them into a coherent form until this.

EOF