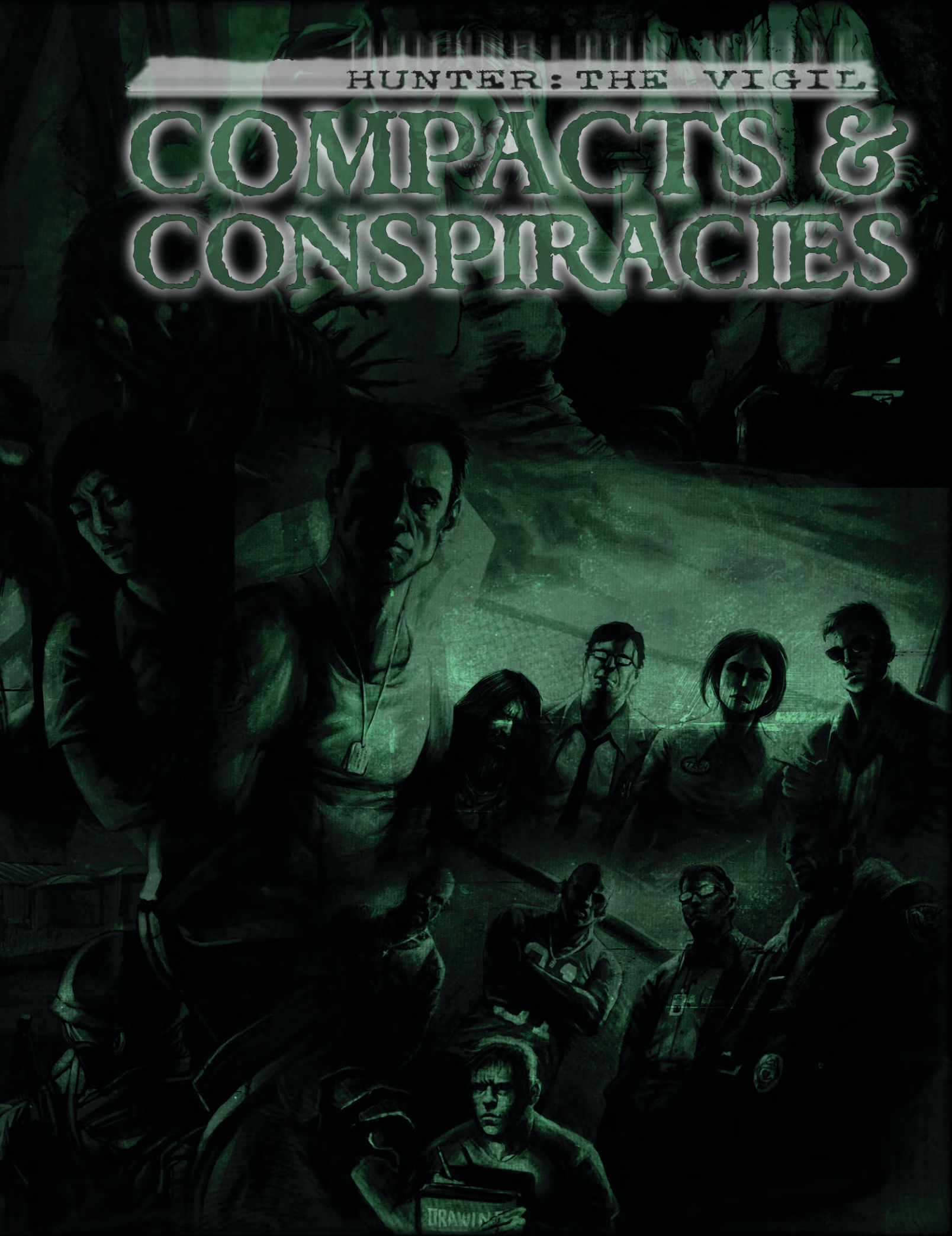


HUNTER: THE VIGIL

COMPACTS & CONSPIRACIES



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PROJECT: EINHERJAR

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"Don't bother calling," Alicia Mangum said, mocking Moryken's rough, cold, flat voice. "We've changed the numbers." He folded his arms behind him, under the pillow, and didn't bother looking over at her.

"Cute," was all he said.

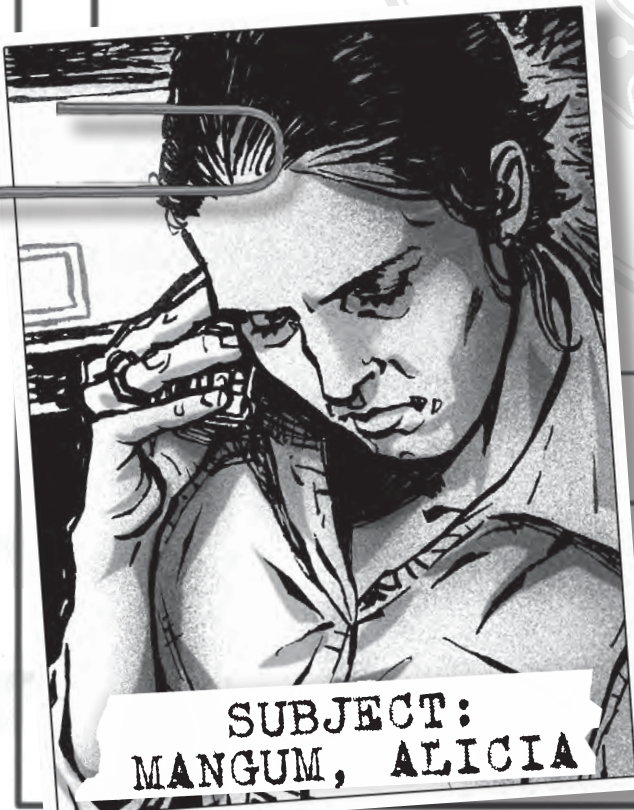
She laughed. It was an annoying laugh.

It had been a year since their last communication. A pair of unkind, accusing letters; an unresolved situation with a missing file and the missing cell that had compiled that file. It didn't end well. Moryken didn't steal the file for VALKYRIE. Mangum and her bosses over at Keystone Pharma thought they did. And with that, their burgeoning alliance was shot in the back of the head by a bullet primed with paranoia and suspicion. As a joke, he'd "gifted" her with some help from a newbie VALKYRIE agent he didn't particularly like: a thug cop named Vince Gabreski. Gabreski's job was to get in her way, and stay out of Moryken's way. That was the last he'd heard from Mangum.

Now they were in bed together.

Literally.

Mangum's Center City townhome had an exterior warm with rich, burnished Philadelphia history: brass lights, red brick, shutters the color of Amish butter. The inside was nothing like that. Mostly white, but some grays and blacks thrown in. A few splashes of color-purple orchids, a pair of color photographs of family framed on the wall, and for some fucked up reason, a reproduction (at least, he hoped it was a reproduction) of a Bronze Age Nebra skydisk cast in its cerulean patina.



**SUBJECT:
MANGUM, ALICIA**

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS	
SECURITY CLASSIFICATION	DATE TIME GROUP
CLASSIFIED	

She leaned over, and ran her tongue up his ear.

He didn't flinch away. It felt nice. Abstractly, he recognized that. But these days, things were cold, distant. He knew when he should be enjoying things (a nice steak, single-malt scotch, a vengeful bullet), but mostly it felt like going through the motions. Even this.

"We make a good team," she said. Nibbling, now.

"Mm," he said.

"How did we get here?" she mused aloud. "What a strange world."

...

Strange, indeed. Both Moryken and Mangum had honed on another missing cell, a trio of rag-tag Eagles fan assholes who were far less erudite than the last bunch that disappeared. These three had a pretty singular approach to the hunt: drink lots of beer, get sports equipment to use as weapons, and go hunting monsters. Or homeless people, whichever they came upon first. Reckless fools who would've been put down like the rabid dogs they were...

That is, if they hadn't wandered into a warehouse that was there one minute, and gone the next. A cell phone call recorded by VALKYRIE—from one of the boys to his pregnant wife—blabbered on about some giant spider with a single eye tearing the roof off the warehouse. The call dissolved into static, peppered by some kind of incomprehensible chanting. And then, nothing. The warehouse wasn't there. The trio of fuckwits wasn't there. No giant spider, either, for whatever that was worth.

Mangum wouldn't have checked it out, except for the fact that this sounded like it could've been connected to the other missing cell, and more importantly, connected to that missing file she was so keen to reclaim.

And Moryken would've have checked it out, either, except for the fact that Mangum would surely show up on scene.

He was right.

She was there. So was he. They yelled at each other. She threw some dishes, pointed a gun.

Somehow—well, he worked at it—they ended up at Cappie's bar, knocking back a few.

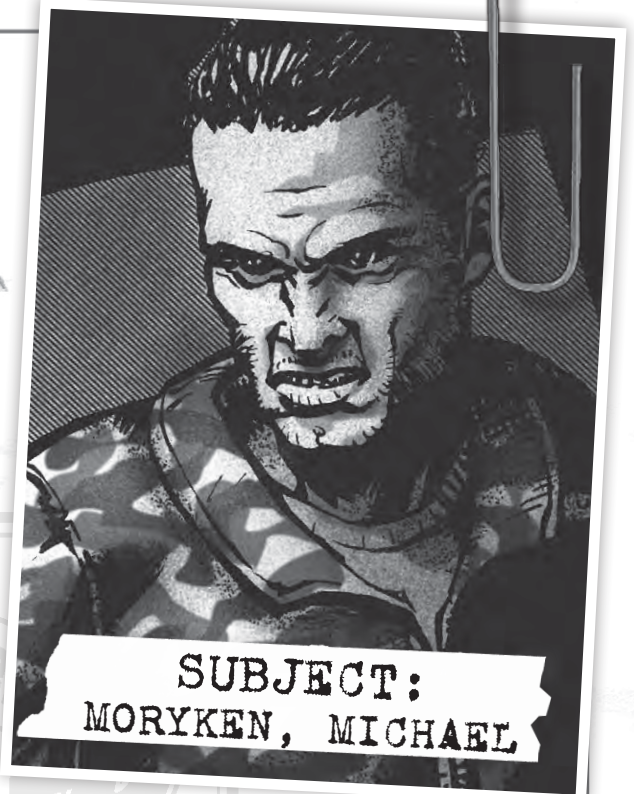
Now they were here, in her bed, with her raring to go a second time.

Everything was in motion.

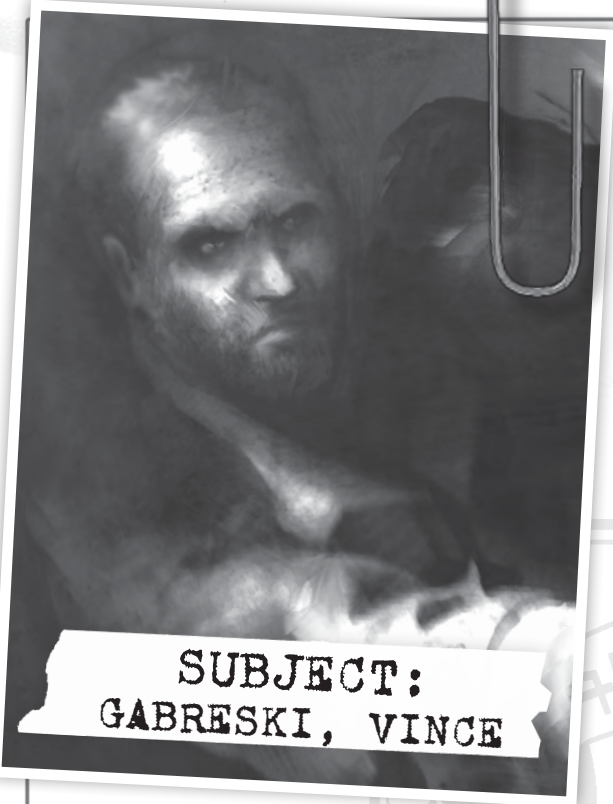
...

"How's Gabreski working out?" he said.

She ran her hands under the sheets. Fingertips sliding down his ribcage.



SUBJECT:
MORYKEN, MICHAEL



**SUBJECT:
GABRESKI, VINCE**

"I don't want to talk about him."

"Not yet." He grabbed her hand, and finally looked at her.

Christ. She really liked him. Maybe she was in love. Or lust. Same thing.

He felt nothing. Just an empty hole inside, with everything slowly sliding into it.

"Why?" she said, pouting.

"Get me a drink, first. You too. I see you have a bottle over there."

He gestured with a little nod. A decanter of something-vodka, maybe-sat on a sidebar.

That annoying laugh, again. She slinked out of bed. Alicia looked good. He couldn't deny that. But again, what did it matter? Just because he knew she looked good didn't mean he felt anything about it. Hell, he was lucky he could get hard last night. Took a handful of pills to get him there, but he got there.

In fact-he looked under the sheets-he was still there. How long had it been? Couple of hours. What did the bottle say? Something about more than four hours? His luck, it was probably a Keystone Pharma product. Irony is alive and well.

Alicia poured two glasses, brought him one, and straddled him, pinning him beneath the sheets. He took his, and clinked glasses.

He tilted the glass to his lips.

But he didn't drink.

She did. And then she noticed he wasn't.

"Why aren't you-"

Woozy, she fell off the bed. The glass didn't break-it just clunked against the hardwood floor and rolled away until the wall stopped it.

Moryken got up, started tugging on his pants.

Alicia tried to babble something at him, but her lips wouldn't successfully form words. It was a good drug. Keystone Pharma probably made that one, too.

"Project EINHERJAR," Moryken said, answering a question she was probably trying to ask. "The Einherjar were heroes that died on the battlefield. Norse myth. They trained and fought, trained and fought, over and over again, cutting themselves to pieces."

Alicia tried to climb back up on the bed. Moryken put his bare foot against her face and gently eased her back to the floor. It was no more difficult than tipping a cheap lamp.

"See, the government-or, rather, our little corner of it-decided that we face threats to our freedom that go beyond the monsters that hide in the shadows. Turns out, the country is home to a whole catalog of anti-patriotic, terroristic do-gooders. At least, they think they're doing good. I'm sure Al Qaeda had the best of intentions, too. Doesn't mean they weren't monsters, though, does it? Point is, I'm

the head of a new project. EINHERJAR says it's time to clear the playing field of amateurs and terrorists. So we catalog. And when we find someone particularly dangerous..."

Alicia slumped to the floor, finally unconscious.

We find a nice cell for you to rot in. Probably in Romania or something.

He stood up. Put on a shirt. Took a gander at the skydisk artifact on the wall.

Something rolled across the floor and hit his foot.

Moryken looked down.

It was a little metal marble. Except-

It moved. It unfolded. The metal marble became a tiny bee-no, a hornet. A yellow jacket wasp. It took flight, buzzed up and orbited his face.

Which is when he realized the wasp had its own face. Rather, its own human face.

Moryken looked up and saw someone standing in the entrance to Alicia's bedroom. It was Vince Gabreski. The thug was smiling.

"Gabreski," Moryken said, swiping at the bug. He thought about telling him about the wasp, but what was there to say? It couldn't be true. "I don't know what you're doing here, but she's over there. I was going to call my boys, but we can carry her out together."

Gabreski said nothing, and took a few more steps into the room. The man put out his hand, and tilted the palm upward.

Moryken saw a small hole—a shunt, ringed in white plastic—sticking out of the man's wrist.

"Gabreski," he said.

Something emerged from the shunt. It wriggled free.

Another wasp.

And then another. And then a steady stream of the things vomiting forth in a dark line of yellow and black.

"I switched teams," Gabreski said as Moryken screamed, dancing around the room, the wasps crawling up through his sleeves and pant legs and carpeting his face. Stinging, all the while. Red welts grew-fat lumps that turned swiftly to fluid-filled blisters. Moryken pirouetted drunkenly, and then face-planted against the sidebar. The decanter toppled. Unlike the glass, it broke.

The wasps dropped to the floor, dead. Moryken probably wasn't. That was okay.

Gabreski blinked, and the wasps were no longer there—in their place, just a few dozen ball bearings, like little hematite orbs.

He went over and stroked Alicia's hair. She moaned.

Then he made a call to tell his new friends at Keystone Pharma what had happened, and what he had learned. This was war. VALKYRIE thought they could hang him and his men on a hook forever. Turns out, the government wasn't all that powerful, after all.

Or, really, all that smart.

He lifted Alicia onto the bed, and kissed her temple.



compact and conspiracies INTRODUCTION

For many hunters carrying the Vigil, the hunt is only one part of their lives. Yes, it's a consuming element, but it doesn't comprise every waking hour. Many belong to hunter organizations—the more localized compacts, or the globe-spanning conspiracies.

Joining such a group comes with varying advantages—safety in numbers, a paycheck, access to unique weapons and critical information, and camaraderie.

But it also comes replete with new problems: competition, cover-ups, and a rigorous set of rules to which one must adhere or face the always-unpleasant consequences.

This book seeks to detail what life is like *inside* one of these organizations. You've already gotten a glimpse of how these organizations pursue the Vigil—between the core book and the supplements, enough information has been provided on how the compacts and conspiracies approach the various monsters of the World of Darkness. This product instead moves the perspective to within the organization.

What's it like to belong to such a group? How does one get recruited? What does it take to advance—what sacrifices must be made?

In addition to answering those questions, each compact and conspiracy comes replete with a handful of new tips and tricks.

Themes

When approaching each compact and conspiracy, we aimed to steer toward a few consistent themes throughout:

- **Your organization is not necessarily your friend.** Your hunter joined up for a reason—maybe he believes deeply in the cause, maybe he perceives it as his only chance for survival and success, or maybe someone led him to the fold by gunpoint. Either way, none of this means that an organization is unilaterally good to its hunters. The conspiracies in particular can serve as the primary foe in a **Hunter: The Vigil** game, worse even than the monsters themselves. The compacts don't slouch when it comes to being unkind to its members, either—as we have it here, the Open Minds and Rationalist camps within the Null Mysteriis are two groups that could erupt in violence. Which leads us to...
- **Conflict makes for good story.** We don't enjoy stories without conflict. Would you rather see John McLane and the terrorist holding hands and sharing tea during **Die Hard**? Didn't think so. This means that each compact and conspiracy has to be laden with conflict within itself. Schisms are prominent. Threats exist from within. Betrayals aren't uncommon. We want it so that an entire **Hunter** story could be driven by these conflicts, beyond the Vigil itself.

- Each compact or conspiracy is an island. The compacts and conspiracies may or may not exist together in your game world. That's why here, we've kept them relatively isolated. They have a little crossover, but for the most part, the crossover is up to you to create—we assume that each exists largely on its own.

WAIT? NO NEW TACTICS?

Tactics take up a lot of space, and the existing Tactics found in the **Hunter: The Vigil** core rulebook and supplements are alarmingly comprehensive, as is the system by which a group may come up with its own. Sorry!

Layout

Each compact and conspiracy is laid out roughly according to the following:

In-Character Opener

A quick paragraph in-character, usually taken from the perspective of a more experienced hunter within the organization to a less-experienced hunter.

General Information

Each compact and conspiracy gets a deeper look at the bonds that hold the organization together—recruitment, organization, history, ethos—as well as some of those forces that threaten to tear it apart. Some of this information is already in the **Hunter: The Vigil** core rulebook, so we endeavored not to reiterate too much information.

Sub-Groups

Each organization has its own three sub-groups (factions, theories, philosophies, etc.) as detailed in the **Hunter: The Vigil** core. Each group receives further discussion, and each also gets two particular elements worth noting:

First, a *free Specialty*. This Specialty is earned automatically upon joining the particular sub-group. Storytellers have a free hand on how to deal with this: some Storytellers may demand that a player buy dots in a separate Status Merit to deal with this, while others may relegate membership in such a group purely to roleplaying membership in-game.

Second, a *secret*. Each group possesses a critical secret, and this secret can be adopted by Storytellers or players as a story seed that can be planted into your current story or chronicle.

Systems

The organizations all have a few new toys for the toolbox—Endowments, in particular. And that goes for compacts, too.

Compacts now receive a Compact Endowment. A Compact Endowment is a non-supernatural Merit granted to those members of that compact—only one dot of Status is necessary in the parent organization to purchase the Merit. Again, these have no supernatural benefits. Most are largely formed from the social bonds gained through compact membership—hunters in the Union can mine the neighborhood or town around them for certain benefits, for instance.

Bonus Material

Each organization gets its own bonus material—something that sits outside expected systems, something that may be useful to players and Storytellers alike, *and* something that might not be specific to the one organization. Ashwood Abbey gets bonus materials driven toward a system to run an orgy (really, a system to run any kind of Abbey gathering), but that can apply to other cells or organizations, too. The Long Night chapter sees discussion on how to invoke more “merciful” systems, but again, these needn't be relegated only to the Long Night, even if they were inspired by that compact.

SEX GOLF AND MONSTER PARTIES ASHWOOD ABBEY

Make no mistake! You are an important person. You have money. People like you. That's why you're here. That's why you're holding that knife and that rope. You deserve more money. You deserve more love and more fame. You are a creature of privilege, and you can do anything you want. Once I open this door, you'll see what waits on the other side on the chaise. You can do anything you want to him. It's not about sex, though it can be. It's about power. It's about pleasure. And most importantly, it's about privilege.

The Abbey: Membership Has Its Privileges

Why join the Ashwood Abbey? Well, for one thing, it's got all the benefits of any quality country or gentleman's club—whiskies aged a hundred years, the finest cigars, the most exotic food, access to the best golf courses and islands, and the other joys of being wealthy and fortunate.

But chances are a hunter who joins the Ashwood probably has access to those things already: the Abbey rarely extends a hand to scrubs. Trust fund? Horse farm? A last name dripping with propriety and heritage? Welcome to the club.

Studio apartment, Hyundai sedan and an Ikea butcher knife?

You aren't getting past the door, not unless *they* find you intriguing or a giddy curiosity... and even then, that doesn't make you much better than the monsters with whom they play.

And play with monsters, they do. The definition of "play" varies from cell to cell, club to club. They've earned a reputation as rapists and monsters, and for some, that's certainly true—but for most, it's about the thrill of the thing. They already *have* power. What they don't possess is excitement—at society's upper echelons, ennui is a persistent threat, and the Abbey offers ways to combat that boredom.

So, how to get that thrill?

One cell holds parties. Small affairs—salons, really. They invite one monster, maybe three. They don't kill them. Maybe they drug them. If sex occurs, it's consensual—some are happy with orgies, with all that flesh slapping and smooth hands pawing, while others prefer to host spaces away from the salons where its members can go and nuzzle the neck of a vampire or suck the tongue of some cackling demon.

Another club has a big, lavish affair—string quartet, a handful of cherry-picked celebrities and executives, a \$10,000 food spread. At midnight they open the cages, free the doped-up captives and hunt them on horses (or golf-carts, or in their Maseratis).

A cell in Chicago gets a thrill just from hanging out with monsters—when the vampire feeds, they feed, when the pack hunts, they go with them and work backup.

A cell in Bangkok essentially plays a grown-up combo-game of Tag and Hide-and-Go-Seek: they toy with monsters, tease them, attack them and then *run like hell*. They hide, sometimes to ambush, sometimes just for the thrill of escaping.

One of the many clubs in NYC gets its enjoyment from the long con—playing monsters against monsters, stirring great supernatural wars, brokering peace (just to ruin it), offering their enemies up as stalking horses and sacrifices.

It's perhaps tempting to think of them as hunters devoted to hedonistic sex—and they can be, often basking in all its *faux-pagan* trappings—but really, they play with monsters

the same way kings once toyed with commoners: it's a rush to ruin lives, to break hearts, to put yourself in mortal danger to remind yourself that you're not a god and that you are very much still human.

A fucked-up human, perhaps. But human.

Oh, Didn't We Mention the Cost?

Recruitment is rarely a formal affair—a club votes on potential new members and then they extend the offer (or set up the offer as some kind of game—“Oh, you picked the red billiard ball! Here, take this sacrificial dagger and come with us!”).

Here's what they don't explain: membership has its privileges, but it also has steep costs.

For one, money. A hunter pays dues, just like a member at any country club. Fees are different per cell and club (and sometimes per hunter, a fact they prefer to keep secret unless it engenders useful or entertaining suspicion), but one can expect a thousand a month for dues, plus fees for use of the golf club, to maintain the weapons locker (“Heavens, we don't use American-made shotguns—only Italian, like Caesar Guerini or Luciano Bosis”), to pay for parties, to entice monsters and so on.

For two, the work. The Vigil requires a lot of scutwork, and they can't leave that to the ignorant masses, no matter how wealthy. A migrant worker can water one's plants, but he can't be trusted to hide a body. A hunter in the Abbey always learns that someone in the compact has a higher Status—and oh, will they use it.

For three, sorry, did you think you could quit? Good luck with that. Some clubs actually have contracts—how one might enforce the legality of a monster-hunting organization is not precisely clear, but they're less interested in legal options than they are a confirmation of the hunter's loyalties. Most, however, don't. It's just unspoken. You sign up, you're in for life. It's like the mob, but with richer and stranger criminals.

Org Charts of the Rich and Famous

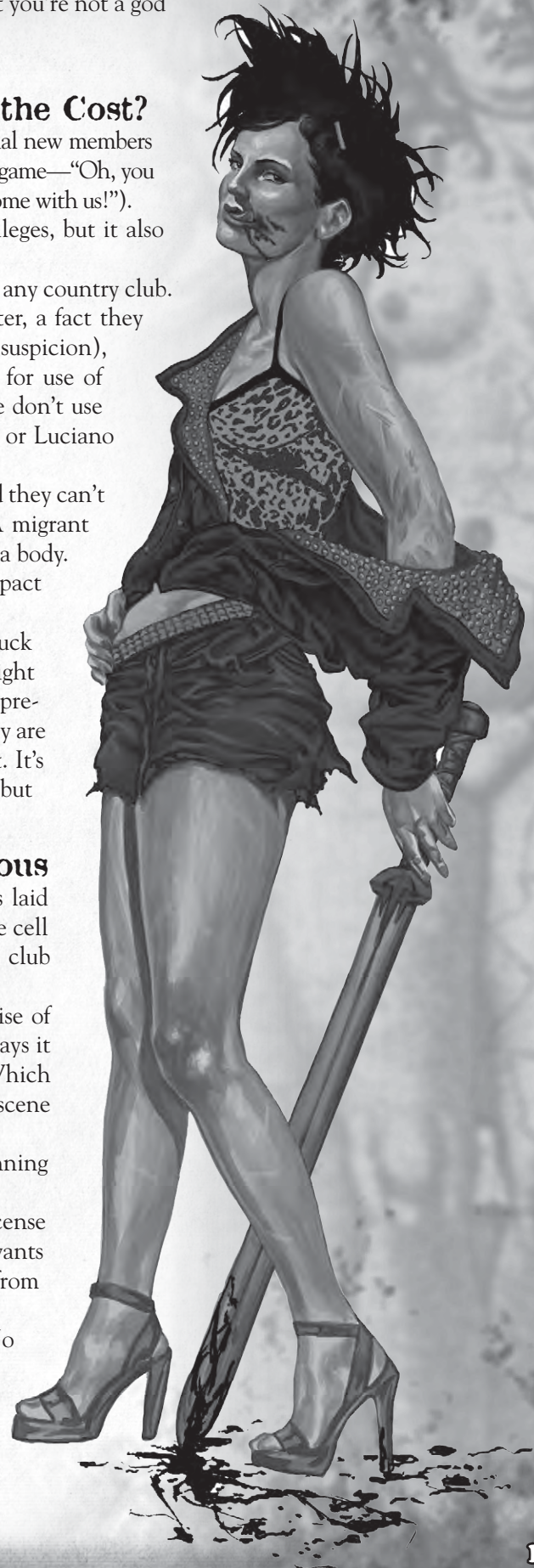
It's a pyramid scheme. That's how the entire compact is laid out. Each iteration of the hellfire club—which may be a single cell or a club that comprises multiple cells—pays dues up to the club from which they purchased their license.

That's right—“license.” Each club is effectively a franchise of another club. One club pays dues to another club, that club pays it to the club that licensed them, and up the chain it goes. (Which means that, yes, someone sits at the top collecting an obscene amount of money; more on that later.)

What prevents Ashwood Abbey franchises from overrunning the world?

First, the cost. Individual dues are one thing, but the license and dues from one club to the next are prohibitive. If one wants in, they'd better be willing to pony up for it—costs range from \$100,000 to well over a million.

Second, the secrecy. They don't put ads on Craigslist. No photocopied flyers up at the public pool. This is exclusive. They want it that way. The money's great, but so is the privilege of being among the ranks of the elite, and that means not extending the option to just anybody. Those who offer a license are held accountable. Someone is



watching, be assured—if your licensees run amok, draw the police, or are generally complicit in behavior consistent with ill-breeding and low culture, someone will cut off that branch of the org chart. And to be clear, “cut off” isn’t just someone yanking the franchise out from under one’s feet—it’s a syringe in the neck and a burial plot in the foundation of some new bank or stadium.

The Compact: Three Faces

While no group of hunters is easily categorized, it’s still worth mentioning the three *general* types of Ashwood Abbey club you’ll find in the World of Darkness.

Old World

You know the type—real exclusive gents, maybe descended from royals or famous politicians, or even old adventurers. Lots of white hair. Fancy accents (even if they’re just from New England). Pipe smoke, leather-bound books, weapons of the hunt passed down as heirlooms from generation to generation. This is *old money*. An estate in the Black Forest or in the hills of Virginia would not be unusual. Big

families come with lots of entanglements. This is a gentleman’s club in the truest sense, and their hunts are less about debauchery and more a sense of the “old boys” going out on a “fox hunt.” They might even look down their noses at their younger, hipper compatriots in the compact.

New Blood

A great deal of the Western world’s wealth is concentrated in “new money.” Real estate barons, CEOs, Wall Street kingpins and the like are the movers and shakers in today’s society, especially in America. Who your grandfather was matters less than who you know and what you can bankroll—and these Abbey hunters are just that type. This is more “country club” than “gentleman’s club,” filled with men *and* women in their 30s to 60s who have carved out a piece for themselves and come sniffing out the next big thing. That thing just happens to be monster hunting and the salacious thrills that come with it.

Rich Young Punks

Now we find ourselves in the nightclub. New York Prep? *Gossip Girl* characters brought to life? The children of privilege—the daughters of rock stars, the sons of hotel scions—are too young to be bored, but too rich to be properly entertained. They comprise a growing contingent



within the Abbey, having shouldered their way into the ranks with massive bank accounts and clever maneuvering. These young punks—cruel and callow in equal measure—are just as likely to make nice with the monsters, at least until boredom urges them toward ending the relationship in a bout of good old-fashioned ultraviolence.

The Cliques

Below, an examination of the factions present within the Ashwood Abbey.

Competitors

Free Specialty: Intimidation (Boast)

The name says it all: this is a game. Their competition is other hunters in the Abbey or outside of it, and the monsters of the city and field are nothing more than pawns and poker chips. It works like any bet among boastful men: “I bet we can turn the fangs of Filbert Street against one another.” “We’ll be the first back to the clubhouse with a pint of demon’s blood.” “First one to knock up a shapeshifter—or get knocked up by one, miss—is the blue ribbon winner.” Fresh stakes (of the gambling kind, not the *vampire* kind) are always on the table. Whoever wins gets that case of ’90 *Chateau Latour*, or that draught of vampire’s blood, or use of the clubhouse for the next year. Some competitions are truly hateful, and fueled by unbridled spite. Others approach it with smiles and showmanship.

Curiously, the Competitors are perhaps the least devoted to the Vigil, perhaps because to them it’s just another avenue of one-upmanship. Most nights of the week, these Abbey hunters pursue the life of normal luxury: gallery openings, duck hunts, nightclub romps.

Secret: Those high enough in this clique eventually learn of the grandfather of all competitions within the Abbey: the annual Black Royal Regatta (“The Bee Double-Arr”). It has nothing to do with boats in actuality—that’s a purposeful misnomer meant to throw off those who accidentally hear the name. Those “in-the-know” either discover it on their own (and are allowed to participate or are dealt with) or gain invites when they’ve sufficiently impressed the self-proclaimed Royal Council. The goal of the Regatta is different every year—the Council puts forth a single target, which may be a sacred object of import held by a notorious monster, or perhaps just the head (or even a thread of hair) from an infamous creature. Whatever the MacGuffin, the cell that brings it first is assured a million dollar bonus and a rather significant boost to its Status within the compact.

Pursuit

Free Specialty: Stealth (Hide in Plain Sight)

In a manner of speaking, these hunters are the gossip-mongers of the hunter world. They seek secrets.

They scare up information hidden and profane. Why? Because it’s delightful to do so. They exist almost as a more salacious, miniature version of Network Zero, connecting with one another, sharing snuff films and *verboten* documents, creating clandestine events where they can spy on a single creature (or hunter) for days, even weeks, recording the whole event for distribution later.

Of course, ironically, this also means they’re one of the most useful groups within the Ashwood Abbey. They don’t mean to be useful—rather, they mean to be *entertained*—but the secrets they collect happen to be incredibly powerful. It also makes them very dangerous.

Secret: They call it “the Ring,” not to be ironic and name it after the movie about the ghostly VHS tape, but because within the Abbey exists a ring of truly privileged hunters that have a pristine and bizarre collection of information and artifacts—the Kennedy assassination seen from a strange angle, shadowy footage of the Cheiron Board of Directors, stolen passages from Vlad Dracul’s ritual texts. This makes them dangerous, because they know way too much about the monsters and the other hunter organizations—from time to time, they’ll purge some of their prized collections in a secret online auction.

Libertines

Free Specialty: Persuasion (Seduction)

They have a reputation within the compact as being rapists and perverts. The latter is largely true, the former, less so. The Libertines are interested in wearing down the walls between social norms and mores; it’s much more fun to bring others along for the ride willingly. *Take a hit of this. Put this in your mouth. Place your hand here. Taste the creature’s milk; drink your own blood; ease this golden key inside you.* For them, life is ceaseless pleasure, and pain can certainly be a part of that pleasure—though, even there, they try to only bring the pain willingly.

One might assume they’re hunters, still, but really, their idea of the hunt is far different from everybody else’s. Conquest is still a critical aspect, but it’s the conquest of ideas and preconceptions. They’re less likely to *hurt* a creature, and far more likely to exploit its already unnatural desires to get their rocks off. A number of them end up as vampire ghouls or brood mares to shapeshifters. More, though, move toward truly bizarre addictions: huffing Frankenstein blood (or whatever it is that burns through their revived bodies), attempting to breed with tentacle monsters, or sharing gluttonous meals with demonic gourmands. Yes, some of them find an electric thrill in murdering other monsters, but that’s actually a very small portion of this clique.

Secret: One of their number was recently impregnated by a vampire. Vampires, being dead, reportedly can’t

do that, which is why this is such a puzzling anomaly. The woman—whose name might be Bethany, or simply Beth-Ann—is of great interest to the Libertines. First, she’s technically supposed to be among their number, but their interest in the child is actually murderous—they don’t want it getting out that their habits can lead to such... unwanted complications.

Systems

Below, you’ll find the Compact Endowment available to hunters of the Ashwood Abbey.

Abbey Endowment: Bacchanal

Effect: They don’t all refer to it as the Bacchanal—certainly some Abbey hunters gleefully embrace the *faux*-pagan trappings of Saturnalian revelry, but most don’t. They might call it a party, salon, soiree, celebration, fête, festival, or even orgy. Some engage in restrained revelry (formalwear, golf claps, ice sculptures), while others check their restraint at the door and wade into the fray with naught but harlequin masks, Taser weapons and tumescent flesh.

The advantage is the same regardless of the trappings, however. The Abbey hunters possess more than just money—they possess privilege, which can be spent in ways that money cannot. The Bacchanal is one such way, and the hunter with this Endowment can, once per story, hold a *Grand Guignol* party that buys her a number of small advantages. No roll is required to hold the party. Such is the pleasure of privilege; mere possession of this Endowment gives the hunter sway over high society.

The number of guests that come to such a party is roughly equal to 20 times the dots possessed in this Endowment (three dots would then equal an approximate maximum of 60 attendees if the hunter desires it).

The real advantage, though, is what the hunter can *buy* during and after the event. Before the player initiates the Bacchanal, double the dots in this Endowment: this is now a pool of points that can be spent on specific advantages (these advantages must be spent and secured before the event begins). The advantages that can be bought are as follows:

- **Abbey Influence:** By throwing a legendary affair, the Abbey hunter can purchase a Social bonus that can be used on other Abbey members. Each point spent confers a +1 bonus (max +5). This lasts for the remainder of the story.
- **Famous Guests:** Points can be spent to ensure the attendance of specific guests that possess the Fame Merit. The number of dots the guest has in the Fame Merit is the cost in points necessary to sway them to show.

- **Sphere of Influence:** Choose a personal or professional sphere (politicians, advertising, supermodels, etc.). The Abbey hunter gains a Social bonus with that group equal to points spent (max +5); the bonus lasts until the end of the story. Note, too, that the Storyteller can deny this advantage over groups he thinks are unlikely to show to the party (blue-collar plumbers’ union, the homeless and so forth).

- **Supernatural Sway:** The hunter can purchase a bonus with a specific supernatural group—how this is “earned” should be reflected somewhat through roleplaying. Example: by torturing an infamous shapeshifter, the hunter buys influence among the vampire community that the shapeshifter long tormented. Or, by simply inviting a hedonist faction of witches, the hunter gains a bonus with that particular faction. The bonus purchased costs one point, and provides a +1 Social bonus (max +5). Bonus lasts for the remainder of the story.

- **Tactical Advantage:** Tactics performed by an Abbey cell at the event can gain tactical advantage, because they’ve set up the advantage beforehand (removable table legs as stakes, or furniture arranged to make prey’s movement difficult). The hunter can buy up to three bonus dice (one per point spent) that is gained for all secondary actors. The primary actor gains only the bonus afforded by those successes on the secondary rolls, however.

Bonus Material: The Orgy

Okay, we’re being a bit provocative, here—this isn’t necessarily about running the mechanics of an Ashwood Abbey sex party (though it can be!), it’s more about providing something of a “system for social gatherings” as befits a hunter of this compact.

First, let’s consider what an Abbey hunter is likely to seek as the result of such a gathering—fun, for one, but we don’t need a mechanic to simulate fun. The character is having it, or she isn’t. The other thing, the perhaps *measurable* thing, is advantage.

The hunter is going to bring some specific thing to the party, some element of her persona that is intended to suitably impress those around her, whether they are other hunters, vampires, or venture capitalists.

Now, the hunter might be in conflict with the nature of the party. The Storyteller should choose a thematic tenor of the party—this theme might be anything from an already existing Skill (“it’s an Occult party, with vapid spiritualists and lusty Crowley-esque rites”) or a broader over-

arching idea (“pain becomes pleasure,” or “we can be more monstrous than the monsters,” or, “money can buy everything”). Note that this theme may not be in line with what the event’s own runners intend—social gatherings have a way of shifting and manifesting depending on the overall mood and interest of the crowd, so this is something the Storyteller should feel free to examine.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Action: Extended (the target number of successes is equal to 10% of the approximate total guest list—if the party has 100 people, then 10 successes would be necessary; each roll is equivalent to one half-hour’s worth of effort); if the roll isn’t complete before party’s end, it fails, and the Willpower is lost.

Dice Pool: Presence + Choose Appropriate Skill. Any Skill can be brought and demonstrated at the party provided the Storyteller understands its use. One hunter might wow those in attendance with his knowledge of demonic sex rituals (Occult). Another might show off his swordplay (Weapons). A third might simply flap her social butterfly wings (Socialize).

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character earns mockery when he messes up his attempt. The embarrassment costs him a -3 Social penalty for the next 24 hours.

Failure: It’s hard to impress those gathered.

Success: The character gains a few potential benefits:

- For the remainder of the story, when interacting with any of the characters present at the party, the hunter achieves an exceptional success on three dice instead of five for all appropriate Social rolls.

- The character may choose one group represented at the party (bankers, vampire ghouls, what-have-you) and buy dots in that group via the Allies Merit for half-price (round up).
- The Skill chosen to represent the character’s abilities for this action gains a +1 bonus for the next 24 hours due to the character’s lurch in confidence.

Exceptional Success: The character regains the Willpower in addition to the above benefits.

Potential Modifiers

- 3 The hunter used the same Skill at the last party (orgy, soirée, etc.)
- 3 The hunter’s Skill works counter to the “theme” of the event (e.g., the hunter tries to get all Academic when the theme of the party is indulgent, thoughtless sex)
- +X At the Storyteller’s discretion, the hunter may add her dots in the Bacchanal Endowment (above), but only if the hunter is running the party.
- +3 The hunter’s Skill works in line with the “theme” of the event (e.g. using the same Skill if the Storyteller identified one, or using Persuasion during the indulgent, mindless sex).



HARBINGERS OF THE RAPTURE THE LONG NIGHT

Read it carefully. It is the Lamb that opens the first seal. It is our Lord that opens the book of history for His Church to see. It's all part of His plan, don't you see? The monsters cannot stop that. They are just players on the stage. The only ones who can stop Him from coming are we his children, the ones he cursed with choice and thought. But we don't want to stop it. We want to hasten it. The sooner He comes, the better. Now, let us sing together and offer Him our praise.

Many Voices Singing a Song of Salvation

The Christians of the Long Night are all over the map. Try as you'd like, you cannot pin down one type of Christian hunter that best emblemizes the compact.

Radical survivalist firebrand? Yes. Deeply conservative pulpit-pounder? Absolutely. Socially liberal matron? Sure. You'll find every type represented. Violent youth ministries, elder religious academics, speakers in tongues, snake-handlers, suburban hausfraus, progressive preachers, abortion clinic bombers, inner-city street corner reverends, and so on, and so forth.

In that way, this is a deeply divided compact. Cells might operate individually, or as part of their own little armies within the compact itself. So, why be a compact at all? If so many different perspectives live under this tent, why have a tent to begin with?

The Nature of the Compact

The nature of this compact—or, really, most hunter compacts—is that it represents a *loose* confederation of like-minded cells. They needn't agree. They probably don't. The advantage is that they have a network of information and resource-gathering that first-tier cells do not generally possess (and, once they possess it, they become a *de facto* compact). Still, a compact must be bound by common purpose or dogma. So, what glue binds the hunters of the Long Night?

Tribulation and Rapture

Christian eschatology binds them, as does the key notion that the end of the world—the Apocalypse, meaning *revelation*—is a good thing.

Why is it a good thing? Because our world is damned. It's mired in sin. Mankind has gone wayward, and the revelation of Christ into the world will end the world that foolish man has made for himself. Christ is the savior, and he will lead his children to a better place. For those who believe themselves to be Christ's children, this is a great comfort. Imagine being stuck in a prison cell, and knowing that one day your family will come and free you from that dank room and walk you into the light. The end of this dark world isn't sentimental, it's a good thing. Heck, it's a *great* thing! That's how they see the Apocalypse: Christ is freeing them from a long, dark prison sentence.

Now, while the hunters of the Long Night do not universally agree on all the specifics, they're in *general* accord over the dogma. They accept that this time, right now, is the Tribulation. The Tribulation is the equivalent of

that prison sentence—it's a “long night” where the faithful are persecuted, where the world toils and suffers under monstrous depredations. That's now.

In this post-millennial outlook, they accept that the Rapture isn't coming—not yet. Christ will not reveal himself until his faithful prove their worth by pushing back the darkness—in effect, opening a “path” for Christ to ride down on his white horse, brandishing his fulgent blade. Once the faithful—represented by the hunters of the Long Night—open a way for Christ, *that's* when the Rapture occurs. That's the Apocalypse, the revelation of Christ unto a persecuted and ruined world.

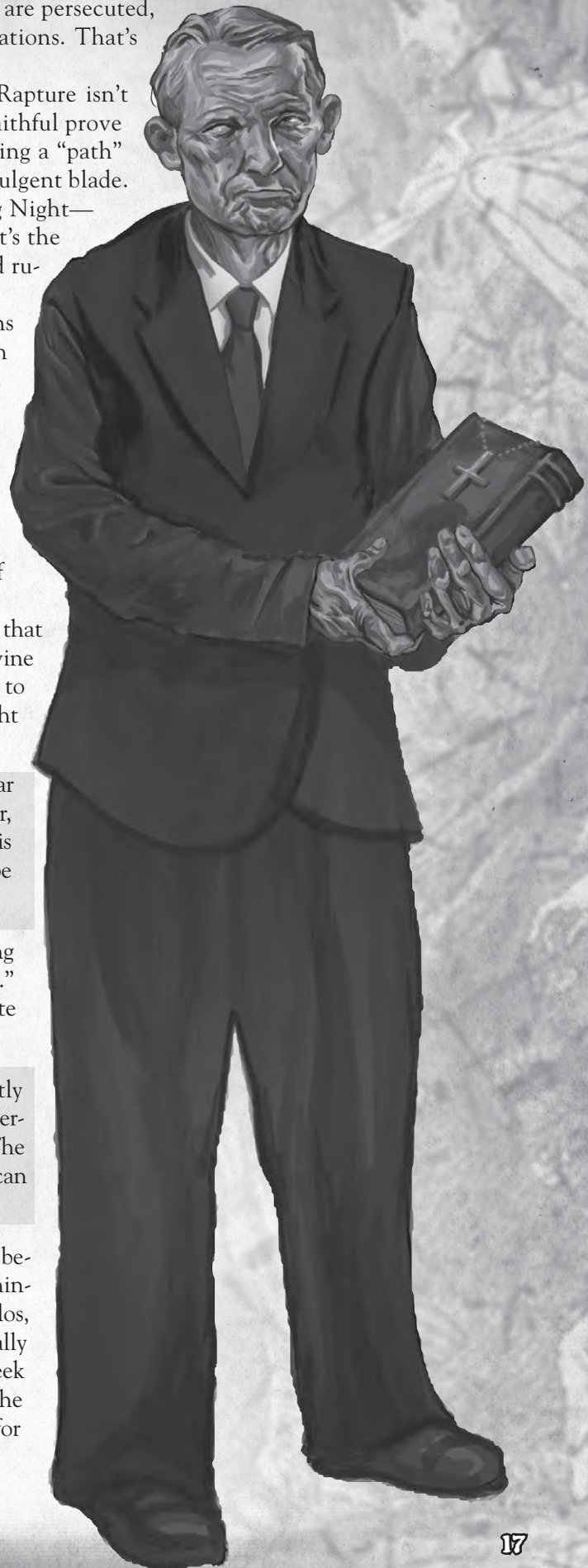
They want the End Times. They want to see the signs of the Apocalypse coming, and they look for them with paranoid scrutiny—because, once the signs begin, it means they've been successful in shoving back the darkness, and that means Christ is coming.

What Signs?

It's important to distinguish between “signs of the Tribulation” and “signs of the Apocalypse.” That the world is at its breaking point—wars, famines, plagues—is not indicative of the coming Rapture. They're signs of the existing Tribulation.

No, what the Long Night want to see are religious portents that the Tribulation is over, or will be soon. They're looking for divine messages, or in effect, cryptic ciphers sent from Heaven meant to offer hope to the devoted. What types of signs do the Long Night hunters seek?

- An Antichrist. For Christ to come, an opposite figure—a liar figure who will claim to be the savior—must first show. So far, it hasn't happened. The Long Night often grasp at straws—is it Kim Jong-Il? Osama bin Laden? None of these claim to be Christian leaders of men. They don't fit the profile.
- Miracles. Really, they're looking for miracles—something more than, “I see Jesus in the rust stains on my ceiling.” Blindness cured. Miraculous survivors. Resurrections. White animals that cannot be slaughtered.
- Numerological signs. The number *seven* figures prominently in Christian eschatology. Dates with the number seven, perhaps. Or seven assassinated leaders. Or seven miracles. (The numbers three, four and twelve are also prevalent, which can lead to conflicting signs.)
- Rapturous glimpses. Generally, the Long Night hunters believe in angels. Yes, some falsely imagine angels to be the shining, winged men and women with the trumpets of the halos, but most recognize that the angels are going to look totally bizarre—many mouths, many eyes, wheels of fire. They seek heavenly intercession by these beings (which means, yes, the Long Night might see a truly alien monster and mistake it for a messenger of Heaven).



SENSITIVITY TRAINING

This may bear repeating: this compact, even more than the *Malleus Maleficarum*, deals with religion in a pretty sensitive way. The compact comprises all manner of Christianity, from conservative fundamentalism to liberal social doctrine. No matter what approach is handled at the table-by players or by Storyteller-it would do everyone a little good to remember that religion is a sensitive issue. This is just a game. It's the World of Darkness. Everything's meant to be darker and weirder and meaner in this setting than in our world-just don't let it bleed over into your world. Keep your discussions civil. Keep the chatter focused on the game. Try not to offend. And so on.

Doctrines

Below, you'll discover further discussions of the doctrines found within the Tribulation Militia.

The Hopeless

Free Specialty: Survival (Trauma)

Addicts. Alcoholics. Ex-slaves to vampires or witches. Prostitutes. The demon-possessed. Recovering Lucifuge. The doctrine of the Hopeless exists as a dumping ground within the Long Night—those who have been abused by the world, by themselves, or by the monsters find themselves here, endeavoring to bring salvation to others while accepting that they are likely outside God's reach. It's not a healthy part of the compact, exactly—but in a way they are one of the most functional and dynamic groups. They have nothing to lose, and so they carry the Vigil with alarming verve and tenacity.

Secret: A small contingent of the Hopeless has gathered together out in the Badlands—the Army of Sinners has taken to the streets with a plan of attack that makes even other Hopeless Long Nighters blanch: suicide bombings. They feel they have nothing to live for, and so they seek to maximize their damage. They strap themselves up with guns and bombs, and go in shooting. When the shooting is done, they hit the button. Lest it go unsaid, their goal is to take out monsters, not humans—but, bystanders are bound to get blown to bits.

The Faithful

Free Specialty: Athletics (Feats of Strength)

The Faithful believe that they are ordained by God to be his soldiers during the Tribulation. They are driven

by blind faith, and are ultimately pretty zealous. They're generally a more conservative faction within the compact, though that's not a universal. They're also the one that scan the newspapers and the skies for signs from Heaven. As to why they get the Specialty they get? They believe their faith gives them power—a miraculous inner and outer strength. It's more a self-fulfilling prophecy: they tend to be stronger not because of God, but because they have trained themselves to be.

Secret: Followers of this Long Night doctrine are everywhere. They have taken special care to put themselves in high positions of government, business, and even entertainment. It allows them to push an agenda, and that agenda is furthering the Apocalypse. They want to usher it in, and they'll use their tremendous influence (when the time is right) to help push back the darkness and usher in the end of the world. Some Faithful might actually be disturbed to learn the truth of this.

The Merciful

Free Specialty: Socialize (Questioning)

The Merciful want to save the monsters, plain and simple. God was wrathful, but Jesus was a manifestation of God's love—a change from the Old Testament to the New. They embody this love, and seek to do no harm to the monsters. ("Harm" is a bit subjective, of course—Jesus casting demons into swine does harm to the demons, in theory, and certainly to the swine.) Most are driven to convert the monsters to their side, or even more significantly, help reverse their supernatural conditions.

Secret: The Lion's Den is a group of Merciful doctrine-keepers, and other hunters might be appalled to know how they tend to their mission: they seek to become monsters. They want whatever curse will make them a shapeshifter, they seek the blood-hungry Embrace of the vampire, they want the supernatural condition forced upon them. They believe they are so righteous that they can march right into the lion's den and not get eaten—even by becoming a witch's slave or a vampire outright, they still maintain their evangelical mission and their righteousness.

Systems

Below, the new Endowment for the Long Night compact.



Long Night Endowment: The Prayer (• to ••••)

Effect: This isn't a supernatural Endowment, though it may certainly seem to be. The hunters of the Long Night are driven by a very deep, very potent faith. This faith, as manifested in prayer, gives them a great deal of confidence and unity even (and perhaps especially) in the darkest hour.

At the dawn of each day, provided the hunter prayed before sleep, a Long Night hunter with the Prayer Endowment begins with a pool equal to the dots purchased in this Merit. We'll call these "Prayer Points."

The hunter can spend these points throughout the day in a number of ways:

- The hunter can "cash in" Prayer Points for Willpower points (reflexive).
- The hunter can gift Willpower to other hunters in his cell, provided those hunters have dots in this Endowment. A transfer of one Willpower point costs one of his Prayer Points (reflexive). Note that the Prayer Points do not *become* Willpower points (as the above benefit) – the cost is for the transfer, not the transformation. It transfers already existing Willpower.

- The hunter may cash in a Prayer Point to ignore wound penalties for one turn.
- The hunter may spend a Prayer Point to resist mental domination for one turn—he can add his dots in this Endowment to any rolls or pools used to resist supernatural mental domination.

The hunter regains his Prayer Points pool the next day *only* if he prays the night before, just prior to sleeping. He must pray for one full hour, uninterrupted.

Bonus Material: Systems of Mercy

Fact is, in **Hunter: The Vigil**, you get a whole lot of systems devoted toward bringing pain to the monsters. But you don't find a lot of systems geared toward delivering *mercy* the monsters (unless "mercy" is carved into the butt of that Remington shotgun).

Time to fix that. These systems could be of use for Long Night hunters, yes, but many of the compacts and conspiracies have members that believe in a more gracious approach when it comes to the Vigil. Use or discard at your leisure.



Kill Them with Kindness

This is the World of Darkness, so to stay in theme, we don't recommend this be overused, or even that it work all that often. But it *has* to work sometimes...

Kindness might provide a hunter with a bonus when dealing with a monster. Monsters aren't used to kindnesses done to them or for them. Existence for one of the supernatural denizens is a hardscrabble, deeply competitive affair, with lots of backstabbing and paranoia born from genuine threats.

So, if a hunter does something... well, *nice* for one the monsters unbidden, that's a big moment. It might earn the hunter +1 to +5 on a Social roll, depending on the severity of the kindness performed.

Then again, it might get the hunter killed, or it might lead the monster to believe that the character is a dupe whose compassion can be his undoing.

That's the life of a hunter, though: Risk and reward. Danger even in the kindest gesture.

Drawing Out

Monsters are people, too. Okay, they're not exactly *people*, but they have problems. They have fears. They have hopes and dreams. It's just that their problems are way more fucked up, and that their hopes and dreams are either deeply disturbed or are buried underneath layers of hate and madness.

The merciful hunter does his job best when he knows what ails a monster; each monster is different, and each creature's problems and secrets go well beyond the clinical nature of his supernatural condition. Drawing out that information is a dangerous act; it is, in a way, like drawing out poison. It might cause the monster existential pain. And, in receiving that pain, the monster may lash out—supernaturally or physically.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy

Action: Extended (target number is equal to the monster's Resolve + Composure score; each roll is equivalent to one "conversation," and a conversation may be five minutes or five hours, depending on how it plays out)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The hunter says or does something that triggers a very bad reaction in the monster. The creature is sure to lash out with psychic or physical violence.

Failure: The hunter doesn't make any progress in drawing out information about the monster, from the monster. Worse, it marks a setback in the process. One failure removes one "success" from the total pool, setting the hunter's total back. Two failures in a *row* constitute a bigger issue: the monster shuts down and will not yield any revelations about him-

self for the remainder of the night. The hunter can try again the following night, but at a -3 penalty.

Success: The hunter gains progress toward the total; once complete, the hunter succeeds by getting the monster to reveal some useful element of his personality or history. The hunter doesn't get to decide what (though he can endeavor to steer the conversation)—fears, hopes, dreams and secrets are all on the table. The key thing to remember is, this is intensely personal. It's not meant to be strategic information. The information is about the monster, and is arguably meant to be used in a compassionate way. It doesn't have to be used that way, of course—manipulative hunters may fake kindness to draw out crucial weaknesses.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the hunter gains a +1 Social bonus with that monster from this point forward.

Deprogramming

The goal of deprogramming isn't to undo a monster's supernatural condition, but rather to undo any real or metaphorical neurolinguistic programming that binds that creature to his social groups—a vampire might be enslaved by another vampire or be brainwashed into following the dogma of a certain religion, while a witch might be magically coerced into a berserker fugue state. Deprogramming seeks to undo social conditioning.

The Deprogramming Tactic is in the **Hunter: The Vigil** book, pp. 219-220.

Reversal of the Supernatural Condition

Hunter: The Vigil is a crossover-friendly game, to some degree. Yes, the game is about hunting monsters, but "hunting" can mean a lot of things, and in *some* games, a lot of interesting dramatic tension comes out of hunter

cells forming tenuous alliances with the supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness (lesser of two evils).

One plot point that's continued to come up is a notion that hunters can, in dramatic and rare scenarios, "undo" the supernatural condition of a single monster.

We like that idea. It's something that demands a long story and lots of toil, and then ends in a rather big payoff—a vampire becomes human, a wayward changeling girl can once more rejoin society, and so forth. Reversal of the **supernatural condition** might require blood transfusions, religious intercession, sunlight, sainted Relics, torture, deprogramming, blessings, curses, a gift from a demon (that the hunter must pay back on behalf of the monster), an animal or human sacrifice... really, the list goes on and on.

A few caveats if you're going to include this as a possibility in the game.

First, this isn't the type of thing that comes easy. It should be the culmination of a long story, or even a chronicle. If hunter cells are running around curing supernatural creatures of their condition... well, fine. You're encouraged to play as you want, but we politely suggest that it'll be more impactful if it requires effort and puts the hunters in danger.

Second, if you're running a crossover-intensive game, it's best not to "invoke" this condition on one of the other player's characters. If that player *likes* the idea, however, then it's worth pursuing as a cool story.

Third and finally, you should ask why this is a sought-after storyline. Good reasons exist. It can highlight the nature of "man versus monster," and is one condition really better than the other (remove a werewolf's ability to shapechange, and he might not thank you). It can also—as this section dictates—be a good way to utilize more compassionate solutions for the Vigil.



OCCULT OBLIGATIONS OF THE LOYALISTS OF THULE

Let's be honest. You fucked up. You summoned up something you shouldn't have, and now it's out there, and it's bouncing between the bodies of your friends like a leafhopper. It's making them do things. It's your fault. But you didn't know. Now you do, and that means it's time to fix it. You have a debt, and it's time to pay. I have a debt, too. Mine's not something I earned, like you, but something I was cursed with. Something my grandfather did, way back when. It's my debt, now. Just like yours. A debt's a debt—it's all red on the balance sheets. So, let's get going. We both have work to do. The accounts need balancing. Bring that book you found. Oh, and a shovel.

The Indebted: Hunter-Scholars

Among the Loyalists of Thule, it's brains over brawn. Sure, it doesn't hurt to be able to swing a shovel at a vampire's neck or know how to shoot a pistol with the safety off, but that's not their general approach. They're not hasty. They stick to the shadows. They watch. They learn. When they hunt, they hunt intelligently—setting traps, playing monsters against one another, and going armed with *as much information as is humanly possible*. Some say they play it too safe, that while they're combing through ancient texts or sneaking into a vampire's haven to hack his computer, the monsters are out there, doing bad work, with nobody to stop them. Then again, some say that until the Loyalists show up at their door, soaked in mud and blood, holding an old Buddhist prayer ritual that's just what they needed...

All told, it's worth asking, though: *why* are they so cautious? What gives them pause, causing them to act so judiciously in the hunt?

It's Because Somebody Fucked Up

This is how you get into the Loyalists of Thule: somebody in your family messed around with the occult, or *you* messed around with the occult, and bad things happened.

Because bad things happened, now you owe, and you owe big.

If you're in the compact because of family, that probably means that a couple generations back, a family member belonged to the *Thule Gehellschaft* (Thule Society) and watched as his group picked up bad ideas—ideas that eventually lead to the founding of the German National Socialist party, a.k.a. the Nazis. It doesn't matter that the Nazis eventually rebuked the occult and made the study of it illegal. What matters is that the Thule Society's original ethos was a springboard for one of the greatest evils to have walked the earth in recent history. That's a big black mark against the family. It's a heavy burden, and so the descendents of those original Thule Society occultists have taken up the acts of penance, and now carry the Vigil to help combat the evils of the world—both supernatural and natural.

Alternately, you might be in the compact because either you or a family member did something very bad when mucking about with the supernatural—your father awakened an ancient vampire to gain favor from it, your mother made a bad deal with a neighborhood witch that gave the witch untold powers, or maybe you went ahead and played with a cursed Ouija board and brought into this world a gang of ghosts that now run rampant in the city. It all adds up to a very big *oops*, and somebody has to foot the bill. That's you. You might not know about the debt you owe; or you might not care to address it. Maybe you run. Maybe you hide. Don't worry—the Loyalists will find you. That's part of their gig. If they see something supernatural wreaking havoc, they'll look to see if it has human origins.

If it does, they'll uncover them, and they'll demand that the person make good on what he owes. One thing this compact values above all else is *responsibility*. You can't just lose something and walk away. You break it, you bought it.

Nazis Need Not Apply

The Loyalists are not Nazis. They hate that they have that reputation. They loathe that the origins of their society dovetail with the origins of the Third Reich. Fascism disgusts them. They fear authoritarian approaches. They reject any attempts to diminish people—Jews, gypsies, African-Americans, Catholics, *anybody*—with a zealous fervor.

The problem is, Nazism still thrives. It thrives among humans: Neo-Nazi “white power” movements continue to pop up and gain momentum. It thrives among monsters: some creatures glom onto the Nazi “brand” as a source of pliable human minds, or see it as a way to conjure up old evils and powerful hatreds.

Above all, that is the enemy that the Loyalists fight. Any time they discover Nazism thriving, they stamp it out. And yes, that means among humans too. The Loyalists attempt to destroy Neo-Nazi human factions just as they do monstrous factions. They usually go the legal route, first—using the system to bring the groups down. That doesn't always work, though, and when that fails, violence becomes the only answer.

The Search for Thule in Body and Spirit

The Indebted dig up secrets, and then they use those secrets on behalf of other hunters to help bring down the monsters. That's their *modus operandi*.



RITUAL WORKERS

Throughout the various books in the World of Darkness line, you'll find lots of ways for normal humans to perform occult rituals. They can exorcise ghosts (World of Darkness Rulebook, p. 214). You can turn magic effects into occult rituals using Witch Finders. You'll find psychic powers (Second Sight) and summoning rituals (Summoners).

It makes sense, then, that if anybody can do some of this stuff, it's the Loyalists of Thule. They're not a conspiracy, no, but given their history and their interests it makes sense that they'd be the ones to be out there, trying all sorts of bizarre demon-banishing rituals or ghost-talker ceremonies to get the job done. So, we very much encourage you to use the Loyalists in this way. Just remember: they're careful and hesitant. They don't run amok wielding occult rituals. They did that, and they fucked up, and that's why they're a part of the compact.

In spirit, they think of this as "searching for Thule." This is a metaphor, really—Thule was the Nordic equivalent to Atlantis, a place where a race of giant men created wonders of technology and civilization that remain unparalleled even in this modern age. It was a place of powerful magic, occult engineering and ancient secrets. So, to "search for Thule" is now a metaphor for attempting to uncover lost truths and potent secrets.

That's no easy task, and it means that the Loyalists must possess a powerful arsenal. That arsenal does not necessarily include shotguns and scimitars—it requires weapons of a far more erudite nature.

A Loyalist usually possesses the following: a broadly-researched library of books within and outside the occult; occult ritual implements such as Tarot cards, crystals, incense, reagents, Ouija boards, voodoo *gris-gris*, divining rods, etc.; items stolen from the supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness; exploration items such as shovels, pick-axes, flashlights, headlamps, rappelling equipment, glass cutters, etc.; and one good weapon (usually a small knife or small pistol) to make sure that nobody steals his books.

All that being said, some Loyalists go beyond the metaphor of Thule and... well, continue to search for Thule itself. They claim that the ghosts of Thule's giant supermen are actually still around if you care to risk life and limb finding one (see Bonus Material: the Rmoahals, below), and that those strange ghosts possess earth-shattering secrets.

The Three Old Men (Die Drei Alterer Männer)

The Three Old Men of Munich do not exactly *run* the compact—after all, the compact more or less runs itself. What they do is watch, collect and disseminate.

Oh, and they hate. Each other, mostly, but their hate is cast far and wide, like a handful of sand thrown into the wind.

These men are old. They were young men in the Thule Society roundabouts 1933, which makes each of them over 90. They know that each of them is guilty, carrying the burden of the entire compact on their shoulders—and so, they hate one another.

Their names? Otto Lanz, Christoph Dahmer, and Alois Steiger.

A hunter may actually take one of these old men as a Mentor (●●●●●), but shouldn't expect to have an easy or pleasant mentorship.

The old men have secret retainers throughout the compact. These retainers collect information and pass it to them. The old men then determine if the information is worth distributing or keeping wholly secret. If they distribute, then they pass it through the chain to those who "need to know." If they keep it secret, it goes into a folder or a notebook (one of thousands) and locked away in a vault—the information in this vault is often called "The Archive," or *Das Archiv*.

Philosophies

The Loyalists are not organized enough to have true sub-groups, but they do have members that espouse differing philosophies. In general, note that the Loyalists are far less divided than other compacts or conspiracies. For the most part, the members of this group are all on the same page.

Scholars

Free Specialty: Academics or Occult (Research)

As the name suggests, these hunters are academics and learned men who assume a "slow and steady wins the race" approach to the Vigil. It's best to know the enemy thoroughly before running into the fray. Their approach to the Vigil may seem passive, until one realizes that they sometimes have to detonate walls and decapitate shambling mummy-zombies just to get at an



old papyrus scroll. For the most part, these hunters do not form entire cells—rather, one or two members try to become part of other cells (always keeping their true affiliations secret, as their debt is shameful) in order to bolster the efforts of those cells with knowledge.

Secret: The biggest secret is that the Scholars know too much—and they keep a lot of it to themselves. Overall, the knowledge they possess is dangerous, and handing it out freely is like handing out a basket of loaded handguns to a class of sixth graders. They have lists of ancient vampire burial sites. They possess scrolls that detail ways to summon Elder Demons from the weirdest corners of Hell. They have roadmaps to ancient Thule, as well as archaeological finds from Shamballa, Mu, and Atlantis. But anybody could use these things for terrible effect: awakening those old vampires, or plundering Hyperborean tombs, or getting cocky and trying to trap an Elder Demon (and loosing it on the world, instead). So, they keep this stuff very closely guarded, which is a secret that other hunter organizations would not like to learn.

Penitents

Free Specialty: Firearms (Pistol)

The Penitents form something of an unofficial “club” within the Loyalists. You want in, fine. You get a pistol—a Nazi pistol, like a Luger or a Walther P38. It’s not meant

to be a joke or an homage. It’s meant to remind you that this pistol killed people, that it shot American soldiers and Jews and French Resistance and whoever else got in the way. The hunter holds in his hand a simple weapon, but a terrible one. And he’s tasked with going out and being active in the hunt. Unlike Scholars, the Penitents generally form whole cells. They still approach the Vigil from the academic-occult angle, but they do so with... well, frankly, a greater degree of violence. They’re less content to bolster other hunters, and feel more Indebted to fix what’s broken themselves.

Secret: Those Nazi pistols that the Penitent possess? Most don’t like to talk about it, but more than a few of those pistols are haunted—not just by one ghost, but by a whole host of lost souls. A Nazi got his hand blown off holding that pistol? A Gypsy shot in the head by the 9mm Wehrmacht weapon? An American soldier was killed by it? Those voices are in that weapon. They strive for release. They remind the hunter of guilt. It drives some Loyalists mad.

The Advance

Free Specialty: Persuasion (Leadership)

It’s funny, because this philosophy represents a small (though growing) core of the Indebted. They aren’t well-liked. Ultimately, they assume a proac-

tive—and some might say cocky—approach to “resolving debts,” which is that to truly balance the scales the compact has to put itself not just in the thick of the fight, but at its fore. Those who espouse this notion tend to be self-made leaders of men, and are quite capable at it. Problem is, they’re trying to lead a group of self-hating apologetics who have little interest in leading the way. Leading the way not only opens oneself to great errors, but it is also the same cocky thinking (so the argument goes) that got the original Thule Society into that Nazi mess to begin with.

Secret: Everybody suspects that this faction secretly harbors some Neo-Nazis. They don’t. They’re just as stridently opposed to intrusion by fascist notions as any; maybe moreso, because they’re so damn defensive about it. What they *are* interested in, however, is putting the Loyalists of Thule back on the map as far as a legitimate occult society goes. They want to be the go-to organization for all things occult, and they don’t want it to be a secret. They’re in favor of the disseminating of secrets, which puts them at odds with the rest of the compact.

Systems

Below is the new Endowment available to members of the Loyalists of Thule.

Loyalists Endowment: Unearthed Secrets (• to •••••)

Effect: The Indebted have a very loose but very potent network of information-sharing. This isn’t a group that suffers from a lot of infighting or paranoia; they share information, and they share it broadly. The more information one is willing to share in return, the higher he places himself on the chain of unearthed secrets.

A hunter with this Endowment gains a benefit at the beginning of a story. He can, for free, gain a number of important “secrets” about the monsters (or about other hunters, where appropriate) equal to the dots possessed in this Merit.

This is a great place for the Storyteller to seed new plot points and information, as well as for the Loyalist to learn information that is useful to previous stories.

This Endowment also has a side benefit that can be used throughout a story, as well—it is, in effect, an “Occult Contacts” Merit. It works just like the Contacts Merit in the *World of Darkness Rulebook* (pp 114-115), except each dot is geared toward character types with occult specialties: “New Age store owners,” “Diviners” or “Vampire experts.”

Bonus Material: The Rmoahals

The Rmoahals are the ghosts of the Thulist giants, who are in turn apparently a sub-race of Atlantean descendents (or, according to some, Atlantean competitors). Don’t expect easy answers from the Rmoahals themselves.

Tombs of the Rmoahals

The tombs are well-concealed, and most often subterranean—they can be found in the pagan barrows and ancient catacombs of Northern Europe. The lead-up to each tomb is lined with elaborate traps (pits that drop onto floors of jagged quartz crystals, half-moon blades of untarnished silver swinging out of wall slits, ancient gears ready to grind up those that fall into them). Nobody really knows who put these traps here—the Rmoahals themselves? Witches who do not wish Thulist secrets to be known? Antediluvian vampires who saw the Thulists as friends or foes?

Finding a tomb and traveling to its center isn’t as easy as detailing out a couple rolls. It should be the focus of one or more full game sessions.

Awakening the Rmoahals

The ghosts slumber. To awaken one—and to make it manifest, at least initially—one must sacrifice something.

One must sacrifice a magical item. In **Hunter: The Vigil** terms, this means a Relic of three dots or higher. Which, yes, can put the Loyalists at odds with the Aegis Kai Doru.

The Thulist Specters

In some ways, the ghosts of the Rmoahals are like any other ghost. They exist largely in Twilight until they manifest. They possess Numina (most have five or more). They are anchored to this world by their tombs (and destroying the various urns and treasures in their tombs can help to destroy the Rmoahals—or, at least, send them into the Underworld).

And yet... it’s not hard to spot the differences.

First: they’re huge. They are twice the size of normal men when Manifested (Size 10).

Second: they look human-ish, but are clearly not human. Their flesh is pale and sickly, with a blue or yellowish cast (depending on the Rmoahal). Their two eyes appear blind, and covered with cataracts—but the third eye in the middle of their expansive foreheads remain wide open, casting about as if paranoid. They’re naked, and possess both sets of genitals, male and female. Finally, the weirdest part: their mouths. Their teeth are a tangle of barbed fangs, and

their tongues are marked with strange symbols and prayers written in dead languages.

Third: they're maybe insane, or hyper-sane, or just possess a sanity from a world past. They don't make much sense. They speak in songs, in tongues, in grating sounds and in animal cries—a bizarre pastiche of noises. Curiously, despite this communication barrier, a Rmoahal ghost will understand a hunter just fine.

Fourth: communicating with a Rmoahal can damage one's sanity. Contact with a Rmoahal incurs an *instant* mild derangement, a derangement that remains with the character until it can be resolved naturally (through therapy or Willpower expenditure). Worse, the hunter's own Morality is in peril: if the hunter has to make a degeneration roll within the next seven days after encountering a Rmoahal, he loses one die on the roll because he feels distanced from the act that compelled the degeneration attempt to begin with.

The Benefit?

So, what's the point of even contacting a Rmoahal?

Two potential benefits occur.

First, these mad occult engineers were said to conjure the physical world into being by the power of the Logos, the word. Simply by singing or speaking, they could create things. Their ghosts retain this power. If the hunter requires some object or item (or even another individual, alive or dead), the Rmoahal can conjure it just by speaking its name. It's real. It's permanent (at least until destroyed). It works flawlessly. It isn't some cursed copy.

Second, this ability extends to conjuring any piece of *information* into existence. Instead of asking for an object, the hunter can ask to have one question answered, and the Rmoahal will answer it. Or, rather, he will conjure a physical object that answers it—a scroll or a piece of stone with the answer inscribed upon it, perhaps, or an audio cassette featuring a recorded response.

The Rmoahal will grant those who find him one such request. Further requests result in violence: horrid, impossible violence.

Because what one can gain from a Rmoahal is so profound, it should be the focus of an entire story—and not an easy story, at that. Mortal and mental peril should await at every turn.



MILITANTS OF NETWORK ZERO THE MONSTER MEDIA

Everything's different now. It's fuckin' better, if you ask me. We're getting closer to the edge, you see that? Think about it. The Internet has changed everything. It's cheap as shit now to take web video, post it on YouTube, write a blog, update your photostream, all that crap. Everybody's got a cell phone with a camera. Privacy is falling away like dead skin, man. The monsters won't have anywhere to hide. Their shadows are shrinking, and it's the lights from our cameras that are doing it. The Web 2.0 is our fuckin' revolution of revelations. Lock and load, dude.

Lights, Cameras, Monsters: The Revelation Revolution

Network Zero is a compact on the cusp of very big things. Makes sense, when you think about it. Our privacy will soon go the way of the dodo. Cameras on every corner and at every traffic light? Wiretapping abilities that allow interested parties to listen in through your cell phone *even when you're not making a call*? The fact that no files ever stay deleted, and your internet-browsing history can almost always be dredged up?

It's the age of the Big Brother, the All-Seeing Eye. Except savvy users know that it's not just the government or big business with access to this undisputed stream of broken privacy. In fact, the truly crafty—those hunters of the Secret Frequency—can tap into that feed and use the intrusive eyes to their advantage.

Monsters operate in the shadows, but those shadows are dwindling. With every new CCTV system, every new camera phone, every new satellite thrown into space, those dark spaces shrink. Some monsters go deeper underground, but many aren't afforded that ability—or, worse, they underestimate the powers of human curiosity.

Network Zero is happy to exploit that. Their job is to get the message out.

That message?

Monsters are real.

Old Timey Versus The Modern Age

What Network Zero thinks of the "olden days" is really five, ten, maybe fifteen years ago. Back then, the Internet was in its foundling stages. Fewer people were connected. Traditional media still held sway. What did end up on the Net was often considered amateurish and untrue—unlike *now*, when the Internet seems to hold greater sway and authenticity than television or the print media.

Back then, getting the message out was a rag-tag effort. A "netzo" cell with a MiniDV camera still had to shoot the footage and then *escape* with that footage. Then, they had to find a way to transmit the footage—sure, they could put it on the Internet, but dial-up didn't make that easy to upload or to view. A more militant cell might kick down the door of a local public access channel and put it on late-night (a less militant cell might just endeavor to buy the airtime on public access). The audience was slim. The quality was for shit. And just getting the footage from *Monster Point A* to *Access Point B* was a deadly mission.

Think about how it might work now.

A Network Zero cell heads out with a small handcam that fits almost in the palm of the hand. The video camera

films in full high-def. It's got GPS, and it geotags every video. The cell could use a smartphone video instead, taking a hit on the video quality but gaining the ability to not only geotag the photo but to *immediately* upload it to the net.

A cell with high-quality or high-interest video may already have an audience of hundreds or thousands of people. If a thousand people send a link to the video to three other people—or pop it onto their Twitter feeds where they might have their own “audience” of hundreds—then the thing goes viral.

That's just this year. What comes out next year? Or five years down the line?

The shadows are shrinking. That's not to say that Network Zero is the top of the food chain. They're not... not yet. The monsters are catching up, technologically; vampires are a stagnant lot, but some have recognized the need to make younger, more tech-savvy vampires to serve in their undead armies (and many vampire havens are now protected by cell phone scramblers). Moreover, technology is still half-worthless off-the-grid. A werewolf territory in the middle of the Badlands won't yield immediate fruit: The old model still applies, where the cell has to get the footage and get out the door.

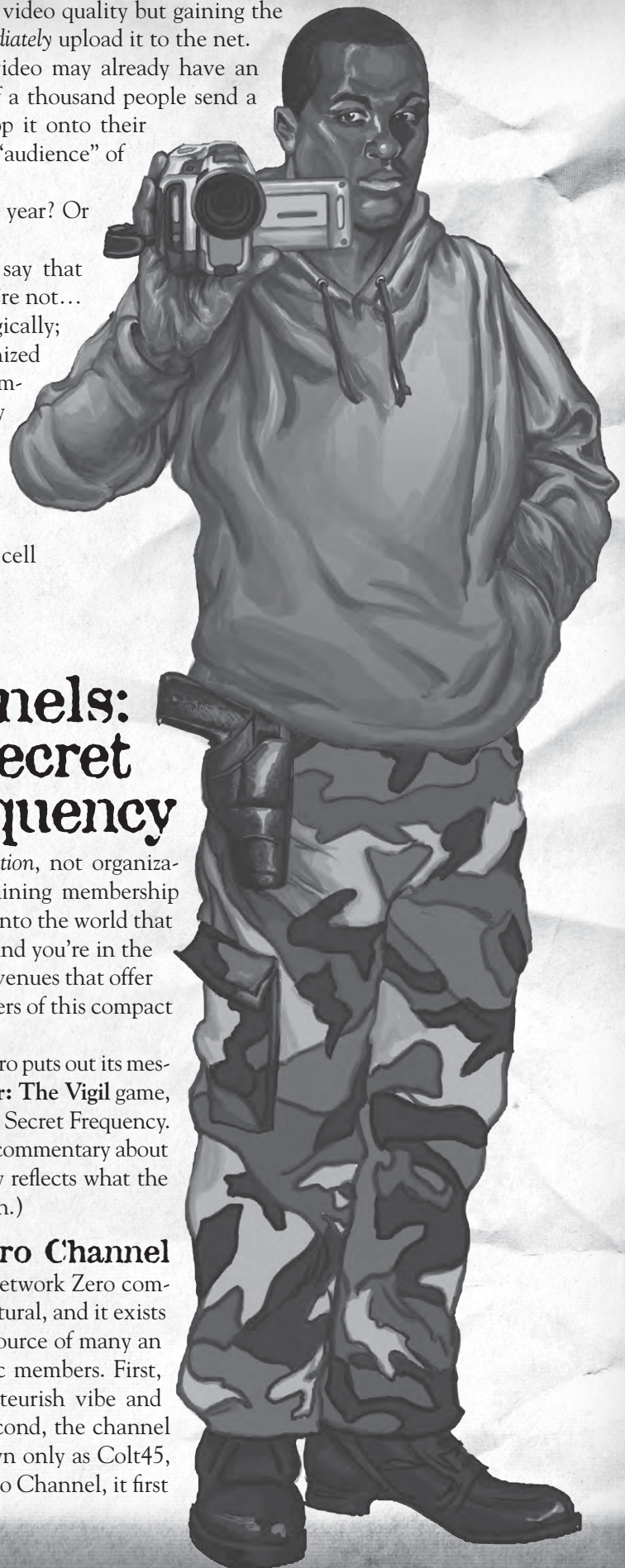
Dark Channels: The Secret Frequency

Network Zero's chief weapon is *communication*, not organization. As a compact, it's fairly disorganized—gaining membership isn't a rigorous process. Put something online or into the world that could be a genuine glimpse of the supernatural, and you're in the club. The question then becomes, what are the avenues that offer those glimpses? What dark channels do the hunters of this compact use to convey their messages?

Here's a sampling of the ways that Network Zero puts out its message. These can be story hooks used in any **Hunter: The Vigil** game, and aren't married to a story that is specific to the Secret Frequency. (These channels can, in fact, provide an ongoing commentary about the story. Even better if the ongoing commentary reflects what the hunter cell is actually doing from session to session.)

Zero Channel

Zero Channel is the preeminent way that Network Zero communicates its “web video exposés” of the supernatural, and it exists as a channel on YouTube. Zero Channel is the source of many an argument within the compact's already anarchic members. First, it's YouTube, which lends their videos an amateurish vibe and puts into question who “owns” these videos. Second, the channel is moderated by a mysterious netzo hunter known only as Colt45, which means that for a video to get posted to Zero Channel, it first



HELL-CHALKERS AND HELL-DRIVERS

Here's an example of how fast technology moves, and more importantly, how fast Network Zero moves to catch up and put it in play:

Augmented Reality apps for various cell phones are just gaining prominence. They allow the user to view the world through the video camera, and see the "live" view marked by real-time information, whether that's the nearest gas station or the local Twitter updates.

Network Zero has already seized on this. Old-school war-chalkers/war-drivers used to mark the ground with paint or chalk to signify wireless networks that could be borrowed or hacked. This compact has taken that idea and used it to mark areas of monstrous influence or territory.

Those with the AR app on their phones (called HellVue 2.0) bring up the camera and can use its real-time GPS-based information to view (and add) information about local monsters. Is this the office of a vampire slave? Do a series of murderous ghosts linger in this alley? Has this doorway been known to open to a place of glowing lights and strangling vines? Network Zero has a whole series of code symbols (based on old "hobo code") that they can digitally "paint" on an area. It's accurate within 50 yards on a good network; less so on a bad network.

It doesn't stop there. HellVue 3.0 will utilize facial recognition. Wonder if who you're talking to is a monster? If it's one that's been marked by Network Zero in the past, then facial recognition will do the trick. Just frame their face in the camera, and the phone will do all the work.

has to be moderated and "authenticated" by this user (though to his credit, he approves or denies them with an alarming 24-hour turnaround, which makes some hunters question whether or not he's even real, or just some bot).

The Panoptic Cons

Some Network Zero hunters aren't satisfied letting their message be passive. By putting videos on YouTube or public access and letting the audience come to them, the message is diluted: It becomes less a "whistle-blower" event and more an entertaining curiosity.

The Panoptic Cons—a group within the Army of Truth (below)—feel that it's much more important to take the message to the people and shove it in their eyes like a handful of searing embers. These firebrands take to the streets and engage in elaborate stunts to "get the truth out." Examples of this include:

- Hacking home networks, cell phones, coffee shop Wi-Fi, even the video feed at a local big box store like Best Buy to put out videos exposing the supernatural.
- Breaking into homes and businesses to leave behind DVDs or USB keys featuring critical audio or video clips (the goal here being for the victims of these crimes to then be the ones who disseminate the videos... which also conveniently puts the big red target on *their* backs,

and not the backs of the hunters. It also helps to recruit new individuals for the Vigil).

- Setting up "projector traps." They leave behind small handheld projectors (or larger ones when they can be concealed), and string them to tripwires or other triggering mechanisms. A person crosses a threshold, and the projector suddenly plays a disturbing exposure of the monster population.

The Panoptic Cons are different than the standard "Army of Truth" hunter in that they endeavor to remain hidden, and are less concerned with deadly weapons than they are the "weapons of communication."

Shortwave (Numbers Stations)

Long thought to be secret networks manufactured and operated by embedded foreign spies, Numbers Stations are those (frankly creepy) shortwave stations that play a series of tones, frequencies, songs, and numbers (read in foreign-accented English or in other languages) on a constant loop.

Some of these are what people suspect: clandestine cipher commands offered by and to active spy or terrorist networks.

Some of these are not what people suspect: communications by strange monsters and alien beings.

A small minority, however, are actually operated by Network Zero hunters. They do not use these

channels as vehicles for supernatural exposure, but rather, they use them to communicate coded missives to hunters “in the field.” Information conveyed through encrypted audio ciphers is meant to direct hunters to areas of supernatural activity so that it can be captured and relayed. Known netzo cells will receive a “key” (a word or number) that helps them decipher the code carried over shortwave.

Decrypting the code while in possession of the proper key isn’t difficult: success on an instant Intelligence + Investigation roll does the trick. Without the key, it becomes significantly harder. The roll becomes an extended Wits + Investigation roll, and the dice pool suffers a -5 penalty. It takes ten successes to crack the code, and each roll is equivalent to ten minutes of work. By the time the code is hacked, it’s likely that the supernatural event has already gone down.

Some Network Zero numbers stations are maintained by known operators. A few in the field, though, are operated by unknown hunters.

The Crews

Below is information on the three prominent crews within the Secret Frequency.

Record Keepers

Free Specialty: Computer (Multimedia)

For the most part, Record Keepers aren’t “big picture thinkers.” They don’t need to be. The same way that a soldier’s job is to shoot his gun, not win the war single-handedly, the members of the Record Keepers have one job: capture the supernatural in whatever way possible. Yes, some take it to the next level and also work to disseminate it—but many leave it to the militants of the Army of Truth to do that onerous task.

Secret: If you become a prominent enough Record Keeper (lots of hits on YouTube, a popular blog-radio conspiracy show, high Status), you’ll hear tell of something called the Zero Registry—it’s an online database that tracks individual monster sightings, and comes complete with alarming amounts of accompanying data. The hunter gains a password and access to edit it (it’s built as a wiki).

Army of Truth

Free Specialty: Firearms (Rifle) or Firearms (Shotgun), choose one

They see themselves as an army because, for the most part, they’re armed. Rifles and shotguns are easy enough to come by without creating a paper trail (you can head to Wal-Mart and buy a long gun without much trouble; not so much with a pistol). These “soldiers of truth”



head out into the world with the materials collected by the Record Keepers, and they disseminate it in whatever way possible—if that means storming a TV station with masks and shotguns, so be it. They used to take a more peaceable approach, but overall the feeling within the conspiracy (and this crew in particular) is apocalyptic. Whatever madcap, viral, violent way will get the message out... well, that's what the Army of Truth is going to do in these increasingly troubled times.

Secret: Most Network Zero hunters have secret caches of camcorders, jailbroken cell phones and USB keys with encoded information. Well, the Army of Truth also has a number of secret weapons caches. *Big* weapons caches. See, nobody expects Network Zero to have the really dangerous shit. Rumors circulate that suggest that the Army of Truth, however, might have everything from vials of smallpox to a Soviet-era dirty bomb. And guess what? Those rumors are true. Network Zero represents hunters with *access*—hunters that are very good at lying and getting into secret places. They've stolen some very sensitive and dangerous weaponry, and they're on the lookout for more. They'll do whatever it takes to clear the streets and secure the airwaves when the shit hits the fan.

Secret Keepers

Free Specialty: Intimidation (Keep Quiet)

The Secret Keepers work like this: you're a hunter for Network Zero, or maybe another hunter organization, and you've learned something you shouldn't have. For Network Zero, such information is a coup because you ideally plan to release this evidence into the wild (*information wants to be free*, after all). Don't let the Secret Keepers catch wind of it, though. If they hear of it, they'll come knocking. The Secret Keepers don't *want* information revealed. The free exchange of supernatural evidence is dangerous; it spooks the monsters. Scare the worm, and the head goes back in the hole. They'll threaten if need be, or they'll use whatever ways lie at their disposal to just *steal* the evidence outright. They don't destroy it, however. They keep it. They *hoard* it. They sit on it to wait for just the right time. The Secret Keepers believe that time is soon. They don't want to release dribs and drabs of information; they want it to be a megaton bomb of evidence, an undeniable implosion. The question is, can they reach that point before they're destroyed... potentially by their own compact?

Secret: The Secret Keepers often work in tandem with other hunter organizations. Many of those groups, despite carrying the Vigil, don't believe that an uncontrolled exposure of the supernatural is going to be healthy in much the same way that the government doesn't advertise every secret mission or terrorist threat. It's why some Secret Keepers play ball with, say, Task Force: VALKYRIE.

Systems

Below, you'll find the Compact Endowment available to hunters of the Secret Frequency.

Network Endowment: The All-Seeing Eye (• to •••••)

Effect: Network Zero is best-served by the technology that they use to capture the supernatural, and this Merit speaks toward that purpose.

For every dot purchased in this Merit, the hunter gains access to one normally-private stream of information, within reason (Storyteller's discretion applies). The hunter might be able to access local ATM cameras, stop light cameras, the CCTV system at a local company, the RFID tracking map of the same company, etc. Each dot is representative of one such "stream" of information.

Accessing that stream generally requires no roll, though it does likely require that the hunter be near a computer, or at least a capable device (phones with higher-end operating systems and browsers). A roll is only necessary when the hunter is using a locked computer or accessing a truly private information stream.

Each dot can only apply to connected systems. If the hunter chooses "ATM cameras," that dot only applies toward ATM cameras of a certain bank or machine brand—Bank of America's ATM feeds don't connect with Wachovia's machines, and so two dots would be necessary to have access to both.

Some restrictions do apply: the hunter cannot access supernaturally-held systems, for instance. If a series of vampire havens are guarded by CCTV, the hunter cannot gain easy access to those with this Merit. (Though the hunter may eventually be able to hack into those feeds, that would be the provenance of an extended roll, not this Merit.)

Drawback: Every time the hunter connects to an information stream represented by this Endowment, the Storyteller should roll a die in private. If that die comes up a '1,' then the hunter is caught. The hunter loses access to that information stream (gaining half the experience points back used to buy that dot), and is now on the radar for having hacked that system.

Bonus Material: From Compact to Conspiracy

If any one compact is really on the edge of being something bigger, it's Network Zero. The information revolution is exploding at an exponential rate—everybody's getting connected, all devices are synching, and

Network Zero's reach is constantly growing. Assuming them to be paranoid pioneers of New Media gives them a very distinct edge. Plus, they're already global. They're already deeply clandestine. They have the markings of a conspiracy in the making. So, let's go ahead and make them one.

What needs to happen to make them a conspiracy?

First, they have to get *organized*. Conspiracies are top-down, while compacts are bottom-up. You can't have rag-tag turf wars in a conspiracy... or, at least, you can't have obvious ones. So, pick one of the crews (above) to effectively "run the show" and provide the prevailing ethos.

Second, you need to crank up their *operations* to the maximum volume. Network Zero will need to take it to the next level. They get their own satellite, maybe, and from this satellite they can transmit their anti-monster propaganda to the masses via encrypted channels on the Internet or even through satellite TV providers. Their numbers probably grow, too—from a handful of hundreds to thousands of militant record keepers worldwide.

Third, it's time to conceive of a new Endowment—something more supernaturally potent than the one we posit above. Now, if Task Force: VALKYRIE doesn't exist in your game world, you could borrow some of their non-military Advanced Armory (Witch Buster, Etheric Goggles, etc.). But, that doesn't really speak to Network Zero's awesome ability to expose the supernatural. So, let's think of a whole new Endowment.

We'll call it...

Conspiracy Endowment: Monster Media

It'll be one through five dots (• to •••••) for ease of use (and because we don't have the space to do a brand new Endowment).

Each dot purchased in Monster Media allows a Network Zero hunter to upgrade *one* piece of technology (likely a recording device of some means) so that it becomes capable of capturing and identifying a monster in its true, exposed form on the accordant form of media.

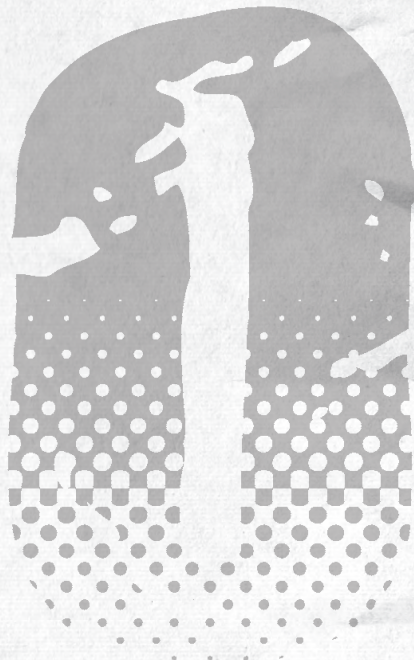
Let's say Casimir Bell is a hunter in the Network Zero conspiracy. His player purchases three dots in Monster Media on his behalf.

He decides to take two of those dots and apply them to his cell phone.

Bell's player decides that these two dots should be geared toward visually recording two types of monster on the phone's still and video camera: ghosts, and werewolves.

The Storyteller wants Bell's player to have some investment here, so he allows him to describe how those creatures appear on the cell screen. Ghosts come up as diaphanous spirits, hazy and indistinct yet present just the same. Werewolves come up looking like normal humans, but with bright yellow eyes.

Bell's player also decides that he has a small handheld recording device: a tiny microphone that he can pin to his shirt like a button. He allows his third dot to go toward this item, and he lets it pick up the voices of ghosts, transmitted right to his ear. So, if ghosts in *Twilight* are speaking in a voice that isn't audible to the living human ear, Casimir can hear it.



NULL MYSTERIIS HUNTING IN THE NEW AGE OF REASON

I don't believe in the supernatural. And yet, I know that vampires exist. I know that magic is real. I know that men can change their anatomy from human to wolf, and I know that dead tissue can be animated-or, reanimated-through liberal use of electricity. And yet, let me repeat myself: I do not believe in the supernatural. Hard to reconcile? Look at it this way. Once upon a time, the sun was dragged across the sky by a god in a chariot, plagues were curses by witches or demons, and brewing and then drinking tea from the "vine of the dead" was thought to give you visions from jaguar gods. And then, lo and behold, science came along. Ah, but science did not take away the sun, or plagues, or the ayahuasca vine, did it? It just explained them. It used reason and evidence to dissolve the mysteries. That's what we do here. I do not believe in the supernatural, because I know that science is a light that will dispel the shadows.

The World's Most Dangerous Hobby

The hunters of Null Mysteriis consider the Vigil an academic hobby. It's not a job, as it pays nothing, and most of these people *have* jobs—very good jobs, for the most part.

The hunters of the Null Mysteriis at least *start out* with a less rigorous attachment to the hunt than others—many possess an academic fanaticism, yes, and some let it ruin their lives and day jobs from word one, but more step into the Vigil the way you might ease into a hot bath: one inch at a time.

That changes over time, and it never stops this hobby from being a very dangerous (and expensive) one. All that equipment? Using a Safehouse as a lab? Plus the time off from science jobs that can be quite lofty but *also* quite low-paying or infrequent?

Over time, those in the Null Mysteriis *do* grow obsessed. It's hard not to. Some think of it as "chasing the dragon," an act of constantly reaching for the dragon's tail before it rounds the corner out of sight. One answered mystery opens the door to ten new questions. It's like Pandora's Box: once you open it, all kinds of awful things come tumbling out. But for the hunters of the Organization for Rational Assessment of the Supernatural (ORAS), what's left in the bottom of the box isn't *hope*, as the myth suggests, but *reason*.

Recruitment and Advancement

For a "hobby," though, Null Mysteriis is hopelessly bound to its organization. This is no rag-tag compact of disconnected hunter cells—no, this is a hobby where everybody knows everybody else, where they meet frequently, where they pass around academic journals and have awards and ranks and mixers.

How does one get involved, then? Usually, it involves a brush with the supernatural—a scientist or academic is confronted by the reality of the paranormal, and one of a handful of things might occur. The hunter tries to expose it, and works diligently to tell everyone about what he saw, even going so far as to try to prove it. Or, maybe the hunter quits his field, his certainty in science and reason shaken. Or, the hunter's work suffers and he tumbles into some kind of stress disorder.

All these things are red flags, and when someone in the compact sees a red flag rise, the compact endeavors to intervene (provided they believe that individual can bring something to the compact; if not, well, good luck to him). They send someone, and she walks them through what happens, and talks them into the compact.

She makes it clear that the compact is not about exposing the supernatural. That's worthless. It just spooks the herd, and clouds the minds of the less rational (and the Null Mysteriis is quick to point out how brashly irrational the rest of the world happens to be, believing all manner of nonsense regardless of evidence to the contrary). Yes, they'll go ahead and expose the supernatural when all evidence is in place, and only then.

Once a hunter is in, he'll soon realize how competitive this compact happens to be.

First, the committees. The whole compact is broken up into tiny research circles and discussion groups—the Committee to Study Haemophagic Parasites, the Committee on String Theory and Interstitial Territory, the Working Group to Determine the Veracity of Psychic Phenomena, and so on and so forth.

Second, the ranks. The compact is an unholy tangle of what might be made-up ranks (and seem to only loosely align with one's actual dots of Status within the organization). These ranks are generally academic: provost, principal lecturer, head researcher, junior rector, distinguished instructor, and so forth. Elections exist for the highest three positions within the compact: the Provost (Status ●●●), who keeps track of the vast tangle of administrativa, and who keeps the various academic journals up and running; the Chancellor (Status ●●●●), right-hand man to the General Secretary; and the General Secretary (Status ●●●●●), who oversees all of the compact, and who sets the agenda for the year ahead. Advancing in the ranks is generally a “nomination” affair—be nominated by one of your betters, and have that nomination confirmed by a *council* of your betters. Enjoy your new rank and title, whatever it may mean.

Third, the academic journals. The Vigil provides a steady stream of data for the hunters of Null Mysteriis, but not all of it is *new* data. A lot of it is treading previous ground, and that's a no-no. They put out all these monthly, semiannual and annual journals (online and in print) that examine the monstrous condition and other paranormal elements of the world in all its scientific glory. (Which means that, were it to fall in the hands of the average individual, they'd barely make it past the first sentence before being bombarded with unfamiliar terms and lots of academic rigamarole.)

Oh, and the dues. Null Mysteriis hunters not only fail to get paid in any way, but must pony up annual dues of \$1000 a year.

Science to Pseudoscience to Outright Quackery

The compact comprises a large bulk of rational, science-minded or academic folk: biologists, chemists, physicists, and the like.

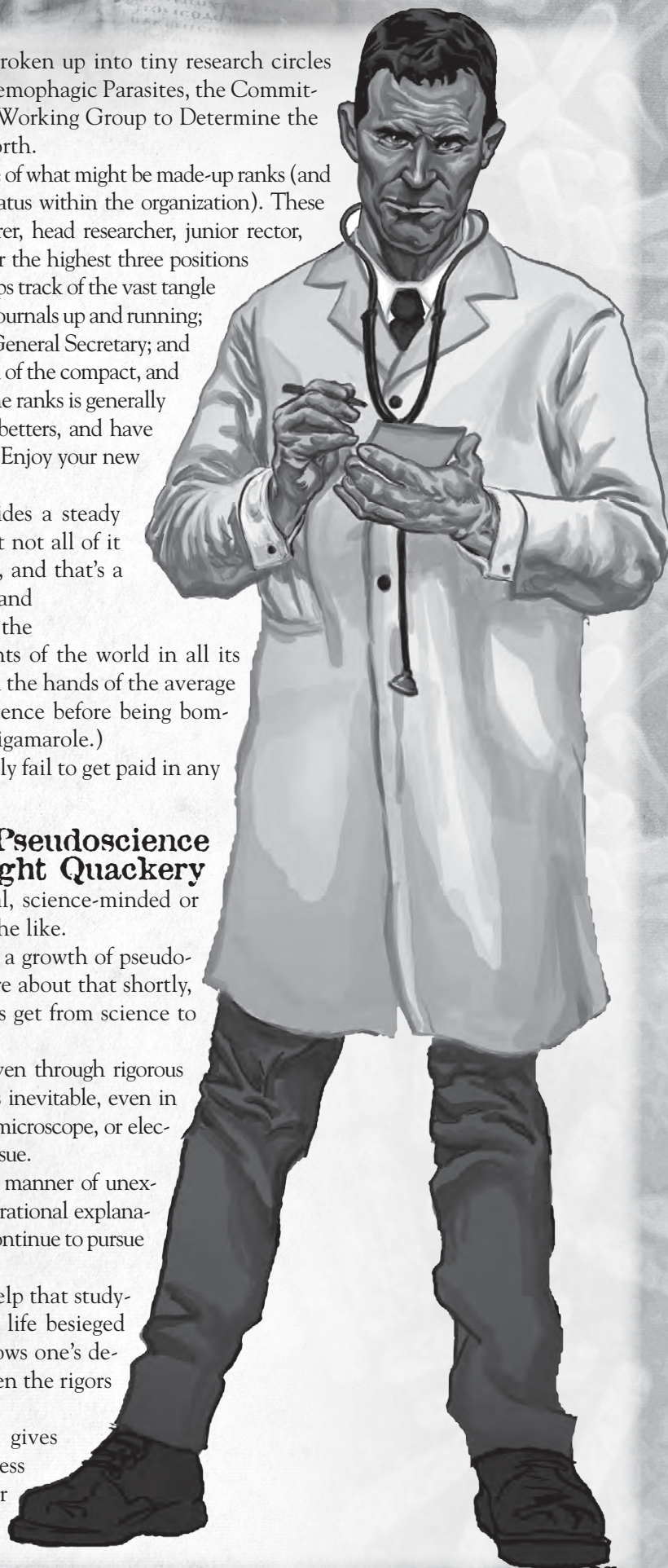
In recent years, however, the compact has seen a growth of pseudo-scientific efforts amongst its hunters. We'll talk more about that shortly, but for the moment it bears examining *how* hunters get from science to pseudoscience (and beyond).

Scientists seek rational explanations that are proven through rigorous testing. The scientific method is everything. Success is inevitable, even in small ways: vampire blood looks a certain way under a microscope, or electricity has reproducible effects on reanimated human tissue.

Problem is, the World of Darkness is home to all manner of unexplainable horrors, and these horrors consistently evade rational explanation. The truly diligent don't take that as a failure, and continue to pursue explanations.

Some, though, aren't truly diligent. It doesn't help that studying the horrors of the World of Darkness means a life besieged by... well, *horror*. That damages the mind. It winnows one's devotion to reason. Answers are a lot easier if you soften the rigors of one's standards, yes?

And that's what happens. Eventually, science gives way to pseudoscience—proof obtained through less meticulous testing and with reason that crosses over into unreasonable territory.



IT'S DECISION TIME!

If you're running one or several Null Mysteriis hunters in your story, you'd better figure out what the reality of their philosophies happens to be. See, the World of Darkness doesn't really work according to their designs, generally. It means you need to accommodate that, and adjust accordingly. Three general approaches apply—pick one.

First, the Null Mysteriis hunters have it all wrong. They continue to doggedly pursue rationality in an irrational supernatural world. Every effort is hampered, but this doesn't stop them from being wrong (and almost getting killed for it).

Second, Null Mysteriis has it totally correct. The supernatural can be explained scientifically, but science hasn't advanced to that point largely in part because the supernatural hides and no sane advocates exist outside of this compact. But, some day they're going to have a breakthrough—in the meantime, it's lots of little discoveries.

Third, it's a mix of the above two. The World of Darkness is home to a lot of awful horrors that boldly defy exploration and rationalization—but that doesn't mean it all gets discounted. Even if they're wrong about some conclusions, it doesn't mean that science can't help them track a vampire, predict who might be born a werewolf, or identify the biological differences between a *Greater Demon* and a *human*.

How does the scientist go beyond this? Well, pseudoscience is a slippery slope. Relax your standards, and they continue to relax. Worse, the Vigil continues to erode one's sanity, and before too long, it's all navel-gazing, crystal-waving, Nostradamus prophecy-proving, dream-examining, and the like.

A Schism Born Of Frustration

The above slide from *science* to *pseudoscience* is best exemplified in the annual General Secretary elections. Current General Secretary Alexander Watt—the rationalist—has won the election for many years, but every year, his vote tally dwindles. Coming up on his heels is Vincent Fielding, current provost (and treasurer; didn't we say the ranks were a bit made-up?) and proponent of a host of pseudoscientific ideas. (A third contender has thrown her hat into the ring: Mahasti Jalili. This Iranian-born American has something of a guru-like standing within the compact. While her adherents are few, they are quite zealous, and they advocate outright quackery—a loose syncretism of science and miracles, thrown together in a haphazard philosophy she calls Spiritual Science.)

Theories

What follows is another look at the prevailing Theories of the Organization for the Rational Assessment of the Supernatural (ORAS).

Rationalists

Free Specialty: Science (Experimentation)

These are scientists and academics by Profession, and they believe that the supernatural is quite natural, thank you, it just hasn't all been figured out yet. To

many, it's all quite boring: lots of journal writing and lab hours, the World of Darkness seen predominantly through a microscope, blah blah blah. But to the hunters upholding this approach, it's very exciting. It's like CSI, but with the paranormal. Every clue, every detail, is the answer to a mystery. And just because they're scientific doesn't mean they don't know to carry a pistol or a stun-gun. Sure, most don't know how to use them very well—but they know it's better to be safe than sorry.

Secret: The Rationalists know that their compact is under siege by what they term “the crazies.” These addle-headed pseudoscientists are frankly ruining the party. The Rationalists believe in that the so-called “Open Minds” should be shown the door. Let them go find their own damn compact to celebrate their broken theories. And yet, a darker thread has emerged among the higher-ups of the Rationalists, including Alexander Watt himself: some think maybe it's time to make Vincent Fielding and Mahasti Jalili disappear.

Open Minds

Free Specialty: Expression (Argument)

The hunters that espouse this theory run the gamut from pseudoscience (Kirlian photography, ghost hunting equipment, Zener cards) to outright quackery (hollow earth theory, abductee experiences, spirit possession, Theosophist mediums). They basically don't want to close the door on anything, because they're afraid a too-rigorous set of standards is damaging to the compact's actual progress. They lump their own efforts in right alongside the supernatural monsters: they espouse strange ideas, yes, but if vampires and ghosts exist, who's to say that pseudoscience won't one day *be* science?

Secret: Amongst their number is a hunter who calls himself The Contactee. His real name? Jim Taylor. He's a mid-50s ex-research scientist for Big Pharma, but lately, he believes he's housing another consciousness, a spirit from the Underworld known as the Taker of Children. This spirit, Jim claims, came to him when he fell in a frozen lake and almost died from hypothermia. He believes the spirit is ancient, and can provide a whole host of answers about the World of Darkness. Right now, Mahasti Jalili is keeping him hidden and protected, interrogating Jim and the spirit within him. She believes that the Rationalists want to kill him (but they actually want to kill *her*).

Cataclysmicists

Free Specialty: Investigation (Paranormal)

Couple a fear of the Apocalypse with scientific study, and you get these Null Mysteriis hunters. They note that all self-organized critical systems are subject to cascading failures: power grids, earthquakes, financial markets, and the like. More and more of our world is bound up in self-organized critical systems, which means more and more of our world is subject to critical cascading failure—and they believe that the rise in paranormal activity is something of a warning sign showing that these failures (or *one big failure*) are coming. Sure, this theory is supported by those who think the 2012 thing is real and who believe Nostradamus predicted the end of the world, but for the most part, it's held up by the truly science-minded—they just think that the principle of chaos and entropy is going to eventually break it all down. The Apocalypse is coming—it just won't be heralded by angels.

Secret: It's in full-swing, now: the Human Preservation Project. The Cataclysmicists think the world is coming to an end, so they've formed an unfortunate alliance with other Armageddon-minded folks (even those who are strictly religious and non-scientific) in an effort to fund a series of underground shelters to protect mankind from the end of days. These shelters—all seven of them—are built in mountain ranges around the world.

Systems

Null Mysteriis Endowment: I'm Doing Science (• to ••••)

Effect: This Endowment is less social than the other Compact Endowments, in that it's built more off the hunter's approach and equipment than it is off of the hunter's social bonds within the organization.

This Merit assumes that a Null Mysteriis hunter is equipped to carry the Vigil with an investigative, scientific (or pseudo-scientific) bent. It does not provide *specific* equip-



ment, but rather assumes that the hunter has access to certain equipment and specialized approaches, and the better he knows how to utilize these, the more use he can bring to the hunt. It might mean he's using a handful of Rationalist gear (pH strips, evidence baggies, microscopes) or less scientifically rigorous equipment (Kirlian cameras, energy meters, divining rods). Either way, dots in this Endowment translate into effectiveness on the hunt, useable in a variety of ways.

At the beginning of a hunt-related scene, the player of the hunter with this Endowment should roll that hunter's Intelligence + Investigation + I'm Doing Science dice pool. This is an instant roll mechanically, but takes more than one turn to perform—it takes five minutes of examination and exploration.

Success can be used in one of the following ways once the five minutes are up:

- The hunter can use what he learned to track a monster that left behind evidence at the scene (blood, etheric vapors, hair samples, etc.). The hunter gains a bonus equal to dots in this Endowment on any roll made to track the monster's movements. The hunter gains this bonus for a number of hours equal to successes gained.
- The hunter learns one critical fact about the monster—a fact that can only be discerned with some measure of scientific examination. The hunter might be able to discern the blood type or other hints about a vampire's last meal, but not how the vampire *feels* about it. The hunter might discern that the tuft of hair caught in the old floorboards *isn't* actually wolf hair, but, curiously, the hair of a coyote.

- The hunter gains a number of successes that can be added as bonus dice to the next attack on a monster—she can use this bonus herself, or gift it to a hunter in her cell. She might see that a footprint indicates the werewolf is favoring his left leg, or that the witch's magic is clearly born through her palms and fingerprints.

This Endowment can only be used once per day.

Bonus Material: Behold My Monstrous Evidence

Fact is, even if monsters cannot be explained scientifically, they do leave behind scientific evidence. What follows is a smattering of ideas you might choose to use in a science-minded **Hunter: The Vigil** game. Each is equal part “hunter technique” and “story seed.”

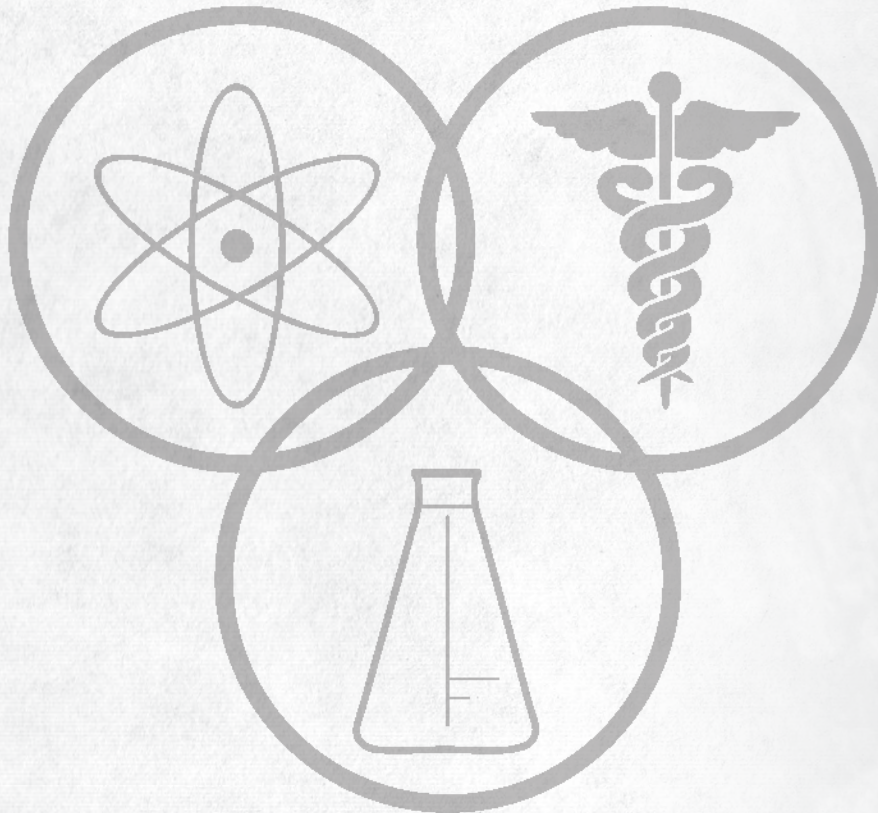


HAND-WAVING?

The Endowment on this page—and, really, a lot of things to do with Null Mysteries—demand a little hand-waving. They perform tasks that ultimately *should* fail in regards to the World of Darkness, it being a world that defies natural reason. Moreover, an Endowment like that has to work for both the science-minded and the pseudoscience junkies in the compact.

But all that's okay. The Storytelling System isn't meant to be a detail-oriented system that examines the nitty-gritty. It's meant to facilitate the story aspect, to keep the players energized and the narrative moving.

- Fairies Under the Microscope: Cells taken from a changeling character may show some very unusual properties under the microscope, even if the changeling *looks* human to the hunter's eye. The DNA might show odd chromosomal properties—as if the human DNA is in some parts replaced by, say, animal or plant DNA. It's possible too that the cells literally transform into something else: water molecules, flakes of stone, fish scales.
- Reanimated Flesh: Battles with the Reanimated sometimes leave hunks of meat and skin lying around. Zap it with a shitload of electricity, that it might reanimate *again* for a moment—a piece of skin flapping around, a finger twitching and crawling around. If the flesh left behind is bigger than a fist, though, it might grow legs and a mouth and start running around trying to eat everybody (or escape).
- Vampire CSI: A vampire drinks a human's blood. That blood remains in a vampire's system until it is expended for their superhuman undead abilities. While it remains, that blood can be tested to determine the identity of those whose blood the vampire has consumed (perhaps killing them in the process).



WELCOME TO THE UNION THE NEIGHBORHOOD

I know what you're thinking. You're lookin' at me, and you're sayin' to yourself, is that a pistol on his hip? It is. It's a .45 ACP, if you give a shit. Used to be my Dad's. Dad also used to play softball, so I got an old bat of his in the car. And, he was handy with fixin' things, so I have a car battery with some jumper cables. Now, you're thinking, jeez, this guy's ready for war. This guy's got a lot of weapons. But those aren't my weapons. My real weapons are all around us. Look. Over there? That's Mrs. Salazar. Carrying in her groceries. Old lady's got eyes like an owl, and she watches out her curtain most hours of the night. Caddy-corner, that's Eddie Chase's newsstand. Eddie's got his finger on the pulse-beat. Plus, that prick can run! He helped me take down a... well, I won't get into the details, but he tackled that fuck-o right into the side of a furniture truck. Point is, the gun, the bat, the battery. They aren't my weapons. The people of this neighborhood? They are. Every neighborhood's got its problems. But now, every neighborhood's got its solutions, too. Welcome to the Union, pal.

First-Tier Ethos, Second-Tier Organization

The Union is very likely the best and freshest example of what happens when a bunch of tier one cells get together for some tier two compact-style organization. It's a young compact, about a decade old, and for the most part, it espouses an approach to the hunt equal to most first tier cells. A group of local hunters sees the bad shit that's going on all around them, and decides to do something about. That's the Union, except with better (though far from perfect) organization.

For the most part, their ethics and approach remain that of a first-tier cell: monsters are in our neighborhood, and are threatening our way of life, our friends and our families. That's unacceptable. Most Union hunters aren't looking to destroy or control all the monsters. They're just trying to keep their little corner of the world safe, so their kids can go to school without drug dealers peddling poison and without some black thing with wings swooping down on them on the way home from basketball practice.

You Want In?

Recruitment isn't exactly a complicated affair. Sure, local Union cells might throw together some kind of "gauntlet" where newbie hunters have to prove their mettle and show how devoted they are to keeping the neighborhood clean, but that's not universal.

Ultimately, the way it works is this: you're a hunter, first tier. You're out there alone, or maybe with two of your buddies you've known since high school, and you're holding back the night as best as you can. You're overwhelmed: Job, family, and the Vigil? It's rough stuff.

That's where the Union steps in. The local Union cells step up, and they show you what's really going on. And they give you a choice: You join up and you do it like we do it and in coordination with us. Or, you quit that shit right now, you put down the butcher knife and deer rifle, and you leave the Vigil to the... well, not so much the *professionals*, but to the proper authorities, because you keep doing it your way and you'll eventually fuck it up for everybody else.

It doesn't always work like that. Sometimes, the Union sees someone in the neighborhood they think can help them—a tough old war vet, a local prostitute, or maybe a teenage son coming of age—and they'll extend the invite.

Invitations also mean getting a web address and a password for the Union forum (see below).

It's a Secret... Except, Not Really

The truth about the World of Darkness is this: *people know*. They know it's a bad place, and that the shadows are long. They suspect that the monsters are real, not metaphor.

But they're scared. Alone. It's easier to live in ignorance and walk in the bright light of the day and not give power to your fears by acknowledging them.

But this forced ignorance starts to change when the Union is in town. In neighborhoods protected by the Union, the people start to drop the veil of ignorance. Oh, they don't all collectively step into the Vigil or anything. But a Union hunter stumbles bloody and ragged in an alley, pursued by dark forces with his gun falling on an empty chamber, he might look up and see that the back door to the local Indian restaurant is open—and the man standing there looks around and surreptitiously throws the hunter a pistol wrapped in an oily cloth before ducking back inside.

People know, and when they find themselves besieged by monsters, they'll come knocking on a Union hunter's door with a haunted look, and they'll say something like, "I need your help. I know you... fix special problems. And I have a very special problem."

And that's all it takes.

Evil Is Evil: Not In My Backyard

The Union is one of the rare hunter organizations that doesn't limit its vigilantism to just monsters. Pedophile? Drug dealer? Mobster restaurant owner? Serial killer? Gang thugs? Wife-beater? Any and all might be fodder for the local Union. Not every cell likes to do this—it certainly takes a harder heart to go after a run-of-the-mill drug dealer than to go after some demon-summoning witch-pimp. But for the most part, the neighborhood or town is under assault from human forces just as dangerous (if not more so) than supernatural ones. This can make for an interesting game with greater moral challenges.

Note that it can get very quickly out of hand. We're not talking *Footloose's* "no dancing" rules—we're talking police state, with the Union playing the moral watchdogs ready to break fingers for every immoral infraction.

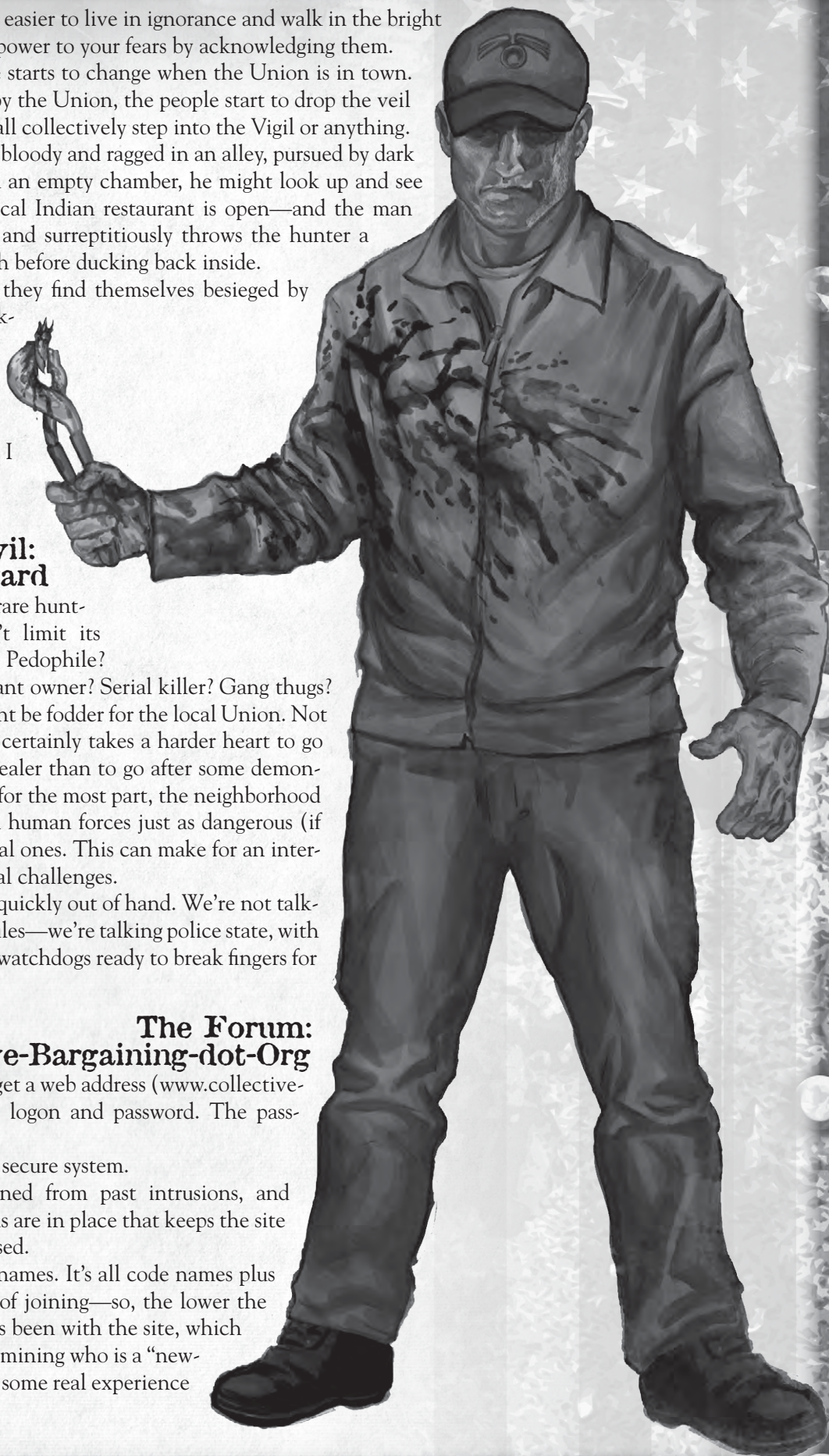
The Forum: Collective-Bargaining-dot-Org

You join the Union, you get a web address (www.collective-bargaining.org) and a secure logon and password. The passwords change weekly.

No, it's not a particularly secure system.

Thankfully, they've learned from past intrusions, and some non-technical safeguards are in place that keeps the site if not *safe*, then uncompromised.

First, they don't use real names. It's all code names plus numbers (organized in order of joining—so, the lower the number, the long a hunter has been with the site, which is a useful way of at least determining who is a "newbie" and who is a hunter with some real experience on and off the site).



UNEXPECTED IMAGES

For the most part, it's easy to imagine the Union as being a bunch of blue-collar folks in regular (or downtrodden) city neighborhoods.

It's not an untrue image. But it isn't always the case, either.

For one thing, Union hunters exist outside the cities, too. Small towns are perfect Union fodder. One or three Union cells might watch over a small town on the edge of the desert or mountains—one cell watches main street, another cell watches the badlands outside of town, and a third cell might hang out on the "other side" of the tracks with the truly destitute.

Also, yes, Union hunters tend to be blue-collar and often conservative, but the compact has a strong contingent of white-collar folks (lawyers who do *pro bono* work, whistleblower executives, local politicians) and liberals.

Second, no precise locations are discussed, at least, not on the board. Hunters are free to take discussions to email. A forum posting might suggest, "Vampire nest in the Northeast, got allies in the area?" or it might even say, "New York City" (a big enough area that it's hard to pinpoint useful information), but it won't give a neighborhood, a block, or a longitude/latitude.

Third, all forum posts are moderated. They do not go live until the cell that moderates Collective Bargaining (which rotates between a series of six cells—one of those cells is Holly Ramirez's original cell, which picked up the slack after her death in 2005) at least verifies that it doesn't seem to be a monster (or spam, which some hunters jokingly suggest is worse).

If the supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness end up on the site—so be it. They won't see anything truly incriminating. Plus, if they do anything to stand out, it might actually draw hunters to their door. The site in this way can occasionally serve as bait.

Advantages: More Than Monster-Hunting

The Union does more for their hunters than help them kill monsters.

Late on a mortgage payment? Union hunters might talk to the bank (or "talk" to the bank). They might take up collections. They might work with the local sheriff to forestall foreclosure.

Can't quite make ends meet? They might take up food collections. They might find a place for the hunters to stay.

They look out for each other. Broke a cell phone when tussling with some vampire slaves? They have a

box of old phones that'll keep you connected. Broke an *arm* in that fight? Here's the name of a doctor. Or maybe it's a veterinarian, but setting the leg of a border collie isn't that different from setting the hunter's leg, is it?

They take care of their own, but that's a pay-in, pay-out situation. You don't get to reap the benefits without giving back what you take. If a hunter is down on his luck but then gets back on the straight-and-narrow again, when the time comes *he'll* have to help others in the same way that they helped him. A Union hunter at any time better be ready to have guests, pay some money into a fund, or go break a mortgage lender's little pinky to let a hunter down the block keep his row home.

This system is generally local, but in times of plenty, they might send money or goods (or even hunters—whether to help hunt or just patch a leaky roof) to other neighborhoods or cities to make sure that other Union folk are taken care of.

They *do* help in the hunt, of course. Union resources go in a big pool, not dedicated to individual hunters. Ammo, weapons, information—it's all part of the pool. If John has ten bullets and Betty over there has none, then John better be willing to give up five of his bullets.

Some Union cells are more proactive about resources—they take down monsters and criminals, and "liberate" the resources of their enemies for themselves or for the neighborhood at large.

Factions

The factions within the Union each serve their own function within the compact.

Home First

Free Specialty: Streetwise (Names and Faces)

Well over half of all Union hunters are "Home Firsters." They take care of their neighborhood or town, and that's it. It's not even about killing the monsters. It's just about making sure they get out of town. Same with drug dealers, or sex offenders, or... well, anybody who doesn't belong. They've actually spun this into a successful grassroots campaign, too, outside the Vigil: the message there is, *take care of your own neighborhood, and that'll fix the world.*

Secret: You hate to see it, but this goes awry as often as it goes well. It isn't a far leap from Home First to xenophobia and moral crusades. They might also think they're playing Robin Hood, when really they're just



acting as another criminal organization—white power, gang thugs, or mafa men, all acting like they're doing it for the neighborhood. Power corrupts.

General Strike

Free Specialty: Politics (Campaigning)

The General Strike represents an active branch of the Union. Like Home First, they take on territory—but a cell's territory ceases to be physical and ends up as something altogether more abstract: *abused women, the health care industry, local politics*, etc. They go out and they seek to protect these abstract domains from mon-

strous corruption. That might mean infiltration, where they become a part of it, or work to undo a monster's influence through grassroots campaigning (helping get a corrupt company shut down, voting against a monster-puppet politician, working in women's shelters). Alternately, it might mean raw vigilantism: That monster-puppet politician catches a bullet. A corrupt company doesn't know that it has bombs in the ventilation ducts. Those monsters who prey on women don't realize that shadowy hunters exist who will crush their heads beneath steel-toe boots.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR UNION REP?

Here's one official role within the compact: Union Rep (Status ...). The Union Rep is a traveling hunter, and he has a rough "territory" that he watches over (the Northeast, Texas, California, the United Kingdom, etc.). It's his job to go around, hear complaints, see where people need help, offer money or ammo or other aid, and so forth. Most important, he's meant to be a jack of all trades: If one Union cell has a vampire problem, he better know some ways to solve it. If another cell lost members down a dark, neon-lit alley that wasn't there ten days ago, and isn't there now, then this guy better know how to get them back (or at least know people who know how to get them back-knowing people is another qualification of the Union Rep). Union Reps come in and join a cell for a period of time: maybe a week, maybe a month.

Secret: They have a little thing called the New Year's Revolution ready to rock. What is it? Well, a number of General Strike hunters have placed themselves in and around those monsters who have infiltrated the highest levels of society, as well as those humans who are slaves to those monsters. Come New Years Eve next year, the General Strike is going to assassinate anybody they can related to these conspiracies—up to and including the monsters themselves. No cover-up will be able to hide it. It'll expose monstrous corruption and send a very clear message. That is, if it isn't discovered beforehand.

Politicals

Free Specialty: Persuasion (Recruitment)

The name is a bit misleading. They aren't that political. What they are is the lunatic fringe of the Union. These homegrown militias see the world as under siege and held fast in the grip of constant oppression. Problem is, they see this oppression *everywhere*. Government, military, big business—it's all a broad conspiracy designed to keep people fat, stupid, and blissfully ignorant. They want war. They want to tear it all down: Every system, every company, every government and ruling body. They want to rise up; they think a little revolution is a good thing. To them, everybody in power is the moral equivalent to Hitler or Stalin.

Secret: These guys have encampments and headquarters all over the country. Their mini-militias have fenced-in compounds, gun caches, churches, you name it. It's from these locations that the Politicals want to wage their war.

Systems

Union Endowment: Your Friends and Neighbors (• to •••••)

Effect: The Union's weapons aren't the guns or baseball bats or car batteries. The weapons of the Union are right there in the neighborhood. A hunter who knows his neighborhood and knows its inhabitants is a hunter armed for war against the monsters. This Endowment ensures that to be true.

At the start of a game session, a hunter with this Endowment can choose *one* benefit for himself and his cell that will last the game session (though he can certainly carry it from session to session where appropriate):

- He can have a temporary Safehouse (pp. 70-71, **Hunter: The Vigil**) equal to the dots in this Endowment. He can split them however he wants across



the Safehouse sub-Merits (Cache, Secrecy, Size, Traps). This might be a neighbor's house, a business closed for remodeling or an old warehouse.

- He can have a Social bonus (equal to dots in this Endowment) with one local resident. He wants to use this bonus, though, he'd better be prepared to help that resident out in some way. Failure to do so means that not only can he not gain this benefit with that resident again, but it also means that dots in this Endowment become a Social *penalty* with that person until reparations are made.
- He can choose to have the dots in this Endowment become the Allies Merit for the game session, devoted to some aspect of local life (volunteer fire dept, PTA, guardian angels, local cops, local store owners, etc.).
- He can take the dots in this Endowment as a bonus to any Drive rolls made in this neighborhood (he knows how to time the lights, he knows all the shortcuts, he knows where the cops sit, etc.).

Bonus Material: Mapping the Neighborhood

Even if you don't have **Block By Bloody Block**, you can put a map of the neighborhood to good use in your **Hunter: The Vigil** game (it's great for Union games, but needn't be restricted to games involving that compact).

It works like this: get a map. It doesn't have to be the actual neighborhood unless you're a stickler for authenticity. Google Maps with both terrain and roadmaps turned on makes for a particularly useful view—you can print it out or use it on screen. (You can create your own custom maps in Google – see “My Maps.”)

At the beginning of the chronicle/story, it should be blank. However, assume that part of the game is a fact-finding exploratory goal. The characters have a task, and that task involves figuring out what monsters are where. What's safe, and what's not? With the “satellite view” on a Google Maps view, they can even take notes on individual buildings, coloring them green for safe, yellow for unsure, and red for “monster present.” They can use the pen to draw out territories—this is where the werewolves lurk, this is where the vampires hunt, etc.

The Storyteller is encouraged to have his own version of this map. He should have parts already figured out, and can even insert notes that detail one or two prominent modifiers found in that area: “No electricity, -2,” or “Sacred Ground, +2 to hunters, -3 to monsters.”

The hunters can even “take territory,” and mark it on the map. The Storyteller might then afford them bonuses.

What else to mark on the map? Where do the hunters live? Friends? Family? Any Safehouses? Well-traveled routes? Shortcuts?

If the Storyteller or player knows of story hooks, list them on the map. They know where they can go to pick up a new story.



THE RELIC HUNTERS AEGIS KAI DORU

This is a legacy, my son. A legacy that's been a part of us a lot longer than you think. From before the time of Christ. From before God spoke to Moses and Abraham, from before the meeting of Gilgamesh and Enkidu. In this world lurks evil-evil that works to undo the bonds of our humanity, and our very reality. Magic threatens to

bring us to the very edge of our existence. We mustn't let that happen. Magic can be ours as well, and that is how we push back the darkness. Magic settles, it hides in artifacts and objects. We rescue those artifacts from the hands of the manipulators and the shapechangers. And then we use these artifacts against them to destroy them. That's the vow. Will you speak it with me, now?

History's Labyrinth: Three Possible Truths

The truth behind the Aegis Kai Doru is muddy, at best. Here's a look at what might be the reality behind the history of the Guardians.

Option One: The Witch War

This is the version the Guardians hold to be true.

They call what happened the "Witch War," and it happened... well, let's just go with "several thousand years ago." It predates any of the Great Floods of myth.

Man was an enlightened creature, an elevated being capable of great magic. He dwelled in paradise: a now-sunken continent sometimes called Atlantis, sometimes called Lemuria, or Mu, or Eden or a thousand other names.

Of course, as is mankind's wont, humanity divided itself into factions. This was fine, initially—certain tasks were better suited toward certain individuals, and from this division of labor came harmony.

It didn't last. The forbears of the Aegis Kai Doru, the Guardians of the Labyrinth faction, were great artificers led by the *greatest* among them, Daedalus. The Guardians built and kept vigil over the Four Labyrinths: The Labyrinths of Crocodiles, of the Marsh, of the Isle and of the Tomb. It was the Labyrinth of the Isle, however, that was the biggest and strangest, and was both a vehicle for man's enlightenment and a prison for two ancient gods that had been trapped by the maze.

One was the Mistress of Honey, a seductress whose unliving body was home to a hive of golden bees. The other was Asterion, a massive man with the head of a horned bull. Prophecy demanded that these two be kept imprisoned. Were these two changers-of-shape freed, they would breed, and in breeding would give birth to a race of monsters that would cast the world into darkness.

Like all dreaded prophecies, it was bound to come true. The factions of men—witches, really—soon grew bitter and jealous toward one another. Much anger was pointed toward the Guardians of the Labyrinth, for they placed themselves as keepers of enlightenment and the artificers governing many objects of power.

War resulted, and tore paradise apart. Magic both wondrous and terrible carved great scars across the world—and it was not something the world could abide. The earth's mantle shuddered and cracked. Paradise cleaved. As a result, the Labyrinth of the Isle was shattered, and the Mistress of Honey and Asterion the Bull were loosed upon the world.

The factions, even as their world was collapsing, blamed the Guardians of the Labyrinth. They stole their magic. They cast them out.



Paradise fell. The Mistress and the Bull bred; the wretched races of the shapeshifters were born. The scions of those original factions fled, too, and to this day lord over their mad armies of witches who will stop at nothing to bring back their lunatic vision of paradise.

And that is why the Aegis Kai Doru battle the mages and the shapechangers.

Option Two: Ancient Identity Theft

Maybe it's not exactly a lie. Maybe that story happened mostly like the Guardians tell it.

Except, maybe the Guardians aren't who they say they are.

Maybe, just maybe, the *real* Guardians of the Labyrinth were cast out, like the story says. And it could be that they didn't survive out there in the darkness. Maybe the children of the Mistress of Honey and Asterion came and slaughtered them.

Or maybe an opportunistic tribe of lowly, non-magical humans crept out of the darkness and assassinated them while they slept.

What if, in paradise, all men were *not* created equal? What if all men weren't enlightened with the power to do great magic? What if some of humanity dwelled at the fringes, lit not by glorious lanterns, but instead framed in the guttering flames of a meager campfire?

Those "unenlightened" might club the real Guardians—or find their corpses.

They might steal their secret artifacts. And they might tell a story to their children as to how they came upon those artifacts—and the story damn sure doesn't include, "We bludgeoned someone to death and stole their treasures."

Which means that all these years, the Aegis Kai Doru are the children of a legacy, a legacy that is a total lie. If you believe this option, that is.

Option Three: Puppet Theater

The world is home to a number of factions that might like to see the mages and the werewolves dead and gone. The so-called "Pure" werewolves, perhaps. Or the Seers of the Throne. Or the Banishers. Or other hunter conspiracies.

Point is, pick one. One of them—or perhaps some alliance of several—has been yanking the chains of the Aegis Kai Doru for hundreds of years. It wouldn't be hard. Convince the children of dead hunters that their parents and descendents are part of something special,

OH, AND A FOURTH OPTION: THE AVES MINERVA

The Aves Minerva (p. 18, *Hunter: The Vigil*) are reportedly dead and gone. Some say that isn't true, that this group-or, its legacy-still exists in some form. (Night Stalkers posits that they're still around, existing as the Cainites).

Except, maybe their legacy is actually that of the Aegis Kai Doru. Sure, it's Roman instead of Greek, but those two civilizations shared quite a bit as far as mythology goes-and some of it makes a bit of sense. The Birds dwelled on the Aventine Hill, and beneath the hills of Rome were various catacombs and necropolises (hey, a *labyrinth!*). Minerva, or Athena, was both crafter and weaver. She invented the chariot. She had both spear and helmet. She had a serpent (once a child) in a *cista*, a box.

It might be true. It might not be true. We're just throwing it out there.

that they're the remnants of some "war of the witches," blah blah blah. Evidence can be faked. People want to believe; they're hungry to have purpose.

So, give them purpose. Wind them up. Set them to task with the legacy of revenge burning in their bellies. (Oh, and don't forget to hand them magical weapons—it gives them the edge, after all.)

The Athenian Hierarchy

Below, a discussion of the hierarchy found within the Aegis Kai Doru. These are not the only roles, but they are the predominant ones. It's safe to assume that a hunter of the appropriate Status is likely suitable for the role listed.

As an optional rule, the Storyteller can marry Status within the organization to the dots one is capable of possessing in the Relic Endowment. The hunter can have no single Relic whose dots are greater than dots possessed in his Conspiracy Status—a hunter with three dots in Status could have two Relics, each at three dots, but none at four.

The Panoply: The Inner Circle (Status+)

Above all others sits the Inner Circle—five women, four men. While membership in the Aegis Kai Doru is not necessarily a family affair, certainly many within the conspiracy *are* part of a lineage of some kind. They share the legacy with fathers, mothers, grandparents... which for some goes back centuries. The Inner Circle, on the other hand, *must* belong to this generational process, and must be able to evidentially show that at least five generations of their family have belonged to the conspiracy.

The Inner Circle members are not all Greek, though they do take up partial residence in Athens. They are

the monitors of a very comprehensive list of artifacts, and are the keepers of a trove of items whose power is unmatched and, in many cases, world-ending (such as the skeleton whose teeth chattering causes epic, city-swallowing earthquakes).

These nine hunters do not relinquish the Vigil. They are quite vigorous about the Hunt. Given the items they possess, their Vigil is actually quite ferocious—it's why the werewolves and witches of Athens quake, and why many have scattered toward the four corners.

These nine hunters are *also* fairly mad. Part of it is the drugs: the maze they walk is partly metaphorical. They imbibe potent natural hallucinogens (often before a hunt). Engaging the Vigil and the monsters in this way is a labyrinth of the mind and soul, they claim. Of course, rumors exist that they also walk a very real labyrinth, which is in fact *The Labyrinth*, below the isle of Crete and haunted by the bull-headed god.

Sagaris (Status)

The *Sagaris* is named after the Minoan double-headed axe (known also as the "Labrys") whose blades feature etchings of the Labyrinth of Crete. It's thought to be a representation of Zeus' lightning.

That image translates over to the tasks given to the *Sagaris*, as well. In effect, the *Sagaris* are meant to be the "epic heroes" of this relic hunter conspiracy. At this level, the hunters should be famed, even legendary, with a number of famous claims, monstrous kills and artifact rescues as part of their resumes. Think of a modern-day cross between Indiana Jones and Achilles, and you have a pretty good idea as to what the conspiracy expects of its *Sagaris* hunters. They *aren't* expected to live long and fruitful lives, mind.

Kopis (Status)

This role in the conspiracy is equated with the *Kopis*, the curved Greek sword that was equal parts "war blade" and "sacrificial knife."

The hunter filling this role is two things: local regent to all Aegis Kai Doru hunters, and judge of monsters.

The Kopsis serves as regional authority. The world is, by and large, divvied up into territories—some small as a single city, some comprising an entire state or geographical region (depending on its importance in the Vigil). The Kopsis is meant to shepherd and direct Guardian efforts in that region.

But that also makes the Kopsis a judge: he (or she—actually, quite a few in this role are female, as the Aegis Kai Doru places women’s wisdom above men’s) must examine the monstrous landscape and determine how best to put the conspiracy’s enemies to the test... and ultimately, to death.

Doru (Status ●●●)

The *Doru* is the spear of the Greek warrior—a critical weapon of some finesse.

And so it is with the hunters at this level of Status. They are elevated warriors and teachers—not one or the other, but necessarily both.

They’re meant to be good at what they do, though not operating at mythical levels. They’re capable fighters, shooters, but they also have written books, taught classes, and performed lectures.

Xiphos (Status ●●)

The short sword of the Greek soldier—the *Xiphos*—was a useful weapon, but thought to be a lesser one than the spear.

Those of this rate are, quite appropriately, between roles. They’re useful. They’re capable. Rising stars, perhaps. But they haven’t made a name for themselves. Few, if any, kills. Few, if any, direct artifact captures.

Like the short sword, they’re considered useful, but not yet *necessary*.

The goal of the *Xiphos* is ultimately to distinguish herself.

Aspis (Status ●)

The *Aspis* is the shield of the Greek warrior, and a critical part of a Greek soldier’s gear. That being said, the shields were sometimes heavy and often cumbersome, and they restricted movement.

So it is with those hunters who fall at this lowest echelon within the conspiracy. The *Aspis* is meant to be a student, yes, but he’s also meant to carry gear, to rush first into the fight, and to perform gutter tasks that no one else in the conspiracy wishes to perform.

They are tools, but sometimes burdensome ones. They are never allowed to go out on their own. This is not to say they don’t, and in some ways, such initiative is valued—if the *Aspis* survives.

Conspiracies

The Sword

Free Specialty: Occult (Identifying Magic)

The purview of this group is simple: destroy witches, destroy shapechangers, and that’s it. Mercy is not part of the equation. Martial abilities are paramount. Relics used are generally weapons: blessed swords, unholy axes, mystical Winchester repeaters, and the like. That’s not to say they’re mindless thugs; they’re not. Many are brilliant strategists. But their mission remains uncomplicated just the same.

Secret: Sure, the Sword talks a good game: find and kill the enemies, as per the vow. But what the higher-ups in this sub-conspiracy aren’t telling everybody is the *true purpose* behind all of this: they want their magic back. They were kicked out of paradise. They were forced to forget their magic. They want it back. Relics are all well and good, but they want the real deal, and they’ll stop at nothing in reclaiming it.

The Temple

Free Specialty: Crafts (Traps)

They catch a lot of flak as passive types. They are, but that’s their job. *Someone* needs to guard the Relics, don’t they? They’re damn good at it, too. Temple cells stand guard over a number of labyrinthine safehouses across the world, each a little cache of powerful (and not-so-powerful) Relics. It doesn’t mean they’re not martially capable, either. They monitor, they defend, and sometimes they have to kick some monstrous ass to keep their artifacts safe. Other hunters in the conspiracy would be wise to treat them kindly; they are the gatekeepers to some truly potent magical tools, after all.

Secret: Technically, everything they do is above-board. Their “temples” and “labyrinths” are all known by the other members of the conspiracy. Right? Wrong. The Temple keeps a number of hidden sites, caches where truly potent weapons are held, weapons that shouldn’t be in *anybody’s* hands—especially the hands of the militant Sword.

The Scroll

Free Specialty: Academics (Research)

The Scroll exists because somebody has to go into the heart of darkness and return with information. The Scroll is perhaps the smallest group within the conspiracy, but they’re also the most knowledgeable. They have to be. That’s their purpose: to catalog Relics, to map out monstrous territory, to keep a roster of mages and shapeshifters (*and* their weaknesses). And part of the fun is that they’re the ones who get to test out all the

newfound Relics—of course, that “fun” might involve losing limbs or erasing minds, but big fun comes with a big cost, doesn’t it?

Secret: They’ve gone soft. The Scroll, being the keepers of information, have learned that not every mage or werewolf presents a clear danger. In fact, some appear to be doing *good things* for the world. That changes everything. And so, like any good accountant, they fudge the numbers. Hell, they have *allies* amongst the monsters now (easier to get information that way). If the Sword ever finds out—it’ll be open war within the AKD.

New Relics

Below, a discussion of new Relics for the Aegis Kai Doru hunters. Take special note: each is a mystical severed head.

Barnabas-in-Amber (•••)

Fact: the Aegis Kai Doru have a thing for severed heads. They believe that the severed head contains the soul and wisdom of the body, and that death does not necessarily end the wisdom contained within. Yes, it is a locked door—but locks can be opened.

Fact: the Aegis Kai Doru sometimes *keep* the severed heads of their most prominent (usually Status •••••) hunters. Some of them end up as Relics. Some of them end up on shelves, catalogued *in case* they become Relics.

This severed head is of a prominent hunter from the pre-Revolution United States, an “Injun-hunter” named Barnabas Tuttle. Tuttle, a hunter for the Aegis Kai Doru, was a violent man, but he was no brute—rather, he was quite learned, and eventually developed a very keen sense for uncovering and understanding the ancient Relics of the native peoples (even if he did have to slaughter them to get a hold of such artifacts).

Barnabas was killed in the hunt, and scalped in the process. His fellow hunters sought to contain the wisdom that might dare flee his hacked cranium, and so they stitched the scalp back on, cut off his head, and preserved the head with a lacquer made of tar, honey, and herbs.

Cost: None directly, but any hunter who wields the head when it starts moaning will hear those moans in his sleep for eight straight nights—and, during those nights, he will not get a good night’s sleep (meaning no Willpower point gained upon waking).

Benefit: The Relic detects other Relics. Once the head gets within a mile of a Relic, it starts to moan softly. The closer it gets, the louder the moaning becomes. If it gets near (within 100 yards) of a very powerful Relics (four or five dots), the teeth start clacking together and the eyes start to roll.

The Beauty Jar (•••••)

Jayne Mansfield, buxom film starlet of the 50s and 60s, died in a horrible car crash when she was 34 years old. The car she was in hit a truck that itself was swerving to get out of the way of another truck spewing mosquito fogger. The story that says Mansfield was decapitated is supposedly a myth—but that the story is a myth is *itself* a myth, to cover up the fact that the head was stolen. Not by the Aegis Kai Doru, no—apparently by some mad doctor hoping to use her beautiful head in a Reanimated ritual as part of some undead bride. The Aegis Kai Doru did step in, however, and claim the head.

The head currently sits in a very large jar filled with brine. The face is ridiculously well-preserved, though the blonde hair is rotten and looks more like seaweed than anything else.

Cost: 2 Willpower, and the character will suffer a -5 penalty to all Drive rolls made while under the influence of the Beauty Jar’s power.

Benefit: To access the power afforded by this Relic, the hunter must drink one cup of the brine from the jar (don’t worry—it mystically produces more over the course of a few days). After doing so, the hunter gains the following benefits:

- The Fame Merit at three dots.
- The Striking Looks Merit at four dots.
- A removal of the Unskilled penalty when it comes to Social rolls

The hunter’s body becomes intensely attractive to others. Curves and muscles are accentuated; blemishes and marks fade. This benefit is semi-permanent, until the hunter kisses someone (below).

The hunter has one more benefit out of this, if you can call it that—she can end the effect (this is actually the only way to end it) by kissing someone. The kiss is profoundly foul. It tastes of bug repellent, decay, and brine. This poisons the relationship with that individual—both the hunter and that person share a -5 Social penalty with one another for the next month. It ends the Beauty Jar’s effects.

Bonus Material: The Ancient Vow Made Manifest

Let’s pretend for just a moment that the ancient vow that binds an Aegis Kai Doru hunter to the task of hunting werewolves and mages goes beyond ritual and spoken words.

Let’s pretend that it is a binding oath of some potency.

How might it work?

Walking the Maze

Depending on where the hunter is recruited into the Aegis Kai Doru, she might walk a very real maze (as some legacy Guardians have crafted real, dangerous mazes beneath their territories), or instead be made to walk a metaphorical maze (city streets can be coupled with hallucinogenic drugs). Some task lies at the end of the maze that must be performed: uncover the truth behind a cryptic Relic, perhaps, or destroy a not-so-captive witch or shapechanger.

Beginning this process, the hunter must sacrifice a Willpower dot.

Yes, a dot. The good news is, she gets it back once she completes the task and solves the maze. The bad news is, she *doesn't* get it back if she doesn't.

The Vow Itself

The vow must be spoken—sworn—by the hunter in question. The vow is likely long and lyrical, and may actually have parts spoken in Greek or Latin. It indicates the hunter's willingness to ceaselessly hound the shapechangers and witches of this earth, and to sacrifice himself if necessary in order to erase them from this world. It may also say something about recovering the lost mysteries (Relics).

Given that this is a conspiracy whose primary focus is the collection and use of ancient Relics, it would make sense that the vow must be sworn upon one to make it binding. (Not inappropriate, given the act of, say, swearing on a Bible in court.) That Relic might then be...

The Oath Stone (•••)

To take an oath is to take on a responsibility—and the ancient Greeks and Romans would sometimes invoke oaths and vows upon a stone at one of Zeus' tem-

ples. That stone was large; this one is not, and is actually only a small fragment of one of the primary "Iuppiter Lapis" stones found in the temple on Rome's Capitoline Hill. It fits in one's hand (Size 1). The stone has a small double-headed axe (*sagaris/labrys*) etched into it: a symbol representing one of Zeus' lightning bolts.

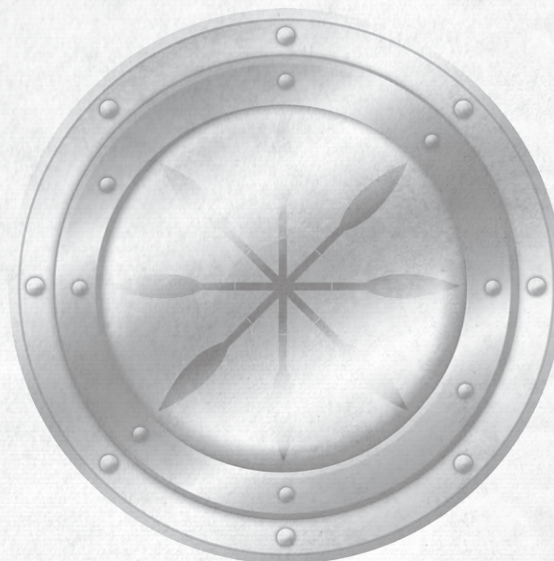
Cost: 1 point of lethal damage from both the target hunter and the hunter governing the oath-taking ceremony, with the blood spilled upon the stone

Benefit: Those who have sworn upon the stone gain benefits when pursuing Relics, or attacking mages and werewolves. Any roll made in effort to pursue a Relic gains a +1 bonus. Any roll made in effort to cause physical harm to a mage or a werewolf gains +3 dice (a reasonable bonus, but it pales in comparison to a shapechanger's raking claws and snapping jaws). At the Storyteller's discretion, a vow on the Oath Stone might also be necessary for the hunter to use Relics at all—it "unlocks" their magic.

Breaking the Vow

Breaking the vow—which likely means sparing the life of a witch or shapechanger—has ramifications. The Storyteller is encouraged to come up with some, but you may choose one or all of the following:

- Relics no longer work for the hunter. Their magical powers are inert in the hunter's hands. If the Relic has a "normal" function (a sword's ability to cut, for instance), then that function continues unabated; but any supernatural benefit is lost to the character.
- Attacks made against mages or werewolves now suffer a -3 penalty instead of a +3 bonus.
- Attacks made against the hunter by mages or werewolves gain +3 dice.



THE THRICE-GREAT ASCENDING ONES

The Rule of Threes: The 'Conflicted Conspiracy

The Ascending Ones is, in effect, three different conspiracies in one.

You have the occult mystics.

You have the monotheistic militants.

You have the drug traffickers and gang thugs.

Are these three faces of one conspiracy reconciled? Or is the only bond shared between them their understanding and ability in mixing and imbibing their strange Elixirs?

Three Voices in Harmony...

If you assume that the Ascending Ones have method to their madness, and that their three separate threads actually bind together in a single knot, then this is likely the approach you would take.

The lynchpin of the whole conspiracy is Hermes Trismegistus.

It's hard to say who Hermes Trismegistus really was—hermetic writings from the early millennium are attributed to him, and he was thought to be some manner of prophet combining the wisdom of the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth.

His writings were equal parts philosophy and alchemy—not inappropriate given the Ascending Ones' own approach, which handily marries those two elements.

"Trismegistus" means Thrice-Great, which is *also* appropriate to the Ascending Ones and their three different factions. How Hermes himself was Thrice-Great is a matter of some discussion—some believe it comes from the Emerald Tablets (purportedly written by him), where the three facets of the universe that must be mastered are alchemy, astrology, and ritual magic. Some say he was philosopher, priest, and king. (Others still point to the earliest three-fold epithet of Thoth, which was Thoth the great, Thoth the great, and... yes, Thoth the great.)

Fascinating enough, Hermes Trismegistus earns points from nearly all religious sources. The occult and pagan tradition honors him for his magical wisdom. Gnostics honored him as being a wise pagan and an early prophet in the tradition of Moses. Islamic tradition sometimes calls him Idris, believing him to be a hero, a mathematician and an alchemist (math and science have very clear origins in the Islamic world).

All of this is bound together in the Priscia Theologica, the notion that a single theology exists with many faces.

So, the Ascending Ones—who put forth three different approaches to the hunt—come together in accepting that these many notions are bound together in the figure that is Hermes Trismegistus. The occult faction accepts him as teacher of magical tradition. The militant monotheists honor him as being a prophet who foresaw the coming of their respective

The biggest question I am asked is, why do we do this? Why is it that we ask for poisons to enter our bodies—snake venom, fish toxins, deadly spores—and beg for these poisons to go against their nature, in effect asking the scorpion not to sting the frog? Why is it that we walk among the demons and the feeders and seek to understand them before attempting to destroy them? We do this because it is holy. We do this because it is what the many faces of God require us to do. Think of the bodhisattvas of Buddhist tradition—they forestall their own enlightenment to guide those around them. That is what we do. We are the great sacrifice. Our bodies are temples ruined in the name of justice. The faces of God have asked us in one strong voice to save others, and not ourselves, to be the hidden line between the darkness and the light. How can we resist that call?

religions. And the drug dealers and gang thugs first recognize his contribution to alchemy (and thus, in a way, narcotics) as well as it being some generally cool shit to get tattooed across your pecs or shoulder blades.

Why then, the Vigil? Why not just be a mystical-religious order? The answer lies potentially in the syncretism of Thoth and Hermes: both gods were gods of wisdom, but were also thought to be psychopomps, guiding souls to the afterlife—and so, with the Vigil, the Ascending Ones help to move humanity safely toward a sacred state or help shuttle the monsters to the afterlife.

...Or Three Cacophonous Songs

Then again, maybe it isn't so well-forged. Maybe the three factions within the conspiracy don't really communicate, and don't really play well together. Maybe the drug dealers are mostly selfish. Maybe the mystical and the monotheistic continue to glare at one another with suspicious eyes. Maybe the loose threads of alchemy and the Vigil are enough to keep this conspiracy from plunging into violent civil war... but not enough to stop them from engaging in a covert "war of undoing" against one another.

The Truth, Between

Likely, the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Yes, the conspiracy has these strong threads that bind it into a knot, but it doesn't mean that everybody's on the same playing field. They get along, grudgingly, and they understand one another's roles, but that doesn't mean it's all smiles and handshakes.

The Ascendant Hierarchy

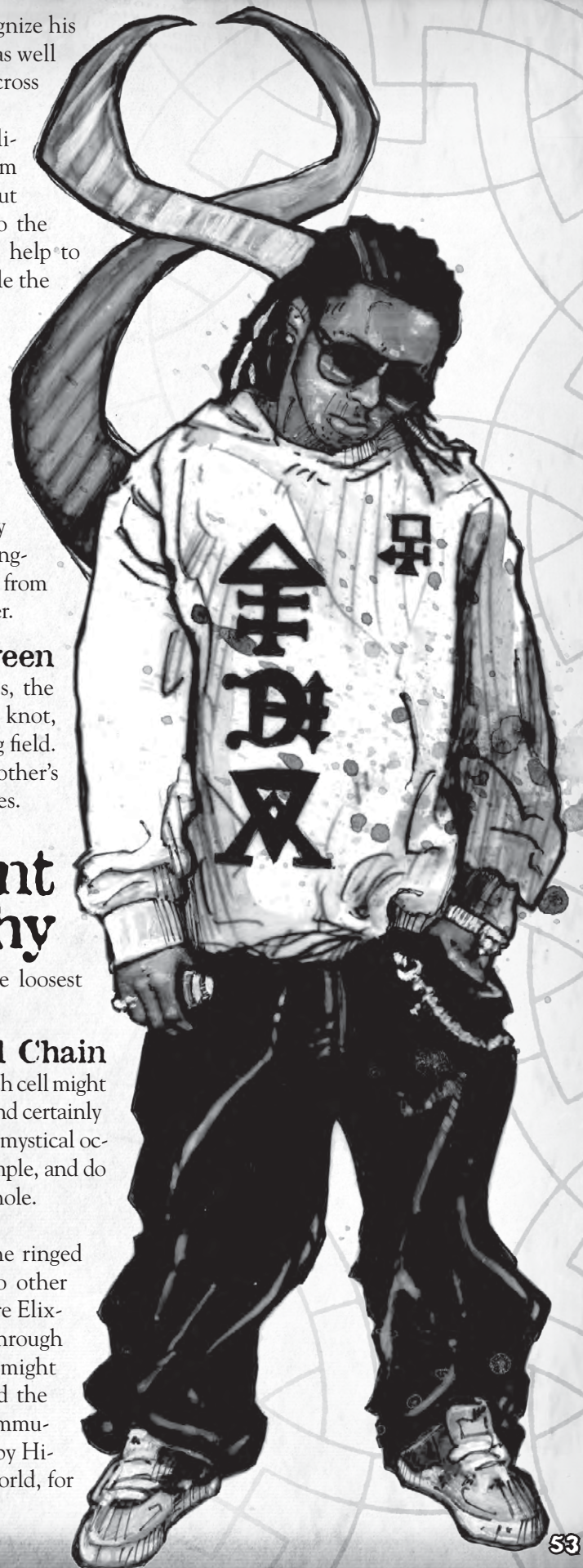
The hierarchy of the Ascending Ones is likely the loosest among all the conspiracies.

The Ringed Chain

The Ascending Ones effectively have no hierarchy. Each cell might have its own way of establishing leadership and function, and certainly the members of the Southern Temple hold a whole host of mystical occult "ranks"—but those ranks are within the Southern Temple, and do not hold any governance over the Ascending Ones as a whole.

So, how does it function as a conspiracy?

The Ascending Ones operate in what they call "the ringed chain." Each Ascending One cell is connected to two other cells. They share information with these cells. They share Elixirs with them. They pass warnings down the chain through these two other cells. The Alistair Hayyan cell (A) might communicate with the Black Bridge Kings cell (B) and the Aurelium Occultae cell (C). The Black Bridge Kings communicate with Alistair Hayyan's cell and maybe a cell lead by Hiram Fortunato (D). That's it. That's the limit of their world, for



the most part. Nobody commands them to do what they do. But they have a “ring” of information and wisdom.

Generally, the connections are somewhat local—the two cells one is connected to are often the most local Ascending Ones, though this isn’t universally true.

Given that they have no dominant authoritative structure, the Ascending Ones don’t frown on their members joining mixed cells, even if those cells feature other hunters. Those hunters do not have the wisdom of Hermes Trismegistus, and will not be able to transubstantiate the poisonous Elixirs in their bodies. The “secrets” of the conspiracy really aren’t that secret—in fact, their knowledge base stretches across countless mystical books, both revealed and hidden.

The Real Ascending Ones

The Ascending Ones generally accept that Hermes Trismegistus was a mystical prophet in the tradition of many of the world’s prophets: Ezekiel, Mani, Moses, Christ, Mohammed, and so on.

It didn’t end with Hermes. Prophets must always continue to be born, acting as a mouthpiece for the sacred truths and the conditions of the world around them.

The Ascending Ones—self-focused as they are, as most groups are—believe that the world’s new prophets come from within their ranks. They are born, not made, though they are rarely recognized at such an early point. And, as it always is, the labeling of a prophet comes with a host of complexities: religious disagreements, violent responses, disavowals, zealotry.

Those who are labeled prophets find their Status within the organization jumps to five dots, though this doesn’t equate to an “easy life.” They’re held under the microscope. They find themselves with as many rabid followers as ceaseless foes. Their every word and action is interpreted to reflect already-revealed truths, or misconstrued entirely.

They call these prophets (appropriately enough) the Ascended Ones. Many exist at a given time, and these prophets are expected to work together and communicate, forming an “inner ring” of shepherds at the core of the conspiracy. These prophets help to set the agenda and tenor of the conspiracy going forward.

The Factions

Order of the Southern Temple

Free Specialty: Occult (Alchemy)

Mystics. Hermits. Academics. The occult tradition is strong among those who call the Southern Temple home—so much so, in fact, that they often eschew other abilities and teachings to focus on the “magical traditions” put forth

by Hermes Trismegistus. This faction is home to a number of uncommitted Ascending Ones (meaning, those hunters who have not strengthened their bodies against the poisoning Elixirs); such hunters serve the conspiracy in a supplementary capacity without ever really learning many of the group’s secrets. The term “Southern Temple” is thought to refer to a number of hidden underground temples kept by the conspiracy (inferring “down” from “South”). These temples are repositories of wisdom accumulated by the faction: The temple walls serve as the conveyor of history and truth, with hunters endlessly carving newfound knowledge into the temple structure.

Secret: Starting on p. 310 of **Hunter: The Vigil**, you’ll find information on The Reanimated, which are another version of the monsters found in **Promethan: The Created**. Why do we bring this up? Well, these golems and Frankensteins are animated by the power of ancient alchemical surgeries put forth by purportedly extinct Demiurge ritualists. Old forgotten texts still hold the secrets to such reanimation, however, and the Order of the Southern Temple just so happen to be in possession of these texts. They found them only recently, and they have the idea to create a number of Reanimated “hunters” to assist them on the Vigil. Much as the golem is a clay-faced creature of vengeance, these “automatons” will do the bidding of the conspiracy’s alchemists. Good luck with that, guys.

Knife of Paradise

Free Specialty: Academics (Religion)

The Southern Temple provides the alchemy. The Jagged Crescent (see below) tests that alchemy and, more importantly, brings in the money that fuels that conspiracy. So what about the Knife of Paradise? Well... they’re the hunters: the *real* hunters, the ones who kill in the many names of God. Thing is, that’s just what’s on the surface. The hunters of the Knife of Paradise are also merciful, regardless of their militant pose. They’re the ones who first try Sulha, the diplomacy of monsters. They’re the ones who seek to enlighten the monsters and bring them to God (admittedly, often before ending their lives or unlives). For all their martial posturing and conservative attitudes, they are often quite intelligent and capable of great feats of social maneuvering.

Secret: The rumors are true. They have reformed terrorists among their number. Not just Islamic jihadists—but radical Christian fundamentalists, too, as well as Israeli hardliners. Many of these individuals have CIA training. They’re not fundamentalists, hardliners and terrorists anymore—at least, not for their respective religions. They keep a low profile, because even within the conspiracy such intensely zealous belief can get one ostracized. Worse, it might draw attention from the other hunter groups if such information were discovered.

Jagged Crescent

Free Specialty: Streetwise (Territory)

This faction has two sides. One side—the majority of hunters within it—carry the Vigil and talk up all this mystical stuff because, frankly, it's sort of bad-ass. It's some tough shit to lay on a monster (or a gang thug competitor) before you send him back to Hell. The other side, the minority, recognizes that the Jagged Crescent is a tool—just as a scythe harvests corn, the crescent harvests money and gains recruits for the overall mission. Doesn't matter if most don't understand it. The scythe needn't understand its purpose beyond the cutting of corn, and so the soldiers of the Jagged Crescent don't need to see the big picture, either. As long as competent hands hold the tool, all is well.

Secret: The faction certainly has some dark secrets that could get it into deep trouble—the group has secret hands in the Afghani opium trade as well as the opium and meth trade of Myanmar. The really *fucked up* secret, though, is that they have a new drug on the street, and it comes from the Underworld, capital 'U.' They enter the dark recesses of the Underworld using old alchemical Elixirs in order to harvest the strange *ofrendas* and fungi that grow down in there. They then distill the stuff into powerfully addictive drugs—even a dusting of this stuff in a line of coke or a joint will engender a potentially endless addiction. Not to mention the other... side effects.

New Elixirs

What follows are three new Elixirs available to Ascending One characters.

Red Resin (•)

The monsters hide. Most look like humans. Many look like shadows or, worse, are invisible. With this thick, toxic resin—comprising the dark sap of the *dracaena* tree or rattan palm coupled with the toxic mercurial ore *cinnabar*—the hunter can survey the room and identify the monsters on sight.

The resin is a greasy clump of vermilion powder. It can be placed between the gum and lip, but usually, a hunter smokes it in a pipe or rolled in a cigarette. The smoke is slightly toxic to those nearby—anyone within five yards breathing in the acrid smoke finds their eyes watering and suffers slight dizziness, taking a -1 penalty to all rolls for the remainder of the scene.

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character goes blind for a number of turns equal to ten minus his Elixirs score.

Failure: The character feels giddy and dizzy for the remainder of the scene, suffering a -1 to all Mental and Social rolls.

Success: The hunter can see all the monsters within sight—they are outlined by a tinge of red light that only the hunter can see. Even entities hidden in Twilight are exposed. It does not identify the nature of these creatures, however—only their monstrousness. One exception exists: if a monster has a Morality (or equivalent score) of 8 or higher, the Red Resin fails to note them. This ability lasts for one scene.

Exceptional Success: The hunter can also tell what kind of monster it is.

Agora Salve (•••)

Those who engage in *Sulha*, or diplomacy and peacemaking with the monsters, sometimes need a little edge when it comes to speaking. The Agora Salve can be that edge. (*Agora* infers “public places,” and also refers to a “place of assembly” in classic Greece.)

By mixing dried vampire's blood with gold flake and the hunter's own blood, it creates a gooey unguent that can be used to coat the hunter's tongue and affect his words.

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character goes mute and his tongue feels fat and useless in the mouth, like a dead slug. The effect lasts until he can sleep for eight hours.

Failure: The character feels profoundly fatigued, and must make Wits + Stamina rolls to stay awake every minute (reflexive). This lasts for one scene.

Success: The hunter speaks, and when he does, his words are slow, monotonous, and calming. He gains a bonus equal to his dots in the Elixir Endowment to all Social rolls, and during this time, he may not be attacked by *anybody* (monster or human) unless he attacks them first. This lasts for a number of minutes equal to successes gained on this roll.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the hunter regains a point of Willpower.

Thoth's Whisper (•••••)

Thoth—one of the gods believed to have inspired Hermes Trismegistus—was a psychopomp, a shuttler of souls from the world of the living to the afterlife. This Elixir, in a way, helps the hunter to facilitate that transfer, giving her the chance to “inhale” a ghost into the temple of her flesh so that the ghost may be “borrowed and used.”

The very process of doing so is frightening to most—the mixture required is a potent concoction of homemade gunpowder, crystallized snake venom, and potassium chloride salt (used in lethal injections). The hunter ignites this, and quickly inhales the resultant flame into his lungs. As he does so, the hunter is likely to hear a chorus of babbling whispers from beyond the pale.

Action: Instant



Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character burns his esophagus. He takes five points of lethal damage.

Failure: The character enters a death-like trance for the remainder of the scene whereupon he experiences intense hallucinations and visions. The hunter cannot move without expending a Willpower point—and even that only earns her one turn of movement and wakefulness.

Success: The hunter is primed to “inhale” a ghost. The next manifested ghost the hunter meets can be drawn into her body with naught but a whispered entreaty to do so (the wording of the whisper is up to the hunter). No roll is necessary beyond the one made to process this potent Elixir.

The ghost is drawn into the character’s lungs and lurks there for 24 hours. During this time, the hunter gains a handful of benefits:

- The hunter gains use of one of the ghost’s Numina. The roll to use the Numina is Wits + Resolve.

- The hunter knows all there is to know about the ghost—at least, as far as the ghost can remember. Whatever the ghost knows, the hunter now knows.

- The hunter may enter the Underworld freely at any Avernian Gate (i.e. a subterranean gateway into the Great Below).

- By spending a Willpower point, the hunter may manifest any Skills that the ghost possesses but that the hunter himself does not possess. This lasts for one scene, and the only drawback is that the hunter suffers a -1 penalty to any rolls using this new ghost-bound Skill.

After 24 hours, the ghost is expelled from the body (and may never be drawn into the hunter’s flesh again). The hunter can keep the ghost in his body, however, beyond that time frame—however, choosing to do so earns him one point of aggravated damage. His body is wracked with pain and internal

bleeding as the ghost is trapped for another 12 hours. Each 12 hour period after this guarantees the hunter another point of aggravated damage.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the hunter can lay claim to two of the ghost's Numina for his own use, now.

Bonus Material: The Djinn

Nobody knows who the Djinn really are, or *what* they are. Frankly, even the Djinn themselves don't have an answer—or, if they do, they're damn sure not telling.

The Djinn are largely invisible (i.e. existing in a state of Twilight), and they might be demons, fallen angels, spirits, ancient ghosts, or any number of occult entity.

The Ascending Ones go to the Djinn not usually to hunt them (though sometimes a Djinn goes mad and must be destroyed), but to make deals with them. A host of mystical and alchemical secrets remain hidden, and the Djinn seem to know these secrets when they must be known. Such secrets aren't free, though.

Systems

Below, the systems that govern the Djinn:

- Djinn are quite powerful. Choose Physical, Social, or Mental—the Skills *and* Attributes in this governing category can go to 10 dots. Skills and Attributes in the other categories go only to five dots.

- Djinn usually are invisible. While invisible, they're impervious to most harm, unless it's a source of damage that harms entities in Twilight (such as ghosts or demons).
- However, a Djinn can manifest once per day as an animal, for one full scene. This animal can speak in the tongue of the listener. While in an animal form, the Djinn gains all the stats of that animal, and can be killed by sources of lethal or aggravated damage. It takes one turn and no roll to make the transition from Djinn to animal, or animal to Djinn.

- Djinn can also manifest bodies made out of surrounding debris and items—newspaper, sand, gravel, locusts, etc. This body cannot be harmed by anything but fire.

- Once every 100 years, a Djinn creates another like itself—a “child.” This child has the same traits as the parent, though, given free will, is likely to develop a different personality.

- The Djinn do not travel or work together. In fact, outside of their “children,” they appear to have great disdain for one another. Demons also seem to loathe them.

- They aren't found in any one location. The Djinn are everywhere.

- Djinn are governed by one Virtue and one Vice—almost to the exclusion of all others.

The Bargain

The Djinn are a good “R&D” means to learn new Elixirs, but they can also give information regarding a host of supernatural information.

Getting that information, however, is rarely easy. A hunter has two ways of getting information out of a Djinn:

First, make a bargain. Djinn always want tasks performed. These often strange and difficult tasks seem to have little purpose and are often rather odd (assassinate a cab driver, steal a golden scarab from the museum and melt it down, introduce an invasive species into the ecosystem). Each event *seems* to harness chaos theory, knocking over a line of dominoes that leads to dramatically good or evil results (Djinn are known to be both at once).

Second, push the Djinn to the brink of destruction. By almost killing the Djinn, the Djinn will seek to spare its own life by giving up a piece of crucial, desired information.



HEADHUNTERS AND THE CHEIRON GROUP (IN) HUMAN SERVICES

Welcome to the Field Projects Division!

Cheiron's FPD is home to two unique types of hunters, hunters not found within the other conspiracies. The first, which we'll discuss here, is the *headhunter*.

Every company has headhunters, i.e. those corporate recruiters who round up new talent for the company, wrestling them away from other organizations whenever necessary. Cheiron's headhunters are different in that they're aware of the nature of the World of Darkness, are cognizant of the existence of other monster hunters, and often themselves possess Thaumatech Endowments grafted onto (or into) their bodies.

In other words, they hunt the hunters.

Cheiron, through its recruiters, look for one of two types of employees (and make no mistake, hunters within this conspiracy are considered employees):

The Talent (or The Wheat)

Comprising about 20% of the "new hires" into the Field Projects Division, these are those hunters that are considered to be truly gifted at what they do. They've been on the Vigil, and they've shown a canny ability to kill monsters and not get dead in the process. They are leaders. They are thinkers. They are killers.

A headhunter is encouraged to do whatever it takes to recruit such an individual, and that approach almost universally begins with increasing offers: nice car, big salary, lots of benefits and nifty vacation packages, and so on. If the hunter refuses recruitment, the offer grows bigger and bigger—

And if the answer is *still* no, the honey is replaced with stinging vinegar. The Cheiron Group is like a spurned lover: it'll get aggressive. It'll make passive, and eventually *active* threats against friends and family. Its agents will endeavor to undo the good work one has done while carrying the Vigil. And when those attempts are thwarted, the FPD isn't averse to tranquilizers or Tasers—the hunter will learn what his rejection has cost him when he wakes up on the hospital table.

Once recruited, these hunters always receive high-quality (and often high-dot) Thaumatech Endowments.

The Troops (or The Chaff)

And now, the rest of the FPD's hunters, which amount to a good 80% of the new recruits. Working for the Field Projects Division is messy business. It isn't pleasant, and it's very easy to get dead. Hence, the conspiracy requires quite a lot of cannon fodder—it may seem cliché, but not everybody is expected to return, and Cheiron prepares for that inevitability by stocking its FPD cells with a high volume of expendable agents.

Hey. Wake up. Hi. I'm your handler. The drugs aren't out of your system yet, but they will be soon—we have exceptional meds here. The bed comfortable? The music soothing? I know, the walls have a Pepto Bismol thing going on, and there's been some discussion about that because we don't even make Pepto Bismol. Somebody probably got fired for that. No, no, don't worry about your arm. It's under that cloth for a reason. I know, it feels like it's... moving. Like it's full of insects. That's natural. Well. No. It's normal. That's what I mean to say. Normal. You'll be up and at 'em soon enough. The rest of the team is eager to meet you. I know, first assignment already, can you believe it? Corporate life moves pretty fast... surely you know that coming from Accounts over at Mencken & Smithwick? I'm very excited. This is going to be a fun day. Are you ready?

Cheiron isn't quite as judicious when headhunting the shock troops—if they can hold a gun and work a hypodermic, so be it. If these hunters do receive Thaumatech, it's usually of lower quality (see “Scraps,” pp. 202-203, **Hunter: The Vigil**) or of lesser dots (one or two dots).

Cheiron cares little for these hunters. It works them hard. It tries to own them outright, getting as close to “indentured servitude” as possible (*we saved your life, we gave you purpose, we could kill your daughter at any time, don't forget we own the twitching creature wrapped around your still-beating heart*).

That's not to say those of this echelon can't move up. Cheiron may be tangled in its own corporate culture, but it's also charitable with promotions when someone from the shock troops proves herself more “cannonball” than “cannon fodder.”

(This “sub-tier” of the Cheiron Group can make for an interesting disposable play-style: each player creates three to five Cheiron hunter scrubs very quickly, with the expectation that they're going to die. One dies, move to the next character. Replaceable agents. Chaff instead of wheat.)

The Cell: Building Blocks of the Cheiron Organism

No, really, it's in the manual: Cheiron compares a cell of agents within its organization to a human cell within the body of an organism.

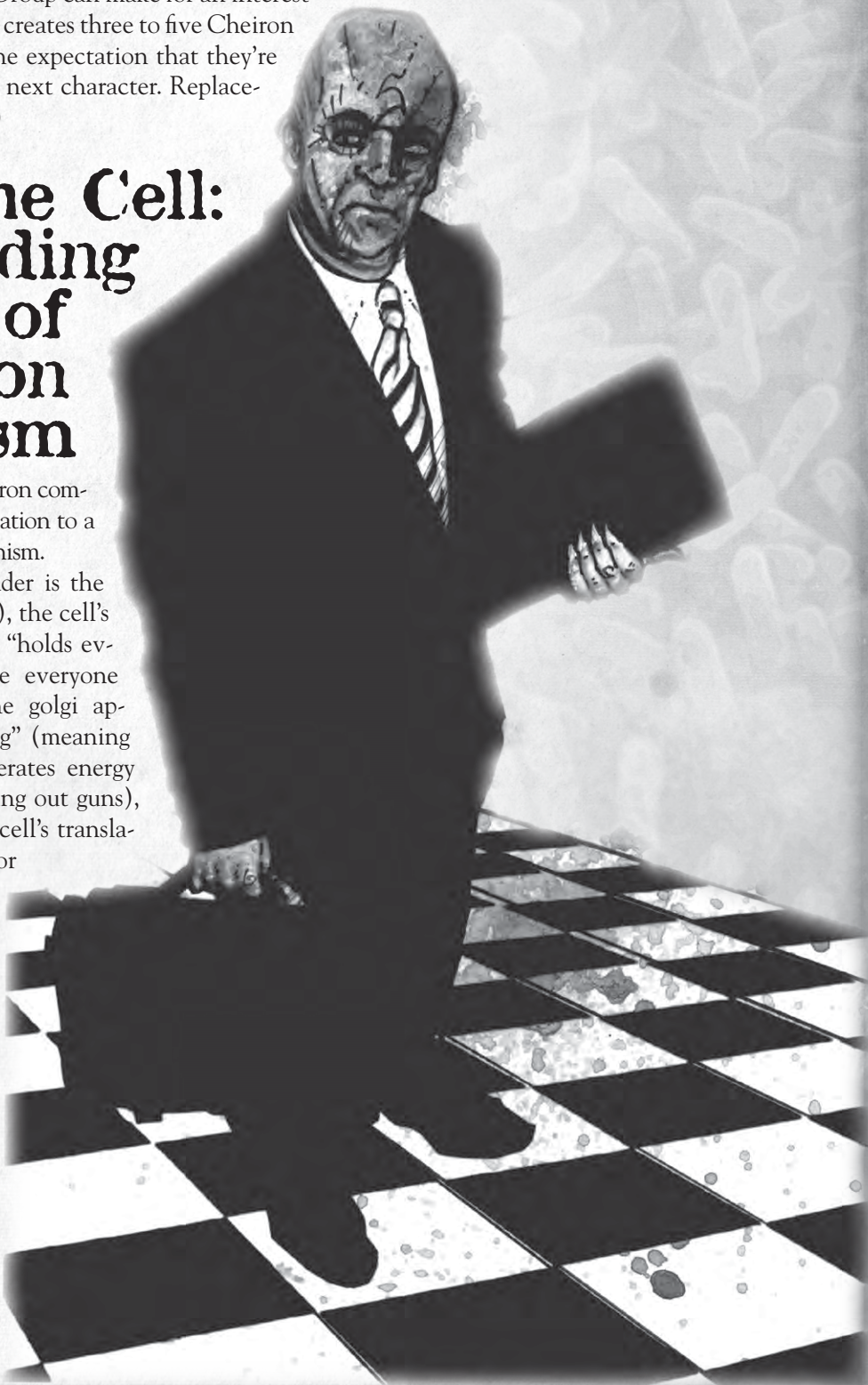
They get into specifics: the leader is the nucleus (the nerve center, the brain), the cell's handler the membrane (because he “holds everything together”). They compare everyone else to the various organelles—the golgi apparatus is responsible for “packaging” (meaning harvesting), the mitochondria generates energy for the cell (boosting morale, handing out guns), the endoplasmic reticulum is the cell's translator (helping communicate to FPD or helping liaise between monsters and Cheiron), and so on.

The reality is that the leader and the handler are the talent, and the other hunters in the cell are workers. They have a job, and they damn well better do it lest the cell fall apart.

Most hunter cells are five-man teams. For specialized affairs, they stack on additional five-person cells.

The Handler: Keeping the Cell Together

The *handler* is the second type of unique hunter in the conspiracy, next



CLAMS, BUCKS, CHITS, DUCATS: THE FPD SALARY

How much does the Cheiron cell hunter make, salary-wise? (Note that this needn't jive with Resources—one can make a ton of money and spend it, which could negate the actual dots in the Resources Merit to some degree.)

Status	Salary	Benefits
•	\$50,000	Full health package, no vacation
••	\$60,000	As above, 1 week of vacation
•••	\$100,000	As above, 2 weeks of vacation, \$1K bonuses per harvested organs or acquired targets
••••	\$250,000	As above, 4 weeks of vacation, \$2K bonus, company car, corporate spending account
•••••	\$1 million+	As above, 6 weeks of vacation, use of company jet, major executive compensation plans, and other unlisted "benefits"

(Note that nowhere does it say anything about "retirement benefits," though death benefits do exist for all hunters—their families are given recompense.)

Handlers and headhunters are usually three dots and above. Headhunters get signing bonuses for each target they recruit; handlers get performance reviews based on the utility of their given cells.

to the headhunter. Reality is, whether existing as the wheat or the chaff, many hunters view Cheiron as the lesser of two evils—still evil, just not as evil as the monsters. It means that hunter cells frequently buck orders and go off-grid.

Hence, the need for a handler. The handler is the liaison between hunter cell and hunter conspiracy. He favors Cheiron's needs, but good handlers recognize the need to throw a bone toward the cell now and again and will at least *pretend* to be working on their behalf.

The handler is a significant role. It might sound like "babysitter," and it is, but babysitting a handful of juiced-up Thaumatech FPD agents is no small task. It requires a robust and capable agent—which means that the handler is often of a far greater skill level than the actual leader of the cell itself.

Most handlers are, well, hands-on. They go into the field. They develop a rapport with the agents by kicking ass and harvesting werewolf glands alongside the others. Some, though, govern at a distance. They keep watch. They stay above the fray. They may never even meet the cell they're handling.

Not every cell has a handler. Cells proven in the field *and* proven in loyalty will often find that their handler visits them less and less, until eventually they're allowed a surprising level of autonomy. Of course, truly savvy cells *know this*, and then slip the leash just as the collar loosens.

Freelancers

Cheiron will hire freelancers, yes. Freelancers are paid per task (or harvested item, or acquired creature).

They get no benefits. No salaries. And, more significantly, they receive no Endowments, nor do they have access to them.

Freelancing is one way "into" the company—and it's also a way for a first tier hunter cell to pick up a little scratch. Cheiron operates above and beyond the traditional corporate model, and so it's quite likely that the freelancers don't even know for whom they work.

The Secret History of Cheiron Group

The Cheiron Group is a modern corporation only in name and organization—the roots of the company go far deeper, stretching back millennia. The company's done its best to squash those instances where some intrepid group of archaeologists goes digging around and finds a Grecian urn or a cave painting featuring the Cheiron corporate logo. Not only do they hope to stifle those conspiracy theories that continue to arise, but they also hope to keep the majority of the corporate workforce ignorant, too. Cheiron's reach is wide; the corporation owns two dozen other companies (on the books). That represents a tremendous workforce that would jump the fence if it became aware of the truth. So, what is the truth, exactly?

The Logo Has Power

It's why they haven't changed it. They could've just changed the logo long ago to refute conspiracy theorists. They haven't, because the symbol provides the company with power. What kind of power?

They don't know for sure. What they do know is, discussions began regarding a change of the logo about 15 years ago. Stocks tumbled. The Board of Directors were not happy. Those who spearheaded the "new logo design" suffered a series of unfortunate accidents and illnesses. The Board clearly doesn't want it changed, and it seems possible that the logo's power is bound inextricably to the health of the company.

Board of Directors

They're human. Their roles aren't permanent. New Board members have come, old ones have gone. So, what's the problem? Why the conspiracies surrounding them?

The truth remains hidden, but elements have been uncovered by intrepid hunters and monsters:

- Board members have collections of strange artifacts from no known age of man: brass statues of spider-creatures, sculptures made of impossible materials such as spider-silk or unmelting ice crystals, painted works depicting great torment.
- Some hunters and monsters have had dreams of a Board consisting of ten truly alien creatures: pillars with eyes, piles of pink flesh, monstrous gray giants hidden behind walls or dark clouds.
- Evidence has leaked of something called a Primary Development Plan. The corporate babble, translated, seems to indicate that it's some kind of "colonization" project.

Departments

Below are further descriptions of the departments within FPD.

Retrieval

Free Specialty: Medicine (Amputation)

Most of the expendable "scrub" hunters in the conspiracy end up here. They get clumsy paramedic training and learn how to cut off parts of monster bodies. This department has a high turnover rate, what with its members getting killed so damn often. Of course, the members here also have the most powerful and obvious Thaumatechnology—they're the ones field-testing this stuff, after all. It should be noted that, when retrieval



YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH

...Okay, maybe you can. If you want the "truth" about what's going on in Cheiron, here it is:

The Board of Directors aren't human, though they mimic human beings (different individuals over time, so it looks proper).

They are from a parallel place, some alternate version of this world. Hunters of this conspiracy have been around for thousands of years, knowingly or unknowingly hunting the creatures of darkness and offering them up as sacrifices to the Board of Directors—an eternal harvest.

But why? Depends on what you want in your game. Consider two options:

One: The Board represents alien evil. They have come to this world because they've bled the last one dry. And the one before that, and the one before that. Their ultimate goal is to manifest here permanently. Harvesting the creatures of darkness gives them power—the greater the harvest, the closer they get to occupying this plane of existence.

Two: The Board represents an alien Vigil. They come from a world that has been ravaged by the depredations of darkness, and so they escaped here. They see that this world is tumbling toward its own darkness, and so they seek to amass power that is used in such a way to turn the tide of darkness and exploit the monsters in order to elevate humanity. (And, if they turn a tidy profit in the process, so be it.) They're hunters. They're just not human, and may not be exactly sane.

cannot retrieve a particular body part or organ, they are instructed to bring the whole damn creature in—many cells default to this, accepting that it's just easier to let the doctors do the cutting (though that also means the hunters'll get a cut in pay or no bonus).

Secret: Sometimes, Retrieval bags a very big prize indeed, and such is the case of the ancient vampire known as Zagreus. Zagreus came in willingly, and Cheiron isn't asking the most important question: *why* did this ancient liar with limitless power come strolling up to a novice team in the field and allow himself to be taken?

Recruitment

Free Specialty: Subterfuge (Corporate Double-speak)

Recruitment is where you find most of the head-hunters and handlers—Cheiron considers Recruitment a very valuable department, and pumps a perhaps inordinate amount of funding into it. Its hunters are usually well-off, with lots of corporate amenities.

Secret: Guess what FPD is working on for Recruitment? Emotion-control Thaumatech implants. Think about it—got a prize hunter on the hook, but he won't commit? Tweak his emotions. Make him feel happy. Have him associate positive feelings with Cheiron's efforts. Ding! Another one in the stable.

Field Research

Free Specialty: Science (Experimentation)

These are the "spies" of Cheiron—they go out into the field, they join other hunter cells (or compacts, or

conspiracies), they sometimes even join up with the monsters (as vampire thralls, werewolf brood-mares, witch assistants). They go deep cover. They steal information. They steal technology. They take blood from sleeping vampire domitors, they steal books from the Loyalists, they get DNA samples from the demon-possessed.

Secret: They hire monsters on the sly. This department is home to a not-inconsiderable contingent of actual creatures—vampires in particular, though it also features a number of up-and-coming witches—who can truly go deep cover. Do they give them Thaumatech implants? On the books, no. But that's just the books.

Thaumatech Endowments

Optic Thorn (•••)

This implant—which pierces the optic nerve of the left eye, and only the left eye (*sinister* is from *sinistra*, or Latin for "left")—isn't a thorn at all. It's a tiny bone spur sculpted to look very much like a thorn. Those who have this implant generally don't know where it comes from. If they ask or get an MRI/X-Ray, they'll see or be told that this "thorn" was pulled from the photosynthetic flesh of a floral- or fungal-based "reality deviant" (in other words: a fae creature).

Patently not true. The truth is, it's a bone chip from another hunter. Specifically, a hunter of the Lucifuge. For the most part, the higher-ups in the Field Projects

Division don't differentiate Lucifuge hunters from demons or the demon-possessed; yes, they seem committed to carrying the Vigil, but they're clearly supernatural, and that supernature is carried through the physical blood. If their blood is monstrous, then so is the rest of their bodies. That makes them harvest targets.

The bone chip is taken from around the eye socket of the Lucifuge—chipped away with a chisel, perhaps, with enough material taken so that one or several thorns can be “whittled” down from the sample. It doesn't require the hunter be killed, of course. Bone damage, however, is not pleasant, nor does it heal easily.

Benefit: The FPD agent is now capable of seeing other *supernaturally-augmented* hunters for what they are. This requires no roll and is considered “always on.” This allows the Cheiron hunter to automatically see hunters of the Lucifuge and the Malleus Maleficarum. In addition, they can see hunters currently using an active Relic (Aegis Kai Doru) or those who have imbibed or ingested an Elixir (Ascending Ones). This does not help the hunter to differentiate between them—it only identifies them as a supernaturally-augmented hunter. It also fails to help the agent identify members of VALKYRIE, or any hunter of the AKD or Ascending Ones not currently using a Relic or Elixir.

Plasmic Caul (••••)

Some ghosts are... different. Cheiron has yet to identify exactly *why* they're different, but what they do know is that they tend to be: a) more powerful; b) without a human identity (while possessing an identity that is more archetypal than anything); and c) able to forge some kind of symbiotic bond with a human.

Cheiron also recognizes that these things can be “killed,” in a manner of speaking, and destroying them seems to leave behind a physical artifact—some displacement of matter, perhaps, or some object manifestation of ectoplasmic residue. The artifact might be a sliver of wood, an ivory horn, a bezoar stone, even a set of gold teeth. Many even have faces (or parts of faces) imprinted into them, as if pushing through from “the other side.”

The fine doctors of the Field Projects Division have learned how to break these objects apart and implant a “seed” of the original object into the thalamus of one of their Thaumatech-



endowed hunters. In theory, it should be a huge benefit for Cheiron employees. In theory...

Benefit: This is all a little *new* to the doctors. The problem is, they don't really know what the final end result of the implantation process will be. Two things are certain: one, it offers the hunter the ability to see ghosts that are concealed in the state of Twilight, and two, it grants them +1 dice on any roll made regarding a ghost (communication, exorcism, attack, etc.).

Beyond that, the results are... unpredictable. The hunter gains a secondary effect by spending a point of Willpower (and the effect lasts for the remainder of one scene). An ectoplasmic caul forms over the hunter's face, and the caul reacts to the world in specific ways, manifesting specific effects.

Players should choose one effect below from the following list (though, if the Endowment is installed during the story, the player is encouraged to allow the Storyteller to determine the ability, instead):

Blood: Those within ten feet of the hunter suffer stigmata bleeding (hands, side, forehead). This causes either one point of Willpower loss to all of them, or two points of bashing damage (the player chooses).

Dirt: The caul leaks runny mud and clods of clay that smell of the grave. In one turn, it covers the hunter's body for the most part—and offers two dots of armor against incoming bashing and lethal attacks.

Emotion: Whatever the hunter is feeling at that moment, so is everybody else near to him (within 50 feet). They possess the exact same emotion. They gain +3 Empathy on all rolls made on one another.

Fire: The hunter is protected from all fire damage for the remainder of the scene.

Howl: The caul is capable of emitting a screeching primal howl—the hunter must roll Strength + Presence. Successes gained on the roll equal a penalty to Perception for all who hear the howl (excepting the hunter herself). In addition, it does one point of bashing damage to them, as well.

Hush: A zone of silence surrounds the hunter in a space equal to a radius of five feet around her. Any Stealth rolls based on sound within

this space gain +5 dice, as do any attempts to surprise within this zone.

Sight: The hunter is capable of seeing things in ways nobody else likely will; any success on a sight-based Perception roll is considered an exceptional success.

Static: The hunter emits a static discharge from the caul. Any electronic objects within five feet of his face cease to work for 24 hours.

Water: The hunter can hold his breath underwater for one full scene.

Wind: A sharp, cold, inconsistent wind whips around the hunter, carrying with it all manner of debris. It adds two to the hunter's Defense for the scene.

New Profession: Executive

Good meeting you. Here's my card. Oh, you like it? They call it "Bleached Bone." Yes, it's really bone, I'm quite serious. Careful. The edges are sharp.

The Executive is different from the average Professional; she's more refined, more cutthroat, with a penchant for playing power moves in a world she views as one big mash-up of chess and Monopoly.



She knows that business is two things: numbers and people. And she can manipulate both in equal measure.

This makes for an interesting Vigil. She can take the long view, and approach the hunt with some pragmatism: how do the numbers look? Too many vampires? Too many unnatural murders down on the West Side? She can also get down in the trenches and broker deals with beasts, and buy and sell the creatures to one another as if they were stock tips or tickets to a parade.

Many Executives find some common origin in the way they're drawn to the Vigil. A blip in the numbers poorly hides the fact that monsters are within the organization. Or perhaps the Executive is attacked on the way to the Lexus in the parking garage. Or maybe she finally meets one of the big stockholders, and he asks to *do things* to her that go well beyond "unnatural."

Background: Physical traits are low on the Executive's needs—though some keep in shape with vigorous exercise, it isn't the same as martial training. No, for most the key weapons are one's tongue (useful for lying—or rather, "massaging the truth") and the ream of data contained in that lovely leather attaché case. Hence, Executives tend to split down the middle—some favor Mental traits, others Social.

Expect a basket of Social Merits, too—Allies and Contacts in spades, followed by Retainers. When they take derangements or Tells, they're usually catered toward issues of control: issues of Megalomania, Obsession-Compulsion, Overkill, or Sexual Deviancies.

Concepts: Ashwood Abbey benefactor, Cheiron handler or headhunter, executive for Big Tobacco (or Big Pharma, or Big Ag, or Big Anything), hardened lay-off consultant, retiree in the lap of luxury (and mouth of madness), sexual conqueror of the secretarial pool

Asset Skills: Politics and Subterfuge

Professional Training

- Junior Executive
- Department Manager
- Senior Manager

- Executive Officer
- CEO

Bonus Material: The Red Tape Tangle (Action)

With this action, a hunter of the Cheiron Group can use red tape to his advantage—concealing his actions, framing a co-worker for a corporate "error," burying numbers, and so forth. She can accomplish her goals by a variety of means: changing spreadsheet numbers, hiding documents underneath a pile of other documents, creating a chain of poorly-transcribed forms or notes, etc. (Note that this could easily work for members of Task Force: VALKYRIE, too.)

Cost: None

Action: Extended (each roll is equal to one day's worth of "corporate stealth;" the hunter has no target number, and can continue to accumulate successes as she sees fit)

Dice Pool: Wits + Politics

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The hunter mishandles the red tape so that it points a big arrow toward her illicit actions.

Failure: The hunter fails to make manifest her red tape obfuscation.

Success: The hunter manages to occlude her actions through corporate stealth-making maneuvers. Those seeking to uncover must first make a Wits + Politics (Perception) roll just to notice that something's off-kilter. Then, they must track the action with an extended Intelligence + Politics, with each roll equaling a day, and with a target number equal to the successes gained on the hunter's original roll. (In this way, it's possible for the "finder" to compete with the hunter—closing in on her activities in the way that one might close in on someone during a foot chase.)

Exceptional Success: Added success is its own reward, here.

HELL'S OWN REBELS THE LUCIFUGE

You are one of Lucifer's children.
Or Belial's, or Belphegor's, or
Glasya-Labolas'-it's up to you how
much that matters. What matters is
this: it's in your blood, and your
heritage is awake, now. The demon's
eyes are in your heart, watching.
What will you show it? Will you
show the creature that you are just
like it, capable of great
heaping gulps of selfishness? Or
will you spit in the demon's eyes,
and declare your independence?
Choose now. Don't let the hard
barrel of the pistol against the
back of your head sway your
decision.

The Becoming: The Five-Fold Birth

Most hunters choose the Vigil; it's a conscious decision to step out of the comforting light and beyond the shadow's edge. The Lucifuge aren't any different. Lighting the candle and carrying the Vigil remains a very deliberate choice.

What isn't a choice, however, is the character's diabolical heritage. Whether or not she chooses to step foot onto the Hunt, she still finds her awful bloodline blooming within her. Some call this process the Revelation, the Epiphany, the Damnation—but most think of it simply as "Becoming."

Like fingerprints, every character's Becoming is different—below you'll find five different ways the Becoming might unfold.

It's important to note that the Becoming is rarely harmful to the character, at least directly (indirect harm remains a sad possibility). It may not be openly beneficial, but it's more a case of the world going askew, where the character's hellish heritage is demonstrated in some troubling way. Also, be aware that the effects of the Becoming aren't permanent.

For most, they only last two, three days—at the longest, maybe a week or two.

When does it occur? Most believe that it happens to a character on her 23rd birthday, and this seems true for many, but not all. Puberty is another common "Becoming" point for a character—between 12 and 15 years of age, the character's voice shifts, sexual urges become prominent, his body changes. And with that, that hellish mote within the blood may awaken. Still, even with these trigger points, stories exist of Lucifuge who awakened to their heritage at age 6 or 60.

The Demon-Haunted

The character is visited by demons (see "Demons," p. 283, *Hunter: The Vigil*). Initially, it's always Lesser demons—imps and hell-sprites, bed-shakers and wan shadows. They come not to torment, but to be tormented. They recognize that the character is—in some small way, deep in the blood—their master, and so they ask to be abused, or commanded, or loved in some maladjusted manner. They appear whenever the character is away from people—sleeping, reading in bed, walking down a desolate alley or highway.

Next comes the Greater demons. They aren't averse to revealing themselves when people are around, given that they themselves appear mostly human. Again, these demons do not come to torment. They may offer knowledge, answering questions that the character has (though always with enigmatic, often troubling answers), or may offer themselves up in more complex acts of obeisance: a succubus offers her body, a gluttonous fiend prepares an eye-boggling feast, a murderous creature says that it'll end the life of one target of the hunter's choice, and so forth.

Thankfully, it never gets to Elder demons. They have little interest in those who manifest infernal blood beyond them being targets of possession—though, of course, a few Elder demons recognize that the bloodlines carried by the Lucifuge might be *theirs*. That can change the equation, because suddenly the character is considered “family.”

Glimpses of Hell in One's Hand

The character is able to manifest one Castigation ritual, regardless of whether or not she possesses it on her sheet. She can't really *control* it, however—Hellfire slides from her hands when she's angry, or she wakes up in a sweat after a sleep besieged by prophetic nightmares.

Ill Fate for Foes

Everybody has enemies—be they minor foes (“The goddamn cable guy always shows up just as I head out to grab the mail”) or long-standing personal adversaries (“Great, John from Accounting is spreading rumors about me again, which is totally going to screw me out of that raise I'm trying to get...”).

Suddenly, the character's enemies, small and large, suffer mightily. The cable guy breaks his ankle on the hunter's porch. John from Accounting chokes on a potsticker just as he's about to spread his latest rumor.

The character has no choice about it—sure, she might wish harm on someone who causes her grief (who hasn't secretly hoped for ill will against another, just for a moment?), but that doesn't mean she actually expects the harm to come to fruition. Even those who only inconvenience her might be in peril—a man bumps her elbow, grumbles some impolite insult, then steps off the curb and *wham*. Bus hits him.

Maybe it just shatters his pelvis and crushes his arm, but it's a huge price for a small error in judgment.

Mad World

As the header suggests, the character's world goes mad. Things go sideways in ways that cannot be explained. Milk curdles. Flies and bees swarm. Black dogs with green eyes trail the character. Technology breaks, or acts in impossible ways (a DVD player suddenly plays the character's favorite classic movie, even though she doesn't even own it). The moon is red. A window or mirror shatters at night.

Monstrous Sympathies

The monsters don't know why, and aren't likely *aware* of it, *per se*, but they seek out the character. They find him sitting at a



L'ENFANT DIABOLIQUES

Those who don't become Lucifuge become what, instead? L'Enfant Diaboliques, that's what. These so-called "children of the Devil" are essentially the same as the hunters, except they have not chosen the path of righteousness as it befits the Vigil. They instead have chosen the path of gratification: the road to sin. They exalt evil and perform it at every turn. They can still be sympathetic individuals capable of love and charity, but for the most part, any positive elements are outweighed by their devotion to baser instincts.

When creating these "anti-Lucifuge" as antagonists, it's up to you how to handle it. Technically, Castigation rituals are available only to the hunters, as they are the chosen weapons kept secret and sacred by the Lady of Milan. That said, the Endowment does make it easy for the Storyteller to assign "powers" to these selfish demon-bloods. Alternately, it might be easier and more thematic to give them access to the Dread Powers found in **Hunter: The Vigil** (p. 276).

bar, approach him walking to his car in an empty parking garage, or simply knock at his door at midnight.

Why? Depends on the creature, really. Some sense a literal sympathy, like two drunks who can commiserate over their boozehound addictions. These monsters want to talk about what drives them, what urges push them beyond sane boundaries. They may not realize that the character is a stone's throw from being a monster himself, but unconsciously, they can sense it.

Other creatures want to do the opposite: they want to find the character so they may revel in their fiendish ways. They might boast of a kill, or show off their powers—not to harm the character, but unknowingly to impress them or intimidate them (scary as it may seem).

Recruitment: Meet Your New Mother

Fact: If the Lucifuge find a character, they're going to take him before the Lady of Milan. That *probably* means going to Milan, though certainly the Lucifuge Herself has made exceptions for those with deep potential. She might meet the potential novitiate at a well-protected location stateside, and a rare few hunters have had the glory and horror to have the Lady of Milan show up at their houses, while they sleep (accompanied by a cadre of armed protectors, of course).

For some, this is a very short meeting—if the Lady already knows all there is to know, then all's that must be asked is the question: *will you join us, or will you die?* And make no mistake, that's the choice. Those whose blood boils with hellfire are, to the conspiracy, capable of great evil. Choosing not to join the ranks of the Luci-

fuge is therefore a declaration of malevolence, and that can only be met by a bullet to the back of the head. Of course, what this means is that many choose fealty, and think to escape from it later. This is true for some. They manage that escape. Most, though, learn that the leash is not so easy to slip.

Often enough, the Lady of Milan knows little about the character in question, and so that character's "visit" is a protracted one—weeks, maybe even months, while the blind scholars pore through infernal genealogies and while the conspiracy's occult "scientists" test the blood and attempt to divine shadows of the novitiate's future.

Factions: Philosophies of Evil

The factions within the Lucifuge are ultimately divisions of philosophy regarding the monsters—the conspiracy bears the weight of a rather complex and uncertain mythology (Lucifer's fall, the Archdukes' rebellion, Heaven's treatment of the angels, etc.), and these philosophies often approach the mythologies in different ways.

The Factions are found on p. 141 of **Hunter: The Vigil**.

The Denial

Free Specialty: Empathy (Discern Intent)

The Lady of Milan embraces this philosophy, which accepts that the Devil is a callous, selfish source of evil, and that monsters who invite this evil must be destroyed. Those who rebel against the evil—as the Lucifuge themselves do—can be left alone or even offered

redemption. Hence, the most important aspect is first to discern the intent of a monster—is its nature cruel, its intent to do harm? Then it must meet with fire and sword. If its intent is uncertain, or its desire peaceful, then the hunter has work yet to do.

Secret: The Lady of Milan meets in secret with Padre Ambrogio, the head of the *Malleus Maleficarum*. Why do they meet? Mostly, it's a social occasion: They meet once a year, share secrets, tell tales, and lie to each other as if it's a wonderful game. Both are nearly ageless, and so they make good company for one another.

The Reconciliation

Free Specialty: Weaponry (Knife)

An irony lies deep in the heart of this philosophy: they believe that their duty is to redeem Lucifer, which sounds comfy and cozy and nice. It's not. Redemption for him means death to all evil on earth and all its cosmic realms: by destroying the wicked that love Lucifer, the agents of the Reconciliation undo the chains that bind Satan to his evil and, by proxy, that bind man to his sinful nature. They are violent, and with little mercy.

Secret: Each agent who espouses this philosophy and signs up to become an uncaring assassin (to save the Devil) receives a relatively non-descript knife: single-edge, rosewood handle, sharp as the dickens—a 2(L) weapon. There's nothing else special about it, except that it smells of roses and sulfur in equal measure. If a hunter presses his ear to the blade, he might hear the rattle of chains, or the howling of a voice echoing in some great abyss.

The Truth

Free Specialty: Academics (Research)

The monsters matter little to the clandestine conspirators-within-the-conspiracy. These agents seek out The Truth about their own bloodline, organization, and founder. These outcasts are wholly consumed with the act of digging up the secrets surrounding their Lucifuge allies. If your character has a dark secret, The Truth might threaten to expose it... unless you join their crusade.

Secret: What one agent of The Truth knows, the rest will know. They do not conceal information from one another—and they know they can trust each other, because they all have one another by the balls. They've recently discovered the Lady of Milan's meeting with Padre Ambrogio. This is their latest obsession, and they will not stop until they uncover such a meeting, discover what's discussed, and put a stop to them.

Castigation Rituals

Coils of Iniquity

Some within the Lucifuge cooly refer to this as the “vice grip,” as it serves to give the Lucifuge some advantage over those whose predilections and sins are of a specific... *flavor*.

More specifically, it grants the Devil's agent the ability to more easily manipulate those whose Vice is the same as the one chosen by the hunter using this ritual. The hunter enacts the ritual in the morning just as the sun rises, anointing herself with three drops of sinner's blood (one drop on her tongue, one in each eye). The Vice caught in the victim's blood (like a mosquito in amber) infuses the hunter with an attunement to that Vice, offering her a bonus toward all those who possess that same Vice over the next 24 hour period. If this Castigation ritual is not performed during the hours surrounding dawn (between 5:00 AM and 7:00 AM), it automatically fails.

Cost: Three drops of blood (human or, at least, from a sentient creature), as described above. The Vice belonging to the one-time bearer of that blood is what matters most.

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: (10 – Morality) + Empathy

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Lucifuge grows distant from the Vice in question rather than gaining proximity. She suffers a -3 penalty on *any action* performed against a character possessing that Vice.

Failure: The sympathy between the hunter and the Vice in those drops of blood fails to manifest.

Success: For every success gained on the roll, the hunter gains bonus dice on all Social rolls performed against characters possessing the chosen Vice (i.e. the Vice of the individual from whom the three drops of blood were taken). If the Vice trapped in those three drops of blood was Gluttony, and the hunter gains three successes, then she would gain a +3 bonus on all Social rolls involving Gluttonous characters.

Exceptional Success: Beyond the bonus of added successes, the Lucifuge also gains a point of Willpower from the heady rush of sinful sympathy.

Family Vestment

Every Lucifuge hunter's bloodline contains some germ of the infernal; some chromosomal pair or twist of DNA bears a whiff of sulfur, a throwback to whatever elder beast seduced or forced its way into the family so many eons ago.

For the most part, this reveals itself in subtle ways—the agelessness of the hunter, the ability to command demons with but a salacious whisper, the power to see the stains of sin that mark a man's soul.

Some, though, see the *true* lineage of their family brood in unexpected—and ultimately more overt—ways. Just as parents might pass to their children green eyes, a receding hairline, or an increased risk for prostate cancer, the Lucifuge may find that the infernal spark within has passed down strange physical augmentations known as Vestments.

The Vestment isn't ever-present; a lashing tail or hooked claws don't exist until the hunter ritually calls upon them, drawing them out of his damaged genetics and to his flesh.

The player may buy this ritual multiple times (remember, though, he can only possess as many rituals as he has dots in Castigation), with each instance offering one new Vestment from this list:

- **The Devil's Wings:** The hunter grows wings. They might appear as bloodstained angel wings, ragged bat wings, or something more bizarre (gold leaf with shifting veins of copper). The character's clothing must accommodate the wings, or the transformation will tear the clothing *and* cause the hunter two points of bashing damage. The character gains actual flight capabilities, but since he's not a demon, it's imperfect: he can stay aloft for a number of turns equal to his Strength dots + dots possessed in the Castigation Endowment. The character flies at a Speed of twice his normal Speed score. Tricky maneuvers may require a Dexterity + Athletics roll to perform (as the Storyteller's discretion).
- **Dread Attack:** The Lucifuge manifests some physical change that allows him to do lethal damage on Brawl rolls (instead of the usual bashing). This could include ichorous black claws, a mouth of hooked teeth, a lashing tail or rough, scaly flesh.
- **Dread Gaze:** The hunter's eyes manifest a strange and unnatural color, perhaps even appearing reptilian or feline. Choose one Social Skill that Dread Gaze modifies; any time the hunter calls upon this Vestment, he gains a bonus to rolls involving that Skill equal to dots possessed in the Castigation Endowment.
- **Hellflesh:** The hunter's body in some way accommodates greater Health or flesh-bound armor (choose which at the time of purchasing this Vestment). The hunter's flesh might bloat and swell

or she might gain leathery skin or a layer of gristly muscle. She gains dots added to her Health or to her Armor (+1/+1) per dot possessed in the Castigation Endowment.

- **Physical Endowment:** Choose one Physical Skill at the time of purchasing this ritual; the physical modification provides a bonus to that Skill (when the modification is drawn to the flesh) equal to the character's dots in the Castigation Endowment. The modification should be appropriate to the Skill it modifies—modifying Larceny might cause the character's fingers to grow into something resembling multi-joint spider legs (for picking locks and pocket), while modifying Stealth might stain the character's skin inky black. The only Skill that cannot be modified is Drive. Firearms could be modified with a change to one's eyes, while Weaponry might cause the weapon-wielding arm to become more fluid in its movement due to length or additional joints.

- **Vestment Of Your Own Design:** Players and Storytellers are encouraged to work together to come up with their own unique Vestments that might modify Defense, Speed, or mimic certain Merits.

Cost: 1 Willpower point, and when the Vestment finally goes away, the character gains a mild derangement for the subsequent 24-hour period. Calling upon one's demonic nature is rarely a comfortable feeling, and often leaves characters feeling less than human.

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Strength + Stamina

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's human nature and physiology prevails—sure, that sounds like a good thing, and in some ways, it is. But it doesn't *feel* good; bones compress, bruises appear, and blood trickles from every orifice. The character suffers three points of bashing damage.

Failure: The Vestment does not manifest.

Success: The character manifests the Vestment, which lasts for one full scene. The character can extend it beyond the scene by willfully assuming one point of lethal damage to resist the change back to her wholly human form. Each point of damage taken in this way extends the duration by one additional scene.

Exceptional Success: The character wears the flesh well. This allows the character to extend the duration by spending points of Willpower (one point per one scene) instead of suffering lethal damage.

Bonus Material: The Ageless Sanction

The Lucifuge herself—i.e., the Lady of Milan that lords over this hell-bound conspiracy—has been alive for at least 1100 years. One of the Lucifuge’s most famous (if not most prominent) agents, the Chevalier Theleme, has been around for centuries. Characters may encounter other hunters within the conspiracy who seem immortal, as ageless as the blood-hungry dead, as unyielding and timeless as demons.

They’re not immortal, but they are abnormally long-lived.

How does this happen? Why isn’t my Lucifuge hunter equally long-lived?

It happens by dint of the diabolical bloodline. It happens to all hunters within the conspiracy once their blood awakens during the Becoming (above). Which means, yes, it’s happening to your hunter character, too.

For every dot possessed in the Status Merit representing membership in the conspiracy, the hunter’s lifespan roughly doubles:

For example, Edward Belladonna, a hunter among

Lucifuge Status (Dots)	Aging	Max Normal Lifespan
•	Every two years, the hunter ages one	140
••	Every four years, the hunter ages one	280
•••	Every eight years, the hunter ages one	560
••••	Every 16 years, the hunter ages one	1120
•••••	Every 32 years, the hunter ages one	2240

the Lucifuge, possesses two dots in Lucifuge Status. Assuming that he’ll live a roughly normal lifespan of 70 years (probably not true, given that hunters don’t exactly walk the *safe* path), Eddie can actually live for about 280 years. The Lady of Milan, on the other hand, surely has five dots in Status (and may actually be deserving of more), so her living beyond two millennia is quite possible.

Ultimately, this won’t have a tremendous effect on gameplay—most stories comprise only a few months or years, of game-time. Still, let this open up the experience; you can now feel comfortable flashing back 100 years or more to visit the events of your character’s dark past.

Storytelling: The Burning Tree

This isn’t really for Storytellers alone—it’s actually for players *and* Storytellers, who can work on one really cool aspect of the Lucifuge: *genealogy*. Your character is the product of a long lineage of demon-blooded humans—sure, the infernal heritage may not have manifested in every generation, but it’s been there, dormant, and that has an effect.

So, where to start? Start with the demon whose wicked seed changed the course of that family forever. It’s perfectly acceptable to say that it was the Devil Himself whose dark deeds lurk in the blood, for Satan has by no means been in control of his hellish lusts.

Next question: when? When did the infernal intermingle into your family’s bloodline? Two thousand years ago? Middle Ages? Maybe your grandmother was a housewife in the 1950s, and had an affair with a dark stranger while her husband went to work in the city?

The cool thing is, a lot of the Lucifuge’s organizational structure is based off of these families—the mobtied Belladonna family, the effete socialite Woodwine clan, the backwood Yeagers. The Lady of Milan directs these families herself, sending missives or messengers to convey her wishes to the head of each family.

So it behooves a player to do a little world-building with the Storyteller in an effort to figure out to what family she belongs—because, even if she’s an orphan or adopted or just distant, it’s the *head* of that family that will come calling and pass along the Lady’s wishes. The more work the player invests, the more she’ll become invested in the story and the characters of this extended family (though, the Storyteller shouldn’t hesitate to include a few “mystery” characters within the family—skeletons still thrashing about in the closet).

Researching one’s genealogy (as it may not be wholly known) won’t drill down to a single extended roll. Rather, it should be played out over the course of a story or even chronicle. The character has to break into forbidden libraries and interview distant mad cousins and suffer oracular nightmares—all in an effort to track back her bloodline to its infernal source. This can make for interesting stories, too, in dealing with demons. Who’s to say that the Elder demon that just came to town (or, frankly, possessed the town) isn’t the character’s fiendish *paterfamilias*?

THE GOOD CATHOLICS MALLEUS MALEFICARUM MATTERS

You know Saint Agnes, do you not? Ah. Somebody needs a refresher. Well. Agnes of Rome was a young girl, very young, too young to the bride of the local Roman prefect, but this perverse pagan did not care. He wished for her to be his bride.

But she would not marry this monster. It was not legal to have virgins put to death, so he decided to have her dragged through the streets and raped so that she could be executed. But God admired her steadfastness, and protected her from the rapists, allowing her to remain chaste. They martyred her—pierced her throat with a spear. She is us, you see? We are her. We will not allow evil to be done, and by remaining righteous, God gives us what we need to combat the darkness. Yes, in the end we die. But that is the road everyone walks. At least when we die, we know we will sleep in the Lord's embrace.

The Satanic Agenda Must Be Stopped

The mission of the Malleus Maleficarum is an uncomplicated one: God is good. God has given the world and its children free will.

Some have chosen to use that free will to become monsters. These monsters must be punished for their choices. The supernatural is a heresy that must be smothered.

That's it, at least on the surface. Dig a little deeper, and certain complexities arise: are the monsters deserving of mercy? The official answer is yes, but that "mercy" takes only one form: conversion before destruction. Not everybody has the stomach for that, of course, and those monsters who truly repent are sometimes given a chance. Some within the conspiracy do not believe the monsters *capable* of redemption. They gave up their humanity and distanced themselves so far from God that they can never regain the focus of his gaze. Conversion before destruction? For them, no. Only destruction.

Vampires, Then Witches, Then Demons

That's the "order of importance" given to the monsters of the world by the hunters of the Malleus Maleficarum. Vampires are at the top of the hunt—yes, technically they were put there by the original founder (and still-living Padre) Ambrogio Baudolino because he was thrall to the undead, but the party line holds a somewhat different mission. It assumes that vampires are the worst of two worlds: they are humans who have invited a demon ("The Beast") into their bodies. They have used the free will given to them by God to become undead demon-hosts.

Witches deserve the hammer, too—they've used the grace of free will to choose to perform heretical (and frankly Satanic) magic. They're at least *alive*, though. They can still make the choice to turn themselves over to God's will.

Finally, demons: demons aren't people, and never were people. This makes them dangerous, yes, but the thing about demons is that they have *no power* without people. They are empowered by the iniquities of man. If man chose not to give in to sin, demons would starve and be as ineffectual as snowflakes. It's for this reason that demons are "lower" on the chain. It is within man's own power to stop them.

Now does this mean that the hunters of the conspiracy are in agreement on this? Hardly. Get three people in a room together and you'll be hard-pressed to find them in universal agreement on what to each for lunch, much less the proper actions of righteousness. Every hunter is sure to have formed his own opinion, an opinion likely forged in the fires of his own experiences.



Does this imply the hunters only hunt these three? No, it just means that these three represent the “official” focus. Shapeshifters are seen as pagan beings, and are often lumped in with

witches (they “choose” dark magic to unfetter themselves from their humanity and thus from God’s grace). Everything else is some gradation of evil, but likely earns less focus either due to a lack of prominence or due to a lack of easy categorization (complexity can lead to willful ignorance—“I don’t understand that, and so I’ll focus on problems I do understand”).

Archbishop Emeritus: Timothy Conor Gallaher

Padre Ambrogino Baudolino—the still-living vampire ghoul founder of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the one who meets in secret with the *Lucifuge’s* Lady of Milan—is still unofficially the head of the conspiracy. He still directs the conspiracy’s efforts. He still sets the tenor and plans of the group’s overarching Vigil. (And he still has higher-Status hunters within the organization bring him powerful vampires off of which he feeds.)

And yet—Baudolino’s over in Italy. His reach extends only so far. The greatest growth in the conspiracy in the last century has been in the Americas.

The “official” head of the Shadow Congregation is Timothy Conor Gallaher, Archbishop Emeritus (meaning, in effect, “retired” archbishop) of New York City. Gallaher—a tall, gnarly-looking gent with dark caterpillar eyebrows and an Irish nose like a hatchet blade—walks the party line. He, unlike most, knows that Baudolino is still around because he was elevated to his role by Baudolino. He pays a great deal of lip service to the handsome Italian, and is nothing but humble and gracious—on the surface.

The truth is, however, that Gallaher is disgusted that the head of the organization is fattened on the blood of the undead. That single impurity taints the holy purpose of the organization. Gallaher won’t abide it. He’s a hard-liner, and a secret member of the Order of St. Athanasius. He slowly builds ranks to take down Baudolino in secret and become the *true* head of the conspiracy.

Rise of the Laity

Ultimately, the hierarchy of the *Malleus Maleficarum* is the hierarchy of the Catholic Church as a whole. This hierarchy is a

KEPT FAMILIES OF GOD AND SATAN

Chew on this: the *Malleus Maleficarum* and the *Lucifuge* share something else: kept families. Each conspiracy has a number of families that it guards and controls them, and ensuring that those who come out of those families serve the conspiracies in some fashion.

holy ordering, thought to be divinely inspired—and so it *must* carry over to the conspiracy.

Except that over the last 100 years, the laity have gained in prominence within the organization. Once, lay members were rare; they might have been deputized or brought in for tasks but never given the whole truth.

Now times have changed. Laity comprise just about half of the entire conspiracy. That's huge, and the number is growing. Cops. Construction workers. Aid workers. Mobsters. Toll booth attendants. If a Catholic is ready to lay her life on the line in the name of God Our Father—then the Shadow Congregation might have a role for her in the conspiracy.

And it *is* a conspiracy. These people are everywhere, from the lowest rungs of society's dirty ladder to the highest echelons of government and business. They might not be "active" every night out of the year. They might not possess Benedictions. But they've been given a glimpse of the truth. They're always on watch, carrying a quiet Vigil. When the time comes to fight, they fight. A woman's husband doesn't arrive home that night. A cop goes off-duty, knowing that his allegiance goes above municipal law enforcement. People who have been functional parts of society just... disappear to carry the Vigil, and reappear again (if they're lucky), making up wild lies to cover the even wilder truth.

How does the conspiracy handle this? These people aren't divinely driven. The priesthood is there to talk to God and translate His messages to the people. Well, that's how it works here. The clergy members of the conspiracy drive the efforts of the laity. If they work in cells, then the cells are almost universally headed up by someone from the Church—a nun will do if a priest is not available.

For the most part, the laity fall in line. They seem doomed to low Status within the conspiracy, and often have limited access to Benedictions. But just as the normal members of the Catholic Church have crises of conscience, so too do the laity within the conspiracy. One soon wonders: "Why can't I speak to God? He's clearly graced me with his blessings." As the laity rise to greater prominence, what will happen? Is a coup in the making?

Brotherhoods and Orders

Order of St. Longinus

Free Specialty: Weaponry (Stake)

This is Baudolino's baby. This order comprises the largest bulk of the conspiracy, and dictates the agenda for the group—the top of which is hunting vampires. Baudolino hates vampires for what they did to him, and loves them because they give him

sweet blood (and whatever else he desires). The members of this order don't *know* that Baudolino still exists, of course, but they count him as a patron of the order even in his faked death. The Order of Longinus also maintains a large army of lay members.

Secret: Baudolino senses war coming. He knows the Athanasians are gaining in power. And it doesn't help that the vampire's blood he has to guzzle every night makes him paranoid and lets him hear the voices of those creatures he's destroyed. Accepting that a schism is coming, Baudolino has taken five of his most favored bishops within the order and gotten them addicted to vampire's blood. So now they have the limited powers of undeath at their disposal.

Order of St. Ambrose

Free Specialty: Computer (Research)

Much of the conspiracy is alarmingly technophobic in thought. It's not necessarily unreasonable—after all, lots of secrets are found in dusty old books, and even a simple chair leg (sharpened) can dispatch the most powerful vampire. This order, however, is tech-savvy. They have no problem with spy gear or computer networks. Ultimately, it's because they take the long view. The others in the Shadow Congregation want it all over with. They want to rush in, thrusting stakes or setting things ablaze. The Ambrosians take it slow. They accept that every monster is a problem, and every problem is a crime scene or a court case, and must be approached methodically, with care, with intelligence.

Secret:... and, yes, with mercy. Out of the three groups, the Ambrosians are the most merciful. Part of it is pragmatic: the monsters know things, and to learn what the monsters know, it behooves one to make uncomfortable alliances. Torture is ineffective. The reality is that some monsters are worse than others, and they're not friendly toward one another. This is an open directive within the Ambrosian order—spare the sinners so that more can be learned. This won't sit well with the other groups should they learn it.

SMALLER ORDERS

The Shadow Congregation is home to a number of smaller orders, orders that comprise only a half-dozen cells or less:

The Sisterhood of St. Wisdom: St. Wisdom's daughters suffered for their faith under Emperor Hadrian. Her children were boiled in pitch and beheaded, and the mother was abused while she prayed over the bodies of her children. This group, comprising mostly women (though not exclusively) takes the Vigil on an entirely merciful path. They find those who have been harmed by the monsters and they tend to them, protect them from further attack, and provide them with charity.

The Anchorites of Wiborada of St. Gall: These mystic Catholics believe they can see the future—and, maybe they can, given the conspiracy's propensity for God-granted Benedictions. They do not form cells; these rare anchorites bind themselves to other hunter cells as harbingers and prophets.

The Order of St. Januarius: Januarius, in standing up for his faith, was thrown to wild animals—and the animals refused to eat him. He was then thrown in a furnace—and the furnace refused to burn him. They eventually had to behead him. But even then, his powers did not stop, for he continued to show up as a ghost, and further, it was said that his sacred Relics held secret powers. These days, this small order, named after the saint, is driven toward understanding and learning new Benedictions—and they secretly believe that such Benedictions do not come directly from God, but come as an intercession from the saints themselves. They also give the Aegis Kai Doru a great deal of trouble, what with stealing a number of their sacred Relics.

Brotherhood of St. Athanasius

Free Specialty: Crafts (Demolitions)

The only “knowledge” that the Athanasians care about is—*is that a Godless monster?* If the answer is yes, then that fiend must be destroyed. Not later. *Now.* That's not to say they're entirely without strategy or patience, but ultimately they accept that letting a monster do its thing, even for an hour, is like turning away from God's call. Their methods are practically terroristic, and innocents are sometimes caught in the crossfire. It's unfortunate, but a necessity. If they're truly innocent, and have confessed their sins after having been purified in the waters of Christ, great. Then they're saved even in death. If they chose ignorance and sin, they're just like the monsters.

Secret: Everybody thinks the Athanasians represent a small portion of the conspiracy. They once did, but they've been on a major recruitment drive. They barely care how good a Catholic someone is—if they're willing to die for the cause of taking out some monsters, great. Numbers are on the side of humanity. If ten humans are willing to die to dispatch one monster, mankind will still number in the billions. The Athanasians at this point represent a conspiracy within the conspiracy. They want to take it over. They don't share their recruitment. They're happy to look like the small, rag-tag group of militants. It's a ploy, and it's working.

New Benedictions

The Preservation of the Chastity of St. Agnes of Rome

St. Agnes stood in such defiance of monstrous violation that she became impervious to harm for a time. The hunter who calls upon this Benediction gains similar benefit.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Action: Instant and reflexive

Dice Pool: Resolve + Benediction

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character suffers one point of lethal damage—a wound opens on the hunter's throat and gouts blood.

Failure: The Benediction fails.

Success: When the hunter's Health track has only one box unfilled (even if the rest is filled with bashing), she can trigger this Benediction reflexively on success. The hunter's hair, clothing, or nearby debris instantly form armor—the hair hardens, the clothes whirl about, and so forth. This armor is equal to the hunter's dots in Benediction. It protects even against aggravated damage. The armor lasts for one full scene, does not limit Defense or Speed.

In addition, the hunter may *expend* the armor to gain a dramatic effect: she takes two points of aggravated damage in a lambent burst of light (it burns off her hair and sears her flesh). This light affects all those within 10 yards of the light, and it does a number of aggravated damage to those affected equal to the hunter's points in the Benediction Endowment.

Exceptional Success: The hunter gains an additional dot of Armor. This does not affect the "damage-dealing" effect, however.

The Casting Out of Witches

The legend goes that St. Patrick cast the snakes out of Ireland, but Ireland never had snakes to begin with. What he *did* was cast out the Pelagian heresy, a heresy that rejected "original sin"—a heresy supposedly driven by a secret cabal of Gnostic mages.

This Benediction attempts to recreate—on a smaller level—the "casting out" of heresies. In this case, it's used to cast out witches and mages, primarily, though it has effects on other monsters, as well.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Action: Extended (each roll is equivalent to ten minutes' worth of prayer; the target number of successes is equal to five times the hunter's own Benediction score).

Dice Pool: Presence + Benediction

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The hunter's voice is seared by damning flame; he loses his voice for the next 24 hours.

Failure: The chanted prayer fails to conjure any meaningful effect.

Success: Those monsters within a given range of effect (according to the hunter's Benediction score, as below) are compelled to flee. They may fight to stay, but in doing so must take a cumulative -1 penalty per minute (maximum -5 dice). Witches are more deeply affected, and must spend a Willpower point to even consider remaining in the area of effect.

Benediction Score	Area of Effect
•	50 yards
••	100 yards
•••	500 yards
••••	1 mile
•••••	10 miles

This only takes effect once the hunter has completed the prayer ritual (i.e. received the proper number of successes). Once in effect, it lasts for one hour.

The monsters will go out of their way to flee the radius of effect, even going so far as to incur minor (bashing) damage to do so. The power manifests to the targets as a sickly, greasy, impure feeling—waves of nausea, dizziness, headaches. (The Storyteller may require a Wits + Composure roll to even realize that they're being supernaturally compelled before allowing the monster a chance to counter it with a Willpower point and/or a penalty.)

Exceptional Success: As above, but the duration is doubled (two hours).

Bonus Material: Prophecy in the Shadow Congregation

Prophecy—i.e. the foretelling of future events, not merely the acting as a mouthpiece for God's agenda—isn't strange in the scope of Catholic legendry. A number of saints have reportedly possessed the ability to see into the future.

So, what do you do if you want your Malleus Maleficarum hunter to possess the same? Consider two approaches.

From Castigation to Benediction

Flip to p. 168 in **Hunter: The Vigil**. See that Castigation ritual, "Infernal Visions?" Time to convert it to a Benediction.

No cost. Dice pool is now Composure + Benediction. Results are ultimately the same—the character

gains clues to answer his questions about the future. You don't need the "hellish vision" angle, though that's not entirely inappropriate given prophecies of the End Times (though really, that's more the Long Night's bag—the Malleus Maleficarum is not particularly interested in the Apocalypse, and sees the Book of Revelation more as metaphor than future-telling).

Prophecy Does What It Wants

The other option is that prophecy is something the Storyteller creates—after all, it's not like one normally *chooses* to have the gift of prophetic viewing. In fact, it's usually a bit of a curse.

The Storyteller is encouraged to not limit this ability to merely one of the hunters in the group. Every session, choose a new Shadow Congregation hunter to be the recipient of a troubling vision.

The visions should gauzily, vaguely foreshadow the Storyteller's coming plans, whether it's a vampire riot, a werewolf massacre, a terrible witch war, whatever.

Note that these visions of the future should never be set in stone. If players can't have their hunters challenge and undo these prophecies, what's the point? One can argue that the reason God gives such prophecies to his soldiers is so they can stand against the coming darkness, not simply falter beneath it.



TAKING THE ENES TO TASK TASK FORCE VALKYRIE

The Joint Task Force: A Global War

What, exactly, is a Joint Task Force? Technically, a task force is the formation of unit meant to be temporary: it has a task, and once that task is complete, the unit is dissolved. Task Force: ENDRUN was a WWII unit tasked with the penetration of Burma, and was built from the survivors of Task Force: GALAHAD. Once the job was done, the units were dismantled or changed to different tasks.

Some task forces, though, go against design and pick up a “task” that has no end in sight because completion is largely impossible—consider, for instance, that Joint Task Force: BRAVO was put into play in 1983 to provide US military support in Central America, and is still in operations today. (A “joint” task force is one that has members from various military or governmental institutions as opposed to just one.)

VALKYRIE's in the same boat. It has a task—“protect America from monstrous threats within and without”—that only ends in a perfect world. Since no perfect world appears on the horizon, VALKYRIE's job security is firmly in place.

It's a global war from VALKYRIE's perspective. Yes, many of the monstrous threats they fight are on American soil, but they're just as happy to send soldiers into the jungles of Thailand, the choked streets of Kolkata, or the deserts of Mexico.

Do other countries have similar organizations? Certainly. Britain has MI18, Military Intelligence, Section 18, headed by Sir Vernon Chickerling. Israel has a sub-group within Shin Bet (its motto of “We are the unseen shield” is particularly appropriate for this kind of task).

That being said, soldiers and agents of other countries can actually be brought on as a part of Task Force: VALKYRIE. Technically, VALKYRIE is a “combined” joint task force, which is a joint task force that borrows manpower (and in some cases, bureaucracy) from other NATO nations. Hence, an agent of Mossad might end up as part of VALKYRIE, not Shin Bet; a member of the Militärischer Abschirmdienst (MAD) counterintelligence agency in Germany may be recruited into VALKYRIE, too.

The Offer That's Not An Offer

It's inevitable. Sometimes, in the line of duty, a person sees things: a fiery *ifrit* over burning bodies on Iraqi sands; an inexplicably-fast, blood-hungry monster leaving a trail of bodies for a pair of FBI agents to follow; a strange package in the mail that hums and gives the mailman who carries it haunting dreams long after he drops it on the intended doorstep. When people see things, generally, they tell someone—a superior, a co-worker, a friend. Even if they don't tell someone, they exhibit certain... traits. Exposure to the supernatural can be damaging to the psyche. It doesn't shatter one's

Here is the sitrep, soldier. We are under attack by insidious terroristic forces. These forces are ancient and innumerable. Your wife, my mother, the mailman—they do not realize that every day the government sends good soldiers to die against an unstoppable enemy, an enemy that poses an existential threat to our way of life. Be assured, soldier, that is what this is all about: our way of life. America is under siege. Our democracy is riddled with worm-holes. These terrorists are zealots who have accepted their unnatural crusade and who care little for our God, our currency and our country. They will tear down our white picket fences and burn our houses, and so we must pick up the splinters from our fences and drive them through the hearts of our foes. Our job is never-ending. Our job is life-threatening. But our job is sanctified by the powers-that-be, by God and country and the POTUS. You will not stay safe, so I will not waste words commanding you to do so. We do ask, soldier, that you stay sane, because the homeland cannot be protected by a deranged mind. Do you understand?

sanity, but it wears it down; any time any agent is found exhibiting traits or discussing the paranormal, the course of action is singular. That agent is removed from active duty and sent for counseling, which lasts for however long it takes to get the character's mind back on firm ground.

Once that individual proves sane, she's given an offer that isn't much of an offer at all: Train with VALKYRIE and join the task force, or enjoy an honorable discharge (or, in the case of non-military personnel, a severance package). Sadly, the war is active enough that those who choose to join are thrown into the line of fire rather quickly; a curious and perhaps counterproductive approach, given that these individuals went through a month of therapy (sometimes only days before) to calm their addled minds. Being launched right into combat or surveillance of supernatural forces often opens old wounds and new fears. Nobody said the war against reality terrorists would come without sacrifice.

SWAT Versus Suits: The Schism

A schism divides VALKYRIE. The problem is this: the conspiracy makes use of personnel from within the military, but also from outside agencies—people from *any* government agency (cops, intelligence officers, bureaucrats, diplomats).

Those who are militarily-trained (inaccurately thought of as "SWAT") don't always get along with those who are driven by a more informational and intelligence-gathering approach. One group ("Suits") would rather kick down the doors of a known vampire haven and go in with flame-throwers (or stake-throwers). The other group would rather build a case the way you might attempt to work up the ladder of a drug cartel or a terrorist organization.

Which means that ultimately, VALKYRIE is almost two different agencies—and given that one group doesn't take precedence over another, and that each group has representatives even at the highest echelons of the organization, it means that these factions do not play well together.

A recent push has occurred, driven by more neutral members of the upper echelons, to put the SWATs and the Suits in the same cells. Previously, it usually shook out that cells comprised one type over the other, and were used for competing purposes—except,



CARLTON JOHNS: THE TRUTH MERCHANT

Carlton Johns knows about VALKYRIE because he worked as a part of the combined joint task force as... well, an accountant. He was the king of the number-crunchers, an unstoppable force obfuscating the realities behind VALKYRIE as a black budget, black box operation.

So, what made him turn on the conspiracy?

About three years back, Carlton Johns disappeared, and he took with him a packet of damaging information. And he's been using it to "out" VALKYRIE to various elected officials and Pentagon big-wigs in what amount to guerilla strikes—he appears on the radar out of nowhere, offers exposing evidence, and then disappears again. So far, he hasn't exposed what VALKYRIE is, exactly, only that it exists, and it's doing some subversive things with taxpayer money. That may change, however, and Carlton might start showing them what VALKYRIE is in addition to highlighting its existence.

Why is he doing this? Johns was, by all accounts, a loyalist. What made him turn quisling? Is his hand being forced? Did he see something he could not abide? Did Johns learn some insidious truth?

that meant that the agency was getting in its own way and suffering under turf wars. The new push to get these two "tribes" to play in the same sandbox and as a part of same cells hasn't been entirely effective—the cells sometimes self-destruct—but it *has* cut down on the overall problem. So, for now, the directive continues.

Hot Zones and Dead Zones

A hunter's experience within VALKYRIE partly depends on one thing: where she is stationed.

If she's stationed in what's considered to be a "hot zone," then she and her cell are on a slide under the microscope. A hot zone—any major metropolitan area or war zone where the fight against the supernatural is ramping up or in full-swing—means that the conspiracy doesn't want any mistakes made. The bureaucratic tangle is thick. The protocols a cell must follow could choke a horse. A number of cells will be present, and if hunters get killed, more are brought to the area. Higher-ups visit regularly. Everybody's under the gun.

Then again, a whole lot of VALKYRIE agents are stationed around the world in places considered "dead zones"—a relatively stable region in terms of monstrous activity (which is sometimes accurate, and sometimes not). These agents grow used to the isolation from the larger conspiracy. They're practically forgotten. It's hard to get new equipment, hard to get any budget at all, but it's easy to perform the Vigil however one chooses to do it. A lone agent stationed in Nowhere, Nebraska, is free to join another cell of hunters under true or false auspices. A cell in a city that the conspiracy doesn't consider a hot zone (like, say, Miami) has free rein to act outside the protocols.

When a *dead zone* becomes a *hot zone*, a VALKYRIE cell with some autonomy will see its entire world change. When the conspiracy sets up shop and turns on all the bright lights, scrutiny is not necessarily a good thing.

The Black Budget: Your Taxes At Work

Two questions of import orbit the mysterious Task Force: VALKYRIE.

First, how does a black budget work? A black budget program is kept secret from Congress, the public, and in some cases even the President. Such programs have line items, but they have mysterious code names (Painted Lady, Rose Thorn, Wolf Pelt) with everything else blacked out (hence, *black budget*). Classification is a fact of the system. Sometimes, the obfuscation is somewhat practical (nobody wants to know how much the B-2 bomber *really* costs). Sometimes, it's meant to dissuade foreign spies (knowing how much a surveillance program costs tells you the scope of the program). Other times, though, it's about concealing projects that are ultimately so improbable are they that any examination would force them to dissolve. That's VALKYRIE. It's been a line item in the black budget for countless years, and the code name and its place in the budget changes. Sometimes it's lumped in with intelligence costs. Other times with military expenditures. It shifts and shimmers, as insubstantial as a wave of heat rising off a sun-baked road. (If classification reform ever takes hold, VALKYRIE would be in danger.)

Second, how much money is devoted toward VALKYRIE as a program? One would expect a combined joint task force to have a substantial budget—after all, black budget expenditures cover an upwards of \$30-40 billion. What does VALKYRIE get, then? A billion? Half that? Hardly. VALKYRIE as a line item gets no more than \$875,000 a year. That's it. Not nearly enough money for new weapons or vehicles. Certainly not enough to train members, to maintain their black site prisons around the world or to run their training facilities.

That, then, leads to a third question: How does VALKYRIE even continue? A secondary money stream must fund the conspiracy. But from where?

The Insidious Truth About That \$875,000

It's vampires. Vampires—ancient creatures, creatures capable of possessing alarming stores of wealth—steer Task Force: VALKYRIE by infusing the project with cash. As a result, vampires help dictate the conspiracy's mission on a night-to-night basis. The question then becomes, "Doesn't VALKYRIE still hunt vampires?" Absolutely. Vampires have enemies. The particular bloodsuckers who hold the agency's leash happen to have a seemingly insurmountable tide of enemies, actually, and they can tug on VALKYRIE's leash and direct the hunters toward their foes. The rest of the time, they have bizarre protocols in place to ensure that their vampiric allies are allowed to escape or at least brought in as "captives." Mistakes happen. Then again, when they do, the magical stream of clandestine funding might suddenly dry up for a little while... just as a warning.

Who knows about all this? Only those sitting at the very zenith of the organization (Status ●●●●●) might have a clue—though, even those who possess that level of Status don't necessarily know the truth. It's guarded among a handful of people.

Departments

Below, you'll find information on VALKYRIE's three primary departments.

Project: TWILIGHT

Free Specialty: Investigation (Surveillance)

Comprising SWAT and Suits (in an approximate 50/50 split), this department is conflicted. Given that its primary jurisdiction are those monsters who mimic the social constructs of human beings (witch cults, werewolf congregations, vampire covens), it'd be ideal to have an agreed-upon approach. Sadly, that's not the case, and the bureaucratic protocols make finding the legally-sanctioned proper path a grave difficulty. Some want to eradicate and exterminate; others want to work the system and use their own investigative abilities to lure out the bigger fish.

Secret: The vampires that secretly govern VALKYRIE (see above) are largely interested in the goings-on of TWILIGHT; TWILIGHT handles vampires and their enemies regularly. Rumor has it, though, that a handful of lower-Status hunters within the department have seen glimpses of the vampiric influence existing over their conspiracy, and seek to begin a "revolution"

meant to break the bloodsuckers' grip on VALKYRIE. (Ironically, should that plan work, it means that the conspiracy will lose most of its critical funding.)

Project: ADAMSKI

Free Specialty: Persuasion or Subterfuge (Conspiracy Theories)

The spooks of ADAMSKI do one thing, and they do it very well: misdirect. Just as the Western world would blanch if it knew just how extensive the terrorist networks and the plans of those networks were, it would piss its pants if it realized that monsters were not only real, but had invaded all aspects of our nocturnal existence. So they lie. They spread disinformation. They give ammunition to the crazies and the conspiracy nuts that only makes them seem crazier. (This sometimes means putting *real* information in their hands, information so absurd it can only be dismissed out-of-hand).

Secret: ADAMSKI has two enemies among other hunters. First, the hunters of Network Zero. These wing-nuts want to kick over the log and show the world what squirms underneath, and ADAMSKI's number one task is to keep those worms forever hidden from an easily-spooked herd. ADAMSKI actually assigns agents (and sometimes whole cells) to countermand the efforts of prominent Network Zero hunters. Their second enemy is within their own conspiracy: sometimes, VALKYRIE hunters catch a whiff of what's really going on, and start to figure out that vampires have infiltrated the agency. ADAMSKI can't have that, and a couple of its higher-ups will surreptitiously send its own hunters to work against those VALKYRIE cells that seek to expose the disturbing truth.

Project: FORT

Free Specialty: Occult (Extradimensional Entities)

By and large, FORT hunts what they call EEs (pronounced as its spelled: *ee-ee's*): extradimensional entities. That's any being that comes to this world from another plane of existence: ghosts, demons, fairies, aliens, psychic mandalas, hyperintelligent parasites, and the like. This has its effect on the hunters of this department. It's a department of fringe-dwellers and oddballs: urban shamans, former cult leaders, abductees, conspiracy junkies, and the downright insane. They don't follow protocol very well, and as a result, the conspiracy is reluctant to make use of them (often shuttling them off to various dead zones—zones which often become *hot* as soon as the FORT hunters start messing around).

Secret: Below, you'll find a piece of Advanced Armory that lets a hunter of VALKYRIE actually enter the Shadow (and potentially the Underworld). This item, ironically known as the Gatekeeper Device, has



been R&D'ed in secret by the hunters of FORT. That means—for now—only hunters of Project: FORT know about it and can use it. That'll change, eventually, but for now, it remains the property of this department. Use of the few Gatekeeper Devices in existence does little to help the sanity of these particular agents.

Advanced Armory

ICE: Interstices Calculation Expedient (•)

VALKYRIE has long posited the existence of interstitial terrain (see below for more information), but hasn't been able to prove it—yes, some agents have experienced it, but the subjective experiences of individual hunters cannot be used as proof for anything.

Now, they have a device that tracks and records instances of interstitial terrain. The device is portable, though not easily concealable (the screen itself is about as big as an iPhone or GPS device, but the housing for the tracker necessitates a backpack that weighs about 30 lbs).

Function: No roll is necessary to calculate the location of nearby interstices. It only tracks a half-mile radius, and only identifies instances of interstitial terrain that have appeared in an area within the last 24 hours. It identifies signature etheric traces, noting the residue. The screen features a GPS device, and the terrain is noted on the map via a blinking red pulse.

The Gatekeeper Device (•••)

It's actually not a device: it's a thin-skinned black bodysuit lined with tiny white filaments—and, because it's been designed by Project FORT, the suit is also marked with a number of stitched-in occult, spiritual, and scientific symbols. It covers everything: even the hunter's face. The hunter sees via dark goggles sewn into the bodysuit mask.

At present, only five suits of this type even exist. FORT does not have the resources or materials to make more.

Function: Wearing the suit allows one to enter alternate realms (at this moment, that remains restricted to either the Shadow or the Underworld). Doing so is an act of will—the hunter must expend a point of Willpower, which charges the suit via biofeedback.

SIN-EATERS AND ETHERIC ROUNDS

Got Geist? Want to know what Etheric Rounds (pp. 150-151, *Hunter: The Vigil*) do to Sin-Eaters? Because a geist literally merges with the Sin-Eater, this means that these Advanced Armory bullets do full and normal damage to the Sin-Eater's living tissue. It also disrupts the Sin-Eater's Synergy; if the Sin-Eater is forced to make a Synergy degeneration roll within 24 hours of having been shot by an Etheric Round, she suffers -1 to that roll.

At that moment, the hunter will cross over. If she's at an Avernian Gate (where the membrane between the world of the living and the Underworld is thin), she will cross over into the Underworld. If she is anywhere else, she crosses over into the Shadow.

The suit has some notable drawbacks. First is that the suit can only be used once every 12 hours. Exiting the Shadow or the Underworld generally means waiting out the downtime between uses, unless alternate means of exit are discovered. Second, the suit causes a few unpleasant physical side effects:

- Itching. The itching is somewhat maddening, and causes a persistent -1 penalty to all rolls. This penalty can be removed for a scene by expending a Willpower point.
- Vertigo. This only occurs when the character is near a threatening edge (be it a set of steps or the precipice of a cliff). If the character is near such an edge, she must succeed on a Wits + Dexterity roll lest she fall off that edge.
- Pallor. The character turns deeply pale, her veins showing through the flesh. This lasts for a full week after using the suit; it has no direct effects, but could cause Social penalties in certain situations (Storyteller-determined).

Bonus Material: Interstitial Terrain

"Interstitial" effectively means *between*. Interstitial terrain, or interstitial spaces, are the places that fall between the cracks in our reality. (An example of this is the **Ten Photographs** story from the **Horror Recognition Guide**, where a series of ten mysterious photographs outline images of a strange reality of monoliths and bizarre creatures overlaid atop our own world.)

The following rules apply:

- The terrain itself is not temporary, but the way that reality's fabric tears and opens a gateway to these places is temporary.
- The terrain isn't simply a doorway or other gate. It's literally a place where the alternate reality intrudes atop our own, and is overlaid there.
- Generally, it only appears where no people are present at that moment – an empty alleyway, a stretch of desert beyond a sandstone arch, an abandoned oil platform at sea.
- They're always temporary. They appear for no more than 24 hours – some may appear only for minutes, even seconds.
- Anything can come out of that "bleed over," and anything can go in. Once the overlap ends, that person is trapped in the alternate reality until he can find a place and time for the overlap to occur anew. *If* it occurs anew, of course.

Why Use It?

Interstitial terrain affords the Storyteller a grand option of bringing elements into the story that are truly unexpected. Alternate reality can see subtle changes ("in this world, one character never married his wife, another character gave birth to a different child") or very drastic ones ("in this reality, the world has been overtaken by forces from beyond the stars, manifesting as an ancient army of alien ghost-machines"). Storytellers are free to tweak the rules accordingly, and play with the laws and mechanics that govern the Storytelling System (here, vampires burn in moonlight, not sunlight; cars do not exist, and so a Ride Skill must be substituted; ghosts are manifest here, always; demons rule the world and can only be killed by blessed silver).



Living With The Vigil

For many hunters carrying the Vigil, the hunt is only one part of their lives. Many belong to hunter organizations—the more localized compacts, or the globe-spanning conspiracies.

Joining such a group comes with varying advantages—safety in numbers, a paycheck, access to unique weapons and critical information, and camaraderie. But it also comes replete with new problems: competition, cover-ups, and a rigorous set of rules to which one must adhere or face the always-unpleasant consequences.

This book seeks to detail what life is like inside one of these organizations. What's it like to belong to such a group? How does one get recruited? What does it take to advance—what sacrifices must be made?

This book includes:

- A more detailed look at each of the compacts and conspiracies covered in the original Hunter: The Vigil rulebook
- Bonus material and systems relevant to each organization
- Endowments for Compacts

HUNTER
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