

# ~ HOUSES of the BLOODED ~

## ~ HIGH CONCEPT ~

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Three True Things</b>
<b>Public Name &amp; Meaning:</b> (+1 die when appropriate)	
<b>Secret Name &amp; Meaning:</b> (+3 dice when appropriate)	
<b>Family Name/House:</b>	

## ~ VIRTUES ~

<b>Bear</b> <b>Strength</b>	<b>Elk</b> <b>Cunning</b>	<b>Falcon</b> <b>Courage</b>	<b>Fox</b> <b>Beauty</b>	<b>Serpent</b> <b>Wisdom</b>	<b>Wolf</b> <b>Prowess</b>
					
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## ~ ASPECT ~

**Invoke** (The merit in the Aspect: +3 dice to you – First use free, spend 1 Style/additional use)

**Tag** (The flaw in your Aspect: +2 dice to your opponent if they give you 1 Style to Tag)

**Compel** (How the Aspect makes you act: +1 Style when followed or spend 2 Style to ignore)

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## ~ THEATRICAL AID ~

(Artifact/Item Vassal, Ritual, Land/Location, Physical Feature etc)

## ~ How I Run Houses of the Blooded Demo Games ~

### Before the Game Starts:

#### **1. Bring the basics:**

Lots of pencils, a sharpener, a rubber, at least 10 dice/person, a pile of style tokens, blank character sheets (see above), have pre-generated characters for the people that really don't want to create a character (the demo booklet is your friend). I also print off the sheet with the Seven Laws of the Ven, as this is great to have to hand and some folks have mentioned having the page of names is also a benefit.

#### **2. Think about how to make your game space look attractive:**

I bought a bolt of velvet to cover the table, ornamental holders for style token pool etc, used pretty looking place-mats, coasters to put things on and nice looking glasses/jugs/plates for snacks and drinks. If you need lighting and can get away with it use candles. Don't flip out when folks sprawl or "mess it all up": having fun is more important.

#### **3. Provide classy snacks:**

Certain foods and drinks will invoke a certain attitude in your players. Fresh bread, humus, grapes and fresh fruit juices are just as bad for you as other junk food, give you a similar buzz, but help invoke a different feel at the table. If it is at home, consider cooking a meal to go with the game.

#### **4. Turn up early and be helpful:**

This is especially true of conventions. Turn up to the venue early, offer your help to the organizers and get to know the space you will be in. Folks running a con have given you a table and it is only right to help them out in return.

#### **5. Print up a pile of demo booklets:**

OK, this isn't possible for most people - I rape my works colour laser printer for HotB promotion, but the demo book in the downloads section of the HotB website is great for getting folks clued up in advance. Also, I've found that at convention folks may go play another game but then seek you out towards the end of the con to talk about HotB thanks to picking up a booklet.

### Introducing HotB:

**1. Introduce myself and usual table chat:** I say at this point that we will be running through the background, character creation and the rules together so the players can see how it is related. I let them know that if they have any questions to just throw them into the mix.

**2. Theme & System:** Explain that the theme of HotB is one of Tragedy. I highlight the meaning of theatrical tragedy and then go on to say that everyone at the table will be openly working to make this happen in the most enjoyable way possible. I often cite Shakespeare, Elric and Greek tragedies as examples. I explain that the players will be the main focus of these stories and that they will be the Nobility in the world. All I say at this point is that the system uses a pool of D6 and that the more you have to roll the better it will be - More will follow later.

**3. History:** I explain that before the Ancient Greeks, before the Ancient Egyptians and before the Atlantians were a historic race called the Ven. Not much is known about them as very few artifacts have survived with the only real evidence of their culture being translated from fragments of their Opera, their Theater and their Pillow Books; as this is the case you will be playing the theatrical representation of the Ven as opposed to the real-life Ven of old (just like you could be playing the Ancient Greeks of myth and legend rather than a historic representation of ancient Greece).

**4. Name & Truths:** As you are playing characters on a stage, their names have meaning. So, at this stage I would like you to come up with both a name for your character, so anything fantastical or appropriate AND THEN tell me what it means. The meaning is important as anytime your character takes a Risk that relates to their name then they get a D6 for their dice pool. I give examples at this stage if needed. NB: I do not use secret or family name in most demos due to time restraints. I also explain the concept that when something is named the person introducing it can define the first three truths about it, but everything else will be defined in play, and so ask for players to give the first three truths about their characters.

**5. House & Virtues:** Once everyone has a name with a meaning listed on the top of their sheet, I explain that the Virtues that the Ven promoted and that each house has a Virtue for which it is renowned for personifying while discussing the Houses themselves. I tell the players to pick a House and that there will be a bonus in the associated Virtue their House represents. Once they have done this I explain the concept of having a Weakness and encourage them to select it. I stress the gravitas of this decision. Finally I show how to assign Virtues (2,2,3,3,4 and +1 to the House Virtue). Advise that each point in a virtue equals a D6 for their dice pool.

**6. Aspects:** I explain that we are now going to define the two things that are important about the character. In other systems these would be calls skills, merits, flaws, backgrounds or any number of similar things. Here they are Aspects. I use "Athlete" as an example and tell the player that they are an advantage you can Invoke gain 3 dice, a flaw that another can tag to gain 2 dice against you when appropriate, or that they can Compel you to act in a certain way. Then we circle the table creating one Aspect each (with full Invoke/Tag/Compel). I invite everyone to help and then by the second time around the table folks have normally got the hang of things and are pro-actively creating their Invokes/Tag/Compel.

*Optional Theatrical Aid: In smaller games I also had time to let each player create a theatrical aid - think of it like selecting a special prop/make-up/extra. Examples have included a Bloodsword (+2 dice for duels), a vassal spy (who will overhear and report three private conversations), a holy relic staff (which would speak one hidden truth out loud for all to hear), horrific scarring (+2 dice intimidating others), a choir of foolish servants (they had an optional Compel to earn the character Style for their mistakes), a swish castle (used as the location for the story so defining facts about the location earned the character Style), etc. This worked out really well and helped round off some really interesting characters.*

**7. Risk:** Here we put Name, Virtue and Aspects together and explain Risk - making your intent known, gathering dice, and then rolling for Privilege. I explain the difference between Success/Failure and Privilege at this point, and introduce Wagers. I go back to explain how Contested Risks work. I then tie it all together with an example where I gather 8 dice (Name 1 + Virtue 4 + Aspect 3) and keep three wagers and choose to fail my intent but make the situation super cool and gain a Style Point, which leads to...

**8. Style:** I explain how Aspects are refreshed, that as well as Wagers that Style can be used to add a fact, and how it is used to Tag/Compel. I also advise the players to inform me if they "self Compel" and act in keeping with their character as I will give them Style. I advise that if someone states a Wager about you and you agree to it you gain a Style point, but if you want to refuse it you must spend a Style point instead. I tell them to give anything they think is really cool Style and it will be tied into the story. I explain Good Form and Bad Form and how it works. Each character is handed 3 Style. NB: I do not use any style limit in demo games.

**9. The Laws:** I have the laws page from the demo booklet printed in front of me and go over the laws of the Ven, and how they apply to everyone else and not themselves personally.

**10. Lets rock:** I give the title of the story and its three truths. If I name any NPCs/Places I also give their three truths. I then call for a Wisdom Risk and say that anyone who gain no Wagers will get a free one because I am Weak. This will not happen again...

### Playing the Game:

**1. Fun for All:** Make sure everyone is getting a chance to shine. Introduce situations that the characters will be Compelled by and follow the players lead when they take it. Play to the characters strengths and their Weakness. Encourage the players to take the lead and run with it.

**2. Introduce the Culture as necessary:** Don't flood the characters with too many facts, but as-and-when it is appropriate add in details about Ven culture to help the game flow along. At least once during the game (just before an important scene have the players describe costume and it's meaning to "the audience".

**3. Extra rules:** Introduce and explain extra rules on a need-to-know basis. All games I run at cons have had duels, but the strike rules were only introduced at the duel. Once I decided that Throwing Insult would really add to the players enjoyment and so added it in. They lost. They loved it! Mass murder came into it a lot – funny that.

**4. Take a short break before a new Act:** Every HotB game I have run has an opening act where everything is set-up and introduced, a middle act where the real intent is made and a closing act which ends with Tragedy. When you sense these changes in act take a pause. Have folks refresh themselves and take the time to discuss where folks think the story is going, what they like and what they haven't liked. Listen to your players and all will be fine.

### After the Game

**1. Thank everyone for their time:** Even if things didn't go as well as you had hoped, talk with peeps about the game and thank them for taking the time out to play with you.

**2. Promote HotB:** Point out that you can download the full rulebook for ONLY FIVE US DOLLARS!!! Even folks who hate pdf books start to take notice. Mention the website and the forums. Talk about Living Shanri and the possibility of starting a Cabal if folks want to be involved in a global game.

**3. Follow-up:** Keep in touch with anyone who was interested in games out-of-con. Thank the organizers of the con and offer to run them a demo as thanks for all their hard work.