



# MORTEM POST

The National Coordinator's Newsletter

Issue 11, March 2007

The Camarilla, a White Wolf World of Darkness Fan Club

## NC Stuff

Welcome to the March issue of the National Newsletter. The newsletter office is running several submission intensive projects at the moment.

**National Newsletter  
National Fiction Collection  
Recruitment Materials**

If you want to contribute to any of these projects, please send your submissions to [USNC.Newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:USNC.Newsletter@gmail.com)



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#### Staff:

Will Laymance ..... Editor and Go Getter  
 Dineh Torres ..... Chief Flunky  
 Wes Contreras ..... Boss Man  
 Submit to: [USNC.Newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:USNC.Newsletter@gmail.com)



## How to Construct a Concept to Pass Approval.

### General Approval Guidelines


Every time we approve a custom mechanic into chronicle, we go farther and farther from our canon model in the WW core material. Therefore, it is imperative that each and every custom we approve go through rigorous beatdowns, from theme and flavor to mechanical functionality. Further, things which are custom should be weaker than - not stronger than - things already in the books. Otherwise, why ever take anything from the books? Remember that when we seem to be 'nerfing' items. It's necessary to keep them below the power level of the general canon; that makes the item's main 'coolness' the fact that it is rare and relatively secret, not that it is a gamebreaker.

One cool thing is cool. A samurai is cool. A monkey is cool. A firefighter is cool. Two 'cool' things put together are dumb. A monkey, who is also a samurai-firefighter, is a Saturday morning cartoon. Don't be the first Viking-Cowboy-Middle Eastern Scribe-Buddhist in chronicle. Everything has a 'base.' A vampire is a base. Each step you take away from that base is a mark against you. A Buddhist vampire - one step. Still fine. A Buddhist-Aborigine? Not so much. A Nightmare power that causes children to cry? One step. A Nightmare power that causes children to cry because they've been aged 40 years? Not so much.

Think about the archetypes. Think about the 'steps from the norm' that you're applying to your character. Can you lower it to one step?

Think about your character in terms of 'schticks.' Mel Gibson is awesome in Lethal Weapon - but part of what makes him awesome is that he can't do \*everything\*. He needs his partner. It's the flaws, not the strengths of a character, that make him fun for you and for others in the game.

### General Application Thoughts.

\* If you put up a bloodline with a custom discipline, that is one approval item. (Bloodline, discipline. )

\* If you put up a bloodline with no custom discipline, but a custom devotion, that is two approval items and

needs two apps. (Bloodline + Devotion)

\* If you put up a bloodline with a custom discipline and a custom devotion, that is two approval items, and needs two apps. (Bloodline, Discipline + Devotion.)

For all applications, template like this: Custom XX: Blah. (Custom Bloodline: Monkeys; Custom Devotion: Dance Dance Revolution; Custom Item: Gas Mask).

This is a vampire game. It is a game of horror. It isn't funny, or silly, or based on punching people in the head. Think about those themes when you apply. Watch old vampire movies. Would the thing you're applying for seem natural if Bela Lugosi were playing it? Does it reinforce 'scary spooky' to your player comrades? Can this concept be done simply by using the already approved items in the book? Do you see Dracula using it as he's sneaking up on the innocent girl in the sheer white dress? If he does use it - is she scared, or does she stare at him and say, "You used a power to summon a monkey? WTF?"

### What's in Your Background?

Hi, I'm the ANST Wreck-whee-'em. Amazingly enough, I read backgrounds when things hit my area of the DB. All of them. I skim some, I fully digest others, still others I mark in my Black Book for use in later plots. What do you need to think about regarding a background on a national-level approval?

1. Do your research.

Please do not tell me that there were Englishmen in China in 900BC, or that you settled Australia during the Crusades. Know your time periods better than your character would, and integrate them accordingly; include the biases, ignorance and misunderstandings. Not every female PC in the Dark Ages can be well-educated. Not every male in Japan was a samurai. Make the decisions you want for your PC and then historically justify them.

2. Do not plagiarize. 

That includes historical figures, fictional books, and mythology. I read a lot, and I will call you on this. Your sire cannot be Miyamoto Musashi, Spider Jerusalem,

Blade or Cuchulainn. In particular, if you plagiarize L5R, I will deny your app into the stone age. Never plagiarize me to me. It's just bad form.

### 3. Use a timeline.

Timelines are a huge preference to detailed story. Ideally, an application background will have a timeline of rough dates with less than a sentence each, followed by a 4-5 paragraph write-up of details for truly significant events. Ensure that, even if your background is written from 'erroneous character perspective,' the ST chain knows the truth and can utilize it in considering your application.

### *Old World of Darkness*

The Old World of Darkness was cool. It really was. But if you can think of something that existed there, and doesn't exist here - there's almost certainly a thematic or stylistic reason WW didn't include it. They knew about all those powers and clans, I assure you. They made the conscious choice to remove them from chronicle, and we will not approve anything that puts those things back into play.


### **Devotion Mechanics**

All devotions must have a cost to activate. Nothing comes for free. It must also have an XP cost. Typically, that's (number of dots in the requirements x3) +/-3.

Devotions should be unique. They should not simply be 'add 2 to my discipline rolls' unless there is a really unusual reason and flavor. Just adding to preexisting things is not only bad form, it's unimaginative. You can do better than that.

Please think about precedent. Look at devotions in the game, and denote ones which are similar in form or mechanic.

In general, combat devotions will not be easy to approve. Killing PCs should happen, but it should be unusual - and we're not here to give you the edge to go Hannibal Lecter all over your local game. This includes defensive items, as combat is already difficult to balance; and items that directly protect or give offense bonuses disrupt all combat in the game. Yes, some will

get through the approval process - but those will be the most scrutinized items in the game. Prepare for that, if you put one up. 

Think about how this item will affect large scale games. If it is always on and always affects vampires in a 20' radius, you're going to be constantly messing with everyone in the ICC ballroom, and making a real annoyance of yourself.

### *Custom Items*

My first questions on any custom item is, "Why can't everyone have this item? Why can't it be reproduced en masse, flooding the chronicle?" A problem with custom items is that they can be passed around. Unlike devotions, once you get your howitzer, you can pass it to any PC you like. We might lose track of it. It might get into the hands of someone who's stats, or custom item, make it absolutely insane and far beyond what we, the NST staff, envisioned. In general, custom items are bad because they cannot be controlled once in play. If you app for one, please take into account how you will oocly ensure that this item can't be reproduced, and can't be 'passed along.'

### *Just Generally Will Not be Approved.*

\* Custom Rituals (Cruac & Theban)

\* Custom Coils

(For both of these, ask yourself - why isn't this just as effective and reasonable as a Devotion using coils/theban/cruac as a requirement? What's the difference in play?)

\* Demons, eating demons, parlaying with demons, making yourself into a demon, turning a monkey into a demon, having marshmallows with demons.. really, anything to do with demons.

That's me.



Ree Sorsbee

US2002ohtwo1444 ~ US-ANST Requiem

## Ethan Skemp Changeling Interview

By Angelus Michaels AU2005120007

The following interview is reprinted with the permission of Angelus Michaels and Shadow N Essence . If you like what you see here, please check out ShadowNessence.com

The nWoD Changeling is being envisioned by Ethan Skemp, the developer for the line. Ethan has a long history with game development and many are excited to hear his ideas and thoughts about the upcoming Changeling line from White Wolf.

Angelus: ... Considering that things are still early on in the knowledge of changeling I don't want to try and dig too deeply into the facts of the game itself; however I would like to give the forumites and other fans a snap shot of the development team and themes being dealt with. I appreciate that in giving out pieces of information you are trying to be cagey but I would like this interview to be a vehicle to engage with some of the questions that I am seeing cropping up over and over again.

Let's start with the official press release given by White Wolf wherein a statement of yours is quoted. I have replicated it here:

“Changeling is a game of beauty and cruelty, of passion and loss, of dreams and madness. You have struggled your way back through the thorns only to find your life had been stolen from you. Now you make your way the best you can, attempting to piece together the fragments of your lost life or to forge a new one, chasing your ambition through the intrigues of the changeling courts and freeholds, and always looking over your shoulder lest the Others, the true Fae, return for you.”

Okay, in picking this statement apart we see a few interesting things. I will make a few observations and see if you wish to make any commentary on them.

The typical interpretation that comes up from the various forums is that it suggests that the Player Characters start off as mortal and have been abducted by the Fae, only to return forever changed. This suggests a return to the original myths on changelings and abduction. What are the development ideas on this?

*Ethan: That's a complicated issue to discuss without giving away too many spoilery details ahead of time, but I'll give it a shot.*

*It's really easy to see what the positive aspects in a game about changelings would be like. It's a romantic concept; there's beauty and passion and exotic otherworldliness and,*

*of course, magic. We knew we could include that sort of thing easily, and we wanted to. After all, you should find changelings appealing enough to really want to play one, right?*

*However, we also wanted the double edge to that sword. It's the kind of theme that goes better with a dose of tragedy. The concepts of abduction and loss, of broken relationships and fear and mistrust are all very powerful, and they're common to the best stories about the fae. Sometimes those stories have happy endings, like Tam Lin; sometimes, as in La Belle Dame Sans Merci, they do not. But they're magnificent stories, and we relate to the idea that it would be terrible to lose all these things that are so dear to you, and for what? To serve something's whimsy, their passing fancy? That's monstrous; and, of course, we at White Wolf have always been interested in the beautiful monsters.*

*Changelings should have things they regret, and things they dream to accomplish. They should have things that they're terrified of, and things that they will stand up to and fight against, if not for themselves, then for others. And going back to those original stories “and some of the more modern stories in that same vein” we found we had plenty of food for that kind of emotional, darkly romantic banquet.*

Angelus: The use of the phrase “back through the thorns” brings up the imagery suggested by the Supernal Realm of Arcadia in Mage. We have seen speculation about the nature of the relationship between the Fae of Arcadia and the Fae of Changeling. How clear is the relationship defined in the setting?

*Ethan: Things are defined from the changeling perspective, and changelings aren't assumed to have frequent and honest contact with mages sufficient to fold the Supernal Realm view-point into their own concept of what the world is or worlds are like. So they tell things in their own terms. We did check out the Mage perspective, however, so we made sure that there aren't conflicts with the changeling perspective; even if at first glance, it might appear otherwise.*

Angelus: One of the criticisms leveled at Dreaming was its disconnection from the themes of horror of the World of Darkness. How does the development team envision the philosophy of personal horror manifesting within the new game?

Article Continued on Page 6

## The Addendum and You

Below is a short selection of some of the suggested changes in this public beta of the Addendum.

### No more MC Dots

It may sound like a bad thing, but the change suggested is a refreshing one. Instead of a dot at every third MC (and MC 14, of course) you now acquire an additional 40xp on top of the xp awarded for attaining that MC level. If you are worried about this adversely affecting your character, don't worry. The rules for converting your PC are available at the end of the addendum.

### 50% Rule

If the suggested rule for creating new characters is put in to play you will not be permitted to spend more than half of your xp in any particular area: Attributes, Skills, Blood Potency, Disciplines, or Merits. Fortunately, MC1 characters are exempt from this restriction, allowing new players to be free to create characters without learning too many of our rules. MC earned in play is also exempt from this restriction.

### Blood Potency

Blood expended for physical augmentation (attacks, and other physical pools) has been limited to a maximum of +5 or the vampire's natural unmodified attribute, whichever is higher.

### Bloodlines

All bloodlines from sanctioned materials will become High approval in the current suggested version of the addendum.

### USCC 2007

USCamarilla Convention will be hosted on June 7th to June 10th with a room rate of \$85 a night.

Sheraton Cleveland Airport Hotel  
5300 Riverside Drive • Cleveland, Ohio 44135  
Phone: (216) 267-1500 or 1-800-325-3535  
Room Block is under "The Camarilla"

More details will be forthcoming. Look for an all call and other information from our event lead, Jennifer Cross. She can be reached at :  
ladyjara@yahoo.com

### Covenant

If you publically leave your covenant (and lose all associated mechanical benefits) you can join another covenant at Low approval.

### Projectile Attacks

Attacks from non-firearms projectile weapons like crossbows are made using the attacker's choice of Firearms or Athletics, and do not deny the target the use of her Defense.

### Other Items of Note

Supernatural characters and NPCs under the age of 12 are high approval.

All of the basic disciplines become Low Approval.

Devotions associated with bloodlines are specific to that type, but may be learned with High approval by those who are not a member of the bloodline.

### Summary

All in all, the addendum promises to bring quite a few interesting changes to our global chronicle. Hopefully you took the opportunity to share your opinion about this upcoming addendum and enjoyed the opportunity to share in helping craft the global addendum.



## Ethan Skemp Interview Continued

*Ethan: Horror isn't the first and only purpose of a World of Darkness game, but a World of Darkness game should be able to do horror easily, and it should be able to do horror well. It's an intrinsic component of the setting, and we wanted to make sure Changeling would fit in with the most excellent mood-setting writing and art of the World of Darkness core. So in short, yes, we want it to fit within the World of Darkness; that's an obvious and important goal.*

*But we also want it to feel different from Vampire and Werewolf and Mage and Promethean. In all of those games, horror isn't the only story you can tell: you can tell stories about passion and grief and heroism and insight and sometimes even humor, and the World of Darkness backdrop can heighten all of those. We didn't want to forget that with Changeling.*

Angelus: An observation I wish to make is that the three large games all have a very large scope and heroic level upon which to play. With the release of Promethean we see the focus emphasizing the personal journey above the epic journey. Is this a philosophy that we might see continue with the smaller lines, including changeling?

*Ethan: I'm not sure I'd characterize it quite like that. It's not quite epic vs. personal, because some personal journeys are really epic: Odysseus didn't exactly make it through the ten-year journey with a group of friends. Promethean's pretty epic, even if you tend to socialize only with your immediate throng and not with a greater Created society.*

*From a focus standpoint, Changeling's designed to be a fairly social game, and as such we want plenty of motivation to spend time with your fellow players and with changelings beyond your immediate circle. Players should enjoy getting together with their motley and setting out to try to fix some problems or navigate the courtly games of intrigue or find a safe hiding spot or whatever their goals are. With so much variety available for basic character concepts, getting together with friends helps you see more of that variety at a given time. This may just be the Werewolf developer in me talking, but I always loved those packs with a variety of tribes and auspices, producing so much*

*diversity that each pack was a uniquely colorful quilt in its own right. A clawed, fanged, murderous quilt that would hunt you through the forest until you dropped of exhaustion and had your throat torn out, but... you know. Some quilts are like that.*

*Same thing with Changeling, if I haven't lost you with the quilt metaphor.*

Angelus: There have been a number of people overjoyed to hear your selection as the developer for the game, considering your previous work to be exemplary. Given your artistic leadership on the project, what would you like to see realized with this game? What is your dream for this game?

*Ethan: Well, I'm damn flattered by these people's faith, and I hope not to tragically disappoint them. My biggest hope, of course, is that people like what I like – that somewhere along the way, we manage to take this basic concept for a game and show other people what's evocative and powerful about it, and encourage them to go play with it themselves. I'm having a lot of fun working on this game, so clearly I'm not just pandering to a playstyle I'm not personally fond of like some game design mercenary. So if I'm not pandering, I can only hope that other people can enjoy the things that make me say "wow, that's damn cool." We're going to make it as slick and sexy as possible, and with any luck, that'll be damn slick and drop-dead sexy.*

*But I also hope people sympathize with the changeling viewpoint. It's not a classic escapist fantasy with the idea that the mortal world you lose wasn't worth half a damn anyway. I would hope that Changeling helps people see the beauty in what their characters have lost as well as what they've gained.*

Angelus: From what we've seen in your suggestions; changeling nouveau is fairly different from Dreaming, what do you consider to be the biggest difference between the two?

*Ethan: The answer to the question "what is a changeling?" Everything else "theme, mechanics, setting, society" hinges on that in one way or another.*