Blood Will Tell

- Background
  - Vampire Biology
    - "Dracula" virus rewrites human DNA into vampire DNA so that as cells replicate, they form vampiric stem cells. The virus attacks the nervous system first, putting the victim into a coma and preserving the brain while the rest of the body stops functioning and is rebuilt into a vampire. The process of going into the coma is very painful as nerves are ripped apart and rebuilt until the brain is reached and the pain centers disabled. After awakening, the body is tender for about a day as well.
    - The virus builds on the basic human DNA, keeping the core parts and adding on the vampiric "extras". The stuff that's not needed is tossed. The result is that after rebuilding, the victim tends to look as good as possible for their age --- a good portion of aging is the result of DNA damage, and the virus can't fix that. Sometimes, the DNA is damaged too much, and the result is rather like when you tell an image editor to automatically fix a photograph: sometimes the result looks like abstract art. Biological "abstract art" is very messy...
    - One of the vampiric additions is an enzyme, vampirease ("can *you* think of a better name?"), that catalyzes a reaction that consumes hemoglobin to produce energy. Quite a lot of energy is produced, allowing the conversion to a vampire to complete solely from the blood in the victim, and after the conversion, to provide the energy to power the superstrength muscles. This reaction is the sole source of energy for a vampire, so they cannot suffocate, and the brain is not damaged by the conversion process when the victim is "dead" (in the conversion coma). This also means that when they wake up, they're very hungry, having used up most, if not all, of the blood in the host body during conversion.
    - The brain is enhanced with improved neurons, smaller, so that more fit in the cranium, as well as getting rid of parts of the brain that are vestigial, so a vampire needs no sleep, is a somewhat smarter, thinks faster, and has better senses and faster reflexes than the human it used to be, as well as a weak ability to control human minds.
    - A single vampire can only suggest, and only a very weak mind can be in any way "controlled". But a number of vampires can get together, and when something too public occurs, a group of "Sanitizers" will "convince" any witnesses that something mundane actually occurred. Usually, the witnesses don't want to believe what they saw anyhow, so it's not too difficult a task. The converse of the coercive effect is that strong emotions and the truth of a statement can be discerned by a vampire focusing on an individual. Thus, a common occupation for mainstreamed vampires is as detectives and police. It also allows them to cover up non-mundane incidents.
    - Inactive cells require no more energy than normal human cells do, and thus while a vampire can in fact starve to death, since they don't need any external resources to survive, they can "hibernate", reducing energy consumption to minimal levels, in which state they can survive for a very long time, but need some external stimulus to revive. In ancient times, they relied on trusted servants for this, or pure luck, but now technology allows for some assistance.
    - As a hunter, the vampire has a much improved sense of smell, and can identify to some detail the odors present at any moment. Since smell is a large portion of taste, and that sense is very heightened, vampires do not like strong foods (hence the distaste for garlic), but can derive much enjoyment from subtleties that humans are barely aware of.
    - The digestive system works, but doesn't absorb anything from the food except water and a few vitamins, etc, that even vampires need. They eat lightly because minimal processing means that it tends to run through the system pretty fast.
    - The main source of nourishment for a vampire are the fangs, which are only about a quarter of an inch long, but hollow. Blood is sucked into them and run through a sort of gill that filters out the hemoglobin, which is passed into the blood, while the rest is dumped down the throat.
    - Vampirease is unstable in the presence of ultraviolet light, which causes the catalyzation process to become uncontrolled: i.e. a vampire will sunburn, catch fire, or even explode, in unfiltered sunlight, depending on the amount of uv present. Technology as created additional risks, even in the nighttime, as many flourescent lights give of UV, and the prevalence of black lights at Halloween keeps most off the streets on a night you would expect to be a big vampire party night.
    - An enzyme in wood, and the metal silver, interferes with the operation of vampirease, acting as a slow poison that has the effect of starving/suffocating a vampire (both feeding and breathing in humans combine to provide the energy for the human body that vampirease reacting with hemoglobin does for vampires). A silver hollowpoint bullet (which will expand for more surface area, as well as more likely to stop and stay in the body to stay in contact with the enzyme) is sufficient to kill a vampire, but probably not before he's had time to dispatch the shooter unless they're quick and shooting at a distance.
    - The Dracula virus and related cells remain in the system in large numbers, which in combination with energy available from vampirease, provides for extraordinarily fast healing, as well as quick destruction of any foreign element, such as other virii or bacteria.
    - A drug has been developed, Libiracin, that "liberates" vampires from classical restrictions: it interferes with vampirease just enough to stabilize it and slow it down enough that ultraviolet light no longer causes the reaction to runaway, though it does still speed it up a little. The slowing effect results in less consumption of hemoglobin, but also less energy and stamina (relative to vampires, but still a little more than the typical human), when not exposed to UV. Under UV, however, vampires on Libiracin raise their temperature and consume hemoglobin faster because of the increased reaction rate, but the lowered energy and stamina is reversed --- they have even more energy and endurance than a normal vampire, though can burn themselves out, literally if they do it for too long. The same is true of healing: slower in the dark, but faster in the sun. Libiracin thus only prevents a vampire's destruction: they will still wear sunblock in order to live a "normal" life in the sun. In humans, it's an anti-oxidant that people take as an anti-aging pill.
    - Crosses, holy water and invisibility in mirrors are just old wives tales used to embellish the old stories. Holy water and crosses were something spread by priests trying to convince uneducated masses to join the church. Occasionally, holy water did work, but did so only when the water had been sitting in a silver bowl long enough to dissolve some of the metal, and the vampire

already had numerous cuts for the poison to infiltrate through. Sometimes garlic was soaked in the water as well, which in addition to being pungent to vampire senses, is a skin irritant that tends to keep wounds from healing so the silver tainted water can better get in to poison the system.

- Vampire culture
  - There are those for whom the raw power and violence are an attraction, as well as the thrill of a hunt and escape.
  - As a result, there is an underground vampire police network to keep them from drawing too much attention and starting a new witch hunt, though occasionally an incident occurs that they can't deal with in time and it ends up in the tabloids.
  - A conservative segment doesn't like the changes and assimilation that Libiracin allows and try to fight its use, considering it a "weakening". They try to create reports and evidence that it causes cancer in humans to destroy the cover market.
- Alex
  - Born in 1920 to very bohemian parents, Alex is very open minded, but also learned about intolerance from others. They're pragmatic parents however, and thus he learned how to live with discretion among those who would disapprove of their lifestyle. With Alex growing up in the Depression, he learned self reliance as well.
  - Seeing the effects of friends who couldn't handle the roaring 20's or the depression, he started college with the intention of going into medical school. When WWII started, he was naturally drafted into the medical corps. Not having enough schooling yet to be a doctor, he was essentially an EMT of the time, applying first aid on the battlefield and accompanying the wounded back to the hospital. There he met and became close friends with Matt, and rather quickly, lovers. Matt was a night shift intern who had "an allergy to sunlight", and for some reason, although the sex was great, Alex always felt a little under the weather the next day. He always attributed it to the hospital environment and general presence of disease.
  - Eventually, the odds caught up with Alex, and he was severely wounded himself on the battlefield, and brought back to the hospital. Matt kept an eye on him, and when it was clear he wouldn't otherwise survive, he bit him to convert him to a vampire in order to save him. When Alex "died", Matt managed to get the "body" to an apartment for the conversion period.
  - Matt trained alex, but was transferred, eventually captured, and forced to be exposed to sunlight, and was consumed in fire, a story which, if any witnesses told, was not believed.
  - Alex awoke alone and with no idea what had happened. Fortunately, there was no direct sunshine onto his bed, but when he got up, feeling very tender, a hand fell into a beam of sunlight, flared up with a flame, and burned him badly and painfully. While staring at the burned hand, he went into psychological shock as he watched it heal right in front of him. After the healing was completed, he became aware of a strong craving for raw meat, the bloodier the better. He had a steak in the refrigerator and discovered his new fangs when he bit into the steak. Instinctively, he poked holes throughout the steak, sucking it dry of any liquid. It tasted "off", but briefly quenched the craving.
  - Fortunately, as a new resident intern, he was on night shift at the hospital and was able to avoid the sun. Newly aware, roaming at night, he discovered the vampire society and eventually was given the education Matt was supposed to give him (one of the rules of vampire society is to either kill by sucking the body completely dry of blood and then make it "disappear", or simply infect and convert, and then train the newly "born again" vampire in the ways to remain hidden and not be a danger to the secret society). Violation of this "prime directive" meant that Matt had a very short life expectancy, immortal or not.
  - Did residency on night shifts and worked as night shift emergency room doctor
  - Researched during the day, discovered the enzyme the powers vampires and developed Libiracin. Word spread quickly, and he became wealthy building a pharmaceutical company. The drug also prevents ultraviolet rays from damaging human skin, though at the expense of preventing a tan as well (which doesn't happen unless there's skin damage). So an additional sibling drug was developed to trigger melanin production, and he became one of the world's richest people.
  - In order to avoid the non-aging issue, he disappeared gracefully by selling the company to a vampire-owned holding company, which would ensure the drug continued to be produced as needed. The company was set up with a minimum of three widely spaced research facilities. Every 10 years or so, he would change identities and move to one of the other locations to continue doing biomedical research, focusing on vampire biology and adapting it into drugs for human use. This does not sit well with the conservative set of vampires either.
  - Being forever 25-35, he's constantly fending off the "you need to find a nice girl" questions. He's followed the gay rights movement discreetly, though got found out once which forced him to change identities after only 3 years instead of the usual 10. He did a stint as a private investigator in order to keep from running into people he might have known only 13 years ago at the biomedical research facility he would otherwise have gone to. This allowed him to learn techniques for both finding people and things as well as being better able to cover his tracks.
  - Since the 90's, he's been able to be out as gay, and for the last six months, has been seeing Ben. Ben is ready to move in, and practically lives with Alex as it is. Alex is resisting, but knows that decision time is near: he loves Ben, and there's only one way the relationship can last very long: Ben must become a vampire too, but having been involuntarily converted and abandoned to find his own way, Alex was determined to make sure Ben knew everything ahead of time. This was very risky, because if Ben reacted badly, he would be killed before he could endanger the vampire world, and Alex would be as well if he didn't do it himself to clean up his own mess.
- Ben
  - Born in 1969
  - Farm boy
  - interested in being an architect, but designed an effective sunshade for cars and made enough to live off the proceeds indefinitely.
  - getting active in gay politics

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- [ ] meets alex in hawaii at Little Beach