



KATANAS **& TRENCHCOATS**

EPISODE 1:
Welcome to Darkest Vancouver



WHO WANTS TO LIVE FOREVER

Do you yearn to portray the passionate and harrowing drama of awesome Immortals in a secret supernatural world? Does your heart sing the ancient aphotic melody of '90s storytelling? Does endless fire burn within you to make an everlasting mark on this Darkest Cosmos? If you meet another Immortal in on a windswept street, do you fight with swords as your way of saying hello?

That's because you're a badass, and this book wants to be your best friend and squire. *Katanas & Trenchcoats* is your personal Egyptian Scots-Spaniard on this deep narrative journey. It presents for you—just you because you're special—a totally unique system that isn't at all ripping off countless other roleplaying games.

So gaze into this abyss, and let it gaze lovingly back. It wants to be a vessel for your truth. Open your heart and live the Immortal dream of the '90s now!

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Also Check Out These EXTREME RPGs: *Refuge in Audacity* by Logan Bonner, *Void Vultures* by Josh Roby & *Dudes of Legend* by White Wolf Publishing

SO GODDAMN PACKED

We've crammed so much majesty in less than 25 pages. Could we fit every amazing thing we came up with? Hell no! If we did that, how would we make supplements? So yeah, maybe some rules are missing. Loads of setting shit isn't here. But I trust that the best roleplayers will figure out shit for now, until we can take more of your money with later episodes.

Katanas & Trenchcoats, Episode 1: Welcome to Darkest Vancouver © 2015 Ryan Macklin. A bunch of Immortals were perma-killed in the making of this game. Because some chucklefucks will take it wrong: yes, this is a work of parody. No, we're not claiming ownership of others' IP. We're not chomping on their flavor; we're loving all over it. (That said, the game might also be playable? If not, that's what *Katanas & Trenchcoats Revised* will be for.)

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FORGED FROM STAROUST & ANCIENT FIRE

ABOUT THIS GAME:

PLAYING A TRUE SECRET HISTORY

Immortals walk among us. Some lurk in shadowy alleyways and fight shadowy threats. Others control governments and corporations behind shadowy puppet strings. Some even eschew the company of mortals entirely, sticking to the cold shadows of the wild. Point is, wherever there are shadows, Immortals rule.

Since roleplaying games are about totally ruling, we've taken our inspiration from those endless princes of the universe that truly live in our world... perhaps as tribute to them, perhaps to reveal their insidious secrets to the sleeping mortal world.

Katanas & Trenchcoats focuses on the dark and sexy aspects of tabletop roleplaying: swordfights, emotions (hidden and shown), probably badass soliloquies, whatever gets you hot—in and out of character. So grab your eyeliner, dice, and replica swords. It's time to play at being the rulers of us all.

WHAT EVEN ARE IMMORTALS?

The secret of your kinds' origin is lost to time, as mysterious as the Darkest Cosmos itself. You've appeared in every era of humankind, carrying the memory of eternity, the triumphs of humanity's greatest victories and the burdens of its tragic failures. You're the best and worst of everyone, at once the ultimate badasses and the ultimate terrors.

Immortals can't die by normal means—immune to the ravages of age, disease, privation, and injury. You might get hurt, but you'll always recover. The only way you can die for good—"perma-killed" in the lingo—is if another badass Immortal or other supernatural cuts off your head. That fact makes rivalries between your kind very personal and dramatic... and it means you're all very good at fighting with swords.

Immortals can't procreate. Thus, most relationships with mortals end in heartbreak, leaving you an eternal, brooding solitude. It also means you can have as much sex as you want without worrying about the consequences. (STIs are for mortals. You're good to go.)

Your Immortal nature means you have the potential of wondrous sorcery. At minimum, you summon and banish your Awesome Sword at will. The wickedest of your kind perform supernatural feats mortals only dream of—possessing psychic insights, becoming one with shadow, and even commanding elemental forces.

IMMORTAL HOUSES

Although Immortals quickly leave behind home and family upon becoming aware of what they are, they become part of a new family, what they call their *Genus*, commonly known as the Immortal's House. Written into their eternal souls, their Houses define a great deal about Immortals.

Since Immortals come by their undying natures in different ways, initiation to their Houses is the long process of self-selection that can stretch across decades or even centuries. Eventually, though, most Immortals find that having a network of assistance, reinforcements, and camaraderie is all but essential to eternal life.

HOUSE CANIS

Immortals of the House of the Wolf are "lone wolves" outside the "pack" that is humanity. Social creatures forever separated from society, Canids find some purpose for it, whether safeguarding their (metaphorical) descendants, fulfilling an oath, or preying upon mortal "sheep." Immortals say, "A Wolf's loyalty is forever."

HOUSE CORVUS

Sly, cunning Immortals known for skill in all things arcane make up the House of the Raven, from the battlefield haunters of Europe and oracles of the Mediterranean to the tricksters of North America and Asia. "Dark are the Corvids' souls, darker still their lore," the saying goes. They know everything, or at least act like they do.

HOUSE FELIS

Those of the House of the Cat moves easily in darkness, unseen, unheard. They are stealthy and sometimes cruel hunters and thieves able to appear and vanish almost at will. Felids are first-class sensualists who can resist everything, save temptation. Curiosity may kill a cat, but satisfaction always brings it back. That's not a mortal saying; that was always about Felis, and has since leaked out to mortal parlance (though none know by whom).

HOUSE ORPHIS

The House of the Serpent may or may not have been responsible for the Garden of Eden, but they certainly act like they were. Orphids are masters of disguise—shedding their metaphorical skins—and deception, "speaking with forked tongues". They were feared and worshiped in ancient times and have never forgotten it.

HOUSE URSUS

The House of the Bear may seem like a gang of hulking berserkers, but they are fierce, proud warriors as well as wise healers and protectors, from the Americas to Asia and their ties with Artorias, the bear-king of Camelot. An Ursine is slow to anger but an unstoppable force when unleashed, especially the legendary she-bears. "Never awaken a sleeping Bear," Immortals say.

*I've seen the deepest darkness
And wrestled with gods*
~Army of Lovers, "Crucified"

LESSER HOUSES

The psychopaths who call themselves **House Pistrix** are shunned by all right-thinking Immortals who understand that the proper way to dispatch an enemy is beheading them in the street. The Sharks insist on biting heads off, which, seriously, is just gross.

House Acerodon, by contrast, is a vanishingly small house of very little reputation. Mostly they just hang around all day. Some say they have extensive connections with Vampires, but this is probably an old wives' tale.

THE UNHOUSED: HOUSE BUFO

Not truly a House as it wholly lacks any structure, government, or membership rolls, “House Bufo” is a catch-all term for those Immortals who have not yet chosen a house—or who have been cast out of the House of their choosing. Named for the toad, which can’t decide if it should live in the water or on land, Bufo is as often a pejorative as it is a description of a loner Immortal.

LOST HOUSES

Even among Immortals, some institutions die out.

House Gallus: Long ago made extinct, the Hensprided themselves in using subtle pressure, diplomacy, and guilt to keep Immortal society from collapsing in on itself in an orgy of blood-soaked violence. That all ended in an orgy of blood-soaked violence after which the membership of Gallus was almost entirely perma-killed. Gallus was thereafter considered a Lost House.

House Anatide: A century after the destruction of Gallus, the Immortals saw the rise of House Anatide. Led by the dynamic Donald, they scooped up the unhoused with promises of power and grandeur. Their firebrand leader, prone to exaggeration, promised "We shall fly!" A few short years later, the entire House disappeared, the only clue a scribbled message on their meeting house wall: South!

House Meleagri: Now yet another house, this one calling itself Meleagri, claims to be the Anatide returned, and even claims House Gallus as its distant ancestor. Whether Meleagri intends to placate their fellow immortals into a stupor like the Gallus or enact some hare-brained scheme for the exaltation of its membership à la Anatide remains an unanswered question.



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HISTORICAL INFLUENCE

What historical events did you participate in? What's your secret influence on history? What famous people have you slept with? The SM should boost your Grandeur Rank if you find an event on Wikipedia that no one at the table knows about and incorporate it with style. That's good roleplaying.

ORIGIN STORY

Hollywood wouldn't keep making movies about your kind if you weren't dark and sexy. How did you become an Immortal? Basically, you've got three ways to take this: badass, tragic, or badass *and* tragic. Choose wisely, and create an awesome story. If it overlaps too much with your Personal Tragedy, make one of them more awesome and different, or else.

YOUR NAME

You need a name. Awesome names often include: prefixes, suffixes, ostentatious middle names, titles like "Baronet" or "Grand Poobah," nicknames like "Superfreak" or "Giggles," or fake names. Fake names are especially arousing, because it means your real name is a mystery.

If you get stuck, here's some awesome on loan: Google "dub-step songs," pick any two titles, and mash them together. That will give you an amazing and totally believable modern-day name. Or if you yearn for historically accuracy, Google "ren-faire names" and mash up any two.

If you're still stuck, name yourself "Landon Darkwood" and move on.

YOUR TRAITS

You have five Traits, representing the core elements of awesome you bring to the action.

AWESOME SWORD

Every Immortal has an awesome sword. Because reasons.

ANCIENT MEMORIES

You've lived longer and know more than anyone else.

RAGING PASSION

The beating heart of dark sexiness.

MYSTICAL TALENTS

Sorcery, mesmerism, and other unexplainable things.

KICKASS WARDROBE

Trenchcoat, corset, whatever, with other high fashion.

Traits and Skills are ranked in **Marks**; higher is better. Pick one Trait and rate it at 3, two others at 2, and the rest at 1. For every Mark a Trait has, full in a circle on your sheet.

Now, go back and do some more good roleplaying: customize one or two of your Traits to better fit you. Maybe you have an Awesome Cinquedea. (It's a type of sword!) Maybe you have Brooding Passion. Maybe you've got a Vigilante Costume. Get personal. Get specific.

Leave at least three with their original names. You'll rename them as you earn the right to in advancement.

YOUR SKILLS

Your Skills represent what you know and can do. See p. 10 for the list of Skills. You get the Fight Skill at 3 Marks for free, cuz duh—that's every Immortal's **Essential Skill**. Rate one other Skill at 3 now. You rate the others as you play: four Skills at 2 and the rest at 1. Whenever you're about to roll and see that you haven't defined the skill you need, you can decide if it's a 2 or a 1. You can do that until you've made four skills a 2.

YOUR EDGES

An Edge is a cool trick you can do that messes with the rules, because you're awesome. Most Immortals are double-edged, and get two Edges to start with. If you're triple-edged, you get three! See p. XX for a crazy bunch of Edges.

YOUR GRANDEUR RANK

Grandeur Rank is probably the most important stat you have! It tells everyone how awesome you are. It applies to you as a player and to your character; good roleplaying breaks the fourth-wall like it's a delicate teacup and you're a god of ferocity. Your initial Grandeur Rank depends on how much you detail you spouted forth in your Saga: 1 for a phrase in each category, 2 for paragraphs, 3 for pages, 4 for epic poems. (If you had the Premiere edition of this book, you'd get +1 Grandeur...)

You also get awarded more Grandeur if you draw your character, dress like them, bring your Awesome Sword to the game, or whatever exceptional roleplaying the SM deems worthy of Rank. If you do bad roleplaying, the SM will take your Grandeur away, so don't suck.

(What Grandeur Rank does is covered in the SM's section. Only read that if you have your SM's written permission.)

THRONE OF COMFORT

Name something important to you that, if threatened, would totally spur you to immediate action. It could be a place of power, legendary relic, social status, personal relationship, quest you've made some good progress in, whatever. Name something awesome that you're really invested in. Don't worry, though; the SM would *never* actually threaten it.

This is *always* the last thing you do. Why? Because you can't really know what your Throne of Comfort is until you give a massive backstory and decide on your crunchy stats and how Grandeuresque you are.

DONE!

Now start cutting heads off while moping about how you keep outliving your friends.

FULIGINOUS CITADEL: ORLANDO

There are plenty of other hotspots of supernatural action in the world. Take Orlando: Widely regarded as an entertainment destination, Orlando is actually a breeding pit of mutants and other stuff that's toxic. This is trenchantly ironic, because so many family-oriented vacation activities are located in Orlando and—*whoah*—when seemingly wholesome things are "dark," that's a really edgy "reimagining."

RULES THAT BIND THE COSMOS

KEEPING IT REAL & ROLLING DICE

You're standing in an alleyway—it's always an alleyway, right?—facing down a worthy foe. Mist pools in corners. Ambient urban noise fills the night. The only real light is the sheen on your blade and the blade of the Viking ninja you're facing down. How do we decide who wins? We roll dice.

First, **announce** what action (p. 7) you're doing in the moment, like "I'm cutting that luchador mask right off your face!" or "I'm scaling the wall like a freakin' monkey!"

Then somebody else **responds**. If someone jumps in to stop you, that's a response. If your action targets another Immortal and no one jumps in, they respond. Otherwise, the SM does. The responder says what they're doing or what makes it hard for you to pull off your action.

You both **assemble** your die pools. Select the Trait (p. 5) and Skill (p. 10) most central to your action, adding their ratings together. Pick up that many d10s. The SM just picks a difficulty between 1 and, oh, 10 dice; more dice means harder.

(**The Keep-It-Fresh Rule:** If you use the same combo of Trait and Skill twice in a row, that costs you a success after rolling.)

If you're going to use a Boost (hold on, we'll get to how to make one), describe it *before* rolling dice, and it's gotta make sense. You can use a Boost you made or have, or use a Boost someone else made if they're cool with it.

Roll your dice. Each die that rolls a 7 or higher ('0' does, in fact, mean '10') gives you one success. If you used a Boost, that gives you two extra successes. Using two Boosts gives you three extra successes instead of two.

Compare your number of successes with your opponent's. Whoever has more successes wins. Subtract the lower number of successes from the higher to get the action's result:

Difference in Successes	Result
4+ successes	Critical hit!
2–3 successes	Normal hit
1 success	Weak hit
Tie	Weak hits both ways
No successes for anyone	Big failure

Whoever lost **sells** the winner's victory. Describe how the winner succeeds. If you lose and skimp on the awesome, that's weaksauce roleplaying. Expect to get called on it. Plus, you want others to pimp your badassery when you win, yeah?

If you really must add something to your own victory, it'd better be necessary for the story, or you risk losing Grandeur.

Use a Boost? Now it's exhausted. Might want to make another soon...

FUNKY DICE OPTIONS

Let's make the game more complicated.

MAKE A GAMBLE

When rolling at least four dice, you can make a gamble. Describe a seat-of-your-pants, highly risky maneuver that can only result in astounding victory or catastrophic failure. Roll only one die, then turn the rest of the dice for your action to the same number.

EXPLODING DICE

If you ever get three 0s in a roll, the SM describes something in the scene exploding in a way that makes you look awesome. Remember, real badasses walk away from explosions without looking back.

MORE RULES THAT BIND THE COSMOS

BREAKING TRAITS

When you have to Break a Trait, you *always* Break the Trait you last used. Describe how that aspect of your character is compromised, lost, made unavailable, or literally broken. That Trait is worth 0 dice until you've recovered (see Resverie).

Any special rules that rely on that Trait (mainly Edges) don't work for shit while its Broken.

USING TROPHIES

When you face off against an Immortal and have one of their Trophies (p. 8) in your possession (whatever y'all decides that means), you can use it as a Boost once per scene. They should find a way to get it back from you or make it worthless, lest you keep hitting them over the head with it.

WOUNDS, DEATH & RECOVERY

As you are an Immortal, little things like wounds and death are, at best, fleeting inconveniences. Of course, there are wounds and then *there are Wounds*: Immortals start with five Wound boxes available.

NORMAL & HARDCORE WOUNDS

Most Wounds that you'll enjoy are **normal Wounds**: katana cuts, bullets, blunt force trauma, flamethrowers, poison gas, rabid dog bites, and the like. Mark normal Wounds with just a single slash in a Wound Box on your character sheet.

☒ ☐ ☐

All normal Wounds heal after a few minutes of downtime—anything that isn't combat, chase sequences, room-sundering sex, etc.. Wounds knit up without leaving scars (unless you dig scars); little things like missing fingers, toes, ears reform. More serious dismemberments—like an armed lopped off—might take as long as a day or three to unfuck; otherwise, Immortals would be all stumps.

Enough normal damage will kill you, but **death** is a temporary condition for Immortals. Once you've marked your

last Wound, your body is disabled and will die at the end of the scene; it might self-immolate, dissolve into dust or mist, or just sit there like a lump of meat. You're out of the action for a scene or two, and then you can make a glorious re-entrance. Erase all your normal Wounds. Game on!

What won't disappear are **Hardcore Wounds**. Each time you die, you take a Hardcore Wound. Mark new Hardcore Wounds by putting a slash on top of a normal Wound, making an X. Or mark a new Wound box with an X if you don't have any normal Wounds.

☒ ☐ ☐

Recovering from Hardcore Wounds requires completing a challenge created by the SM. You might trek to the Thrice-Blessed Fountains of Mu, or deliver a nubile princess to an ancient dragon—it's okay; it's some consensual kink roleplay thing they've been doing for centuries. Completing the challenge clears *all your Wounds*, but no challenge can be done twice by the same Immortal (unless the SM is boring).

Some eldritch weapons inflict Hardcore Wounds instead of normal ones, but we didn't have room to print those rules in Episode 1.

Once all of your Wound boxes are filled with Hardcore Wounds, you're **critically vulnerable**. You can still walk around and do stuff in later scenes, but you can't Attack, and you're automatically beat down if you take a single Wound.

WEAPON DAMAGE

Pretty much any weapon worthy of Immortals is rated at 3 dice. Weapons that aren't worthy can't be used to attack... but most weapons are pretty awesome in the hands of Immortals. Roll for damage like you would for an action; each success of 7+ gives a normal Wound.

(Detailed weapon stats: also totally in a future Episode.)

PERMA-DEATH

Most Immortals fear perma-death, although some welcome it, even seek it out. An Immortal who dies can be **perma-killed** by another, but this is a significant undertaking of willpower. The would-be perma-murderer must roll a special action,

using a Trait + the Will Skill; the vulnerable Immortal rolls Will + one die for every normal Wound (not Hardcore!) they have marked. Only the attacker can use Boosts.

If the attacker critically hits, the Immortal permanently dies. If the attacker gets a normal hit, Immortal takes a Hardcore Wound and the body disappears. For any lesser result, the Immortal disappears to rise again soon. Better luck next time!

RESVERIE

However, the most harrowing experience most Immortals undergo is the shrouded process of Resverie, a nightmarish dream-state where the Immortal is forced to reflect on their past crimes and failures. Resverie can take you by surprise, or it can be sought out through quiet meditation. The SM describes a scene out of your past, plunging you in recriminations and guilt over past sins. You describe what you did, and the flashback progresses until the scene's resolved. When you emerge from Resverie, Broken Traits are mended and back to their normal ratings. Resverie is the only known way (in Episode 1) to recover a Broken Trait.

AN ORGY OF ACTIONS

Not all conflicts are one-on-one duels. A lot of times there's a whole bunch of katana-wielding psychopaths leaping around slashing at each other. Or three Immortals trying to stop a fourth from pulling a lever that releases the Kraken. Or one drama queen trying to shame an entire room of people into action.

MULTIPLE TARGETS

When you act against more than one target—slashing your blade at two fiends or persuading three rivals to cooperate—announce your action, then remove one die for every target beyond the first. Everyone you target must respond, and each response is individually compared to your roll.

DOGPILE DEFENSE

When more than one Immortal wants to respond to a Push or Boost with their own Push back, everyone rolls simultaneously. The one with the highest result counts as the response. Each other defender forfeits their next turn in the combat—that's the cost of dogpiling the defense.

FOR EXAMPLE...

Aloysious and Kyoto have been going at it for nearly an hour—and by that I mean swordfighting; the Sex Move (p. 11) comes later. Kyoto has three normal Wounds at this point. Aloysious has one.

For initiative, Kyoto and Aloysious both roll Move + Awareness Skills. Kyoto rolls four dice (Move 2 + Awareness 2), and the highest is 8. Aloysious rolls three dice (Move 2 + Awareness 1), but only gets 6-high. So Kyoto starts the round by charging his erstwhile friend with his Awesome Sword Trait (rated at 3 Marks) and his Fight Skill (3 Marks). "I'm going to cut you down to size!" he shouts.

Aloysious responds by attacking—because why wouldn't you—with his Napoleon's Privy Cutlass Trait (Awesome Sword; 2 Marks) and Fight (3 Marks). They both roll dice: Kyoto rolls an impressive five successes, and Aloysious only gets three! With a difference of two successes, Kyoto scores a Normal Hit.

Kyoto rolls three dice for damage, since all weapons are worth three dice in Episode 1. He gets a 4, 8, and 7: two successes! So he inflicts three normal Wounds, bringing him to four Wounds marked on his sheet.

Aloysious marks those Wounds and considers his options, since he has just one Wound box left. He could flee, Breaking his Awesome Sword (the last Trait he used) and leaving behind a Trophy. Or he could hope to take Kyoto out first. That sounds less boring, so let's do that.

"Your battle-frenzy is no match for my suave sophistication," he declares as he uses stylish combat moves against Kyoto. He picks up dice for his I Make This Look Good Trait (Kickass Wardrobe; 3 Marks) and Fight.

Kyoto counterattacks. He can't use his Sword again without penalty, so he uses his Secret Catholic (Raging Passion; 2 Marks) with Fight. Kyoto strangles Aloysious with a rosary he normally keeps in an inside pocket, next to his heart.

Kyoto's dice give him four successes and Aloysious only gets 3. A Weak Hit deals one normal Wound to Aloysious, but that's enough to defeat him. Kyoto chooses to make a demand instead of just killing Aloysious. He picks his fellow Immortal up in his arms and says, "Admit it, Al. Admit it. You always loved me."

Told you we'd get to the Sex Move.

THEME SONGS MAKE YOUR GAME

You literally can't have a good game without a fucking awesome soundtrack, got that? Here's how music works in *Katanas & Trenchcoats*. Every player should bring their favorite song. The song can be about their character, nay, should *embody* the very essence of character. The best songs grant +1 Grandeur.

When stuff gets intense, any player can call for a song. Play a random song. Whoever's song it is gets a Boost while that song's playing. If you're sexing when your song plays, double the results of your Sex Moves roll. (Yes, always call for a song when you're getting lucky.)

Pick any song for your character's theme, but like, don't pick anything that sucks. That's bad roleplaying. Start with Queen or the Crystal Method or N.W.A. and work out from there. Or check out the YouTube playlist at SoManyKatanas.com.

SKILLS E MASTERCRAFT ACTIONS

THE ULTIMATE SKILL LIST

Immortals can be boiled down into 15 Skills. (Of course, there'll be Skill bloat later. Otherwise, what's even the point of calling this "Episode 1?")

AWARENESS

Figuring out what's up. Noticing danger, whether physical, emotional, social, financial, metaphysical, temporal, or gastrointestinal. Spotting clues (because that's *such* a useful thing to roll for in a RPG). Good not just for the five mortal senses, but also using your third eye (maybe also fourth eye, if you have Mystical Talents at 3+).

FIGHT

Kicking ass. Taking heads. This goes for swords, fists, guns (if you're just trying to tickle a fellow Immortal), magic—it's the only skill that causes Wounds. So if you're Wounding, you're using Fight... or you're cheating somehow.

HEISTING

Casing a place, breaking and entering, taking stuff, leaving without a trace (or with a trace that misdirects). Physical, digital, and mystical heists are all covered, since they're all the same to the sleek modern Immortal. It's also good for going over a crime scene to uncover how someone broke in, figure out what they took, and pin down where they went.

INFLUENCE

Getting people to do what you want, which could be through intimidation, seduction, etc. Sometimes you don't get exactly what you want, but you force the other person to have to flee or offer something else important cuz you're being too awesome to shrug off. That's still influencing, baby!

KNOWLEDGE

Immortal knowledge is so vast that this is split into multiple, separate skills:

Academics: Classical education—philosophy, mathematics, history, sciences, languages, etc. Knowing what "etc." means. Also useful for understanding academic bureaucracy and where to score the good drugs in the dorms.

Politics: Rumors about those in power—government, corporate, and supernatural conspiracy, all the same to you. Navigating byzantine bureaucracy by knowing the right schmuck to bribe or annoying form to fill out. Knowing who you can freely piss off and who you can't without payback.

Secret Lore: Occultism. True pagan rituals not in bookstores (and the bullshit ones in paperback). Immortal and other supernatural lore. Basically knowing everything mortals would get themselves killed by finding out, and also knowing what is actually bullshit mumbo-jumbo.

Street: Rumors about lowlifes. Secrets the downtrodden whisper to each other. Secret hobo codes. Where to score the best in designer drugs, all that jazz. You'll notice when the rats are deserting a sinking ship.

Damascus Steel Production: Everything that's worth knowing about swords, sword making, sword culture, all things sword-like. It somehow also covers ancient and modern Damascus, as well as the global steel industry.

L.C.S.

Lying, cheating, stealing. Whenever you're being extra-dishonest. It's about getting a quick edge or getting out of a jam. Disguises, forgery, underworld contacts, and secret Vegas rituals fall under L.C.S. (If you have L.C.S. at 4+, you can probably con the SM into believing "L.C.S." stands for something else, like "Long Chanting Screams," "Lacking Cocktail Sauce," or "Last Chance Situations.")

MAKE

Building, fixing, and breaking things. Programming software, working a forge, devising magic formulae, inventing a new form of marketing, whatever. Use Make when you want something that you can say, "hey, I made that" and you're not sarcastically pointing to a dead body.

MOVE

When you need to be totally somewhere else quickly or want to dodge out of the way of bullshit gunfire, you use Move. Also good for winning dance contests. Move covers cars, planes, ocean liners—anything that intentionally moves... and a few things that don't.

SNEAK

Hiding in shadows, in boxes, even in plain sight. Moving silently and unseen. You know, dark and sexy ninja skills. Also important for sneaking into inhuman places like the Umbric Realms, the Atramentous Lands, and Amazoft's headquarters.

WILL

Staying cool under pressure and not giving in. **Important:** You use this skill to perma-kill others and resist being perma-killed. So maybe don't leave this at 1 Mark.

PAIRING OPPOSING SKILLS

If you get really obtuse with your actions, sometimes the Skill your opposition uses isn't clear. Here's the general guideline for when another Immortal gets in your way:

Awareness is how you oppose actions like sneaking or lying. There aren't Awareness-based actions to oppose, yet.

Fight can be opposed by Fight (for counterattacks) or Move (for dodging).

Heisting can be opposed by Awareness (detective stuff) or Heisting (figuring clues based on how you'd do the Heist).

Influence can be opposed by Awareness (when they're employing misdirection), Influence (when they're targeting someone you can influence), or Will (when you're targeted).

Make can be opposed by Make for hacker duels, competitive alchemy, racing to repair or destroy a doomsday device, and whatever else Make can do in the game.

Knowledge can't be opposed. Information wants to be free. You can interfere by interrupting with an action of your own.

L.C.S. can be opposed by Awareness (against distractions and misdirection) or your own L.C.S. (bullshit detecting).

Move can be opposed by Move for chases, runway walk-offs, and the like.

Sneak can be opposed by Awareness (in general) or Sneak (only if you know someone's sneaking around).

Will can be opposed by Will (for perma-death).

MASTERCRAFT ACTIONS

Now that you know all the core rules and stuff, you can get really funky. Here are just a few actions for Immortals yearning to dominate the Great Game.

INFLUENCING & BULLYING PEOPLE

Sometimes you're so badass you can use words like weapons and get people to do stuff where normally there would be swords involved. Use Influence (or L.C.S. if you're not being wholly truthful); they can oppose the roll with Will (or L.C.S. if they're catching you in the lie).

If you succeed, they go along with what you want them to do or suffer consequences. If they deny a weak or normal hit, you get a boost out of them. The boost can represent their

frustration, hesitation, or confusion, or just how unbelievably slick you are. If you score a critical hit, they'll have to Break a Trait to get out of complying. Whatever their decision, they sell your action, describing why they go along with you or how you're awesome despite their being stubborn.

Critical hit	They comply or must Break a Trait to leave the scene
Normal hit	They comply or you get a Boost for a roll this scene
Weak hit/tie	They comply or you get a Boost for your next roll only
Big failure	You blow your sweet-talking; They get a Boost

INVESTIGATING SECRET STUFF

Has the game ground to a halt because the Story Master wants you to find a clue to make the story go again? Will it just take some time to discover it? Then tell the SM you discover a clue and ask them what it is.

Is there something barring the way and catastrophe or awesome action sequences might happen? Then it's a Push. Losing or tying means something gets in your way that you'll have to deal with it to get that juicy, juicy info.

Or is this all your idea in the first place because you're trying to dig up information to arm yourself in some upcoming showdown? Then you're making a Boost. Roll your dice. Success means you find something usable. Failure means you didn't and you never will—get over it and keep moving.

THE SEX MOVE

When two or more Immortals have sex with each other, roll the most appropriate skill from the following: Move, Make, Will, L.C.S., Knowledge (Academics). Whoever rolls the most successes feels the most invigorated, and gets a Boost in the next scene. If you tie, you all feel pretty damn awesome; everybody involved gets a Boost. As always, the loser describes the winner's success. Be brave: don't skimp.

If any die comes up 1, the sex is interrupted by something batshit nuts: ninjas or explosions or unexpected visits from ex-lovers. The winner still gets a Boost, but so awkward!

CHILL BACK & LOOK GOOD DOING IT

During a combat round, just be awesome without acting or responding with an attack. Gain +1 Grandeur Rank for the remainder of the scene. This effect is so cumulative.

Here I stand at the crossroads edge,
Afraid to reach out for eternity,
One step, when I look down,
I see someone else, not me...
—Queensryche, "Someone Else?"



THE DARKEST COSMOS

A WORLD OF DANGER & BADASSERY

Katanas & Trenchcoats is set in the **Darkest Cosmos**, which takes the world you think you live in—the Boring-Ass Time-line—and reveals the Supernatural Underneath. You know the saying “five minutes in the future?” Yeah, that. In the Darkest Cosmos, neon glitz rules, Immortals duel in foggy streets, Vampires run trendy nightclubs, Werebeasts rage out as eco-terrorists, Ghosts haunt and brood, demons take mortal hosts for rides, and so many other wicked things.

Powerful and sinister entities have their hands (and tendrils) in governments, corporations, gross-roots movements, consumer spending, youth groups, knitting circles—pretty much everywhere. Some Immortals fight against this incursion. Others are part of these massive conspiracies. Still others don’t give a shit unless they’re personally fucked with.

Magic is very much alive in the Darkest Cosmos—ley lines and faerie magic, heavenly and abyssal power, human sorcery and will-working, forces from Umbric Realms and Atramentous Lands, and Clarkean technomagic just to name a few. Some of this magic pours in from the outer realms of spirit and ether. Other magic is genuinely native to the Realms Mortal, such as that of Immortal sorcery or Werebeast shapeshifting. It’s pretty batshit crazy here. The only saving grace for mortals is that their minds are too feeble to understand the true nature of their world or remember horrifying unnatural encounters. (Except for those mortals cursed to be just awesome enough to Truly See, but not actually be supernatural.)

You’ll find all that and more in Darkest Vancouver—the unofficial capital of the supernatural world.

DARKEST VANCOUVER

Terminal City. End of the line. The last refuge of the burned-out elite, it’s a city like a gargoyle, crouched on the rain-soaked rooftop-edge of the future. Where technology, buried forces of ancient Gaia, and the Sorcery of the conglomerate global media universe grind together in one last sweaty dance party before the Apocalypse.

The secret history of the city starts with a man known only as “Jack,” a frontiersman and notorious drunk on the lookout for a place to wash away the horrors of living in the savage Canadian wilderness. With no place to turn, he did what every self-respecting drinker would do: open a bar himself. His bar was more than just a place to drown yourself in cheap whiskey; it was fortress against the darkness, built on a site of arcane power. Stories about this time are plentiful (though most of them shot through with lies) and there are some who tell them that claim that Jack was no mere mortal. If that’s true, he’s certainly deep in a powerful whiskey sleep beneath the city waiting to be awoken by a worthy successor to whom he can pass his infinitely distilled supernatural gifts. Jack’s legacy drew only the toughest people to the end of the line, a pull that remains as strong today.

Darkest Vancouver is a living nexus of raw energy. Its heart is the Granville Entertainment District, a throbbing



organ pumping blood, sex, and drugs. Bars, dance halls, and theaters crowd the streets and hidden beneath most of them are secret, underground clubs where only the most well connected are granted entry. Granville Street is a neon highway where anything goes, day or night. Controlled by the shadowy Donnelly Group (a cabal made up of Immortals, Vampires, Arch-Technomages, and other Powers) the GED is where the elite and famous Immortals go to rub shoulders and perform their ecstatic magicks under the pulsing lights.

They say you can't throw a knife in the Couve without impaling an aspiring director. This is because, like the Immortal, the film industry has felt the pull of the city's magick. A convergence of energy, Vancouver is cloaked in Glamour. Illusion magicks gain special power here and no illusion is more real than the silver glow of the movies. Vancouver is a perfect stand-in for any city and can be easily transformed into Tokyo, New York, Delhi, or Berlin. Unwary visitors will often find themselves lost in streets whose signs seem to shift languages without warning. Look to the skyline and you'll find the Sears Tower jutting into the sky next to the Burj Dubai. Turn your head and you'll see the Eiffel Tower, looming menacingly over the smoggy streets. Nothing is what it seems in Hollywood North.

Darkest Vancouver isn't all chrome and flash and glowing lights. An ancient power dwells here, and has since the dawn of time itself. The great water of the Pacific Ocean crashes cold as ice against the shore, a primordial entity waiting hungrily to swallow the decadent city that encroaches on its territory. Virtua-shamans who make their home in Vancouver post on EcoMagickal forums about "whispers from the sea" and a dark thing that rises in the depths. Many have lost their minds searching for the meaning of these secrets and wander the streets, babbling about the Great Orca Spirit. What these tuned-in aura junkies agree on is that something big and bad is coming, and that it'll spell the end for all who aren't ready for it. Most Immortals treat this ranting as crackpot bullshit.

Darkest Vancouver is a place where anything might happen. Its where Immortals can come to tap into the sweet veins of ancient power or just lose themselves in the hedonistic fury of the city with nowhere left to run. Something bleak is emerging from the watery horizon, and the view of the Apocalypse is always the finest in the city at the end of the world.

INFAMOUS IMMORTALS

Ellen Caldwell seeks forbidden arts that make necromancy look weaksauce. Only she and the **Rose of Viterto** possess keys to the Vatican's Dante Archive.

Known as The Mercenary, **Angus McGillicutty** will hunt down and perma-kill other Immortals for the right price. Or just regular-kill, if you're only looking to teach a lesson.

Gildoril was cursed to be so beautiful as to drive nations to war. Today, she uses that to run mortal crime syndicates.

Lucretia and her biker gang, the Red Madonnas, patrol the Pacific Northwest, dispensing their own brand of justice wherever they see it lacking—against mortals and supernaturals alike.

A Technomage before becoming Immortal in the late 1800s, **Mimsy Borogrove** spends most of her time creating mind-bending technological devices in her orbital laboratory.

Cairo Surge uses Borogrove's facility as a safe house, as it's the only place where he can be treated for the cyberserpentine affliction that made him Immortal.

King David yet lives. She changes her name and face every couple decades, and her gender once a century or so.

That's barely the beginning; Immortal culture is a rich vein. Check out somanykatanas.com for more characters.

WHAT ABOUT RELIGIOUS FIGURES?

You mean like Moses, Buddha, Heimdall, St. John the Divine, Apollo, and Keanu Reeves? We'll touch on them in the Needlessly Controversial Episode. Because we gotta have one of those, or this isn't truly Darkest.

FULIGINOUS CITADEL: SEATTLE

Seattle's very own Fremont Troll used to be an Immortal. How'd it get stuck? No one's sure. It's probably something to do with how damn big it got. Grew too big, grabbed a car, and somebody had to put that fucker down. Bet he could wake up... if someone knocks hard enough.



DANCERS IN A PERILOUS TANGO

The Darkest Cosmos isn't just a playground of Immortals. These are many supernatural fronts that post as threats, uneasy allies, and drinking buddies. The following are just a few of the major and minor players in the Darkest Cosmos, along with their presence within Darkest Vancouver.

ROYAL MOUNTED SPECIAL BLACK OPS TASK FORCE

This elite military brigade is Canada's response to the growing supernatural menace. You didn't think the government would remain ignorant of sword-wielding undying people *forever*, did you?

What the Public Knows: Absolutely nothing. The RMSBOTF ("Centaur's" in their parlance) prefers citizens of Darkest Vancouver asleep in their beds, ignorant of the covert forces keeping them safe from Immortal lunatics and other shadowy figures.

What the Immortals Know: They're organized, highly informed, and cruise around in stealth hovercraft. Immortals unlucky enough to be captured by Centaur's are dragged them off to a lab rumored to be under a Canada Post building.

Face: René Bogosian, head of Canada Post in Darkest Vancouver. Don't let the PSAs he does in the Santa suit or his collection of natty sweater vests fool you. He's a black ops luminary and a brilliant tactician.

Shit Going Down Now: Man, you were about to have the most truly epic duel. Sparks flying off swords, fireworks, shattering glass... the works! Until those hovercraft surrounded the warehouse, spewing armed soldiers in urban camo. Fuck.

TEAM NUNCHUCK

You'll never find a more organized gang of violent stunt actors and cultural appropriators within Darkest North America.

What the Public Knows: Anyone who knows anything about the movie industry knows this crowd—at least their reputation as a highly skilled guild of stunt performers. Movie credits list "Team Nunchuck" with as much status as any SFX studio might get.

FULIGINOUS CITADEL: IRELAND

Ireland, or *Tír na nÓg* in the whispers of supernaturals, is the threshold of the Faery realm—a threshold drenched in blood and terror. The land is bitterly divided between Catholic native and Protestant invader, from the capital Dublin (*Tara* in the true tongue) to the other cities and villages. If you hail from this ancient land, you have red hair and alcoholism and totally wield a traditional claymore. (It's cool; an actual Irish writer wrote this. That makes insulting and appropriating their culture okay, right?)

What Immortals Know: These guys aren't just skilled at martial arts and high-flying wire work; they're performing a years-long ascension ritual to steal talents from ancient traditions practiced in other cultures... by using those very talents on camera. After hours, they put their powers to the test by working as mercenaries for various supernatural clients.

Face: Brad "Daikatana" Wilson is a lantern-jawed, muscle-bound white dude who always dresses in (totally inauthentic) Japanese kimonos and "samurai garb." He's runs a "dojo" downtown, training the next generation of faux-ronin.

Shit Going Down: Team Nunchuck signed a new contract with the Immortal Aziz, who's out to take down some local bigwig, and needs a gang of mostly disposable and deniable agents who are nevertheless capable of going toe-to-toe with supernaturals standing in his way. Team Nunchuck's price? Access to a collection of ancient Near Eastern artifacts.

SCARS SUB ROSA

Scars Sub Rosa is *the* hottest goth/fetish nightclub in all of the Darkest Pacific Northwest. Corsets and the Cure weave through an absinthe haze. In its walls, dark cravings are *sated*.

What the Public Knows: If you want in Darkest Vancouver's hottest goth/fetish nightclub, you'll need an invite. SSR takes over a random building—empty warehouse, mansion, office park, even an existing club—for a weekend. But like any orgy, when everyone's spent, the party moves on...

FULIGINOUS CITADEL: MACHU PICCHU

Although the height of the Incan Empire was in the 15th century, this Brazilian ruin plays host to occasional secret cabals of trenchcoated katana virtuosos. Hidden chambers throughout the ruin contain stockpiles of really puissant katanas and probably some spears or other exotic weapons, too, for lost in the mists of history, a school of katana mastery emerged here because every generation sees a master born in every culture and here it was. Also, Machu Picchu isn't in Brazil, it's in Peru, but that's the sort of misdirection and secrecy shrouding Machu Picchu these nights.

What Immortals Know: "Everybody bleeds:" that's the rule since spidercore group Blood Recklions semi-accidentally conjured the devil Saxaz Sinslick. After the slaughter, Saxaz decided Earth could be a blast—with the right company. Now hapless mortals that walk into Scars Sub Rosa don't walk out the same... and some don't walk out at all.

Face: With silken charm and a sweet mantis-in-amber cane, club owner Lilith Lust arranges Scars Sub Rosa's stops. Saxaz whispers moody suggestions—untended crypts, semi-famed murder houses—that just happen to be Hellmouths.

Shit Going Down: The staff's dressed as plague doctors, local fave Speak and Shame is wailing, and at midnight one of your mortal friends (who is totally in the dark about your kind) will get cut in a group sacrifice to summon Acorphemis, the Lunatic Teat. It's going to be killer!

VIVIPAROUS VYPERS

Oh, man, you *do not* want to mess with the Viviparous Vypers. Serpents who can take on the form of humans, the Viviparous Vypers seek to implant innocents with their embryonic progeny, which then gestate and burst forth from their hosts in a shower of gore and blood and some more gore.

What the Public Knows: About Viviparous Vypers? Nada. But their presence is nonetheless felt—more than a few of Darkest Vancouver's hipster population are Vypers just trying to blend and get by in mortal society.

What the Immortals Know: Of course, Viviparous Vypers have katanas in place of traditional viper fangs. These katana-fangs can be poisonous, depending on the ancestry of a given Vyper. Viviparous Vypers are weak against thunder magic and cold-forged bauxite.

Oh, and Immortals also know to tip their baristas well, just in case they happen to be Vypers in disguise.

Faces: Gable and Skyler are the apex of the Darkest Vancouver Vyper community. You can tell they're the top based on the size of their earlobe gauges.

Shit Going Down Now: While Gable's followers are happy to just complain about "how cool the planet was before the monkeykin hit the scene" while serving the city's best god-damn macchiatos and doing sweet unicycle tricks, Skyler's

have turned cultists looking to actually change the world—by summoning their elder snake god. One key ingredient: A vat of blood from human Immortals.

ILLUMINATED COUNCIL OF THE NEW FUTURE

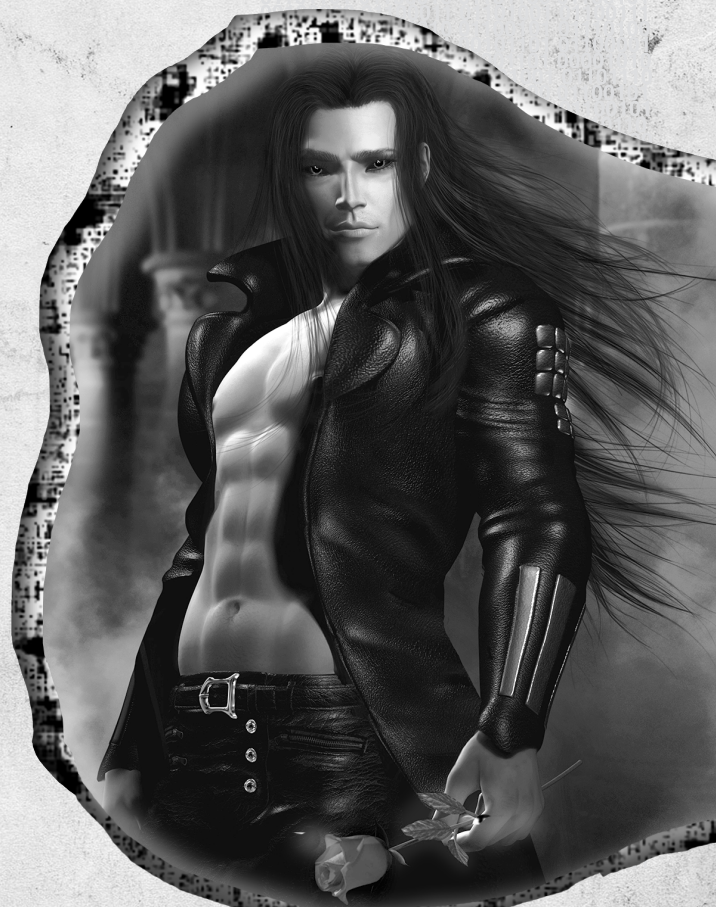
The Illuminated Council of the New Future is secretly in control of everything including, double secretly, the other organizations that think they control everything. Also, they have cyborgs. So many cyborgs.

What The Public Knows: Nothing! Dear lord, what's the point of secretly controlling everything if Joe Q. Moron knows about it?

What Immortals Know: The Council dates back to somewhere in the First Crusade, and their shadowy machinations for the last thousand years have guided the technological development of all humankind. Naturally, they keep the best things for themselves from the Clockmen of the Renaissance to today's vat grown cyber-troops, hoverjets, and orbital helicopters. It would freak you out to see these things.

Face: Sheila Mammonson, Greater Darkest Vancouver Area online marketing guru.

Shit Going Down: Mammonson has pit the Vypers against Team Nunchuck, hoping to draw out the RMSBOTF. She's scheduled said confrontation in the lair of the one of you who, a few decades back, broke Mammonson's heart.

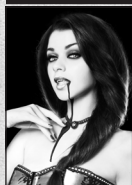


PLAYING OTHER SUPERNATURALS

Immortals aren't the only supernaturals who walk the shadowy back alleys of the Darkest Cosmos. There are others—many others—who bear terrible curses of power or wield unfathomable and sanity-shattering magicks. It can be tempting for lesser players to want to play these other eldritch entities. They may not understand how truly awesome Immortals are or how precisely suited their lives are to good roleplaying. Generous, beneficent SMs might allow players to use these rules. Vicious SMs will mine these for equally vicious antagonists.

These basic rules replace Immortal creation and play where mentioned: other age generation methods, different traits, etc.. Advanced rules for playing these will appear in a parade of later Episodes. And yes, everyone knows how and has the means to perma-kill everyone else.

VAMPIRES



A bite, a flash of pain. An eternity of bliss as you slowly died. And then you opened your eyes. Now your body is hard, sleek, and impossibly pale. But even though you have amazing abs, there is a burning angst inside of you that can only be quenched by tragic love.

Age Generation: One die is how many lovers you've lost. The other two are how many mortals have accidentally or intentionally died at your hands.

Personal Bullshit: For Personal Tragedy, what friend or family member died, and how was it your fault? For Inner Deal, why do you fall in love with mortals, only to push them away?

Traits: Replace Mystical Talents and Raging Passion with: *Blood Necromancy*—magic drawn from blood and death (but in a sexy way).

Dark Poetry—the sensual self-loathing that gets you through each night.

Essential Skill: Influence, because mortals are prey.

Wounds & Death: When you drink someone's blood, you can heal immediately as if it's been a day of game time. If you're hungry, you can't heal at all until you feed.

Perma-Death: You can be perma-killed by a silver stake through your heart. Once someone knows you're a Vampire, they can find a silver stake.

WEREBEASTS



If you're not angry, you haven't been paying attention. With their excellent senses, Werebeasts are *very* good at paying attention. They notice every stupid thing the dirty apes do. They keep count. Eventually, they're going to even the score.

Age Generation: One is your human age, because you age in dog years (or octopi or whatever). The other two makes the age listed on your fake ID.

Personal Bullshit: For Inner Deal, what kind of beast lurks beneath your human skin? For Influence on History, describe one time you just couldn't take it anymore and killed someone... and how they turned out to be important.

Traits: You have Raging Passion, Kickass Wardrobe, and: *Sharpened Senses*—Every detail reveals itself to you.

Claws that Catch (or Tentacles That Strangle)—Your array of animal features are very, very good for hunting and killing.

Wild Kinship—All beasts of the Many Wilds bow to you, and especially those of your Breed.

Essential Skill: Still Fight. Werebeasts gotta beast out.

Wounds and Death: You heal like Immortals because you're a shapechanger; a broken bone is just a different shape from a whole one.

Perma-Death: You're vulnerable to a type of metal. Silver for wolves. Bronze for rams. Copper for cephalomorphs. Mercury hurts everyone because mercury is *really* toxic.

TECHNOMAGES



You perform supernatural feats of high-tech wizardry. Any act of magic is indistinguishable from sufficiently awesome science, so you've devised bleeding edgeware and methodologies far beyond what mere mortals dare fathom.

Age Generation: Use two dice to get your age, and two dice to get the percentage of your body that's *not* been technomagically altered yet. (Yes, you still roll 3d10.)

Personal Bullshit: For any point in your Saga—Somewhere in your past, one job went wrong in a big way. Someone survived that shit-storm and wants revenge: a suit, cyber-criminal, government dark-unit, or entire corporation.

Perma-Death: In theory, any mundane weapon can kill you... except you *pwn* theory. But someone using unnatural improbability (or your own tech) could perma-kill you.

The Power of the Maze—All places of death are part of the Atramentous Lands, and you can go between them like a leaf on the wind.

Perma-Death: A Ghost can be Obliterated by destroying the fetter that ties them to the Realms Mortal, trapping them forever in the Atramentous Lands.

Perma-Death: You can be perma-killed by weapons made of cold steel. Yes, including ammunition.

Yeah, well, screw you, Orson Welles, because you're not fooling anyone. Take that happy emo horseshit and ram it up the ass of your unfinished admissions sample to the Iowa Writers Workshop, because none of us are impressed with your brave and daring "good roleplaying" choice.

Seriously? You still want to do it? Fine. Do regular character creation and then strip all the cool shit off. The sad, pathetic meatsack that's left? That's your character.

There are many other sorts of supernaturals in the Darkest Cosmos. Later Episodes will cover Demons, Mummies, Sorcerers, Nephilim, Paladins, Mutants, Orcs, Urban Shamans, Avatars, Dragonkin, Visible Clergy, Halflings, Pre-Ghosts, and more!

Dream on my dear
 And renounce temporal obligations
 Dream on my dear
 It's a sleep from which you may not awaken
 ~Dead Can Dance, "The Ubiquitous Mr. Lovegrove"

BEING A DAMN STORY MASTER

WHAT THE HELL DO YOU DO WITH THIS GAME?

Ah, the age-old question for all RPGs. *Katanas & Trenchcoats* can handle any story worth telling, but it best handles the princely narrative of deathless character melodrama intermixed with awesome violence. You can just do combat with sparks flying off of metal, and you can just do brooding contests where the most emo person wins, but if you make those two ideas get it on, this game will deliver that story-baby.

We've got the action part covered for you. I mean, "Katanas" is in the title, for fuck's sake! The melodrama part is up to you and the group doing good roleplaying. These are rules to push you in directions when conflicts come to head, but you all have to *want* that story to emerge. The trick is as much in the setup as it is in the moment-to-moment play.

USE THOSE HOOKS!

If your players did good roleplaying in character creation, then you have pages of backstory to mine for ideas of how to fuck with them. And remember their Thrones of Comfort? That we promised you wouldn't mess with? Of course we lied. Since *we* lied, it's *our* fault. That frees you up to play hard and string them up by their story hooks.

If they don't give you enough ideas and their Thrones of Comfort are weaksauce, do they even want to play? Okay, some players are better at extemporaneous oration and composing epic prose. If text is running dry, have the players talk about their Immortal's antics. Ask questions. Frame flashback scenes. And if they still don't have good ideas, I dunno. (And if they have excellent ideas, they should get some Grandeur for tickling your ear with words they didn't put on paper.)

YOUR PREMISE: INWARD OR OUTWARD?

The sorts of premises you can come up with for *Katanas & Trenchcoats* games come in two forms: inward and outward. **Inward** premises have the protagonists pointed at each other, maybe with a couple NPCs on equal footing. This covers stories of the PCs wanting things from and


jockeying power between each other. They're significant players in their world, and everyone else is a sometime-ally, sometimes-foe, and sometimes-lover. Want player-on-player intrigue? Play an inward premise, like "The Immortal duke was just beheaded. Who will take power? Who will survive the ensuing conflict?"

Outward premises have the PCs in a coterie, bound together by something—similar need, fate, circumstance, survival, ancient events, drunken bets—and working together against external forces. Want stories of

interfering with conspiracies, uncovering mysteries, and confronting big bads? Play an outward premise, like "Your joint mentor was killed. By who? Why? What dangers lie ahead?"

You can totally **mix those together**, like "The Immortal duke, your shared mentor, was just beheaded. By who? Why? And who will claim power in this vacuum?" You can also adjust the premise as you go, tilting more in one direction or another as the story progresses. Your best tools for this adjustment are your NPCs. Make them real threats worth banding together against and the game will slide Outward. Use them to goad the player Immortals into arguments and duels and things will turn Inward quickly.

Now, you could let your players in on what sort of game they're going to be playing, or even ask them what they prefer, if you want to make playing an RPG *easy*. Or you could keep them guessing the entire time. Nothing is more entertaining than crippling uncertainty regarding a hobby pastime.



THE PLASTIC RULE

Every Story Master should feel free to adjust the rules contained in this book to match the needs of their particular game group. They should also adjust the rules in order to verbally kneecap the one ass-cannoning funk monkey in every group who memorizes the rules and then proceeds to use that hyper-specific knowledge to crap all over the game session because that's their version of mounting behavior.

Fuck that. That's bad roleplaying, and it should be punished. Seriously. When docking Grandeur doesn't work, change the rules on the fly on that sumbitch and watch their head explode. It's the most fun you'll have all night.

THE ARMORY: EDGES

Edges are advantages, feats, stunts, and talents that are so sweet-ass that not even all Immortals can do them. Each Edge tells you what it does and how it works, as well as the required Trait, Skill, or other character element.

Losing Access: If you can't meet the Edge's requirement in play (like if you Break a necessary Trait), then you lose access to that Edge until you fix your shit.

ADVANCED PSYCHOMETRY

You get visions (by concentrating or at SM discretion) about important objects or places in a scene to catch glimpses of their history. This can be used on other Immortals to find out pieces of their Saga or their Throne of Comfort if that really interests you.

Required: Mystical Talents 2+ to get down with your inner goddess.

ALWAYS ANOTHER POUCH

You invented the Boy Scouts, and they take their motto from you. Once per session, you can draw something useful out of one of your many pockets, pouches, purses, or patches. Describe which location you're drawing the object from, and draw it on your character doodle. Be sure not to double up, or else you'll totally violate realism.

Required: Kickass Wardrobe 2+ because seriously where else would you put them.

ARMOR OF PASSION

When something truly meaningful is directly at stake, like your Throne of Comfort, you can take 1 more Wound in a fight before you're beaten. (SMs, expect the player to bullshit ways of making everything about their Throne of Comfort. And then make them suffer for it when they lose fights.)

Required: Raging Passion 2+ and a majestic backstory, which you should already have.

BALANCED EDGE

To achieve balance, you must put yourself at equilibrium. To walk a tightrope, you must equally distribute your weight. To truly be balanced, you must consider both sides. You can use three Boosts in a single action for a total of +5. If you do, you can't use this Edge again until you use two Boosts in an action and only take a +1 for them. In both cases, you must emphasize just how in the middle of everything you are.

Required: Fight 4+ and Raging Passion at 1 or less. Otherwise, how can you be so Zen?

CATLIKE LANDING

If you jump off a tall building or cliff, you land on your feet without taking any damage or lose time. You don't even have to bend your knees, although dropping into a crouch with your trenchcoat billowing around you can still look pretty badass.

Required: Move 2+ and a near-coital love of heights.

CHAINED PARRY-RIPOSTE

When some fool dares attack you, you automatically parry and riposte with moves that make Jackie Chan look like a piker. This Edge may be magical, mental, or physical in nature

(choose one). It can be taken more than once, because there's no such thing as being over-prepared.

Required: 2+ in an appropriate Talent for delivering your bitchin' response to any unwarranted attacks.

CLOAK OF SHADOWS

You can disappear and reappear at will, provided there's something cool for you to disappear around—the shadows, a passing truck, a crowded dance floor, etc. If an Immortal tries to find you after you've disappeared in the scene and you have to roll dice to block, you get one Boost to use that scene. Mortals are out of luck.

Required: Kickass Wardrobe 2+ to slink around in the darkness all awesome-like.

COMBAT SPLIT

Once per session when Pushing against an Attack, describe what two objects you use to make an acrobatic split over in order to avoid the attack. Double your successes on this defense.

Required: Move 3+ because only those with the appropriate crotchal dexterity can master this maneuver.

CONNOISSEUR

You have a passion for a very specific art and are a world-class expert. French wine. Japanese calligraphy. German funk. Chess. Describe how your Throne Of Comfort is a stylish and tasteful paean to this pursuit. Whenever your passion is prominent in a scene, gain +2 to your Grandeur Rank.

Required: Grandeur Rank 2+ for the sophistication to pull this off. Otherwise, you're just a poser.

CULT OF PERSONALITY

You are a Golden God, and your awesomeness is just too great to keep hidden. You've attracted numerous fawning devotees who seek to emulate you or sleep with you. You can always find someone willing to help you such as by holding the bag, taking the fall, distracting a guard, or whatever. This is a great plan and they're excited to be a part of it.

Required: Kickass Wardrobe 3+ to look the part or Grandeur Rank 3+ to be the part.

DEADLY HANZO STEEL

Every Immortal bears a Awesome Sword, but yours is told in story and in song. 6s count as successes when you wield your blade against someone who knows its legend.

Requires: Awesome Sword 2+ and a poem about the deadly beauty of your blade.

DOPPELGANGER

Through technology or magic, you never leave your lair. No one realizes it because you use a doppelganger that looks and acts exactly like you. Whether the doppelganger is a hologram, a robot, a simulacrum, or another SM approved creature, damage to your doppelganger doesn't affect you, allowing you to plot your revenge.

Required: Make 3+ to create a doppelganger that would fool your own mother.

DOUBLE-AXE HANDLE GRIP

Making a fist with both hands, with fingers interlaced, a successful hit will knock your target unconscious (Immortals roll Will to resist). By all rights this should shatter your fingers, but it doesn't because this game isn't about boring-ass "real physics."

Required: Fight 1+ because it looks easy enough to do.

INHERITOR OF THE DRAGON SPIRIT

The legendary dragon orbs have chosen you as their vessel. If you channel the power of the dragon, you can achieve the perfect warrior's spirit, but at what cost? The cost is time. In a fight, you can describe how you're powering up by channeling the dragon spirit. Describe what's going on in the environment as your power comes to the surface. Take a Boost for your next Attack in this fight for each turn you spend powering up.

Required: Mystical Talents 2+, for the dragon only takes their own.

IMPENETRABLE LAIR

Your lair is invulnerable. It can't be broken into, hacked, spied up, set on fire, or blown up. You have taken all the necessary security precautions and all your personal are completely loyal. You have all the appropriate documentation. You've thought of everything.

Required: Influence 3+ to have someone else handle the paperwork.

LIBRARY OF INFINITE KNOWLEDGE

You have a vast, personal library that holds darkest secrets, ancient lore, a crapton of college textbooks, and volumes on Damascus. Add one success to all Knowledge rolls you make while using your library.

Required: Any Knowledge 3+ or why do you even have a library.

MACHINE SENSE

When in physical contact with a machine or other device, you have an instinctual sense of its operation and, if it's broken, understand how to fix it. You get a free Boost once a session usable when attempting to repair or sabotage tech-based things.

Required: Make 3+ because you're an engineer-artiste. Must be a Technomage to use this on technomagical devices.

MAJESTIC ACCENT

You have a sexy Accent from your years in the old country, but a good Accent, not like an American one. Add one success to all Influence and L.C.S. rolls that involve you speaking to someone, along with any roll where you're having sex. But if you speak in character without affecting your Accent (or you use it and everyone hates you for it), lose 1 Grandeur.

Required: Ancient Memories 2+ and appropriate backstory that explains where you picked up your Accent.

PARANOID FORESIGHT

You're a forward thinker, constantly preparing yourself for both likely scenarios and things most people can't imagine—because you know They're coming. Once per session, you can dictate that you were ready for whatever is happening and bust out something small but significant, like extra ammo, a special weapon, or a spare set of shades (for reasons of awesome).

Required: Awareness 2+ and knowing They're out to get you.

SOUL BLAST

You can wield the very essence of Immortality as a weapon, blasting others with your soul as easily as slicing with your sword. This lets you use Will to Attack; describe what form the attacks takes. If you use this to Attack and take Wounds yourself on that action, you take one extra Wound because your soul is totally exposed.

Required: Mystical Talents 2+ to throw your soul around.

SPRITE IN YOUR DEBT

You've bound a tiny fey sprite (or cherubic angel or similar being) to your service. Once a session, you can summon it to perform some small and quick task for you before it goes back to doing what it was doing before. It won't get in harm's way for you and won't appear in front of mortals—it doesn't owe you *that* much. The first time this happens, the SM describes what it looks like, then you name it.

Required: Influence 3+ to bullshit the fey (or whatever).

TO PAY THE ASHEN PRICE

Your soul churns with angst deeper than the Darkest Pits. When the SM destroys your Throne of Comfort, immediately replace it with "avenge your loss" or "brood over the skyline of Darkest Vancouver." Also, it starts to rain.

Requires: Raging Passion 2+ to express your angst.

THE UNSOLVED MYSTERIES OF UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

You follow (and probably manipulate) reports of supernatural activity in the mortal world. If only those gullible mortals knew the truth. When you're using a Knowledge skill in attempting to recall details about unexplained phenomena that isn't Immortal-related, add one success to the roll.

Required: Knowledge: Secret Lore 3+ since only those who have seen the truth can truly *know* the truth.

WORLD TRAVELLER

You are a rootless wanderer. At the beginning of every session, declare where tonight's story begins—anywhere in the Darkest Cosmos, but somehow the scenery always resembles Pacific temperate rain forest. Once per session, when you incorporate a notable aspect of the local geography or culture into your Response to an Action, add 1 success to your roll.

Requires: At least 500 words written for your Influence on History to explain your rambling lifestyle.

YOU CAN TAKE IT WITH YOU

Whenever you return from death, you can bring something back with you, as long as it can be held in one hand. It can be something you had on you when you died, or it can be something lost to antiquity, but not something that already belongs to someone else.

Required: Will 3+ to drag eldritch energies back with your consciousness. Also, someone else has to kill you.

ZENO'S STEP

An ancient philosopher taught you how to sneak past space itself. Once per session, you can silently and instantly walk up to 15 feet without ever having occupied any of the space between there and where you started. You're here, then you're there. Note that you can't walk out of bindings or chains, because bondage is hot.

Required: Sneak +3, not Mystical Talents; this isn't magic, you're *bullshitting space*. Big difference.

LARP RULES, PART 1

The other rules in this book are for tabletop-style play, which is all well and good when you're just getting started with roleplaying. But tabletop is inherently limited in its capacity for immersion; if you *really* want to get into the game, you need to step away from the table.

And so here are rules that you can use to play *Katanas & Trenchcoats* as a Live-Action Roleplaying Game (LARP). LARPing provides a truly immersive experience, because instead of hand-waving while you narrate things like "I punch the dude in the face", you actually play out the action you're describing. (Only without actually punching anyone in the face.)

A WORD OF CAUTION

LARPing isn't as "safe" as tabletop play, which is why it's important to set some ground rules. LARPers are never allowed to bring real weapons to a game, nor are they allowed to touch someone without their permission. (This includes punching. No matter how bad they are at roleplaying.) Of course, not bringing real weapons to a game can affect your Grandeur rank, so make sure you're doing other cool roleplaying shit.

RESOLUTION

When playing the LARP, you use the same rules for character creation. What differs is the resolution mechanic. Since it would be tedious and desperately uncool to pause the action so that players can pull out some dice, find a flat surface, and roll to resolve a challenge, there's no die rolling here. Instead, players use rock-paper-scissors, with several modifications.

When a player character is taking an action where the outcome is uncertain but not opposed by another character, the Story Master calls for a challenge. At the SM's discretion, it can be either a basic challenge, in which case either a tie or victory passes the challenge, or a hard challenge, in which ties also count as failure.

POWER SIGNS

Players can use special signs when using a Skill or Trait rated at 3 or higher. There are different **power signs** for each Skill and Trait, and each power sign beats some signs and loses to others.

- **The Eye** (Awareness 3+): Point two fingers at your eyes, then one finger at your opponent. Loses to the Fist, Anvil, and Scissors.
- **The Fist** (Fight 3+): Smack fist against opposing palm. The Fist beats everything but the Anvil.
- **The Finger** (Influence 3+): Point one index finger at opponent. Loses to the Fist, Maaaaagic, and the Anvil.
- **Maaaaagic** (Mystical Talents 3+): Twiddly magic fingers. Loses only to the Anvil and Rock.
- **The Anvil** (Knowledge: Damascus Steel Production 3+): One hand flat, palm down, smack top with opposing fist. Loses to [REDACTED].
- **The Horns** (Will 3+): You know, the horns, like "throwing the horns" Loses to the Anvil and the Fist.

All this barely scratches the surface of the deep LARP rules for *Katanas & Trenchcoats*. This is just part one of what's probably an infinite-part series.

A NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION, FROM RICHARD DANSKY

Many of terms used in this game are originally derived from foreign languages. Under normal circumstances, we would provide a guide to the correct pronunciation. However, seeing as this is a game book about stabbing people in the face with katanas, we've decided to forgo that content. I mean, it's not like you were ever going to use it, and if you did, you'd still pronounce everything wrong. Seriously, people, don't act so offended. I've heard ninety-six distinct variations on "Tzimisce" despite the fact that they'd announce the official version—which never changed, mind you—every couple of weeks online.

A NOTE ON A NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION

Fine. You really want to know how to pronounce things? Really really? Then here you go.

KA. TA. NA.

Seriously. That's it. It's the only one you're going to use regularly anyway, so why the hell should I bother trying to teach you the intricacies of Old English emphasis patterns just so you can butcher "scramasax" on a regular basis.

So.

KA. TA. NA.

Take it or leave it.

Right. Where was I? Okay, how to pronounce stuff. And I've got to ask, why the hell are you looking to game book to learn how to say these things? Go take a language course. Get Rosetta Stone. Learn this crap for real instead of cherry-picking a couple of words for "shit that stabs you in the face" and thinking you're all multi-culti badass because of it.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Fuck this, I need a drink.

THE BROODING CHRONICLE OF A DARK & SEXY IMMORTAL



NAME _____ TRUE NAME _____
 PLAYER _____ TRUE PLAYER _____
 BORN _____ FIRST DIED _____ ALLEGIANCE _____ VENDETTA _____
 HEIGHT _____ WEIGHT _____ HAIR _____ SIGN _____ TEARS _____ COAT LENGTH _____

ACCOUNTING OF THE AESTHETIC

EYELINER ☐ HAIR (SHAVED) ☐ BEARD (STUBBLE) ☐ PANTS (LEATHER) ☐ SHIRT (LEATHER) ☐ COAT (LEATHER) ☐ BROODY ☐ SCAR (FACE) ☐
 PALLID ☐ HAIR (PONYTAIL) ☐ BEARD (GOATEE) ☐ PANTS (PLEATHER) ☐ SHIRT (PLEATHER) ☐ COAT (PLEATHER) ☐ LONER ☐ SCAR (BACK) ☐
 BLACK LIPSTICK ☐ HAIR (LOOSE) ☐ BEARD (PATCH) ☐ PANTS (RUBBER) ☐ SHIRT (NONE) ☐ COAT (RUBBER) ☐ FLASHBACKS ☐ SCAR (CHEST) ☐
 RED LIPSTICK ☐ HAIR (OTHER) ☐ BEARD (OTHER) ☐ PANTS (NONE) ☐ SHIRT (OTHER) ☐ COAT (OTHER) ☐ IRREVERENT ☐ SCAR (OTHER) ☐

SAGA

PERSONAL TRAGEDY ☐☐☐☐
 BADASS REP ☐☐☐☐
 INNER DEAL ☐☐☐☐
 HISTORICAL INFLUENCE ☐☐☐☐
 ORIGIN STORY ☐☐☐☐

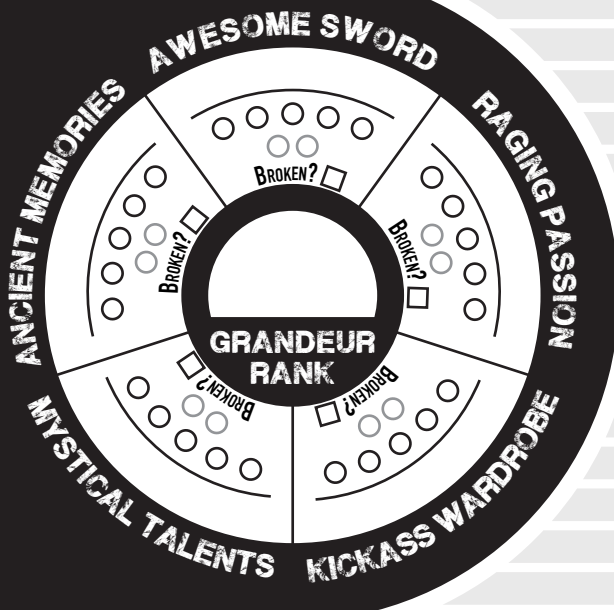
INSIGNIA

SCARS

WOUNDS

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 CURRENTLY DEAD? ☐

TRAITS



☐☐☐☐ AWARENESS
☐☐☐☐ FIGHT
☐☐☐☐ HEISTING
☐☐☐☐ INFLUENCE
☐☐☐☐ L.C.S.
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SKILLS

EDGES

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IMPERFECTIONS

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TROPHIES

THRONE OF COMFORT

