

# Kismet's Virtues and Vices

## What They Are

A character can engage in any of the Virtues and Vices at any time, but her primary Virtue and Vice are intimately connected with self-image. They reinforce a sense of her essential self, beneath all facades and despite any rules, rewards, or punishments. Thus, her dominant Virtue and Vice feel natural, are the most satisfying to fulfill, and are more likely to be repeated. Even though one's Virtue leads to a longer-lasting and greater sense of comfort, one's Vice still provides a quick dose of reliable bliss; together, they represent long-standing patterns of behavior instead of sporadic slips or experiments. Perhaps most importantly, a character's primary Virtue and Vice reflect what she'll take the greatest risks to achieve.

That doesn't mean that it will be easy to figure out someone's dominant Virtue and Vice. Characters will go to great lengths to hide their key habits (as when a corrupt politician makes a great show of trying to quit cheating on his wife, or when a wealthy benefactor does everything possible to remain anonymous). Others can't help but reveal their strengths and weaknesses because their actions are public and constantly under scrutiny. Some people only reveal their true motivations to their private friends, and a few wear their desires boldly and openly. Regardless, a character's Virtue and Vice are lynchpins to her personality and decisions; discerning either trait should reveal much about how she tends to operate.

It's important to note that Virtue and Vice are inherently personal, active, and constant. They are strengths and weaknesses that a character can act upon in private and through her own efforts. Fulfilling Virtue and Vice can involve and affect others, but being bolstered by them doesn't rely on the reactions of others. Both routes require a character to actively do something, however, either on her own behalf or that of another; passive benefits aren't enough to reinforce a deeper sense of self. With all of this in mind, it should be clear that a character's dominant Virtue and Vice are unlikely to change during the course of play. She might begin to follow one far more than the other, or she might use different methods to gain satisfaction, but her key Virtue and Vice will probably remain the same.

## How They Work

In general, a Virtue is difficult and immediately uncomfortable to follow, but leads to genuinely pleasant outcomes eventually. That doesn't mean that a character won't enjoy the process, but the fun is tempered by the time and effort involved. This is because satisfying a Virtue demands an element of risk and extended effort, or else you won't feel like you've lived up to your highest creed in any meaningful way. Struggle and sacrifice are also important parts of pursuing a Virtue because they reinforce the reality of what you have done. In the end, if you follow through, it will feel like winning something of value in the real world instead of simply getting lucky or hiding out in a fantasy.

A Vice, on the other hand, is all too easy and amusing to engage in, but more often than not it leads to a letdown later on, as the high fades and the real world intrudes. It's an escape, a diversion, or an exercise

in denial; a Vice can lead to real gains, but it reflects a twisted view of reality at best. As such, a Vice is best indulged quickly and left behind, because it offers no special rewards for long-term binging. If anything, feeding a Vice for too long leads to disenchantment and disgust faster. Since Vices often involve taking things too far or putting in just enough effort to get a small reward, their thrills burn out swiftly. Ultimately, it will feel like you are getting away from reality for a while or are getting the better end of the deal - even when you know you're not.

The core World of Darkness rulebook outlines seven Virtues and seven Vices to choose from, whereas the God-Machine Chronicle update encourages players and Storytellers to create their own out of an ever-expanding variety of concepts. Both approaches have benefits and drawbacks, but this article presents a fusion of the two. There are only seven Virtues and seven Vices listed below, but they were carefully selected according to the principles above rather than created on the fly. Some of the mechanics were drawn from the core book, others from the God-Machine update, a few from [this web site](#), and several more I wrote myself. They are balanced so that none of them should be significantly easier or more difficult to use in-game than the rest. Each one was chosen to be its own distinct category with distinguished mechanics, although the same Virtue and Vice can be expressed through different habits, depending on the character. They are also diametrically opposed to one another and reflect a unified view of timeless human motivations.

## Virtues

A character possesses one key Virtue, and regains all spent Willpower points when she acts according to that Virtue over the course of more than one scene.

### **Charity**

A charitable character shares what he has - whether it's time, money, or possessions - for the sheer joy of giving. He might hope for some good will in return, but the act of giving is its own reward and payment can't provide the same satisfaction. By lifting others up, good Samaritans feel as though they are improving the entire world, one person at a time.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points when he helps another at the risk of loss or harm to himself.

Possessed by: Changeling fairy godmothers, soup-kitchen workers.

### **Confidence**

A confident character has faith in her own ability to make the right choice and to discover the best course of action. She doesn't ignore opposition or evidence to the contrary; instead, she trusts in her strengths to see a plan through, even when challenges arise. She uses her own instincts and resourcefulness to rise to any occasion and prove that she's the woman for the job.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points when she successfully follows her own plan and relies on her own skills despite great pressure to engage outside help.

Possessed by: Entrepreneurs, werewolf pack leaders.

### **Hope**

Staying optimistic in the World of Darkness is a tough job, but someone's got to do it. Hopeful characters don't disregard how dire a situation is, but they continue to act as though everything will

turn out for the best, regardless. Even when it seems like real damage is certain or defeat is inevitable, hopeful characters move forward with the trust that the opposition will not win.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points by remaining hopeful about the outcome of a situation, no matter the danger or even evidence to the contrary, and risking danger or loss in the process.

Possessed by: Vampires who maintain high Humanity, clergy.

### **Industry**

Idle hands are the Devil's playground, but staying busy with valued work will keep you out of trouble. This is what an industrious character believes, to the point that he'll enjoy being on the job more than what he earns for his efforts. He will move from task to task, or take pride in juggling many activities at once, but he will never stay put for long.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points when he places himself at risk or gives up a need or major want for the sake of persevering in his work.

Possessed by: Doctors, mid-rank mages.

### **Justice**

Balancing the scales and setting things right means everything to a just character. She will forgo safety, popularity, and rest to make sure everyone gets what they deserve. That's because when wrongs go unpunished, everybody suffers for it and the whole system by which the character lives is threatened. That is not something she can allow.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points when she does the right thing at the risk of personal loss or setback.

Possessed by: Devout mummies, police.

### **Patience**

In a world gone mad with quick but sloppy solutions, careful forethought is king. A little strategizing can go a long way and save future effort, so patient characters put in the time right away. Not only do they avoid even worse complications, but by delaying gratification, the end result is even more satisfying. Patient characters believe that they can afford to wait.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points when completing a task through careful planning despite unexpected obstacles and opportunities for fast resolution.

Possessed by: Elder vampires, scientists.

### **Self-Control**

Mastery of the self involves knowing and tempering your weaknesses, whatever they may be. It also requires being able to resist distractions, bribes, and your own cravings. A character with self-control strives for balance, even when the people around him are wildly out of control. He earns his own respect by dominating his flesh with nothing but the power of his mind.

Your character regains all spent Willpower points when he resists temptation to indulge in an excess of behavior, whether good or bad, despite obvious rewards.

Possessed by: Fitness freaks, veteran hunters of the supernatural.

# Vices

“But there's no way that I could know what you've experienced, right? I couldn't possibly feel that need. Like a thousand hiding voices whispering ‘this is who you are’. And you fight the pressure. The growing need rising like a wave. Prickling and teasing and prodding to be fed. But the whispering gets louder, until they're screaming ‘now!’ And it's the only voice you hear. The only voice you want to hear. And you belong to it. To this ... shadow self.” -- Lila, Dexter

A character has one dominant Vice, and regains one spent Willpower point by wallowing in that Vice during a scene.

## **Avarice**

Money, status, material possessions - an avaricious character can never feel satisfied as long as there's more to grab for themselves. She might try to rationalize it any number of ways, but her hoarding is not about usefulness or preparedness. It's about having more than anyone else, and finding ways to strike out at those who have more than she does.

Your character regains a point of Willpower when she acquires something at the expense of another.

Possessed by: Bonepicker geists, CEOs.

## **Carnality**

Sins of the flesh come in many forms, from drugs to food to sex - but for the truly epicurean, the pleasure is the point. Cravings are constant, overwhelming, and exciting for the carnal character, driving them toward their joy of choice. Anything and anyone will be pushed aside in favor of chasing the next high or misused in pursuit of instant gratification.

Your character regains a point of Willpower when satisfying sensual desires without regard for the consequences.

Possessed by: Rock stars, Tempter demons.

## **Corruption**

There's a special delight in deception and in tempting others to lie, and it's that smug sensation a corrupt character relishes the most. He doesn't see the point in playing by the rules and might even believe that everyone else is just as crooked as he is. After all, bribing and cheating make things so much easier up front and bring so many bonuses.

Your character regains a point of Willpower when he successfully misuses his influence (or materials) over others on his own behalf or that of an interested party.

Possessed by: Osirian prometheans, politicians.

## **Despair**

True despair isn't passive pining. A despairing character believes her situation is hopeless and that she is beyond forgiveness, and acts accordingly. Pessimism, fear, and self-loathing combine to drive her toward escapism or even outright sabotage. Because if she can't make things better, what does it really matter if she makes them worse?

Your character regains a point of Willpower when she acts against her own well-being based on her belief that the situation is hopeless and beyond saving.

Possessed by: Privateer changelings, some relapsed alcoholics.

### **Sloth**

It's not that slothful characters don't want to do anything; they just don't want to do the difficult jobs or have the unpleasant conversations. The way they see it, there's no good reason to handle any of that directly if they can get someone else to do it for them. Others are better suited to work, anyway, so the slothful stick to what they know best - usually leisure.

Your character regains a point of Willpower by arranging for others to perform difficult tasks in their stead and receiving the benefits.

Possessed by: Ghost Wolves, pimps.

### **Vanity**

All personal strengths are magnified and all failures are diminished in the mind of a vain character.

With his superior experiences and wisdom, he is never really wrong and given how twisted the world and other people are, he can never be mistaken. He has no trouble taking the lead and forcing others to follow his whims, since what he wants will always be for the best.

Your character regains a point of Willpower when he prevails in exerting his own wants (not needs) over others (most commonly the desire for adulation, but it could be the desire to make others do as he commands).

Possessed by: Low Wisdom mages, celebrities.

### **Wrath**

A wrathful character loves the feeling of letting her anger run rampant over everyone and everything, not just because they deserve it but because she can. It makes her feel strong, in charge, and right, even when she's overstepping her bounds. Whether she believes the world is against her or that she's better off striking first, she's going to lash out sooner rather than later.

Your character regains a point of Willpower when she resolves a situation by using unnecessary and/or excessive violence.

Possessed by: Domestic abusers, mummies that eschew Memory.