

Boons – Intermediate lessons

An In Character document for the Camarilla role playing game

My childe,

I have observed your progress, and have been pleased with what you have accomplished. You have become a Harpy within the Court, and thus I feel it behoves to me to explain more of the important details of Prestation, as you have obviously mastered the basic principles. We will start with the most serious and important points.

Breaking a Boon

The most serious problem that comes from an economy of Boons is when Vampires fail to keep their promises. This does not happen often, and there is a good reason for that. Failing to respond to a Boon is a serious problem. If someone is discovered to have defaulted, they are undermining the currency of Vampiric Society. All it takes is for this to become common and Boons become worthless.

Those who do refuse to honour their Boons face a harsh penalty. They should be ostracised. Exile from their home Domain should be considered a mercy. Their assets and goods are free to be seized by any of the Damned: their retainer, their influences, their money - all of it is open to be taken. No one is expected to repay debts to a Boon Broken Vampire. Some old-fashioned Princes may even use this as an excuse to have them Blood Hunted. It's that's nasty and that simple. If you owe, you had better pay... otherwise you lose everything.

False Witness

There is a weakness here: someone could say someone else has defaulted when they haven't. That is called False Witness. Bring False Witness against someone and you will probably be killed... simple as that... no appeal, no Blood Hunt. Everyone knows you brought False Witness, and they know you have to die. In order to prevent False Witness from ever happening, it has led to both parties making damn sure that either the Boons are announced or that both are there when it is recorded.

Collecting Boons

The best thing about holding a Court position is that it automatically allows you collect Boons. If a Priscus has a Clan member who wishes to petition a Prince, he should charge them a Boon. All this talk about Clan loyalty can only go so far - consider the argument that members of a Clan should not charge each other Boons a bit like saying no Australian should pay another Australian any wages because they are working in the same country. Boons are currency, and a Vampire must make a living!

Princes, of course, have the most advantageous position in the Court. Everything comes with a price. Someone wants to Sire? Of course! That's a Boon. Someone wants to establish a new haven in another part of town? Boon. Someone wants to be Sheriff but not be thrall'd? Boon. A new Vampire wants to live in your Domain? Yes, you guessed it, a Boon. This way Princes collect many Boons - they either use them to prevent Praxis

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seizures or they allow someone else take over and quietly run things from the shadows. If the Prince doesn't charge Boons, he's weak. A Prince without Boons, is a rich man without money. They look the part but have no power to back it up. Their nights are numbered. At best they are a puppet; watch to see who holds the strings, in this case the power of Boons.

Payment of Officers of the Court

An Officer of the Court shouldn't ask a favour for performing the tasks which the Prince has set him. After all, he probably owes the Prince a Boon to be holding the position in the first place, and shouldn't risk it being said that he wasn't holding up his end of the Boon. More commonly, favours come from selectively not performing the tasks asked of him and overlooking minor indiscretions. Every Court position comes with many opportunities to gain Boons. Consider this carefully should you ever gain such a lofty title.

Beware however; some Prince's do not take kindly to their officers "gathering" Boons by using their position as leverage. Then again, some do. Kickbacks are not unheard of. There's no need to get self-righteous; everyone is advantaged by this system. The Sheriff, for example, performs a duty that all of Society benefits from. What does he get from this duty? The opportunity to risk his existence fighting criminals. Hardly an appealing prospect. So to offset the downsides to the job, he will generally be allowed to collect a few Boons for not coming down as hard as he might on the misdemeanours that he witnesses. Everyone wins – Society has a Sheriff to police it, the Sheriff gains a few Boons and the petty criminals don't get beaten and arrested.

Why owing Boons is worthwhile

As you know, once you get above the level of a Minor Boon you start to get into the position where everything you have worked for and everything you hold dear could be destroyed.

Many would respond to this by shaking their head and saying "I am not ever gonna owe anyone a Boon". This is foolish. Not owing a Boon is a disadvantage; if you owe no one a Boon, you are a wildcard. A title such as Sheriff or Harpy or Primogen should never be given unto you, for you have nothing to moderate your bestial side, nothing to check the excesses the Beast may force upon you.

Another reason is this; if you owe nothing, far from it being a mark of clean "credit" suspicions are aroused. Are you so friendless that no one will do you favours? Are you so miserly that you offer none? Are you so powerless, or useless, that you have nothing to offer? And if that is the case...why are you consuming resources we all badly need? How do I know that you will repay your debts in an honourable and timely fashion? How can you be trusted?

If you have no credit history no one will invest in you.

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Compensation or Blood Boons

Now there is something that hasn't yet been said about Boons. It is without doubt one of the most important factors of Society, and one of the reasons why violence becomes so rare in area where proper protocol is strictly adhered to. That is Compensation; also know as the payment of Blood Boons.

A Boon is an investment. You never know what you may need a Boon for- so you take a Boon out with as many people as possible. But Boons don't really work if the person who owes you a Boon is killed; once they are gone the Boon you where owed is lost. Right?

Not so. Think about it like this: That Boon was an investment that had simply not been cashed in yet. Now someone has destroyed that investment, and they have to pay compensation. If you kill someone who owed someone else a Boon, they have the right to ask you to compensate them by owing them that same Boon. If you fail to do so, you will be treated as Boon Broken. Remember that the entire economy of the Damned depends upon everyone placing Boons high above all else; failure to give them due reverence leads always to the hardest penalties.

Be careful whom you strike against, for you may find you have slain your worst foe, only now to owe his allies because you did so.

Accumulated Boons

The situation often arises in which one vampire is constantly doing small services for another. The first is a Trivial Boon, as is the second, and the third... Rather than accumulating countless Trivial favours, better to accumulate the Boons.

It was the Italian Court of Pisa that first formalised the rates of exchange between the different levels of Boons. The rate is generally considered fair in defining the value of one Boon relative to another, and it is rare that a Court defines the rate of exchange between boons differently from the Pisa Scale.

According to the Pisa Scale a Major boon can be broken into three Minor Boons, and a Minor Boon into three Trivial Boons. Thus nine Trivial Boons is the equal of one Major Boon. The final level is always a Major Boon. It isn't possible to gain a Life Boon from any other method than saving another's existence.

However, a Life Boon can be broken into Major Boons through Compensation. Should a Life Boon need to be repaid, it is usually considered fair to pay one Major Boon for every degree of Status that the deceased Vampire possessed. Thus the Acknowledged would be repaid with a single Major Boon, the Respected with four Major Boons.

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Who it is good to owe

The real secret to Compensation is that a clever, ingenious or sneaky Vampire may actually seek out powerful, hated or influential Vampires and offer to be in their debt in order to use their name as protection. That annoying Crone in the corner may be ripe for a good kicking, but if he suddenly announces that he owes a Minor Boon to the Mekhet Priscus, a Major Boon to Alder Duke Ijon Hall, or a Life Boon to Fenris Black, you must realise that if you destroy him you will owe that person a Boon. Indeed, powerful Vampires may well find others seeking to offer their service by way of a Boon to them, in order to access this very protection. Because others perceive that they have power; so they give them Boons, so their power grows.

This system has many names - the most common and most realistic is patronage. Which is what it is... pure, mediaeval patronage and feudalism, the strong protecting the weak.

Immunity to Compensation

Generally speaking, the only people who are immune to paying compensation are Princes. If someone breaks a Prince's laws, and the Prince Blood Hunts them, then the investment is lost. Equally, members of the Invictus who engage in the dangerous tradition of Monomacy are literally betting their existences on their righteousness. An Invictus who kills another in Monomacy isn't expected to pay Blood Boons for his opponent.

Also, don't forget that if your Domain suffers from an Ascendancy of the Unaligned, your Boons are invalidated until it ends. All Society recognises the futility of trying to enforce Boons on a rabble city. Of course you could always swear loyalty to another Prince and leave your old Domain - and the other Prince will accept you... for a Boon...