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opening extract from

The Vampire Handbook

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What is a Vampire?

What do you know about vampires? You will undoubtedly have questions. These creatures conjure up various images and thoughts — mostly scary ones.

Vampires are creatures from mythology and folklore. Vampire stories and beliefs have been captured in popular culture or passed on through generations by word of mouth. While people really have been accused of drinking blood and being vampires, we do not know for sure whether vampires are real or not.

Are vampires human?

This is a difficult question to answer, but vampires are usually human corpses. They can take many forms, have different abilities, and come in many "types" (*see pages 20-35*), but almost all were once living people.





Above *Vampires prefer to feed on human blood which, while messy, is a good clue when vampire spotting.*
Right *Can you spot why this isn't a true vampire? See how his fingers cast a shadow on the wall. A true vampire would never cast a shadow like this.*

Do they really drink blood?



Many do, yes. They feed on the blood of humans or animals, and from this they gain energy and the ability to live forever. Others take life force or energy from humans, which has the same immortalizing effect.

What powers do they have?

This is another difficult question, mainly because each vampire is different. Vampires can take the form of animals such as dogs and, perhaps most famously, bats. Some vampires can fly. Others are known for their strength, both mental and physical, and are often said to have supernatural powers.

Some can transform themselves into a misty nothingness – ideal in times of escape or entry. They have heightened senses – they can smell and hear you from afar – and some have been known to communicate silently through telepathy.

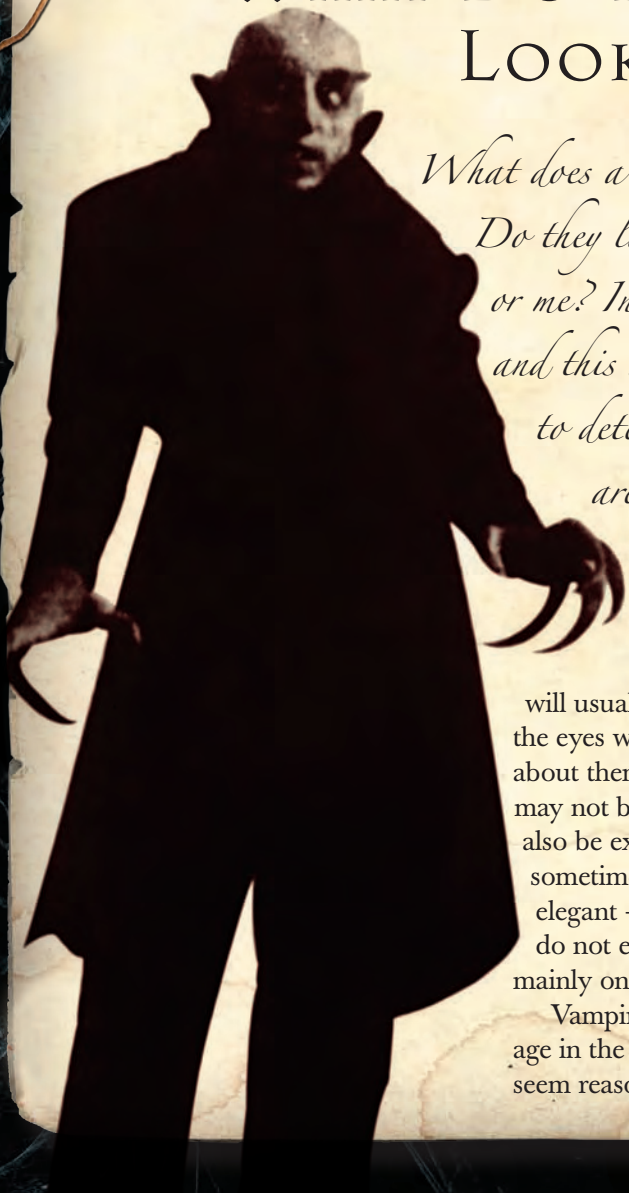


Vampires are immortal and do not age from the time they become vampires, as long as they feed regularly on blood. This immortality also gives them the power to heal themselves and, in very unusual circumstances, others.

If this has whetted your appetite for more, please read on…

Above *Vampires taking the form of bats to feed on a sleeping human. Who knows why she's not in bed.*
Left *The undead rising from their coffins for a night of feeding, caught by a passerby – maybe not so lucky for him.*

What Do They Look Like?



What does a vampire look like? Do they look the same as you or me? In many cases they do, and this makes them difficult to detect. However, there are some differences…

Look closely at the color of their skin or their eyes. The skin will usually be extremely pale and the eyes will have a reddish tinge about them, suggesting that they may not be quite human. They will also be extremely thin – this can sometimes make them appear very elegant – due to the fact that they do not eat normal food but subsist mainly on blood.

Vampires also do not appear to age in the way that we do but often seem reasonably youthful. However,



Far Left *A classic Strigoii vampire, human in form but with monstrous staring eyes and deathly pale skin (see page 20).*
Left *A vampire concealing itself in a mist. This is an invaluable skill in times of danger or when stalking prey.*
Below *A Malaysian Penanggal vampire. This one has clearly fed as the head has rejoined the body (see page 22).*

if deprived of blood for long periods of time, the vampire body will start to decay and become a rotting corpse, just as it would be in the tomb. In parts of Denmark and Norway, for instance, their skin may be black with bits of rotting bone showing through, or terribly white, as if just risen from the grave.

Descriptions of vampires are a bit more complicated in some parts of the world because they do not even appear human. For example, in some places like China or the Philippines, they can take on the shape of dragons or lizards that do not necessarily drink blood. In Mexico and South America, they can appear as no more than balls of light, which draw off energy from sleeping people. In Japan, they can appear as drifting spirits with no feet or sometimes as enormous spider-like creatures with many eyes. In most cases, such creatures only appear at night – though some do appear during the daytime – which may be another clue as to their true nature.





Where Do They Live?

Some people believe that vampires are only found in Eastern Europe, in places steeped in vampire mystery such as Transylvania, but this is not altogether true.

Although they *are* found in the folklore of such places, vampires really exist all over the world. They may appear different and may even absorb human energy in different ways, but they are all essentially vampires.

They exist in Norway and in the Philippines, in Ireland, and in Malaysia. Some live in remote mountains, and others live deep in steaming jungles. Perhaps one of the reasons why many people think that they come from Romania, and why some of the early films about them were set there, is because at one time there were numerous stories about them in that part of the world.

Vampires also don't necessarily tend to live in ruined castles or crypts as many stories suggest; given the proper conditions and precautions, there is no reason why a

Above *Vampires love coffins. In Eastern Europe, vampires often sleep in coffins, probably because there is little chance they will be disturbed.*



vampire couldn't live in an ordinary house. There may even be one existing somewhere near you.

Many vampires do stay well away from humans, hiding away in remote tombs, mausoleums, and cemeteries where they can exist untouched – most of them want as little contact with humans as possible, except for nourishment. However, there may also be some in our bustling towns and cities. Take a closer look at your neighbors, if you dare!

Left *Old castles and creepy ruins used to be popular among vampires, but now they're just as likely to be living in town.*
Below *The steamy jungles of the Philippines are home to the dragon-like Aswang vampires (see page 24).*





10 Vital Ways to Spot a Vampire

Detecting a vampire is not always easy, especially when they sometimes bear a close resemblance to the living. However, there are a few tell-tale clues:

1 Vampires that retain human form have extremely pale skin, while others resemble flames, dragons, floating heads, or even trolls.

2 Vampires may have a particular aversion to garlic, especially large, raw cloves. They also dislike the smell of onions frying.

3 Silver will repel some vampires, while iron repels others. The metal burns their skin and repels their image, which is why they cannot be photographed.

4 Vampires avoid sunlight, as it burns their skin much more quickly than it burns yours.

5 Vampires fear holy ground, churches, and holy symbols such as crucifixes. Most will turn away from a cross.

6 Vampires cast no shadows, even in the strongest light.

7 Vampires stick to the shadows whenever they can to keep out of sight and hunt their prey.

8 Vampires avoid mirrors, as they have no reflection. Some say this is because they have no soul; others say that the silver backing on mirrors repels the vampire's image.

9 Romanian vampires may be extremely obsessive and spend hours gathering small stones.

10 All vampires have been known to sleep in coffins or in crypts, and many make their homes in cemeteries.

Right *If you really want to spot a vampire, spooky nighttime graveyards are ideal. Recently awoken from a day's rest, the graveyard vampires will be up and ready for action.*



How to Avoid a Vampire (very important)

Where you are, where you live, and the type of vampire that you wish to avoid will all affect what you do if you are confronted by one.

Wherever people practice the Christian faith, it may be that some Christian symbols will protect you from vampire attack. Some vampires are driven away by a cross or crucifix, or by holy water, which burns vampire skin like scalding liquid.

Silver can repel some vampires, and sunlight is effective against many types – if you can get them to leave the dark! This is usually tricky because they're either asleep during the day, or determined to keep out of the light.

In parts of Romania (*see map on page 75*) you can throw poppy seeds around if a vampire attacks. Local vampires are compulsive creatures and many will stop to pick up the seeds, giving you time to escape.



The smell of garlic and fried onions is also extremely repulsive to vampires and will usually drive them away. Italian restaurants are especially safe from vampire attacks.

Most vampires can also be stopped and frozen – but not killed – by driving a wooden stake into their heart as they rest. But be