

VampStick: The Stick Parade

A Game of Pointless Horror in the World of DarkStick

written, illustrated and produced by Jason Black

Disclaimer

VampStick is just a game, there are not really blood sucking stick figures running the world, and you do not have to worry about killing them. There are however Goths and people that still think they're Punk, and you should probably watch out for them. If you are one, well no biggie, you'd better learn to laugh at yourself because the rest of us are. As further disclaimer, werewolf stick figures, ghostly stick figures and everything else in this game is simply a figment of my bitter and satirical mind. There are however robots, they hate humanity and they listen to me (for I am in fact an alien super-genius), and if you sue me because I made fun of your clique, I'll sick their horrible rending claws of steel on you before your makeup dries.

Oh, and enjoy this pointless game.

VampStick: The Stick Parade

In the World of DarkStick, VampSticks, horrible undead bastards that feast on the blood of StickMortals, not only exist, but also have lots of power for no real reason. VampSticks love to flaunt their inexplicable power; both supernatural and political, over the StickMortals they prey upon. VampSticks do not bother to hide, knowing that they could trounce a mere StickMortal and drink his blood.

Most StickMortals live in fear of the VampSticks, doing as they're told and going about their business, all while trying to avoid having their blood sucked out. Some strive for power though, and become the lackeys of the VampSticks, even going so far as to become VampSticks themselves, should they manage to impress their masters.

There are other StickMortals though that grow weary of living in the shadow of these unholy creatures, and dedicate their lives to hunting and slaying VampSticks. Known as StickHunters, these hard bastards have access to ancient knowledge, magic and angry rage, and pose a significant threat to the VampSticks.

Character Creation

In VampStick creating a character, whether it's a StickHunter or a VampStick is fundamentally the same. It's very easy, so easy as to insult some people's intelligence, and that's just fine. For purposes of explaining this process, let's assume that you'll be making a StickHunter, those intrepid fools that hunt VampSticks, among other weird denizens of the night. After this I'll explain VampSticks, since they're a little different.

Characters in VampStick have ONE and only ONE stat, and this is POWER. Power is used to do Stuff, whatever that Stuff may be. To determine your starting Power, roll a d4, whatever you get, that's your Power score. Obviously, 1 is the worst and 4 is the best.

Write down the word Power and then the number you rolled on whatever you feel like it. Character sheets are pretty much a waste for VampStick, so use whatever you've got, lined paper, a napkin, the inside of a cardboard box, hell, use the back of your hand if you want.

Now write the Word Karma. Karma is NOT a stat, only Power is a stat. Karma is well, Karma. Deal with it. Karma is the inverse of your Power, so if you have a Power of 1, you get Karma of 4. A Power of 3 means Karma of 2. Get it? Good, it's easy.

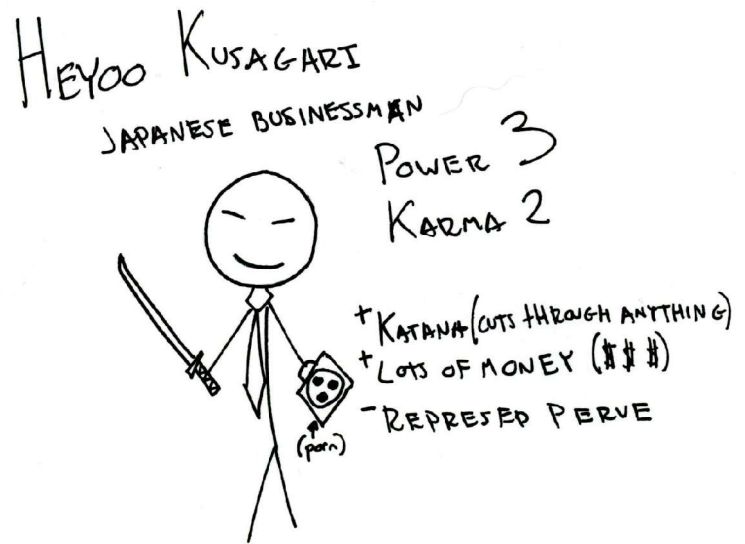
Now, bust out what crap artistic skills you might have and draw a stick figure by the words Power and Karma (only ONE of which is a stat). This consists of six parts, a head, a body, and you can figure out the rest. If you can't handle a stick figure, then you should go play an even simpler game. Perhaps rock-paper-scissors? Maybe leapfrog? You could practice with Hang Man, how about that?

Now your character needs a Profession. A Profession is what your StickHunter does when he's not hunting VampSticks, to give him some semblance of a secret identity and help keep the VampSticks off his ass. Write this Profession (such as Game Designer) above the stick figure in quite possibly the largest letters you can manage. Now, draw something on that stick figure that represents this profession (perhaps dice and an empty wallet for a Game Designer).

Once you've got that stick figure drawn up, you'll probably notice that he looks boring, and possibly dumb. This is where you get to spice up your StickHunter and make him unique. Pick three Attributes that describe your character and make him unique or just like the rest of the world. You should pick two Attributes that are positive, and one that is negative. Write these Attributes below the stick figure, making sure to write the negative aspect LAST. This is more or less important.

Go ahead and draw some stuff on the stick figure to represent these Attributes. For example, a Hipster StickHunter might have cool hair like the Fonz, while a Smelly StickHunter might have stink lines coming off him.

Finally, pick a name and write it on the "character sheet" somewhere so you know what the hell people are supposed to call this guy and the GM isn't forced to call everybody Hey You.



VampStick Creation

VampSticks are created in much the same way as StickHunters but with a few slight differences.

Firstly, when you roll for the characters Power, you roll 1d4+1. VampSticks are more powerful than any StickMortal could ever hope to be, and so have a Power stat of 2 to 5. When determining Karma for a VampStick, you invert the Power stat as normal, except that a Power of 1 equates to a Karma of 5, and so on.

Finally, all VampSticks must have the positive Attribute VampStick Abilities. This is explained below in **Special VampStick Rules**. Other than VampStick Abilities, VampSticks have one other positive attribute and one negative one.

The Rules

The Rules in VampStick are very, very simple. As VampStick is designed to basically be played during lunch breaks or when bored at school/work and requires little to no preparation or thought, the system isn't very intense.

The Golden Rule of VampStick is to keep it simple. Don't draw complex things, don't plan actions out, just do whatever pops into your head first, especially if it's suicidal or funny.

Also, I suggest that, for maximum humor, you add Stick before (or after) every possible word you can. Trust me, it's funnier that way.

Power is used for everything you could ever want to do in VampStick. Karma is there to help out characters that got screwed by the d4 roll. Attributes give you a +1 bonus or a -1 penalty (depending on the Attribute) when they make sense.

Doing Stuff

Any time you want to do some kind of Stuff in VampStick, the GM will pick a random number to determine how difficult it is to do the Stuff. He could pick any number he wants to, and may in fact choose really high or really low numbers if he's being an ass or trying to help you out.

Roll a d4 and add your Power stat to the roll. If you get any bonuses or penalties from Attributes or anything, add those in as well. If the total beats the number the GM picked, then good on ya! You did the Stuff. If the total is too low, then you failed. You're a loser, but you can try again later.

Preventing Stuff From Being Done

If you want to stop somebody else from doing some Stuff (namely to you), you can spend a point of Karma and stop it. Basically, you say No, and they don't get to do the Stuff. Of course, they could always use a point of Karma to veto your Karma, and then you're in the same boat.

The other option is to get another player (or NPSG) to loan you a point of Karma. You can then use this point of Karma instead of wasting your own points. Of course, this basically means that you got somebody else to waste their Karma point to help you out, which is great for you, but shame on them for being dumb (or good on them for being heroic, whatever). They lose that point of Karma and that's that.

On the off chance that you end up playing with these same characters another time, you get your Karma back at the beginning of the game.

Combat

StickHunters want to kill VampSticks because they're "evil," VampSticks like to kill StickMortals because VampSticks are assholes, and a lot of other people are just angry and violent. Regardless of which kind of character you're playing you'll most likely want to put the hurt on somebody at some point. This is pretty easy to do.

When a fight starts, you'll need lots of paper, Post-It-Notes™ work wonders for this, so maybe you should snag some.

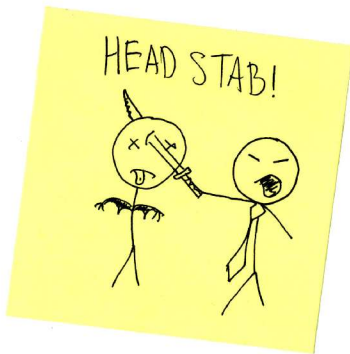
Anyway, everybody secretly draws their character doing whatever they want their character to do. Make sure you draw whomever you want to hurt being hurt by you as well. Maybe label some stuff to make sure it's easy to understand. Everybody (including the GM) reveals their drawings, and the character with the highest Power goes first. If two characters have the same Power score, they go at the same time, or the two players can argue over it or whatever, but you want to keep things simple.

As for actually hurting each other, both the attacker and defender roll a d4 and add their Power and whoever gets higher wins. If the attacker gets higher, then the defender gets hurts (see **Damage** below).

You can go ahead and spend Karma whenever the hell you feel like it.

Damage

When you get hit in combat, erase one of the body parts on your stick figure and write down a negative Attribute that makes sense (like Limp if you erased a leg). If ever the body or head of a stick figure gets erased, then that character is dead and gone.



Experience

At the end of the game the GM will hand out experience points. Write these down on your “character sheet” so you don’t forget how many you have. You get 1 experience point just for being there. You’ll get more if you do something really cool. It’s up to the GM to hand them out as he sees fit.

You can spend 1 experience point to heal a body part, allowing you to draw it back on and erase the negative Attribute you added for losing it in the first place. This can only be done between games or, if your GM allows it, during long boring lulls in the story (like if you have to stay in hiding for a few days).

After that, experience points can be traded to buy new Abilities, such as Magic or so on. You can also use experience points to buy equipment, if your GM says it’s cool. The price is up to the GM.

If your GM says it’s okay, you can use experience points to buy off a negative attribute. Keep in mind that your GM could also force you too keep a negative attribute gained from getting hurt, or even give you new ones to be mean.

Equipment

Anybody can stumble upon equipment throughout the game. Equipment comes in many, many forms and can be gotten hold of in two ways. The first is to buy it with experience points, like we said above. The second is to find it. If you kill another StickGuy, then you can rob his corpse of whatever stuff he may have had. You can also tell your GM that you’re going to try to pick up or find a piece of equipment pretty much any time, but he’s going to tell you if you can get it. Finding garlic in a VampStick lair will probably be a no, whereas getting a hammer from a construction site is probably a yes.

If you manage to pull it off, you can also score equipment when you make your character. If for example you have an Attribute Crazy Gunman, and you draw a gun in his hand, you can probably have a gun. It’s up to the GM.

Equipment gives you a +1 bonus to your Power roll if it’s useful in a situation. A gun would give you +1 to hurt somebody for example. If the equipment proves both useful and neat, then it grants a +2. A crossbow would be useful against a VampStick, but a crossbow that fired wood stakes would be useful and neat.

Abilities

Abilities are things your character can do that others can’t, things like Shape Shifting, or Magic and so on. Like everything else in the game, Abilities are up to you, and can do pretty much whatever you want. Just tell the GM what the ability is, what it does, and why the hell you should have it, and he’ll tell you how many experience points it costs. Generally a lame Ability costs 1 experience point, a good one costs 3 and an awesome Ability costs 5 points.

Special VampStick Rules

VampSticks get a few special rules that apply to them only, and we waited until now to explain them because now they’ll make more sense.

The Attribute VampStick Abilities allows VampSticks to wail on other characters. Anytime a VampStick loses a limb, he grows it back the next night, and it doesn’t cost any experience points. A VampStick is still killed if he loses his body or head.

Furthermore, they get to have whatever magical abilities they want as their extra attribute, and can use the “I’m a bloody VampStick” excuse for most other Abilities.

If a VampStick manages to kill a character, he can make that character into a VampStick as well. The character becomes a VampStick the next night and makes a new VampStick character. He adds 1 to his Power and adjusts his Karma as fits, and continues from there for character creation. He gains both Killed By The Sun and VampStick Abilities, which can be tacked on in addition to any existing attributes.

However, sunlight will kill a VampStick dead. If a VampStick is touched by any amount of sunlight for any time he will be killed outright, he can’t even use Karma to stop this.

Finally, VampSticks have to drink blood every night or they lose Power. For each night that a VampStick doesn't consume any blood, he loses a point of Power, if he ever reaches 0 he goes into a coma from which he will never awaken. Ever. This makes him really bloody easy to kill. If a VampStick drinks blood even once then he returns to his full Power.

Garlic, holy water and crosses always grant +1 bonuses when doing anything mean to a VampStick, and they can't touch these things themselves. A wooden stake allows you to hit a VampStick right in the body and kill him, but it can be vetoed with Karma.

The World of DarkStick

StickMortals had long thought VampSticks gone or imaginary, Count Stickula having been slain hundreds of years ago. They were wrong however. The VampSticks had simply gone into hiding, figuring that in so doing they could rise to dominance in the future and make it that much more melodramatic when the did so.

The VampSticks bid their time in hiding until the 1980s, when the Punk scene developed. The VampSticks chose then to strike, and have made the cities of the world their playgrounds. Knowing that mankind's dwindling faith would prevent too many people from kicking their asses with crosses, they took over the world and plunged it into a metaphorical night that they feel will never end.

Many StickMortals, as the VampSticks call them, felt the same way. Many turned to Punk rock and kept the scene going far longer than it should have, but more turned inward and wallowed in their own stupid fear, birthing the thriving Goth scene. VampSticks, naturally inclined to darkness, embraced this Goth scene themselves, and revel in its gloomy repetitive music and strive to make themselves different from each other but the same all at once.

And so, the 21st century arrives and the world is in a shitty state. VampSticks run the government and business, treating StickMortals like livestock. But the StickMortals continue to do their own thing, doing everything in their power to continue living life as if it were VampStick free.

In most of the large, industrial nations, like America and whatnot, the VampSticks do not run for president and the like, although one could probably win. No, they simply control people, and don't bother to hide the fact that they do. You don't have to worry about a VampStick judge so much as the fact that the judge is probably in some VampStick's pocket. In less advanced parts of the world, VampStick's may go so far as to rule areas from spooky castles on hills like in fantasy stories.

The StickHunters

Over the last few years groups of StickMortals have banded together to help free the world of its unholy infestation. Searching the world over (mostly during the day) for ancient books and relics that will help them in their war against the VampSticks, these StickHunters have begun striking out at the VampSticks.

Using the VampSticks endless bickering to their advantage, as well as the fact that VampSticks can't go out in the day, they've won small victories the world over. Now, the VampSticks have begun to call together councils of their eldest members to figure out what to do about the StickHunters.

So far, they've done nothing, because they're too busy fighting amongst themselves about who's the most Goth, or which ones are sell-out conformists. Luckily for the VampSticks though, the StickHunters have a hard time getting too much done because most StickMortals are either too afraid to fight the VampSticks, or they're idiots.

WereSticks

There are some StickMortals out there who have the "gift" of being able to shape shift into an animal or a weird ass hybrid form of that animal and a person. The existence of these creatures dates back to well before VampSticks existed, and they're pretty much pissed off that VampSticks get all the glory. These WereSticks tend to shy away from cities because they're usually hunted down by VampSticks, who shy away from the wilderness because they'll get their asses torn to shit by WereSticks. In addition, some WereSticks have the

strange idea that they're supposed to be the defenders of the natural world or some craziness, and act as supernatural eco-terrorists.



WereSticks come in all shapes and sizes as far as what kind of animal they turn into, but as far as the game is concerned, they all share some common rules. First, they get the attribute WereStick Abilities, which allows them to turn into a straight up animal, or a sort of man animal hybrid form. They're just like the animal in that form, and in the hybrid form they generally get +2 to their Power while beating the shit out of stuff, because they're always some kind of nasty predator beast. They can only transform at night though, because it's the power of the moon that lets them do all this crazy crap. In addition they heal wounds just like a VampStick.

WereSticks are hurt by silver, things like silver bullets, blades, frying pans and the like can hurt them really bad. If a character wielding such a silver weapon hurts a WereStick, they have to spend experience to heal the wound like a StickHunter does.

StickFey

The StickFey are ancient weirdoes from another dimension too weird even for Salvador Dali. You know, that guy who painted the melting clocks. The StickFey are immortal powerhouses in their own dimension, but here in the old World of DarkStick, their power is severely limited. They contend themselves mostly with driving people nuts, playing vicious pranks and sometimes just outright warping people's minds. Usually they take a form that looks like a normal person, although with the world as it is, this is a very broad generalization. Nobody likes the StickFey in the least, they're untrustworthy and if they ever get their own dimension to collide with this one (as is the plan), they're going to screw everybody. Oh, and they aren't nice.

In the game, all StickFey have the positive attribute StickFey Charms, which allows them to change forms, turn invisible, and generally make people experience shit in their brain that would drive them crazy. In addition, while a StickFey cannot heal like a Vamp or WereStick (they heal like StickHunters), if they get killed, they simply go back to their own dimension, and can return after a few days.

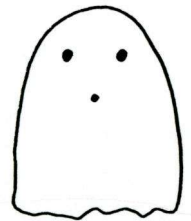
StickMages

StickMages are StickMortals who have learned the secrets of the universe and run around learning more of them. They band together in secret societies and jockey each other for power. If they weren't so busy reading and fighting amongst themselves, they could seriously put the hurt on VampSticks. No real worry there.

StickMages are made just like StickHunters except that when it comes time to determine Karma, not only do they invert their Power like a StickHunter, they add +1 to this, then double it, giving them all kinds of Karma to screw shit up with. In addition, they get the Magic attribute, which lets them do pretty much anything they want, but they have to try and hide their actions from other StickMortals or risk getting killed by their peers.

Other Weirdness

There are other weird things in the World of DarkStick beyond the crazy shit mentioned above. Things nobody understands are bopping around all the time, weird creatures that don't fall under any of the above categories. One such denizen is the StickGhost, which is a mortal stuck in the world of the living even though they're dead. They can't do anything much but they can scare the crap out of people, and that's just as good.



StickMortals are occasionally driven mad by seeing some eldritch freak of weirdness birthed again from the living earth. Ancient gods, weird monsters and aliens among others could wander the night.

Playing Games in VampStick

There are a number of ways to play VampStick, pretty much dependent on the kind of character you want to make. You can find a few suggestions for game types listed below.

StickHunter Games

In StickHunter games, the PSG (player stick guys) are mortals trying to get rid of the VampSticks. Adventures could center on finding lost knowledge that could help kill the bastards off. You could also run adventures where the PSGs are trying to kill a specific VampStick (requiring teamwork) or where a specific VampStick is trying to kill the PSGs (which may not require teamwork).

VampSticks themselves should be used sparingly in a StickHunter game, as they're the main villains after all. Instead you can throw other things at the PSGs, including any of the creatures detailed in **Other Weirdness**, and given examples in the **Denizens** section that follows. Possibly the best foes to throw against a StickHunter group are wannabe VampSticks. These brown-nosing little bastards want to be VampSticks so bad that they suck up to existing VampSticks in the hopes that they will be gracious enough to make them into VampSticks as well.

Sycophantic StickMortal Games

Another option for playing StickMortals has the players playing sycophantic dweebs who want to become VampSticks. Adventures would consist of running errands for whatever VampSticks the PSGs are trying to impress. There can be lots of backstabbing in these kinds of games, allowing ruthless players to wax each other in bids for power. This is the fun kind of political stuff you want to play.

Technically the players will be aspiring bad guys in these types of games, so they should be encouraged to do evil shit. Keep in mind though that they can and will manage to piss off other VampStick that their boss is a rival of. This often leads to getting their asses killed.



VampStick Games

Finally, players can in fact play VampSticks, and this is probably the most common type of game. Since the VampSticks have all the power, they get to do all the cool shit.

There are a few ways to handle this. The PSGs could be new VampSticks, either having VampStickdom forced on them, or having scored it by being a suck up. Either way, there are bigger nastier VampSticks out there that will likely want to mop the floor with them.

Being a VampStick is no easy task, and you have to work for what respect you can get. Adventures in these types of games will likely involve the PSGs trying to get as much power, both personal and political, as they can before somebody ices them.

Conversely, you could have the PSGs be established VampSticks fighting to hold on to what power they have. Obviously, they will attract followers as they gain more power as well as enemies.

If you want to go the angst route, you could also have VampStickdom forced upon the PSGs, either at the start of the game or during an established storyline. In this case the PSGs now have to come to grips with the fact that they're now undead bastards forsaken by God, forced to drink the blood of the living for all eternity. It has some serious soul-searching story telling potential, just don't muck it up too bad.

Running The Game

When running VampStick games, try to make things as creepy or pointless as possible. Play up the fact that VampSticks pretty much rule the world unchallenged. Make the StickHunters so downtrodden that any victory they get is totally awesome.

Don't be afraid to kill off characters. In fact, try to kill off one character per game. With StickMortals this is easy, and it makes sense, since VampSticks are total assholes. It's harder to kill off VampSticks, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try.

A really good idea is to have one VampStick kill all the StickMortal PSGs, then raise them as VampSticks and force them to serve him. This really drives home the point about VampSticks being total jerks, and makes for a fun campaign of powerful bullshit and politics.

Above all, don't forget to have fun, since that's the point of any RPG, much less VampStick: The Stick Parade. Keep in mind that, as the GM, you have the final say in anything that the players want to do. It's pretty hard, considering the game at hand, to "unbalance" things or ruin a game with too much power. Still, if you think something that a player wants to do is too good, don't let them do it. It's important to let them know the reasoning behind it though, as in a game this loose, arbitrary rulings can cause trouble.

Denizens

There are, as we mentioned, various other weird things living in the World of DarkStick. Not all of them are out to kill the PSGs and in fact some might be helpful. Of course, any of these things could probably be playable as well, simply keep in mind the character creation system, read about their abilities in the sections above and go to town. Watch out for future books detailing the other weird denizens of the World of DarkStick as well! Just don't hold your breath.

The stats below indicate an average member of each race or whatever. Note that the words in ALL CAPS denote the profession of the average fellows below. Those without professions simply do not bother to hide themselves as salesmen or whatever.

Average Alien

Power 4; Karma 1; Super Technology; UFO Pilot; Addicted To Crop Circles

Average Cultist

Power 3; Karma 2; SCIENTOLOGIST; Magic; Connections; Crazy

Average Eldritch Fiend*

Power 37; Karma 23; Power Beyond Comprehension; Destroys Minds; Very Tired

Average Mummy

Power 4; Karma 1; Ponderously Tough; Ponderously Determined; Just Damn Ponderous

Average Sasquatch

Power 4; Karma 1; BIGFOOT; Sneaky; Strong; Blurry

Average StickMage

Power 2; Karma 6; SCHOLAR; Magic; Really Smart; Total Wuss

Average StickMortal

Power 4; Karma 1; FAST FOOD WORKER; Controls Food; Register Training; Acne

Average StickFey

Power 2; Karma 3; PERFORMANCE ARTIST; StickFey Charms; Hard to Find; Annoying as Hell

Average StickGhost

Power 1; Karma 4; Move Through Stuff; Scare People; Useless

Average StickHunter

Power 3; Karma 2; SALESMEN; Brave; Crossbow Toting Nut; VampStick target

Average Sycophantic StickMortal

Power 2; Karma 3; GOTH KID; VampStick Patron; Magic; Untrustworthy

Average VampStick

Power 3; Karma 2; VampStick Abilities; Mind Control; Paranoid

Average WereStick

Power 3; Karma 2; PARK RANGER; WereStick Abilities; Woodsy Fellow; Smells like Ass

Average Zombie

Power 4; Karma 1; Headshots Only**; Sturdy As Hell; BRAAAAAAINS!!



*Note that Eldritch Fiends have stupidly high Power and Karma because they don't have to follow the rules; they're here to devour the world after all. God, read some Lovecraft already.

**This attribute means that you can only kill a zombie by taking off its head. No matter what else you do, it'll keep coming after you, trying to devour your precious think-meats.

In Closing

That really sums up the game. I'd like to say that it was way more fun to write up than it probably should have been, and that I drew all but one of the pictures in this book. Try to guess which one I didn't do! I have some fevered plans in my head to do more stuff set in the World of DarkStick, but we'll have to see if that actually pans out. I'm betting it won't, but it would be pretty sweet to see a **WereStick: A Pack Of Sticks** or maybe **StickFey: The Crack Dream**. Only time will tell.

Salutations!

Thanks go out yo Chris Gunning for writing up the original StickGuy rules, as well as 1km1kt.net for hosting the contest, back in 2004, that I started working on this for. And for hosting it. It took so long because I forgot about the file for some time.

Thanks go out to all the people I made fun of too, because without you crazy kids, I wouldn't have written this in the first place.

The StickGuy rules are used here with implied permission (implied because there was that contest), and I'm not taking credit for those. I added some things and tweaked some stuff to make it work for this setting, but anybody that wants to take this and make more changes, feel free. I just ask that anybody who decides to post their own, modified World of DarkStick stuff gives me props.

To that end, StickGuy is copyright Chris Gunning, 2004, where the original creations in VampStick are copyright Jason Black, 2006.

The original StickGuy rules can be found at: <http://www.1km1kt.net/rpg/stickguy.php>

