

Bristol by Night – House Rules for Vampire: the Requiem

Rob Alexander

Some elements taken from or inspired by [the house rules by Warren Merrifield](#), others draw on the original *The Shadow of Yesterday* by Clinton R Nixon or the adaptation of that work by Eero Tuovinen (the latter two under the [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 license](#)).

1 Basic Rules

1.1 Intent and Stakes

As in *Burning Wheel* and *The Shadow of Yesterday*, we'll agree stakes for all rolls, apart from ones already well-defined by an extended contest system (with the two core books, we have those only for combat and for chases). The GM should always say "...if you fail..." before prompting you to roll the dice; if he doesn't, call him on it.

Given, however, that *Vampire* is meant to involve an element of mystery and suspense, the GM may be artfully vague on occasion – "If you succeed, you'll find out if anything's living down here, and what it is. If you fail, *something* will find you first." If the GM overuses this, you should shun them.

1.2 Let it Ride

In general, we'll use the Let it Ride rule from *Burning Wheel* – if you make a test to attempt something, your success or failure stands until something significantly changes. E.g. if you succeed in your roll to sneak into the graveyard where the conspirators are meeting, then you're hidden and can watch them until the police turn up with dogs (new observer with higher skills), or when you actually want to pick-pocket one of them (new intent on your part). You don't, ever, need to make extra rolls for more time or more distance.

In general, the stakes should make it clear how long or far a roll result lasts for. If in doubt, apply this rule.

This should actually work *better* than it does in *BW*, because there's no tests-for-skill-progression economy to worry about. One side effect is that we won't use the "extended rolls" thing from the *WoD* rules very much. I don't imagine we'll miss it.

This doesn't apply in combat – if we're counting time in combat turns, we'll use the standard rules.

1.3 Dice in the Open

All dice, always, rolled in the open. There shall be no fudging, because there is no 'plot' to derail.

1.4 Willpower – Virtues and Vices

For now, I propose that we go with the standard rules – you regain Willpower by playing out your Virtue or your Vice. An option, later, is switching to *TSoY*-style refresh scenes.

2 Keys – Gaining Experience Points

We won't be using experience points – *all* experience gain will be by *keys* in the style of *The Shadow of Yesterday*. This way, you both get to decide what kind of play your characters will be rewarded for, and signal to me as GM what kind of play you're interested in.

2.1 Rules for Keys

Keys are how you get XP. When (and whenever) the circumstances described in the key are met, you immediately get the corresponding XP award.

It's the *player's* responsibility to notice when a key is met, notify the group (“that's 2 XP from my Key of Fraternity”), and take the points.

All Keys have a Buyoff, which is a reversal from the Key by the character. All Buyoffs give the character 10 experience points. This Buyoff occurs only when you, the player, wants it to happen: you can lose a battle with the Secret of Bloodlust and still keep the Secret. If you want your character to undergo a change in her personality, though, adding to the story, you can take this Buyoff by fulfilling it. If you do take the Buyoff, you can never take this Key again.

All characters have one free key that they cannot buy off – their clan key:

- Daeva – Key of the Rake (clan key variant: no buyoff possible)
- Gangrel – Key of the Beast (clan-only key)
- Mekhet – Key of the Paragon (clan-only key)
- Nosferatu – Key of the Outcast – Kindred Society (clan key variant: no buyoff possible)
- Ventrue – Key of Power (clan key variant: no buyoff possible)

Now, the “XP” values I'm talking about here are much more fine-grained than the standard Vampire ones (“VXP”). So, characters will buy improvements (from the table on Vampire p93) using VXP, which in turn are bought at a cost of 3 key XP for one VXP. (This conversion rate may prove too high or too low, but I think this is a decent guess for)

Buying a new key costs 3 VXP.

Following the TSoY convention, you may spend XP and get most improvements at any time, even in the middle of a fight or debate. One exception – learning a new Discipline (or Theban or Cruac ritual) requires a teacher and considerable time.

One final rule – you can't improve the same thing twice in a row. E.g. if you improve a skill by a level, you must then improve something of a different type (e.g. open a new discipline) before spending any more XP on skills. This includes buying a new key – after buying a key, you have to improve something else before you can buy a key again.

2.2 List of Keys

In a handy alphabetical order.

KEY OF THE BEAST

GANGREL ONLY. Your character is a Gangrel, a Clan where the Beast is close to the surface. Animalistic instincts often cloud more reasoned thought. Gain 1 XP every time your character acts on instinct rather than

rational thought. Gain 2 XP every time his impulsiveness leads to inconvenience or harm. Gain 5 XP every time his animal nature brings great risk to his body, reputation, or wealth. Buyoff: Impossible – this is a Gangrel Clan Key.

KEY OF BLOODLUST

Your character enjoys overpowering others in combat. Gain 1 XP every time your character defeats someone in battle. Gain 3 XP for defeating someone equal to or more powerful than your character (equal or higher combat skill.) Buyoff: Be defeated in battle.

KEY OF THE BROKENHEARTED

Your character cannot let go of some tragic event in his or her past. It wounded the character so deeply that she refuses (consciously or unconsciously) to form new bonds of love or attachment. Gain 1 XP every time your character chooses to keep new bonds from forming in favour of honouring their past love (or, in other words, every time the character chooses nostalgia instead of the now). Gain 3 XP every time the character rebuffs an open confession of love or camaraderie. Buyoff: Admit that you have formed a new love.

KEY OF THE COLLECTOR

Your character is dedicated to obtaining as many rare artefacts as possible. Pick a certain type of artefact. Gain 1 XP whenever he obtains information about the location of an artefact. Gain 3 XP whenever he puts himself at risk in order to obtain an artifact. Buyoff: Willingly give away one of your artifacts.

KEY OF THE COMPETITOR

Choose a particular person, social group, culture, or species. You gain 1 XP when you outfox your rivals, and 3 XP when you do so against long odds. Buyoff: Decline to compete against this rival.

KEY OF CONDITIONING

Either through military training, personal discipline or brainwashing, you have a number of conditioned responses over which you have little control. Perhaps you always hit the floor when you hear a loud noise, or blackout when threatened. Maybe you just start punching when you feel crowded. Gain 1 XP whenever your conditioning dictates your actions (maximum 3 per session). Gain 3 XP

whenever this gets you in trouble. Buyoff: Override your conditioned response

KEY OF CONSCIENCE

Your character has a soft spot for those weaker than their opponents. Gain 1 XP every time your character helps someone who cannot help themselves. Gain 2 XP every time your character defends someone with might who is in danger and cannot save themselves. Gain 5 XP every time your character takes someone in an unfortunate situation and changes their life to where they can help themselves. Buyoff: Ignore a request for help.

KEY OF CONTEMPLATION

Your character reflects and meditates on life, attempting to attain oneness with both the internal and external universe. Gain 1 XP every remains calm in the face of provocation. Gain 2 XP every time your character remains calm even though it causes her minor harm or inconvenience. Gain 5 XP every time your character remains calm even though it causes her great harm. Buyoff: Get angry.

KEY OF THE CRAFTSMAN

Building is what you love to do the most; having some concrete representation of your efforts in life is something you strive for. Gain 1 XP every time your character successfully completes a Crafting project. Gain 3 XP every time your character completes a Crafting project that is met with great appreciation from many. Buyoff: Destroy your creations or swear off craft.

KEY OF THE COWARD

Your character avoids combat like the plague. Gain 1 XP every time your character avoids a potentially dangerous situation. Gain 3 XP every time your character stops a combat using other means besides violence. Buyoff: Leap into combat with no hesitation.

KEY OF DEBT

You have a debt, either financial or social, that must be paid. Gain 1 XP every time your

debt comes up in a scene. You gain 2 XP every time your debt influences your actions. Gain 5 XP whenever your debt causes you or someone close to you harm. Buyoff: Erase your debt, one way or another.

KEY OF DOOM

Your character is doomed to a terrible fate. Gain 1 XP every time your character acts without regard to his safety. Gain 3 XP every time your character enters battle against superior enemies (1 or more opponents with higher combat skill or several – 3 or more – opponents with equal skill). Buyoff: Retreat from an overwhelming battle or fight, or fight to survive so that you may be with a loved one.

KEY OF THE EMBRACE

Vampires should have nothing to do with their mortal families after their Embrace. Some do, though, and show their weakness through secretly shepherding their mortal bloodline. Gain 1 XP every time your character is in a scene with one of his mortal relatives or descendants. Gain 2 XP every time he secretly manipulates a situation in their favour. Gain 5 XP every time he puts himself at risk to do so. Buyoff: Reveal who you are to your family or put a mortal relative in harms way.

KEY OF THE ETERNAL QUESTION

There is a reason for the illusion of this world, a purpose behind its entrapment of your character. Pick a philosophical question for your character. "What is the measure of a hero?" or "Can one know himself better through fulfillment or denial?" are good examples. Gain 1 XP every time you can apply this question to the situation your character is in. Gain 3 XP every time your character risks harm in pursuit of the answer. Buyoff: Answer the question.

KEY OF FAITH

Your character has a strong religious belief that guides her. Gain 1 XP every time she defends her faith to others. Gain 2 XP

whenever this character converts someone to her faith. Gain 5 XP whenever this character defends her faith even though it brings her great harm. Buyoff: Your character renounces her beliefs.

KEY OF THE FOLLOWER

You're a natural or disciplined follower, and easily fall in line behind whoever the leader with the most authority might be. Gain 1 XP every time you do what you're told and back up your boss. You gain 2 XP for following orders even when they seem questionable; gain 5 XP for following orders that cause you harm. Buyoff: Refuse to follow an order.

KEY OF FRATERNITY

Your character has someone she is sworn to, a friend who is more important than anyone else. Gain 1 XP every time this character is present in a scene with your character (maximum 3 per adventure). Gain 2 XP whenever your character has to make a decision that is influenced by them. Gain 5 XP every time your character defends them by putting herself at risk. Buyoff: Sever the relationship with this person.

KEY OF GLORY

Who cares about power or riches? You crave fame! Gain 1 XP when your actions inspire strangers to talk about you insultingly (there's no such thing as bad publicity). Gain 3 XP when your deeds win you acclaim and adulation. Buyoff: Adopt a pseudonym or go incognito.

KEY OF THE GUARDIAN

Your character has a ward, someone who depends on her for security and protection. Gain 1 XP every time this character is present in a scene with your character. Gain 2 XP whenever your character has to make a decision that is influenced by them. Gain 5 XP every time your character rescues them from harm. Buyoff: Sever the relationship with this person.

KEY OF THE HUNTED

Your character is hunted by another character or group of characters for some reason. Gain 1 XP every time your hunter interferes with your actions without causing your character harm. Gain 3 XP every time your hunted brings your character harm. Gain 5 XP every time you risk great harm or suffering due at the hand of your hunter. Buyoff: Defeat or call off the hunter.

KEY OF THE IMPOSTOR

Sometimes your entire life is a lie. You gain 1 XP whenever you pass yourself off as someone/something you're not. You gain 2 XP whenever you convince others in spite of serious scepticism. You gain 5 XP whenever your story survives a deliberate, focused, "Hey everybody, look!" attempt to reveal your identity. Buyoff: Confess your imposture to those duped.

KEY OF INTOLERANCE

Your character has a deep-seated intolerance for those that are different from himself. You gain 1 XP whenever your character shows his intolerance in a scene. Gain 2 XP every time this intolerance causes problems for your character. Gain 5 XP every time your character's intolerance brings him great harm or major problems. Buyoff: Show respect towards someone different from yourself.

KEY OF JUSTICE

Your character has an unfailing commitment to justice. Gain 1 XP each time you right a wrong, and 2 XP each time that justice causes another to suffer pain. Gain 5 XP each time your character executes justice at great expense to himself. Buyoff: Heed a guilty party's plea for mercy.

KEY OF THE LAW

Your character has an unfailing commitment to the law. Gain 1 XP each time you enforce the law, and 2 XP each time that law causes another to suffer pain. Gain 5 XP each time your character enforces the law at great expense to himself. Buyoff: Refuse to uphold

the law or otherwise acknowledge its imperfections.

KEY OF LEADERSHIP

Designate the group for whom you are the leader. Gain 1 XP every time a significant number of your followers are in a scene (max of 3 XP per session); gain 3 XP when their presence influences your decision; gain 5 XP when you are put at great risk or harmed while acting to protect the group. Buyoff: Willingly surrender leadership of the group, or leave it entirely.

KEY OF LOVE

Your character has a deep love, whether friendly, erotic, or familial, for someone else. Gain 1 XP every time this character is present in a scene with your character (maximum 3 per session). Gain 2 XP whenever your character has to make a decision that is influenced by them. Gain 5 XP every time your character puts himself in harm's way or makes a sacrifice for them. Buyoff: Sever the relationship with this person.

KEY OF THE MANIPULATOR

Your character works behind the scenes, manipulating others in order to be a shadow ruler. Your character must work for or be an advisor of someone in a position of power. Gain 1 XP whenever your character exerts his will over his ruler, even over minor matters – especially over minor matters. Gain 2 XP whenever the ruler accepts your character's advice over others. Gain 5 XP whenever your character's influence makes the ruler make a policy change or establish a new policy that works in your character's favour. Buyoff: Accept the mantle of power for one's self.

KEY OF THE MASQUERADE

Your character takes the first tradition very seriously. Gain 1 XP every time your character does something to maintain the Masquerade. Gain 2 XP every time he does something to maintain the Masquerade that causes him discomfort or inconvenience. Gain 5 XP every time he acts to maintain the

Masquerade at the great risk of his body, reputation, or wealth. Buyoff: Knowingly breach the Masquerade.

KEY OF THE MISSION

Your character has a personal mission that she must complete. Gain 1 XP every time she takes action to complete this mission (2 XP if this action is successful.) Gain 5 XP every time she takes action that completes a major part of this mission. Buyoff: Abandon this mission.

KEY OF THE OUTCAST

Your character has lost fellowship or membership in an organization - which could just be a culture, or a specific cross-cultural group. This separation defines your character as much as membership in the organization defines its members. Gain 1 XP every time her status with this organization comes up. Gain 2 XP every time her disassociation brings her harm. Gain 5 XP every time the separation brings your character great pain and suffering. Buyoff: Regain membership in the organization.

KEY OF THE OVERLORD

Your character owns other people or oversees the ownership of others. Gain 1 XP every time your character makes someone else do something against his will. Gain 3 XP every time your character makes someone else do something that causes harm, pain, or despair to that person. Buyoff: Free a person under your ownership or oversight.

KEY OF THE PACIFIST

Your character has a personal commitment to nonviolence. Gain 1 XP for every session in which your character does not commit any violence. Gain 2 XP every time your character does not commit violence even though it causes him minor harm or inconvenience. Gain 5 XP every time your character does not commit violence even though it causes him great harm. Buyoff: Purposefully harm another sentient creature.

KEY OF THE PARAGON

MEKHET ONLY. Your character is committed to developing and mastering their vampiric form. Gain 1 XP whenever he obtains information about how he can gain further knowledge. Gain 3 XP whenever he puts himself at risk in order to gain further mastery. Buyoff: Impossible – this is the Mekhet clan key.

KEY OF POWER

You don't even care what you do with it, you just want it. You gain 1 XP whenever you earn a boon from someone important, earn a slight gain in prestige, or make a rival look bad. You gain 3 XP whenever you ruin, kill, or otherwise eliminate a rival, and improve your own position because of it. Buyoff: Relinquish your power and position.

KEY OF THE RAKE

Your character thrives on romantic conquests. Gain 1 XP every time they attempt to seduce someone. Gain 2 XP when they risk harm by seducing someone. Gain 5 XP if they seduce someone at a cost of severe risk or harm to themselves. Buyoff: Abandon these rakish ways and settle down with someone.

KEY OF RENOWN

"You must be the worst assassin I've ever heard of." "But you have heard of me." You gain 1 XP whenever you see to it that your name and deeds are known, by bragging about them or making sure there are witnesses. You gain 2 XP whenever you put yourself at risk to do something unnecessary or foolish that will add to your reputation. You gain 5 XP whenever you risk your life to take credit for your actions (bragging that you were the one who killed the Prince's child, for example.). Buyoff: Give someone else credit for an action that would increase your renown.

KEY OF THE REVOLUTIONARY

Your character is dedicated to overthrowing a ruling class, party, or government. Gain 1 XP every time he speaks out against the rulers, or

breaks a minor law. Gain 2 XP every time he acts directly against the rulers. Gain 5 XP every time he puts himself in great danger in order to damage the status quo. Buyoff: Accept any favour from the rulers in order for your quietude or complicity.

THE KEY OF THE TEACHER

Your character often acts as a mentor to others. Gain 1 XP every time your character opens the eyes of another. Gain 2 XP every time your character teaches something significant to another. Gain 5 XP every time your character's teachings dramatically change the life of another. Buyoff: Ignore an opportunity for education.

KEY OF WEALTH

Your character loves wealth. Gain 1 XP every time you make a deal that favours you in wealth. Gain 3 XP every time you double your wealth (i.e. your Resources Background Rating increases by one or more dots). Buyoff: Give away everything you own except what you can carry lightly, dropping to zero dots in Resources.

KEY OF UNREQUITED LOVE

Your character has a love for someone who does not return this love. Gain 1 XP whenever your character has to make a decision that is influenced by them. Gain 2 XP every time your character attempts to win their affection. Gain 5 XP every time your character puts himself in harm's way or makes a sacrifice for them. Buyoff: Abandon your pursuit of this person or win their love.

KEY OF VANITY

You think you're the toughest, smartest, or best-looking person you know. You have confidence in yourself that gets you into trouble. Gain 1 XP whenever your hubris comes out in a scene. Gain 3 XP whenever your hubris causes problems for you or those around you. Buyoff: Admit that another is tougher/smarter/better-looking.

KEY OF VENGEANCE

Your character has a hatred for a particular organization, person, or even species or culture. Gain 1 XP every time your character hurts a member of that group or a lackey of that person. Gain 2 XP every time your character strikes a minor blow at that group or person (killing a member of the organization or one of the person's lackeys, disrupting their life, destroying their property). Gain 5 XP every time your character strikes a major blow at that group or person. Buyoff: Let your enemy go.

KEY OF THE VOW

Your character has a vow of personal behavior that she has sworn not to break. This could be a dietary restriction, a requirement to pray at sunbreak every morning, or something else like that. Gain 1 XP for every adventure in which your character does not break this vow. Gain 2 XP every time your character does not break this vow even though it causes her minor harm or inconvenience. Gain 5 XP every time your character does not break this vow even though it causes her great harm. Buyoff: Break this vow.