



You play a **Stalker**. A Stalker was once a mortal person who died while defending others against incredible horrors, who is now an abstract entity, dreaming in a personal Domain.

Sometimes one of the great Aesthetics rebels and tries to live in reality, causing ruptures to existence and agony to mortals. Stalkers respond to the Call of a suffering mortal and try to bind the Unbidden into the Vault. Such a Hunt may occur in any location or time of human existence.

A Stalker is motivated by many things, called their Keys of Humanity, but one of them is always Compassion.

Complete your character

- Choose one of the images I've provided. This is your Stalker's true form.
- Choose one of the partly-finished sheets I've provided, perhaps at random. Briefly review the Attributes, Skills, Disciplines, and Servitors.
- Decide what historical era and culture your Stalker's mortal life was lived; it may be any of them, including our near future. Provide a Focus Skill that it retains from its mortal existence.
- Give your Stalker a name (a title, not its former mortal name) and describe its Domain.
- Provide four of its five Keys of Humanity: emotions, passions, or unambiguous concepts.

Concepts

Essence is the metaphysical underpinning of reality, ultimately formed by the multitude of Aesthetics who each conceive of some unguessable component. The Dream is the material world and its history, born of Essence, but as experienced by real beings and things, or the Flesh. The Veil is the necessary blindness of the Flesh regarding creatures and concepts of Essence.

- For example, the illustrated form you've chosen is your Stalker's essential self, but while Hunting, the Veil will ensure that mortals see only an acceptable, setting-appropriate version of them.
- Breaching the Veil is sometimes necessary, but doing so is limited by certain principles of Forbiddance as protecting the Dream outweighs all other considerations.

The Unbidden is an Aesthetic who seeks to experience the Flesh as a mortal would. Not only are its actions directly horrible and damaging, but its very presence creates an Enigma, a patch of damaged and malfunctioning reality.

- The Unbidden is not protected by the Veil, so must inhabit the Flesh literally by killing mortals for their bodies and vampirizing more of them to survive.
- If an Unbidden manages to persist, it develops in stages: the Beast, the Stranger, and the Architect.
- The Enigma increasingly corrupts this portion of space and time, eventually destroying it.
- During a Hunt, the Circle of active Stalkers seeks to understand the Enigma using *Sensitivity* and to *Mend* it, as well as to discover and *Bind* the Unbidden.

Shadows, intangible creatures of Essence, live in the Dream without affecting it directly. Sometimes they Awaken and become, effectively, supernatural creatures. These may be weak or powerful, incidental or dangerous, servile or hostile, but they are often captured by an Unbidden (especially an Architect) and Husked in stolen flesh to become Minions.

Dice resolution

Most situations are resolved using a Challenge. You will make all the rolls in the game – for instance, to attack, you will try to equal or exceed the foe’s Defense value; and to defend, you will try to equal or exceed the foe’s Attack value. In other circumstances you may be rolling to equal or exceed someone’s Resolve.

Roll a number of d6 equal to the relevant Attribute. Read the highest value or the sum of matched values, whichever is higher

- Example: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 – the result is 5
- Example: 1, 3, 4, 4, 6 – the result is 8 (sum of the 4’s)
- Example: 2, 2, 2, 4, 5 – the result is 6 (sum of the three 2’s)

Add the skill bonus, if any, to the result. So if you have +2, the above results would be 7, 10, and 8. You have all the skills on the character sheet, with or without a bonus.

However, for damage, roll dice equal to Strength, or sometimes Willpower, and add the values of the dice. In many cases you must ignore the high values, e.g., all 6’s, or all 5’s and all 6’s.

For any dice roll, you may spend 1 point of Karma to re-roll any or all of the dice. Karma does not refresh and you only gain more at the end of each session.

You will learn more details about the order of action and the effects of damage during play.

Rewards

After every session, you receive Experience Points. You may use them to improve your character.

- Improve skill bonuses
- Gain Disciplines and Servitors, or master the ones you have
- Improve Vitality

You do not learn new skills or improve your attribute values; Stalkers’ lives are already concluded and they are creatures of Essence; they do not technically “learn” or physically develop.

After every Hunt, you receive Karma, which is the only way to increase that score, since it does not refresh.

In addition to increasing rolls’ values, Karma may also be expended to remove your Keys of Humanity. This requires lots of Karma. It results in higher Awareness but reduces total points for your physical Vessel (Dexterity, Fortitude, Strength). If you remove all five Keys, you become an Aesthetic.